European Refugee Fund:
Final evaluation of the first phase (2000-2004), and definition of a common assessment framework for the second phase (2005-2010)

FINAL REPORT

(March 2006)

List of acronyms

CA:	Community Action
ANCI:	National Association of Italian Municipalities
CEAP:	Common European Asylum Policy
CEAS:	Common European Asylum System
DG JHA:	Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs
DG JAI:	Direction Général Justice et Affaires Intérieures
DG JFS:	Directorate General, Justice, Freedom and Security (Rename of DG JHA from November 2004)
DG LSJ:	Direction Général, Liberté, Securité et Justice[1]
DIHR:	Danish Institute for Human Rights
ECRE:	European Council on Refugee and Exiles
ESF:	European Social Fund
EURODAC:	A system for comparison of fingerprints of asylum applicants and illegal immigrants in order to determine the State responsible for examining the asylum application
IOM:	International organization for Migration.
NRA:	National Responsible Authorities
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
MPI:	Migration Policy Institute
ÖIF:	Austrian Integration Fund
TEC:	Treaty of the European Community
TEU:	Treaty of the European Union (Maastricht 1992)
TEU II:	Treaty of the European Union (Amsterdam 1997)
UK:	United Kingdom
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[1] Rename of DG JAI from November 2004

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Executive Summary

A consortium consisting of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Eurasylum Ltd. and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) was selected by the European Commission to carry out the final evaluation of the first phase of the European Refugee Fund. The present report present the findings of that evaluation.

In conducting the evaluation, the team has considered all stages of project cycle management pertinent to the ERF, i.e. the programme's relevance at national and European Union (EU) levels; its effectiveness and efficiency; its coherence and complementarities with other national and EU instruments; and its impact, added value and sustainability. The key methodological areas that have been explored and the indicators applied are outlined in the following chapter. The evaluation is based on information gathered at project, national and European Community levels, including national programmes and Community Actions.

The assessment of national programmes includes both the EU pre-accession Member States (with the exception of Denmark, who has opted out of the ERF) and the new Member States. However, since the new Member States have only been part of the ERF since April 2004, the evaluation of these was not to be as extensive as the evaluation of the 14 pre-accession Member States. The evaluation of these 14 Member States is based on collection of relevant documentation, country visits, dissemination and analysis of questionnaires, as well as e-mail and telephone communication with stakeholders. The evaluation of the 10 new Member States was conducted through desk studies and did not include country visits. Thus, these evaluations are based solely on questionnaires, collection of relevant documentation as well as e-mail and telephone communication with the relevant stakeholders.

In relation to Community Actions, the evaluation is based on relevant documentation, information gained through questionnaires, analysis of a sample of projects carried out in 2000 – 2004, as well as interviews with EC desk officers and relevant stakeholders, including project managers of community actions interviewed during country visits.

Relevance

Relevance has been assessed, in particular, at two levels:

- the extent to which the national European Refugee Fund (ERF) strategies/programmes have been in line with the ERF overall objectives, as outlined in the Council Decision of 28 September 2000 (2000/596/EC); and
- the extent to which the national programmes have been in line with perceived and documented needs for the types of intervention promoted by the ERF

The overall purpose of the ERF is to promote a balance in Member State efforts in receiving as well as bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. This is done through two different mechanisms, namely 1) burden-sharing through national programmes distributing ERF funds to Member States and 2) transnational Community Actions. During the first phase of the ERF, 95 % of the funds have been allocated to national programmes and 5 % to the Community Actions. In the mid-term evaluation carried out by PLS Ramböll, it was argued that Community Actions should receive a higher proportion of funds, an argument which is supported by the findings of the present evaluation. In the second phase of the ERF, 7 % of all funds are allocated to Community Actions. The 5/95 division, as established by the Council Decision, is largely confirmed by the amounts allocated to the two programmes throughout the period in question, with an average of 4 % of ERF funds spent on Community Actions and 96 % on national programmes.

Relevance of national programmes

The overall trend points towards a high correlation between the number of asylum seekers and the amount of ERF funds received – those Member States that received the most funds are, in other words, also those with the highest numbers of asylum seekers. When examining more specifically the relation between the amount of ERF funds and the number of asylum seekers per capita GDP, there is a relatively high correlation. Likewise, when new Member States are included, the correlation between the distribution of ERF funds and the number of asylum applications per capita GDP, as well as the number of applications per inhabitant, is less pronounced. Calculations have shown that the burden-sharing mechanism in the Council Decision 2000/596/EC has been

implemented correctly. There is thus no doubt that ERF funds have been distributed in accordance with the principle of burden-sharing

All national ERF programmes implemented in 2000-2004 have been in line with Council Decision 2000/596/EC. Furthermore, the decentralised structure of the ERF has facilitated the relevance of these national programmes, as needs have been defined at national level rather than through predetermined regulative measures at EU level.

With the exception of the Czech Republic, which opted out of the programme in 2004, all the Member States have made maximum use of the ERF budget support. The high degree of adherence to and use of the ERF opportunity to co-finance national strategies is an indicator of the perceived relevance of the ERF programme, and of the active interest of governments in using the ERF to enhance their own national structures and procedures in the areas of reception, integration and repatriation.

At national level, the ERF strategies, or Requests for Co-financing, are based on the needs for intervention as perceived and assessed by the national responsible authorities in each country. This needs assessment accords with the principle of decentralisation underlying the ERF. While the decentralised structure definitely facilitates a high degree of relevance of national strategies, it nevertheless complicates a definitive assessment of relevance.

The National Responsible Authorities (NRAs) identify the national ERF strategies. In some cases this is carried out in dialogue with civil society (such as Germany), in other cases (such as Austria) without such dialogue, and in still other cases (such as Italy) the government develops a comprehensive plan which can be utilised by municipalities and NGOs to feed into. This variation in strategy formulation shows that each member state has developed its national strategies and applications for co-funding in accordance with its own particular traditions.

Many project managers considered that the national strategies were relevant to the groups targeted. However, more than 15 % of them found them to be of limited relevance. A more systematic involvement of other actors than national authorities in the development of strategies might therefore increase the relevance of these strategies.

On an overall level, the Member States' strategies can be divided into three different categories: *establishment* of structures for reception, integration and voluntary repatriation; *improvement* of existing structures; and *innovative and additional* activities. Regardless of which of these approaches is chosen, nearly all the Member States have focussed their interventions on concrete and isolated interventions rather than on developing broad strategic initiatives. Most strategies aim to cover areas not targeted by existing policies, thereby ensuring a high degree of relevance.

The countries that lacked proper structures for reception, integration and repatriation prior to the launching of the ERF, such as Italy, Portugal, Spain and the new member states, have concentrated their efforts on developing such structures. In many new member states, for example, ERF funds were used to build reception centres. Those countries that had already developed facilities for reception, integration and, to some extent, repatriation have primarily focussed on improving these structures or filling out gaps and supplementing state initiatives.

In the UK, priority was given to integration and repatriation measures since reception was assessed to be fully covered by government initiatives. In Austria, an increase in the number of asylum seekers put the national structures for reception under pressure, and the ERF-1 made it possible to address specific focus areas and take up initiatives that would otherwise not have been adequately addressed. In the Netherlands and Sweden, where existing structures are well-established and functioning, priority has been given to innovative measures.

In Germany, national strategies have continued past practices of building upon cooperation with NGOs and other civil society organisations in order to address the immediate needs of the target groups. In Germany, with its long tradition of resettling groups from the East and a large number of labour immigrants entering the integration system, the ERF fits easily in with established services offered to groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

In Italy, the national strategies endeavoured to involve the local authorities and to place emphasis on the establishment of appropriate structures, enabling an adequate management of national asylum and refugee affairs. The Italian approach has entailed strong involvement of the public sector in the management of reception conditions and integration measures, activities that have traditionally been performed by private assistance organisations with limited public sector involvement.

As mentioned above, nearly all Member States have focussed their intervention strategy on concrete and isolated initiatives rather than on broad strategic initiatives. Only exceptionally has there been an approach as comprehensive as that developed in Italy, where national responsible authorities have developed a national action plan for building up a coherent system of reception, integration and repatriation. This does not mean however, that the efforts to solve concrete problems in other countries have been carried out without strategies to ensure relevance. Most countries developed strategies focussing on shortcomings and deficits in existing policies, thereby ensuring a high degree of relevance and coherence. In Ireland, for instance, a report issued in 2000 by an Interdepartmental Working Group on the Integration of Refugees, outlining shortcomings and needs in national policy, formed the framework for national ERF-1 strategies.

All Member States divide their strategies into three intervention areas, established by the Council Decision: Reception, integration and voluntary repatriation. Throughout the period, a little less than half of ERF funds were allocated to reception activities, one third to integration and one fifth to voluntary repatriation. Thus, most Member States have given priority to reception. In a range of countries, however, focus has shifted from reception to integration during the ERF-1 period. This shift was particularly pronounced in Belgium, Italy and the UK. In most countries, voluntary repatriation activities were allocated the least amount of funding – and often the size of allocations decreased during the period. Exceptions to this were Austria, UK, the Netherlands and Ireland, all of which have prioritised repatriation throughout the period. The changes in priorities reflect national and international immigration developments, such as a decrease in the number of asylum seekers and the need to prepare for the introduction of minimum standards in the area of reception. The inclusion of the ten new Member States in the ERF in 2004 has not had any discernible effect on the relative weight of the three areas within the ERF.

Article 13 of the Council Decision establishing the ERF states that ERF contributions may not exceed 50 % of the total cost of the measure (75 % in Cohesion Fund Member States). Thus, to the ERF funds must be added state and private funds. The evaluation shows that all Member States have adhered to this principle of additionality, indicating that, among national authorities, the ERF is perceived to be a relevant and useful tool to enhancing national structures.

Relevance of Community Actions

The Community Action programme was established by Article 5 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC. The Community Actions are designed to be projects of interest to the Community and to have an innovatory nature. The activities supported are evaluation and analysis, capacity building and awareness-raising. The European Commission is responsible for the management of the programme, including the elaboration and publication of calls for proposals, the selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation, publicity, follow-up and the dissemination of results. The annual calls for proposals outline the specific focus of the programme, the selection criteria and award criteria and the exclusion criteria. Apart from these, a Guide to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions, produced in 2004, outlines all practical aspects in relation to application procedures, disbursement of grants, reporting, evaluation and dissemination of results.

The evaluation team assesses the calls for proposals, the work programmes and the guide to be consistent with the objectives of the Community Action programme. In order to assess the relevance of the chosen priorities and measures, however, there would be a need to consider the background analysis leading to these and to compare the background analysis to the overall strategy. To our knowledge, such a document outlining the overall strategy of the Community Actions does not exist. The evaluation team recommends that the Commission actively encourage a compilation and analysis of the results of the projects carried out, in particular under Strand A: Evaluation and analysis. This could then be used by the Commission as a background paper for the determination of a strategy on the ERF Community Actions, as well as for information to potential ERF grant applicants in order to prevent duplication of actions.

Throughout the entire period of the ERF-1. contributions to Community Actions were well below the established 80 %, ranging from 71.4 % in 2004 to 79.3 % in 2002. According to the mid-term evaluation, in the period 2000-2002, the majority of funds went to ‘analysis and evaluation’ activities and one fourth to, respectively, ‘awareness-raising’ and ‘capacity building’ activities. In 2003, 24.4 % of the funds were allocated to analysis and evaluation, 57.2 % to capacity building and 18.3 % to awareness-raising activities. In 2004, 83.5 % benefited capacity building and 16.5 % to awareness-raising while analysis and evaluation activities did not receive any funding. Viewing the entire period, most funds were allocated to capacity building activities (47 %), while awareness-raising activities received 20.5 % and analysis and evaluation activities 32.5 %. The overall focus – first on analysis and evaluation, then on capacity building – is assessed to be relevant. However, as these divisions are in practice largely arbitrary, no further conclusions can be drawn. The projects

often include elements from all three strands. The choice of the three strands, analysis and evaluation, capacity building and awareness-raising, thus remains unclear.

The projects supported through the Community Action programme include from 0 to 15 partners, the average number being 4.4. Partners of the lead organisations come from all EU countries with no explicit overrepresentation of any particular country. Most partners were NGOs. The groups targeted through the Community Action programme correspond to the target groups outlined in the Community Actions programme. As regards specific groups, the projects have targeted women, youngsters, and unaccompanied minors, traumatised persons, specific ethnic groups and resettled refugees. All projects examined met the objectives of the Community Actions programme. The projects selected are assessed to be highly relevant to the objectives of the programme, as the vast majority have included clear innovative elements either in terms of subject, target groups, partnerships or aims.

Effectiveness and efficiency

In assessing *effectiveness*, the evaluation focuses on the following features:

- National project selection procedures and criteria;
- National systems of monitoring and evaluating the effects of programmes/projects in relation to stated objectives;
- National systems for integrating best practices and lessons learned;
- Effective feedback mechanisms between external and internal actors for improving performance;
- Achievement of outputs as compared to project documents;
- Achievement of programme objectives through outputs;
- Achievement of results in accordance with relevant EU standards.

Efficiency is assessed, in particular, in relation to:

- The existing national monitoring mechanisms;
- The financial procedures, at national level and between the EC and the national responsible authorities;

- The efficiency of management structures in achieving goals, following up on problem areas, reporting requirements and administrative procedures;
- Budget commitments versus budget consumption (at national programme level).

Effectiveness and efficiency of national programmes

The decentralised structure of the national ERF programmes, as outlined in the Council Decision, leaves selected responsibilities to the European Commission. At EU level, tasks related to the management of the ERF are mainly centred on administration and coordination. The responsibilities are: overall allocation of annual funds, verification and approval of requests for co-financing, payment of funds, verification of the effective functioning of management and control systems, decisions on reductions or cancellations of grants, submission of mid-term and final reports to the European Parliament and the Council, the management of the legal framework governing the ERF, and the management of the ERF Committee. The unit responsible for these tasks is Unit B4 of the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission. Desk officers are responsible for the actual implementation of responsibilities.

The verification and approval of requests for co-financing is one of the major tasks of the desk officers. This often includes consultation with the NRAs drafting the requests, which ensures that the standard of the request is consistent with Commission demands and prevents revisions of the requests. The requests analysed by the evaluation team show, more often than not, a certain lack of consistency and accurateness in relation to the conducting of problem analysis and the definition of objectives, outputs, activities, results, impact and corresponding indicators. The evaluation team thus recommends the introduction of a set of standard tools (e.g. Logical Framework Approach) for the elaboration of requests.

Another major task of the desk officers is the monitoring of the actual implementation of national programmes. This is done through communication with NRAs, desk studies of reports delivered by NRAs as well as monitoring visits to the countries in question. In general, the NRAs consider that the desk officers are a potential source for capacity building, and their support is appreciated. Many mentioned that more frequent visits could contribute to establishing worthwhile relations and information exchanges between the ERF project managers and the Commission.

Apart from communication with desk officers, NRAs communicate with the Commission through participation in a committee, consisting of representatives from all Member States and representatives from the Commission. This committee is the only formal mechanism for communication among Member States. However, because it does not allow for any systematic exchanges of experience and best practices as such, many NRAs feel that it does not fully cover their needs. While some NRAs have had limited bilateral meetings with each other, no activities have been put in place to facilitate such exchanges of experience. It is suggested that a forum for such activities could be established as an integrated part of ERF management structures.

Responsibilities and structures

Due to its decentralised structure, the ERF places most responsibilities at a national level. These include, in particular: appointment of a national responsible authority to handle all ERF matters; elaboration of requests for co-financing; publication of calls for proposals; management, administration, financial control, monitoring and evaluation of projects; and submission of annual and final reports to the Commission. The degree of decentralisation is reflected in the wide range of different organisational set-ups, management and implementation structures in place in the various Member States.

Of the funds received from the Commission, national authorities are allowed to spend up to 5 % on technical assistance.

Most national responsible authorities run the national programmes in an efficient and effective manner. Most national authorities do however view especially the financial management of the ERF as bureaucratic and a heavy burden on their human and financial resources. Examples of good practice in this respect include, for example, the outsourcing of administration and monitoring of the ERF to a professional company (in Austria) and the establishment of a secretariat (in Italy). Other countries have added the administration of the ERF-1 to the tasks of the NRAs, which means that the five percent for technical support becomes a supplementary source of income for funding of the general administrative tasks performed by the NRA.

Financial administration and management of a fund that finances projects that follows the logic of project cycles and are carried out by NGOs and other non-governmental entities is a quite different task than normal public administration. It requires different resources, competencies and capacities.

It is not possible to recommend one specific approach as being better than another, given that national contexts vary to a high degree, and what works in one country might not work in another. However, a closer review of the appropriateness of the amount of funding for technical assistance, as laid down in Council Decision 2000/596/EC Article 12, could be carried out, assessing the correspondence between allocated funding for the administrative tasks and the requested quantity and quality of performance.

National strategies and selection procedures

In some cases, the national responsible authorities develop the request for co-financing in cooperation with other stakeholders such as other government entities or civil society representatives. In relation to the selection of projects, national authorities also often include other actors. In most countries, however, civil society organisations are not invited to participate in the development of national strategies, nor in the selection of projects. One reason for this exclusion is of course the fear of potential conflicts of interest. However, it should be borne in mind that public institutions also implement ERF-supported projects, and the inclusion of these might be equally conflictual.

Calls for proposals are published on NRA websites and in the media. In a few countries, it has proven difficult to find sufficient eligible applicants. Whether this is due to a low number of potential applicants in the country or a poor distribution of the calls for proposals is hard to say, but the evaluation team recommends that the national authorities that have experienced problems in relation hereto, investigate the issue further.

Member States present a variety of screening procedures, some involving pre-screening on technical grounds, others involving different entities for screening of different aspects of the proposals. In a few instances, the evaluators identified a relative lack of transparency in these processes, including in some cases the rejection of projects without transparent justifications.

Transfer of funds

In relation to financial administration, national authorities are, amongst other things, responsible for the transfer of funds to projects. While many project managers complain that funds are often delayed, a recurrent claim from most national authorities is that these delays are in fact due to delays in transfers from the Commission. While there is no doubt that the Commission cannot be

made responsible for these problems, given that national authorities have a responsibility to ensure funds, it is also obvious that there is a need for a clarification of rules and regulations in relation to the transfer of funds, since most national authorities do not always appear to be aware of their responsibilities.

To sum up, the evaluation team found that current management procedures do present some problems of efficiency and effectiveness in relation to funding delays, excessive administration and bureaucracy and inefficient management implementation in some Member States. No entity can be singled out for not doing their best, but the administrative structures should be reviewed in order to diminish weaknesses and solve potential problems in relation to efficiency and effectiveness.

National evaluations

National authorities are also responsible for the annual evaluations of their ERF programme. Many project managers expressed a certain fatigue with these evaluations, noting that their benefits were often limited. The evaluations are typically carried out by private agencies, professional consultants, agencies linked to independent academic institutions or, in a few cases, government institutions related to the national authority in charge of the ERF. A recurrent problem for most evaluators has been the lack of measurable indicators applied at project level. One exception to this is the UK where a range of tools and indicators have been developed to ensure the relevance of evaluations.

Project implementation structures

The projects supported by ERF funds are anchored in a range of different types of organisations and institutions. Most of them are NGOs, representing almost 2/3 of the implementing agencies, while public authorities (19 %) make up the second largest group. One group that is only marginally represented is employer organisations, which make up less than one percent of the total implementing agencies. Almost 40 % of all implementing agencies carry out their activities in cooperation with a partner organisation.

Project management structures

Project managers receive technical support from national authorities, in the form of written guidelines and other documentation, as well as through visits and other personal contacts. The first

time project managers are in contact with NRAs is when they respond to the call for proposals. Most project managers (77.8 %) find the call for proposals very clear, while less than 10 % have a negative view. In relation to administrative and management requirements during project implementation, many project managers consider that these are unnecessarily complicated, time consuming and not always efficient. They also mention the fact that restrictions placed by national authorities on the use of ERF funds, such as limitations on the use of funds for salaries, are often an obstacle to efficient project management.

The evaluation team has found that, more often than not, national authorities have insufficient knowledge of project management tools such as Logical Framework Approach, and they are thus unable to assist project managers in a satisfactory manner. This is also reflected in the requests for co-financing, which often do not include even basic project management tools. Likewise, the questionnaire survey shows that almost half of all the project managers have not developed measurable indicators. This number is worrisome, particularly in light of the emphasis which the EU administration now places on the development of indicators at project design stage for all its financial instruments.

Complaints about complicated and time-consuming bureaucracy indicate a need to heighten the capacity of NRAs to absorb and concretely implement managerial and administrative requirements of the ERF (an issue also touched upon above).

Communication and support

Nearly 77 % of the respondents to the questionnaire were either satisfied or fully satisfied with the technical support from the NRA and nearly 69 % finds that NRAs have been helpful in achieving the maximum results of the projects. In Finland, the rate of satisfied or fully satisfied project managers was 100 %. Likewise, compared to the mid-term report, the number of project managers who are positive towards NRAs has increased in Austria, Ireland, Italy and Greece. There are, however, great differences among countries – for instance, in Belgium only 7.1 % are fully satisfied, and in Spain and Latvia project managers are only somewhat satisfied. Despite this, the overall picture remains very positive and compared to results of the mid-term evaluation, the level of dissatisfaction has diminished dramatically in the last two years.

Mechanisms for exchange of experience

The evaluation team found that not many countries had established mechanisms for exchange of experiences and best practices among the projects supported. Most NRAs did not consider it to be their responsibility, and the majority of the project implementers did not have the financial capacity to organise such activities.

An exception to this is Finland, where NRAs have organised training sessions for project managers, financial managers, steering committee members and other project staff. In Germany, there are periodic meetings among organisations working in the same region or in the same field, facilitating the establishment of certain uniform standards and the dissemination of best practices, and the German NRA participates in or co-organises meetings with project implementers in certain key sectors. Both Ireland and UK have also established mechanisms such as a web-based project database, annual conferences and a Good Practice Guide for exchange of experiences on national level.

The evaluators find that increasing standards and creating common systems will require systematic exchanges of experiences, mutual learning and highlightening of best practice. The need for a forum for exchange of experiences does not only concern implementing agencies at a national level, but on European level as well, facilitating dialogue across borders.

Distribution of funds

In total the European Commission allocated 178,613,853 EUR for the national ERF co-financing ERF-1 programme over the period 2000 – 2004. The funds are divided into 3 strands, namely reception, integration and voluntary repatriation. Approximately half of ERF funds are allocated to reception, 1/3 to integration and 1/5 to voluntary repatriation, a pattern that has been consistent throughout the five-year funding period and which corresponds very closely to the pattern of distribution of the total allocation of funding (both ERF and national funds).

Throughout this period, between 69% and 80 % of the total programmed ERF funds have been spent. The evaluation team finds that the relation between programmed and actual costs is almost identical for national funds and ERF funds in 2000 – 2003. The analysis also shows that the ERF has constantly co-funded the same relative share of the costs for implementation of the national strategies. The ratio of spent funds versus planned expenses has improved over years. It can thus be concluded that Member States have improved their planning skills. It appears that that the reception

strand has been easiest to plan correctly, as the actual costs are relatively close to the programmed amounts, while integration and voluntary repatriation strands show greater variations between programmed and spent amounts.

Based on information from NRAs, the evaluation team assesses the cost per beneficiary to vary from 20 to 1500 EUR, with reception activities being the cheapest and voluntary repatriation activities being the most expensive.

Generally, the strategies for implementation and the actual implementation of the three measures have been economically efficient. The variations between the measures is not surprising, given that NRAs do not always have a similar level of experience in all the thematic areas covered by the ERF (this is particularly true in the case of voluntary repatriation measures, where efficiency could only be improved through a greater capital of experience in the design and implementation of such measures).

Additionality

ERF co-financing has been very close to, but below, the 50 % limit set by the Council Decision. The evaluation can thus confirm that the level of ERF resources allocated has been in line with Article 13 of the Council Decision. This conclusion, however, does not answer the question whether EU funds have been additional to, or a substitution for, Member State funds. Given the decentralised structure for the identification of ERF needs, the Council Decision 2000/596/EC does not foresee any prerogatives for the Commission to interfere with national strategies and priorities. The Council Decision enables each Member State to autonomously determine its national needs. Thus, the only way to measure issues of additionality would be through an assessment of the extent to which national ERF-funded activities might have replaced national funding for measures which, on the basis of the national legislative framework, were funded by the national budgets before ERF-1. Based on the findings of the country visits, and the various ERF documents to which the evaluators have had access, there is no evidence to suggest that the principle of additionality might not have been respected. On the contrary, in most of the Member States, the evaluators have clearly determined that the needs addressed by the ERF measures could not have been adequately supported through existing public services and legislation. Most projects were in fact pursuing activities that appeared to be supplementary to existing systems and structures and, in some cases, innovative.

Target groups

Most project managers and national authorities have considered the ERF target groups to be relevant, and the target groups supported by the projects are largely identical to those defined in the Council Decision. Some noted that limitations in relation to target groups have strained the effectiveness of their projects. For example, the fact that nationals cannot be included in project activities diminishes the effectiveness of many integration projects. The evaluators, however, have found many examples of projects that chose to overcome these apparent restrictions and to include nationals in some of their project activities.

Despite these limitations, more than two-thirds of the project managers considered that the national ERF strategy in their country was meeting the needs of the target groups, thus indicating a high degree of effectiveness.

Number of projects and beneficiaries

More than 2,050 projects have been co-financed by the ERF. Of these, approximately 1,107 related to reception, 760 to integration and 183 to voluntary repatriation. The two Member States with the largest number of projects are Germany and Italy. Many countries do, however, support a large number of projects – either as a conscious strategy (as in Ireland) or as a result of a large number of applicants.

27.8 % of the projects have targeted groups of up to 100 people, and 19.9 % of them have targeted more than 500 people. In Greece, Netherlands and Finland, many projects have targeted large groups, while in Sweden, Spain, Cyprus and Hungary they have tended to target small groups. In total, more than 600,000 people have been targeted directly by the ERF projects. Most project managers (59.0 %) believe that between 76% and 100 % of the people targeted have benefited from the projects. A very small proportion (2 %) considered that the number was less than 25 %.

Types of activity

A broad variety of activities have been implemented within the three measures. The most frequent were activities such as provision of social services; help with administrative issues, interpretation, and assistance to deal with legal formalities, language training, counselling and assistance in job search. These activities all aim at benefiting the target group directly. Other implemented activities

had more indirect effect on the target group as they aimed at improving administrative structures through activities such as establishment and development of country of origin documentation, capacity building of various categories of professionals involved in managing and implementing reception, integration and repatriation programmes and activities, networking etc.

The evaluation found that all activities have been pertinent for the meeting needs within the three measures and found excellent projects in all countries. However, a systematic collection of evidence on these results and accomplishments has not been sufficiently integrated into the ERF programmes, neither on a national nor on an international level, which means that best practices, interesting experiences and lessons learned are not disseminated to other projects, thereby diminishing the potential effect of these activities.

Implementation of activities and achievement of results

In more than 90 % of all projects, all or most planned project activities have been implemented. There are no marked variations between the three measures – within each strand more than 2/3 of the projects have been successful in implementing all planned activities and nearly 1/3 have implemented more than half of their activities. Most projects followed the original timetable and were not delayed. Very few projects underwent substantial changes during the implementation period. The high implementation rate of activities is reflected in the level of achieved results. 91.2 % of all project managers indicate that all or most planned results have been achieved.

47.3% of all project managers state that all activities have been implemented and all planned results have been achieved, a rate than can be considered as relatively high. The number of such highly successful projects is slightly higher in the reception and integration strands than in the voluntary repatriation strand. This can be explained by the relative complexity of implementing repatriation measures and the general lack of experience in this policy area among many implementing NGOs. The projects with the highest success rate were found within the group of projects that focused on both reception and integration. This indicates that a rigorous distinction between measures does not necessarily contribute to success.

Among the most successful projects, more had established a baseline situation prior to project launch than among the less successful projects. The successful projects also have followed the established time schedule to a higher degree than the other projects and have been less affected by

external problems. The evaluation has analysed the successful projects in relation to a number of issues on project administration, planning, external obstacles, evolving needs of target groups. This analysis shows that all successful projects were relatively well prepared and encountered few problems. The evaluation team concludes that the projects supported through the ERF have been effective and efficient in their implementation of activities, and that NRAs have managed to select well-planned projects with a high probability to succeed.

Effectiveness and efficiency of Community Actions

Effectiveness and efficiency of Community Actions has been assessed in relation to goal attainment, programme and project time frames, monitoring and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms.

The evaluation team concludes that within the sample of projects examined, 76 % have achieved their planned results. Problems related to project implementation included difficulties in partner cooperation, lack of data and information, identification of and cooperation with target groups and staff problems. In general, international organisations encountered fewer cooperation problems with partners than national organisations and research institutes. The problems encountered often led to requests of amendments to the grant agreements.

Some of these problems might have been prevented through the introduction of a pilot phase, particularly as regards the development of methodologies for capacity building and research needs assessments. Also, many project managers have indicated that they would have needed a longer project preparation period than the current two months. It takes time and money to establish relations with potential partners and to agree on project design and contents. In fact, some organisations stated that the experience of having invested a lot of time and resources in the development of a project that was subsequently rejected meant that they did not plan to apply for ERF funding again.

The standard project period was extended from 12 months to 18 in 2003, following several requests. It is too early to assess whether this extension is sufficient or whether there is a need to extend the project cycle further to 24 months or longer. Often, projects were delayed and contracts had to be extended.

Monitoring and evaluation are in theory an integral part of all projects, and all applicants have to describe in their application form the ways in which they plan to monitor and evaluate their projects. However, some organisations indicated that in practice they have not monitored and evaluated their projects. Other organisations have used different types of evaluation tools, such as external evaluations, questionnaire surveys involving partners and beneficiaries or assessment of activities. The majority of the project managers responding to the questionnaire state that they have established a baseline situation prior to launch of their project, thus facilitating sound evaluations. However, many have not established indicators and those who have often seem to have confused the different types of indicators.

Commission desk officers monitor and evaluate Community Actions on the basis of the reports submitted. In some cases, they also attend project activities. One respondent comments that the management of ERF is a positive example of EU Commission best practice. However, quite a few respondents do not agree with that. Some of them regret the complicated financial administration required by ERF. 30 % state that management had been of limited help.

The grants allocated to Community Actions vary from 40,000 EUR to 400,000 EUR. It is too early to assess whether the maximum amount should have been raised with the extension of project periods. Only 23 % of project managers responding to the questionnaire thought that available financial resources were sufficient. The majority considered that resources could not have been spent more efficiently. Calculations based on available figures from a sample of projects show that the average percentage of funds spent, compared to amounts allocated, is almost 96 %.

The evaluation team noted that in a few cases, cross-fertilisation occurred between Community Actions or between a Community Action and a national ERF project. Such cooperation could be strengthened through kick-off meetings with Community Action implementers and Commission staff as well as through increased information about Community Actions among national ERF authorities. The evaluation has further evidenced that in some cases, organisations implement a national ERF project, which builds on a Community Action, and vice versa. In some cases, however, the two programmes have overlapped.

Coherence and complementarities

The evaluation team has looked at coherence and complementarities between national programmes and other initiatives, between Community Actions and other initiatives, and between national programmes and Community Actions.

The evaluation found that, in theory, a range of other initiatives – EQUAL, ARGO, Daphne, Leonardo, Comenius, Grundtvig and UNHCR – present possibilities for complementarities as well as, in some cases, risks of overlaps. In practice, however, it is primarily EQUAL that plays a significant role in relation to ERF.

Coherence and complementarities of national programmes

When considering coherence and complementarities between national programmes and other initiatives at EU level, the evaluation found that both ERF and EQUAL officials were fully aware of the potential overlap – and complementarities – between EQUAL and ERF. A DG JLS official attends all major meetings and events organised by the EQUAL Asylum Seekers Community Initiative Programme for the purpose of ensuring complementarities with the ERF. Furthermore, ERF requests for co-financing are checked with EQUAL desk officers.

Many national authorities are aware of the relationship with EQUAL. In some cases, the authorities responsible for implementation of the ERF are also responsible for implementation of EQUAL. In other countries, formal mechanisms for ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlaps are put in place. In a range of countries, however, coordination between the two programmes has been poor. Likewise, many national authorities appear to have little knowledge of other programmes. In Finland, the Netherlands and Spain, in particular, the level of knowledge of complementary EU-supported programmes was considered to be high. Also, in the new Member States, there was particular awareness of complementarities and coherence in relation to UNHCR, and the UN agency was often actively involved in ERF meetings and coordination in these countries.

At project level, more than 40 % of all the project managers have implemented or are implementing other EU projects in the field of refugees and asylum seekers. Only few project managers consider that the ERF overlaps with other EU programmes. However, a large proportion of project managers acknowledge that they are not really able to assess the interlinkages between the two programmes. When disregarding these and focusing on the people who actually have an opinion on the subject, almost 40 % of the respondents consider that the ERF overlaps to a high or some extent. The same

pattern is repeated when project managers are asked whether they think that the ERF overlaps with other programmes in relation to target groups and objectives. A very low number of project managers (approx. 5 %) have applied for funding for their project with other EU sources. It could be argued that this indicates that, in effect, most project managers do not consider that the ERF overlaps with other EU programmes. If they did, the number of project managers having applied for funding elsewhere would probably has been higher.

Coherence and complementarities of Community Actions

When considering complementarities and coherence between the Community Actions and other initiatives, the evaluation found that at EU level measures were taken to ensure complementarities with EQUAL. Thus, the work programme is subject to inter-service consultation, including with DG Employment. The pre-selected Community Actions projects that present a risk of overlapping with EQUAL are checked with EQUAL desk officers.

The evaluation furthermore finds that approximately 30 % of the projects examined show a certain cross-fertilisation between ERF Community Actions and projects supported under EQUAL and Daphne, facilitating exchange of experiences and data between different EU-funded projects and enhancing complementarities and coherence. The difference between complementarities and overlap can, however, be difficult to define, and the questionnaire responses show that more than 50 % of project managers think the ERF overlaps with other EU funding. Likewise, almost 40 % think that the ERF and other EU programmes overlap needs of similar target groups. Nonetheless, only 15 % think that their project would have been eligible for funding elsewhere. It is recommended that the Commission investigate whether these findings reflect a high degree of complementarities or simply overlaps.

Coherence and complementarity between Community Actions and national programmes

With regard to complementarities and coherence between national programmes and Community Actions, the evaluation found that, although both are in fact part of the ERF, complementarities and cooperation have in many cases been weak. This has been the case in Greece, the UK, Greece, and Belgium, even though in some instances organisations from their own country were implementing Community Actions. In the Netherlands, Ireland and Finland, however, complementarity between the national ERF programmes and the Community Actions was found to be very high and the cooperation between projects was considered to be valuable. Apart from Slovenia, most new

Member States did not appear to have any knowledge of Community Actions. Knowledge of Community Actions seems in most cases to be higher among NGOs than among national authorities.

In general, there seems to have been no effort by the Commission, the organisations implementing Community Actions or by the national responsible authorities to link the Community Actions to the national programmes in a strategic manner. Furthermore, there is limited awareness of the outputs generated by the Community Actions. Despite this lack of encouragement from the Commission, some Community Action implementers do, however, actively contribute to greater complementarities between the two programmes. Thus, almost 40 % of questionnaire respondents say that they are or have been involved in national ERF projects. Likewise, 30 % state that they, when designing and implementing their project, had taken the national ERF programmes into consideration.

Impact, added value, innovation and sustainability

The report measures *impact, added value and sustainability* in relation to:

- The improvement in the situation of the target groups;
- Changes in specific national priorities or national strategies as a result of documented improvement in the situation of the target groups;
- Improvements in national systems, e.g. new laws, new or improved procedures and practices in relation to reception, integration and repatriation;

The impact assessment was difficult to implement out because annual evaluations carried out at national level were of a varying quality and could not be systematically relied upon. Many NRAs had not developed indicators or carried out baseline studies thus making comparable conclusions difficult to obtain.

Impact, added value, innovation and sustainability of national programmes

Impact at EU level in terms of developing common approaches or methodologies based upon best practices has been limited. Some organisations have developed methodologies and models for best

practice that have been disseminated throughout Europe – one example is IOM, which is involved in voluntary repatriation projects in most EU countries; another is the Finnish Red Cross, which has developed a best practice model for reception and integration of refugees with extensive use of volunteers, and which disseminated this scheme among national and European cooperation networks as a best practice model for Red Cross workers. These are, however, rather isolated examples, and it is clear that the ERF could have benefited from a more systematic approach to the exchange of experiences and best practices.

Greater impact might be achieved, for example, through the establishment of a distribution system for publications produced within the ERF. Although many might not be applicable in other national settings, they still present a potential source of inspiration for new approaches and methodologies. Greater impact may also be achieved through initiatives such as an update of the ERF website, including the establishment of a database for projects supported under the ERF, annual conferences with the participation of all national authorities and the exchange of annual reports among national authorities.

The ERF-1 has been implemented in a period in which development of common minimum standards for asylum and refugee issues in the European Union became an issue of high priority. It is easy to establish points of affinity between ERF-1 activities and issues covered by the development of common minimum standards. However, beyond identifying such points, activities funded by the ERF-1 can only be said to have supported the strengthening of structures regarding reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees, which have become subject to minimum standards.

The ERF-1 programme has increased awareness among Member States of their need to establish transnational cooperation on converging interests, and to find common denominators for the management of issues concerning asylum. Such increased awareness could, to a large extent, be seen as a programme impact at Community level.

At the level of beneficiaries it is encouraging to note that the ERF-1 programme had reached out to at least 600.000 persons. The ERF-1 has thus contributed to breaking the isolation of refugees, facilitating employment, strengthening language skills, providing services, as well as organising and empowering the target groups. The majority of project managers state that between 76% and 100 % of the groups targeted have actually benefited from their activities. This may on a longer

term have an impact in terms of increased public awareness on the usefulness of building up coherent and systematic structures for reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees in order to preserve the social cohesion and balance of the societies in EU.

At a national level, impact has primarily been evidenced within concrete initiatives such as the establishment of reception facilities. In some cases, the ERF has also supported influential programmes and projects in the field of voluntary repatriation. The various examples of ERF impact in different contexts show that there are several different types of impact, namely impact at the level of national policy and practice, impact at the organisational level and impact at the level of individuals.

At the level of national policy and practice, the ERF has contributed substantially to raising awareness among national authorities of issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, which indicates a potential for further impact at the level of national policy and practice. Furthermore, there are examples of ERF-supported activities influencing national policy-making. Another aspect of impact on national policy and practice relates to mainstreaming – the degree to which experience derived from successful ERF projects is incorporated into national legislation or practice. There are several examples on this. In the Netherlands, a methodology developed to reach former unaccompanied minors will be implemented in eight cities. In Luxembourg, some ERF projects have become part of national practice. In Austria, reception of unaccompanied minors has become national practice too. In Belgium, a curriculum for interpretation education might be integrated into higher education institutions. In Finland, a model for integration of children and for cooperation between parents and school staff has been developed, and many schools and social welfare offices have now adopted this model. A job assistance service developed by a Greek NGO is widely used by local employers. In Italy, the ERF-1 has been essential for the development of a National Action Plan, which has outlined a well-functioning structure for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. This structure has been incorporated into Italy's national legislative framework. Finally, a range of ERF projects have resulted in publications such as a handbook for the refugee communities, a guide on peer group work for integration, a guide on the health care system etc. Most of these publications have been distributed nationally, thus potentially contributing to the mainstreaming of best practices.

Although there are thus some successful examples of mainstreaming of ERF-supported activities into national practice, these are isolated and do not form part of an overall systematic approach to mainstreaming within the ERF. Impact at the level of national policy and practice could be enhanced by establishing mechanisms for exchange of experiences and a systematic approach to mainstreaming.

At the level of organisations, the ERF is assessed to have had a very positive impact. Both project managers and national authorities state that the ERF has strengthened project management skills within their organisations, cooperation among NGOs as well as between NGOs and government institutions, and the establishment and improvement of networks. Many respondents, however, note the lack of mechanisms for exchanges and communication within the ERF.

The evaluation team assessed the added value of the national programmes to be relatively high, as 65.7 % of all project managers state that their project would not have been implemented without the ERF support. There are, however, a range of countries in which more than half of all the project managers state that some project activities would have been implemented regardless of the ERF support. Likewise, during interviews held in all the participating countries, many respondents noted a tendency by ERF programmes to support existing rather than new activities, thereby minimising the added value of the funds.

The level of innovation of the ERF is difficult to determine, given that project activities can be standard in one context and innovative in another. It is the assessment of the evaluation team that in many of the participating countries, the ERF has been conducive to innovative initiatives, given that ERF resources were spent on issues that were supplementary to those which governments were already required to address on the basis of existing national legislation. In this sense, many of the ERF activities have thus been innovative. In general, however, because of their methodological approach, many ERF activities should rather be characterised as “typical” or “traditional” within the refugee and asylum management sector. The same types of projects have been replicated in virtually every country, even if approaches and methodologies may have differed according to national contexts. The evaluators have come across a number of interesting projects and methodological concepts that would merit more exposure and discussion at the EU level. There is thus a dramatic lack of a strategy to disseminate innovative developments and examples of best practice.

Sustainability does not seem to be a highly prioritised issue in the overall ERF strategy. It is not mentioned in the Council Decision establishing the ERF, neither as part of the overall objectives of the Fund, nor as criterion for selection of projects. Likewise, not many national strategies include considerations related to the sustainability of the programme or of the projects supported. This situation raises the issue of how to understand the concept of sustainability in a programme such as the ERF. Financial sustainability of the particular projects depends on the continued inclusion of the project as part of the national strategy, even after ERF funding to the project ends. Mainstreaming of the project activities is another way of ensuring sustainability, including the activities as part of national practice. Finally, sustainability of projects and activities can also be discussed in terms of continuous needs. The evaluators find that the concept of sustainability has not been sufficiently clarified in the ERF. It is therefore recommended that discussions on the definition and use of the concept of sustainability be initiated.

Nevertheless, the level of sustainability at project level is considered to be relatively high, when judging from the project managers' responses to the questionnaire. More than 70 % state that all or some project activities will continue after the ERF funding comes to an end. Many count on their own organisation, the national authorities or the EU for continued funding.

Impact, added value, innovation and sustainability of Community Actions

While no indicators have been defined to assess impact and the assessment of impact is not included in the final reports of Community Actions, impact has been difficult to assess. The evaluation of a sample of projects suggests that impact is primarily understood in terms of dissemination of results, organisation of seminars and establishment of transnational networks. The evaluation team notes that in relation to dissemination of results, many Community Actions have experienced problems, particularly in terms of lack of resources for this activity. Regardless of this and other problems, the interviewed project managers were very positive about the results and impact of community actions.

As for added value, the evaluation team concludes that in theory, the Community Actions present a high degree of added value, as all Community Actions focus on activities that transcend national interests. All projects have a clear transnational dimension: they all work in transnational partnerships, they focus on the transnational dissemination of information and they seek to establish

transnational networks. In practice, however, in particular the dissemination of information could be strengthened.

In relation to sustainability, approximately half of all project managers think that all or parts of their activities will continue. 30 % do not know who will fund their activities once ERF funding stops and 20 % do not think they will get funding for a continuation of activities.

For recommendations please see Chapter 8.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The European Refugee Fund

The European Refugee Fund was established by Council Decision 2000/596/EC with the general objective of contributing to "promoting a balance in efforts made by the Members States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons"[2]. More specifically, the objectives of the fund are:

1. To grant appropriate reception conditions to refugees and displaced persons, including fair and effective asylum procedures so as to protect the rights of persons seeking international protection

2. To support action by the Member States intended to promote the social and economic integration of refugees, in so far as it contributes to economic and social cohesion, the maintenance of which is one of the Community's fundamental objectives referred to in article 2 and 3 (1)(k) of the Treaty

3. To create or improve conditions enabling refugees and displaced persons to take an informed decision to leave the territory of the Member States and return home, should they so wish[3]

To achieve these objectives, the ERF supports national programmes in all Member States (except Denmark), as well as actions of Community interest or of innovatory nature. Support to the national programmes is divided into three strands: reception, integration and repatriation. Support to Community Actions is also divided into three strands: analysis & evaluation, capacity building and awareness-raising.

[2] Council Decision 2000/596/EC, 2. recital
[3] Council Decision 2000/596/EC, 3., 4. and 7. recital

The ERF's budget for the period 2000-2004 was 216 million EUR, of which 95% was allocated to actions undertaken in Member States, while 5% was allocated to Community Actions. Resources to Member States are distributed in proportion to the burden of expenditure on each Member State in accordance with the flows of persons in search of protection.

1.2 Background to the evaluation

According to Article 20 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC, the Commission had to submit a mid-term report on the implementation of the ERF to the European Parliament and to the Council. In order to fulfil its obligations, the Commission sought assistance from an independent consultant, PLS Ramböll, who carried out a mid-term evaluation in 2003. This evaluation, together with consultations carried out during a conference with important ERF stakeholders in 2003, later provided the basis for formulation of a proposal for a Council Decision establishing the second phase of the European Refugee Fund for the period 2005-2010. Formal adoption of the decision took place on 2nd December 2004, resulting in Council Decision 2004/904/EC.

Article 20 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC, furthermore states that the Commission shall also submit a final report on the implementation of the first phase of the ERF to the European Parliament and to the Council. Through a tender procedure in the fall of 2004, the Commission advertised for competent consultants to assist in this task, which – apart from the evaluation itself – also included the development of a common evaluation framework.

1.3 The assignment

A consortium consisting of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Eurasylum Ltd. and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) was selected by the Commission to carry out the final evaluation of the European Refugee Fund as well as the definition of a common evaluation framework for the second phase. Pursuant to the tender specifications, the objective of this assignment was twofold:

1. To carry out a final evaluation of the first phase of the European Refugee Fund, at national and EU level, assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and community added value of the ERF interventions with reference to the objectives set out in Council Decision 2000/596/EC; and

2. To provide concrete recommendations and suggestions for further action in the area of evaluation for the second phase of the European Refugee Fund, in view of setting up a common evaluation framework to be used at national and Community level[4].

In conducting the evaluation, the team has considered all stages of project cycle management pertinent to the ERF, i.e. the programme's relevance at national and European Union (EU) levels; its effectiveness and efficiency; its coherence and complementarities with other national and EU instruments; and its impact, added value and sustainability. The key methodological areas that have been explored and the indicators applied are outlined in the following chapter. The evaluation is based on information gathered at project, national and European Community levels, including national programmes and Community Actions.

The assessment of national programmes includes both the EU pre-accession Member States (with the exception of Denmark, who has opted out of the ERF) and the new Member States. However, since the new Member States have only been part of the ERF since April 2004, the evaluation of these was not to be as extensive as the evaluation of the 14 pre-accession Member States. The evaluation of these 14 Member States is based on collection of relevant documentation, country visits, dissemination and analysis of questionnaires, as well as e-mail and telephone communication with stakeholders. The evaluation of the 10 new Member States was conducted through desk studies and did not include country visits. Thus, these evaluations are based solely on questionnaires, collection of relevant documentation as well as e-mail and telephone communication with the relevant stakeholders.

In relation to Community Actions, the evaluation is based on relevant documentation, information gained through questionnaires, analysis of a sample of projects carried out in 2000 – 2004, as well as interviews with relevant stakeholders, including project managers of community actions interviewed during country visits.

[4] Tender Specifications attached to the invitation to tender No. JAI/B4/2004/09, p. 1

1.4 Contents of the report

1.4.1 Country reports

The country reports present the individual evaluations of national ERF programmes. Apart from minor differences such as the sequence of chapter headings, all country reports follow the same structure, as outlined in the Methodology Paper. Furthermore, all country reports include statistics based on project lists and questionnaires[5].

1.4.2. Synthesis report

The present synthesis report summarises the findings of the evaluations at national level and follows the structure outlined in the table of contents. Throughout the report are inserted text boxes describing examples of best practice from different countries[6].

[5] Each report will, as a minimum, include statistics on the following items from the questionnaire: items 3, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19, 29, 33, 35, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 51, 55, 56, and 65.
[6] Since the new Member States have only been a part of the ERF for one year, making it difficult to assess the success of their programmes, no success stories from these countries have been included

Chapter 2: Methodology and data gathering

2.1. Methodological areas and indicators

In accordance with the objectives outlined in the tender specifications, the evaluation of the first phase of the European Refugee Fund focused on the following methodological areas: relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, complementarities and coherence, and finally, impact, added value and sustainability. The next sections outline the key methodological areas, and the main indicators, of relevance to this evaluation.

2.1.1 Relevance

In assessing the Programme's relevance, the team has considered issues related to the design of the ERF and its ability to respond to key EU and national objectives and priorities. Relevance was assessed, in particular, at four distinctive levels:

- The extent to which the national ERF strategies/programmes have been in line with the ERF overall objectives, as outlined in the Council Decision of 28 September 2000 (2000/596/EC);
- The extent to which the national programmes have been in line with perceived and documented needs for the types of intervention promoted by the ERF;
- The extent to which the distribution of funding across the three ERF strands (reception, integration and voluntary repatriation) has been relevant to/coherent with the national strategies and the prioritisation of needs; and
- The extent to which the specific projects supported each year have been relevant to the national strategies and target outputs.

2.1.2 Effectiveness and efficiency

Issues of effectiveness are related to implementation features and outcomes, particularly as regards the achievement of the planned outputs. In assessing effectiveness, this assessment has focused on the following features:

- National project selection procedures and criteria;
- National systems of monitoring and evaluating the effects of programmes/projects in relation to stated objectives;
- National systems for integrating best practices and lessons learned;
- Effective feedback mechanisms between external and internal actors for improving performance;
- Achievement of outputs as compared to project documents;
- Achievement of programme objectives through outputs;
- Achievement of results in accordance with relevant EU standards.

Issues of efficiency relate to the costs of intervention and to the relationship between inputs and outputs, relative to possible counterfactuals/alternative methods – i.e. could national programmes have been carried out in other, more cost-effective ways? Efficiency was assessed, in particular, in relation to:

- The existing national monitoring mechanisms;
- The financial procedures, at national level and between the EC and the national responsible authorities;
- The efficiency of management structures in achieving goals, following up on problem areas, reporting requirements and administrative procedures;
- Budget commitments versus budget consumption (at national programme level).

2.1.3 Coherence and complementarities

Assessment of coherence and complementarities consists, primarily, of measuring the possible synergies and overlaps between the ERF interventions and measures supported through other EU instruments, in particular the EQUAL Community Initiative. The internal consistency of national programmes, and their complementarities with other national interventions in the field of asylum and refugee affairs, was further considered.

2.1.4 Impact and added value

Impact and added value were measured in relation to:

- The improvement in the situation of the target groups, as regards secure social conditions, more rapid case handling, or other measures of improvement;
- Changes in specific national priorities or national strategies as a result of documented improvement in the situation of the target groups;
- Improvements in national systems, e.g. new laws, new or improved procedures and practices in relation to reception, integration and repatriation;
- Increased trends towards coherence and convergence, among participating states, in their reception, integration and repatriation policies and systems.

Impact and added value were also measured against the background of the Guidelines for the preparation of the ERF 2 Programmes by the Member States, which have been approved in September 2005.

2.2 Methods and issues

The evaluation of the above mentioned methodological areas is based on information gathered from different sources and through different methods, namely dissemination of questionnaires, gathering of documents, as well as carrying out of country visits and visits to the Commission. In the following sections, these different methods of information gathering are described in more detail. At the same time, some of the problems and obstacles encountered in the process are described.

2.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaire to national project managers:

A detailed questionnaire was developed with the purpose of compiling standard, comparable data on all stages of the ERF national project cycle through both quantitative and qualitative questions. The questionnaire covers specific statistical data about individual projects and also provides the opportunity for project managers to express their opinions regarding project effectiveness, relations with national authorities, views about ERF strategies and priorities as well as a range of other issues. The questionnaire draws to a significant extent from the questionnaire administered for the mid-term evaluation, thus providing possibilities for comparisons between the two surveys. In line with the Commission's terms of reference, and the request made at the ERF Commission Steering Group meeting of 22 April, the questionnaire also places particular emphasis on administrative and procedural aspects related to the implementation of national ERF projects.

The questionnaire was sent by e-mail, on 16.06.05 and 27.06.05, to the national responsible authorities in all countries, together with a cover letter asking the representatives to disseminate the questionnaire to all project managers of national ERF supported projects for the years 2000-2004. While most representatives did so right away some did not disseminate the questionnaire until the end of September. In Sweden, the questionnaire was not disseminated by the national responsible authorities, but upon their request it was disseminated by the country evaluator, who is the member of the study team responsible for conducting the study in the concerned Member State. In Germany, the national authorities translated the questionnaire into German and sent it out as printed hard copy to its list of project managers, and after follow-up requests by the project managers, additional German language questionnaires were sent by e-mail to these. This procedure also delayed the process considerably. Several reminders were sent by e-mail to the national responsible authorities, and consequently to the project managers, until the deadline for return of questionnaires in mid-January. Representatives from Unit B4 of the European Commission also sent out reminders to national responsible authorities in several countries. The returned questionnaires were processed by the individual country evaluators as well as by a statistician at the Danish Institute for Human Rights in order to generate country specific, as well as EU level, statistics. These statistics are included in the country reports as well as in the synthesis report.

As can be seen from the table below, the average return rate for the questionnaires was 41 %, which the team considers to be satisfactory. While this rate is slightly lower than the 44 % return rate in the mid-term evaluation survey, it should be recalled that the period covered by this survey is considerably longer. Thus, many organisations might simply not exist anymore, they might have moved or changed addresses or the person who was in charge of the project might not work in the organisation anymore. This argument can be supported by the fact that 45 % of the project managers responding to the present survey are involved in projects supported in the years after 2002. When using the mid-term evaluation survey (which covers projects from 2000 to 2002) as a complement, it is thus possible to establish a picture covering the whole period in a satisfactory manner.

Other factors that might have influenced the return rate are language competencies among project managers. The questionnaire was disseminated in English, French, Italian, and German[7] in order to minimise this problem. Despite this effort, many people still received the questionnaire in language other than their own. For instance, project managers in all the new Member States, Spain and Portugal received the questionnaire in English. Another problem could be that the wording used in the questionnaire, despite the team's efforts to simplify the questions, is still highly influenced by project management terminology with which not all project managers might be familiar. Finally, some project managers expressed a certain "evaluation fatigue" in the wake of the mid-term and annual national evaluations. This might also explain why some questionnaires were not returned[8].

Return rate of questionnaires

	No. of projects	No. of questionnaires received[9]	Return rate
UK	162	53	33%
France	122	35	29%
Germany	630	282	45%
Sweden	180	38	21%
Spain	21	6	29%
Portugal	21	17	81%
Italy	421	122	29%
Greece	29	27	93%
Netherlands	77	42	55%
Finland	50	9	18%
Austria	118	55	47%
Belgium	139	56	40%
Luxembourg	18	14	78%
Ireland	66	39	59%
Cyprus	4	2	50%
Estonia	2	2	100%
Hungary	24	14	58%
Latvia	2	1	50%
Lithuania	6	5	83%
Poland	6	5	83%
Slovak Republic	3	2	67%
Slovenia	13	13	100%
TOTAL	2048	839	41%

[7] The questionnaire was translated into German and Italian by the national authorities in these countries. The evaluation team wishes to express its gratitude for this assistance.
[8] As in any survey, it is impossible to know exactly why the people, who did not return the questionnaire, did not do so. Thus, it is not possible to know whether their responses, had they answered, would have differed from the ones that did answer or whether they present a fully representative of the group of projects supported under the ERF. These issues should be taken into consideration when considering the statistical data.
[9] Counted by number of projects

The statistics generated on the basis of the returned questionnaires have been used in the country reports and in the synthesis report to highlight general aspects of project implementation and management, rather than to provide hard data on the national programmes and the individual projects supported. The project lists described below will provide such hard data.

Questionnaire to Community Action managers:

A questionnaire similar to the one for national project managers was sent to all Community Action managers, including a few changes and omissions, given that not all the questions in the original questionnaire were considered relevant for Community Action managers. This questionnaire has undergone the same process as the questionnaire for project managers of national programmes. The return rate, 27 %, is quite low, but may be influenced by factors, such as organisations might simply not exist anymore, they might have moved or changed addresses, or the person who was in charge of the project might not work in the organisation anymore. This argument is supported by the fact that most of the project managers responding to the present survey (69 %) are involved in community actions supported in the years 2002 - 2004.

Other questionnaires:

In relation to the new Member States, a loosely structured questionnaire was sent to the national responsible authorities in order to gather information similar to that gathered through the country visits in the old Member States. All national responsible authorities answered the questionnaire. The information received was not processed in a uniform manner, but fed into the individual country reports.

2.2.2 Documents

Documents from Member State representatives:

Upon initiation of the evaluation, country evaluators sent a letter to the national responsible authorities, kindly asking them that the documents below be provided either electronically or by mail.

- Annual strategies/programmes for each year covered by the evaluation;
- Yearly reports submitted by the national responsible authorities to the ERF Commission Steering Group;
- National monitoring and evaluation reports;

- Information about project application and selection procedures: calls for project proposals; selection panel and criteria; number of proposals received, accepted and rejected by strand;
- List of all projects, for each year covered by the evaluation, with title, implementation period, ERF strand (reception, integration, repatriation), budget and implementing organisation;
- Project management tools and additional relevant procedures and guidelines;
- Planned annual budgets and breakdown by ERF strand;
- Budget effectively spent, according to each ERF strand, for each year covered by the evaluation.
- Other financial information (including audits);
- Minutes from steering committee/executive committee meetings related to ERF activity as well as minutes of any additional meetings between national responsible authorities and ERF staff in Brussels;
- Any publicity or journalistic articles about particular programmes or projects which would give a picture of the public impact of the activity;
- Other relevant information related to the ERF activities in the country;
- If available, a short outline of the national refugee and asylum-seeker situation during the period covered by the evaluation: baseline data; key policy priorities; and the legal and institutional environment.

The speed with which the team received the documents, as well as the amount of documents received, varied greatly among countries. Thus, some country evaluators received all requested documents right away, while others had to send several reminders. One reason for this is that national responsible authorities are often overburdened and simply had difficulty finding the time to assist the country evaluators. In addition, many countries had experienced changes in management staff, entailing that in some cases the person responsible for assisting the country evaluator had only recently started and consequently did not have the full overview of the programme and the documents related to the programme.

Sometimes, even the most basic information was difficult to obtain. One example is the list of projects, including information on organisation, project title, total programmed project costs, programmed ERF contribution, total actual project costs and actual ERF contribution, divided into

years and strands. Although basic, this information is obviously central to the evaluation and provides the basis for the development of crucial statistics to be included in the report. Lack of this basic information might be indicative of certain administrative deficiencies. While most national responsible authorities did in the end provide the information, some information had to be retrieved through other sources (such as Ramböll) and some was never obtained.

Lack of basic data seems also to have been a problem in the mid-term evaluation: "It has proven rather difficult to obtain a complete picture of exactly how many projects were actually funded during the 2000-2002 period"[10]. In order to solve this problem, PLS Ramböll designed an extensive project data base with information on all projects supported in the period 2000-2002. To our knowledge, this database has not been used or updated since, by either the Commission or the national responsible authorities. According to representatives of the Commission, there is no reason for them to update the database, as the Commission is not dealing with projects. However, it could be argued that such a database would provide a valuable tool to keep track of key trends and outputs in the deployment of ERF resources throughout the 2000-2005 period.

Documents from EU desk officers and contact persons:

EU desk officers and other officials have also contributed to the provision of documents. By e-mail and telephone communication, they were asked to provide the following documents:

- National implementation programmes /co-financing requests
- Annual summary reports (until 2003)
- Final reports of annual national programmes (incl. audit and national evaluations)
- Description of project management tools
- Procedure manual
- List of persons involved, incl. organogramme
- Minutes of meetings
- Council decisions and directives
- *Acquis*-related documents
- Financial implementation by Member State (commitments and payments)

[10] PLS Ramböll, Mid-term evaluation, p. 44

Furthermore, the Commission provided the following documents concerning Community actions:

- The Call for Proposals 2000 – 2004
- Rejected proposals 2001 – 2003
- Work programmes 2003 – 2004
- The various forms used for submission, monitoring, and evaluation of projects,
- Final reports of a randomly chosen sample of 21 projects (2000 – 2004) (43.7 %; n=48).

Obtaining some of the above documentation has at times proved cumbersome. This can be explained by a range of factors, some of them similar to the ones mentioned in relation to national responsible authorities. One is the fact that desk officers and other officials are generally overburdened with work and therefore have little time to assist the evaluation team. Frequent changes of staff were also a major obstacle to the smooth gathering of documents, as this meant that desk officers and contact persons often had a limited overview of the documents which could be of relevance to the evaluation team.

According to Commission representatives, this situation is not representative for the whole period: "The evaluation took place at a time when a number of experienced staff left the unit at the same time – turnover during the life of ERF-1 was not excessive and it is normal that staff who had been with the programme for five years would now seek a new challenge".

Other documents:

Apart from the documents mentioned above, the evaluation team has made extensive use of the mid-term evaluation of the European Refugee Fund, carried out in 2002 by PLS Ramböll. In particular, the questionnaire survey carried out as part of the mid-term evaluation has provided a basis for comparison with our own questionnaire survey.

Furthermore, as required by the Commission, the Eurostat website has been used for the gathering of statistics. However, the statistics presented on the website often proved incomplete or very limited. Thus, in many cases other agencies such as ECRE, UNHCR and national offices for

statistics were used to supplement this statistical information[11]. Finally, the team has made use of a range of background documents.

2.2.3 Country visits

Apart from the dissemination of questionnaires and the gathering of documents, information was obtained and compiled through country visits to all 14 pre-enlargement ERF Member States. These visits, lasting three to four days, included the following meetings, interviews and visits:

- One or two meetings with the National Responsible Authorities;
- A combination of individual meetings/focus group meetings with all or most of the ERF project implementers[12];
- One meeting with the national evaluators;
- Where applicable, a meeting with a national partner from one of the Community Actions;
- One or two visits to projects and interviews with target groups as feasible;
- Where possible, a meeting with a national government official dealing with complementary ESF measures, in particular the EQUAL Community Initiative;
- Where appropriate, a meeting with one or two major external stakeholders/key informants, e.g. UNHCR, a major NGO not having benefited from ERF resources, or specialists/experts on migration issues.

The country visits were prepared in cooperation with the national responsible authorities who made the practical arrangements in relation to the meetings, interviews and visits listed above. In most cases, these preparations as well as the actual visits proceeded without any problem. In fact, most country evaluators have reported that the national responsible authorities have been extremely helpful and supportive during the preparations as well as during the actual visits. Most evaluators have found an open and sympathetic attitude to this evaluation.

[11] In general, however, as is well known, it is still a problem to generate common statistics for all EU countries, given that each country has a different understanding of categories and procedures.

[12] This will vary according to Member State, and will depend upon the number of projects and their distribution across thematic strands. For example, in Italy there is only one ERF project per se, which is administered by several local authorities across the country

2.2.4 Meetings with the Commission

Apart from visits to the individual countries, the evaluation team carried out a visit to the Commission, during which two desk officers were interviewed for the purpose of gathering information on ERF management structures at the EU level, as well as information on the relations between desk officers and national authorities.

Unfortunately, the desk officer in charge of the coordination of Community Actions could not be interviewed due to his extended sick leave. Therefore, the evaluation of the community actions is based, mostly, on a desk analysis of documents provided by the Commission, as well as on the findings of a questionnaire submitted to all the CA's project managers.

Chapter 3: European asylum and refugee trends and policy

3.1 The Common European Asylum System

The establishment of the European Refugee Fund is part of the general drive of the European Union to develop and implement the so-called "Common European Asylum System" (CEAS), within the general framework of a common "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice" for the EU Member States, as set out in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 (TEU II). The TEU II moved the issues concerning asylum and immigration from the Treaty of the European Union to the Treaty of the European Community (TEC), thus allowing the Commission to propose new legislation and establishing a qualified majority voting on these issues at the Council of Ministers.[13]. The "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice" refers to the entire territory of EU Member States, where citizens should be free to circulate, immigration is managed, access to protection for third country nationals or stateless people in need is ensured, and with established security and justice for all citizens and residents. With the adoption of the TEU II, the 15 Member States of the European Union in 1997 thus marked the beginning of a new era in the development of an asylum policy in Europe. Binding minimum legislation and rules on asylum and immigration now also had to be developed.

In this context, art. 63 of Title IV in Part Three under the Title II of the TEU II[14] directly relates to immigration and asylum, outlining the main policy areas and indicating a five-year timetable within which the Council should adopt measures and binding Community legislation on asylum, in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the protocol of 1967 such as. In accordance with the TEU II, the drafting of asylum related legislation, and the preparation and implementation of policies and operational strategies became a responsibility of the new Directorate General (DG) for Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)[15]. Following an informal agreement at the Tampere Summit in October 1999 it became the responsibility of the DG JHA to prepare all the new asylum instruments (after the Member States renounced their right of initiative) and to manage funding mechanisms to

[13] There was, however, a five-year transitional period from the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty during which the Council maintained the right, alongside the Commission, to initiate legislation on immigration and asylum and to take decisions on the basis of unanimity in the Council.
[14] TEU II (Amsterdam), Title II Provisions amending the EEC Treaty (Treaty of European Community, TEC), Part three: Community Policies, Title IV (Title IV of TEC), art. 63
[15] The DG JHA was renamed in November 2004 as "Justice, Freedom and Security" (JFS), but since that only happened at the end of the ERF-1period, in this context the old name DG JHA will be used.

support reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons. One of these funding mechanisms was the European Refugee Fund.

The specific measures concerning asylum, refugees and displaced persons as set out in Title IV Art. 63 of TEC are divided into building blocks for policy development. These are mechanisms for:

- Criteria and mechanisms for determining which Member State is responsible for considering an asylum application
- Minimum standards on the reception of asylum seekers
- Minimum standard for qualification of third country nationals as refugees
- Minimum standards for giving temporary protection for displaced persons from third countries
- Minimum standards for persons who otherwise need international protection
- Promoting a balance between Member States in receiving and bearing the burdens of receiving refugees and displaced persons

With the provisions set out in Title IV Article 63 of the TEU II, the European Union was thus ,for the first time, in a position to develop a legal basis for the adoption of community instruments in the area of asylum..

In 1999, at the European Council summit in Tampere (Finland), the heads of state and governments of the European Union set out a concrete agenda for developing an ”Area of Freedom, Security and Justice”, where the milestones to be reached by the Commission in a five-year period were reaffirmed. The meeting stressed the commitment of the EU to develop a common EU refugee protection regime and to set out milestones to be reached toward a Union of freedom, security and justice hereunder milestones, including a common EU asylum and migration policy. This policy was divided into sub-issues such as development of partnerships with countries of origin, a common European asylum system, fair treatment of third country nationals and the management of migration flows[16]. Following the outcome of the meeting in Tampere, the Commission developed a “scoreboard mechanism”, the purpose of which was to monitor progress made towards implementing the measures and meeting the deadlines set by the Amsterdam Treaty and the conclusions of the Tampere summit for the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice. For

[16] Tampere European Council 15 and 16 October 1999 paragraph 10 to 27

the specific area of "Common Asylum System", the scoreboard cited five overall objectives to be reached in 2004[17]:

- Determination of the State responsible for the examination of an asylum application
  - Examination of the effectiveness of the Dublin Convention
  - Adoption of criteria and mechanisms (regulation)
  - Finalise work on EURODAC

- A fair and efficient asylum procedure
  - Adoption of common minimum standards on procedures for granting of withdrawing refugee status with a view, inter alia, to reducing the duration of asylum procedures, and with special reference to the situation of children
  - Definition of common minimum conditions for reception of asylum seekers (with particular attention to the situation of children)

- Uniform status throughout the Union for those who are granted asylum
  - As a follow-up to the Commission communication a legislative instrument may be needed
  - Approximation of rules on the recognition and content of refugee status

- Adoption of measures on refugees and displaced persons aimed at offering an appropriate status to any person in need of international protection
  - Temporary protection in the event of mass influx of displaced persons in need of international protection
  - Subsidiary forms of protection

- Promotion of a balance of effort between Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons
  - Setting up a European Refugee Fund
  - Making a financial reserve available in the event of mass influx of refugees

[17] Mentioned for example in: COM (2000) 167 final/2; COM (2003) 812 final. These communications from the Commission have been issued on biannual basis.

In addition to the objectives specifically related to area of "Common European Asylum System", under the objective of approximation of national legislation on the conditions for admission and residence of third-country nationals, the scoreboard also aims to monitor the development of common standards for family reunification, which applies to both migrants and refugees in Europe.

Concerning the issue of determination of the state responsible for the examination of an asylum application, which was in fact a revision of the 1990 Dublin Convention with the addition of the Eurodac fingerprint data system providing evidence of any previous asylum application by an individual in any Member State, the Council adopted a regulation on February 2003. After passing the revision –also known as the Dublin II – the Commission adopted a regulation concerning detailed rules for the application of these mechanisms[18]. The decision to establish Eurodac was taken in 2000 and implementation regulations were enacted in 2002[19].

The goal of defining common minimum conditions for reception was met in January 2003, when the Council adopted a directive on the minimum standards on the reception of applicants for asylum. The goal of adopting minimum standards on procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status was met in April 2004, when the Council adopted a directive on minimum standards on the reception of applicants for asylum in Member States[20]. As political agreement on the latter directive had only been reached after substantial changes to the proposal on which the European Parliament had expressed its opinion, the Council decided to re-consult with the European Parliament.

On the topic of achieving uniformed status for those who are granted asylum a directive on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees was also reached in April, 2004[21].

[18] Council Regulation (EC) No. 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 and Council Regulation (EC) No. 1560/2003 of 2 September 2003

[19] Council Regulation (EC) No. 407/2002 of 28 February 2002 and Council Regulation (EC) No. 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000

[20] Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, and the Council Directive on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee standards, COM(2000)578, 2000/0238(CNS).

[21] Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of protection granted.

The milestone on the issue of temporary protection was already reached in 2001, when the Council adopted a directive on minimum standards for promoting temporary protection in the event of mass influx of displaced persons and on measures to promote balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof[22]. This directive was actually the first concrete legislative milestone to be reached.

In relation to family reunification, the Council adopted a directive on the right to family reunification in 2003[23].

At the end of the five-year period resulting from the Tampere meeting, the Member States still needed to adjust their legislation to the commonly agreed standards. In some Member States the transposition of EU legislation was likely to impact on existing arrangements and structures. The period of 2000–2004 was thus characterised by major variations among Member States in relation to legislative frameworks regulating rights, obligations and management of reception and recognition of asylum seekers and refugees, integration of refugees into host societies and programmed voluntary return initiatives. But it was also characterised as a period of upcoming changes and of gradual practical acceptance of the Commission's right of initiative on matters concerning asylum, and of preparation for the end of the five-year transition period, when qualified majority voting on these matters would be introduced.

In this context the European Refugee Fund (ERF-1)[24] was launched in September 2000 with the objective of supporting and encouraging the efforts made by the Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. The ERF-1 was thus intended to be a mechanism to promote a balance in the efforts made by the Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons as an underpinning arrangement for the preparation of a common policy of asylum.

The objective of launching the ERF-1 as a mechanism to promote a balance between Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons was seen as a Community issue, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, due to the fact that the scale or impact of this

[22] Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof
[23] Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification
[24] Council Decision 2000/596/EC of 28 September 2000 establishing a European Refugee Fund

objective could not be sufficiently supported by the Member States without the assistance of the Community. On the other hand it was decided to provide the support of the ERF-1 through a system where member States could request co-financing of eligible actions in relation to the situation and the needs of the specific Member State. However, the system of distribution of funds for concrete actions did not, *per se*, ensure any direct mechanism for linking the promotion of burden-sharing to the concrete needs of the individual Member States. This was not an explicit condition to the co-funding of eligible actions, given the relatively loosely defined eligibility area. According to the Council Decision the burden-sharing mechanism of the ERF-1 was defined as the allocation of ERF-1 funds to each Member State in accordance with the proportional burden on each Member State in receiving refugees and displaced persons. As a consequence of this decentralised system, the individual policy on refugee and asylum in each Member State was the only criterion in the definition of concrete ways to use ERF funds. There was an implicit understanding, however, that the co-financing of eligible actions in the Member State would be beneficial to the development of a Common European Asylum Policy, in addition to establishing a burden-sharing mechanism between Member States, based upon an arithmetic measurement of reception and integration efforts deployed by each Member State.

3.2 Major asylum trends in Europe

3.2.1 Asylum applications

During the period 1997-2004, 2,495,383 asylum applications were lodged in the 14 ERF participating Member States, with an average of 311,923 applications per year. The influx of asylum seekers has grown every year from 1997, reaching a peak of 362,938 applications in 2001 and then slowly decreasing, to a level in 2004 comparable to that of 1997. While the numbers of asylum applications in 2002 was practically the same as in 2001, there were noticeable declines in 2003 and 2004 (see table 3.1). The number of asylum applications in the 14 ERF participating Member States in 2004 was thus 239,869, a full 123,000 less than in 1997. In addition to the asylum applications in the old Member States, an additional 38,920 asylum applications were lodged in the 10 new Member States which became members of the ERF in 2004 (see table 3.2), bringing the total number of asylum seekers in the 24 ERF participating states to 278,789 asylum applications. This number is still well below the level of previous years in the 14 old Member States.

During the entire five-year period under consideration, a total of 1,661,130 asylum seekers were residing in the area covered by the ERF programme.

During the period 2000-2004, the United Kingdom and Germany were the two main recipient countries, together receiving slightly more than 40 % of all asylum applications lodged in the 14 old ERF Member States. While, in the period 1997-1999, Germany was the main receiving country, the United Kingdom has taken over this position in 2002-2004, even though the number of asylum applications in the UK actually decreased during this period. In Germany the number of new asylum applications has decreased steadily from year to year over the entire period, from 104,000 new applications in 1997 to 36,000 applications in 2004. Austria and Sweden are two other main receiving countries, each with 8-9 % of the total number of asylum seekers in 2000-2004.

The entry of the ten new countries into the EU has not had any impact on the above trends, given that the two main countries of asylum the Slovak Republic and Cyprus, accounted, respectively, for only 4 % and 3.5 % of the total number of asylum seekers in the ERF countries in 2004.

Table 3.1 Asylum applications 1997 – 2004 in pre-enlargement ERF MS

Table 3.1

Asylum applications 1997 - 2004 in pre-enlargement ERF Member States																		
Country	1997	% of total	1998	% of total	1999	% of total	2000	% of total	2001	% of total	2002	% of total	2003	% of total	2004	% of total (14 old MS and 10 new MS)	Total 2000 - 2004	% of total
Belgium *	11.788	4,96%	21.965	7,58%	35.778	10,35%	42.691	11,86%	24.507	6,75%	18.798	5,19%	16.940	5,70%	15.360	5,51%	118.296	7,29%
Germany	104.353	43,91%	98.644	34,04%	94.776	27,42%	78.564	21,83%	88.287	24,33%	71.127	19,63%	50.563	17,01%	35.615	12,77%	324.157	19,98%
Greece	4.376	1,84%	2.950	1,02%	1.528	0,44%	3.083	0,86%	5.499	1,52%	5.664	1,56%	8.178	2,75%	4.470	1,60%	26.894	1,66%
Spain	4.975	2,09%	4.934	1,70%	8.405	2,43%	7.926	2,20%	9.490	2,61%	6.309	1,74%	5.918	1,99%	5.365	1,92%	35.008	2,16%
France *	21.416	9,01%	22.375	7,72%	30.907	8,94%	38.747	10,76%	47.291	13,03%	51.087	14,10%	51.939	17,48%	61.600	22,10%	250.665	15,45%
Ireland	3.880	1,63%	4.626	1,60%	7.724	2,23%	10.938	3,04%	10.324	2,84%	11.634	3,21%	7.901	2,66%	4.765	1,71%	45.562	2,81%
Italy **	1.890	0,80%	13.100	4,52%	18.450	5,34%	15.194	4,22%	17.402	4,79%	16.015	4,42%	13.705	4,61%	9.629	3,45%	71.945	4,44%
Luxembourg	433	0,18%	1.709	0,59%	2.930	0,85%	627	0,17%	683	0,19%	1.042	0,29%	1.549	0,52%	1.570	0,56%	5.471	0,34%
Netherlands *	34.443	14,49%	45.217	15,60%	39.274	11,36%	43.895	12,20%	32.579	8,98%	18.667	5,15%	13.402	4,51%	9.780	3,51%	118.323	7,29%
Austria	6.719	2,83%	13.805	4,76%	20.129	5,82%	18.284	5,08%	30.127	8,30%	39.354	10,86%	32.359	10,89%	24.630	8,83%	144.754	8,92%
Portugal	251	0,11%	355	0,12%	307	0,09%	224	0,06%	233	0,06%	244	0,07%	116	0,04%	115	0,04%	932	0,06%
Finland	972	0,41%	1.272	0,44%	3.106	0,90%	3.170	0,88%	1.651	0,45%	3.443	0,95%	3.220	1,08%	3.570	1,28%	15.054	0,93%
Sweden	9.678	4,07%	12.841	4,43%	11.220	3,25%	16.283	4,52%	23.499	6,47%	33.016	9,11%	31.355	10,55%	23.195	8,32%	127.348	7,85%
UK	32.500	13,67%	46.014	15,88%	71.158	20,58%	80.315	22,31%	71.366	19,66%	85.866	23,70%	60.047	20,20%	40.205	14,42%	337.800	20,82%
Total	237.674	100%	289.807	100%	345.692	100%	359.941	100%	362.938	100%	362.266	100%	297.192	100%	239.869	86,04%	1.622.210	100%
Source: Eurostat (numbers of asylum seekers). Calculations: DIHR																		
* Source of figures for Belgium, the Netherlands and France for 2004: UNHCR (The UNHCR annual figures for Belgium and the Netherlands 2000 - 2003 are very close to Eurostat figures. The annual UNHCR figures for France 2000 - 2003 are generally 5 - 9000 higher than Eurostat).																		
** The figures for 2001 and for 2004 have been provided by NRA in Italy																		

Table 3.2

Asylum applications 2000 - 2004 in new member states								
Country	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	% of total (14 old MS and 10 new MS)	**Total**	**% of total**
Cyprus	650	1.770	950	4.410	9.860	3,54%	17.640	9,52%
Czech Rep.	8.790	18.090	8.480	11.400	5.460	1,96%	52.220	28,19%
Estonia	3	10	10	10	20	0,01%	53	0,03%
Hungary	7.800	9.550	6.410	2.400	1.600	0,57%	27.760	14,99%
Latvia	4	10	30	10	10	0,00%	64	0,03%
Lithuania	200	260	290	180	140	0,05%	1.070	0,58%
Malta	70	120	350	570	1.230	0,44%	2.340	1,26%
Poland	4.590	4.510	5.150	6.920	8.080	2,90%	29.250	15,79%
Slovak Rep.	1.560	8.150	9.700	10.360	11.350	4,07%	41.120	22,20%
Slovenia	9.240	1.510	700	1.100	1.170	0,42%	13.720	7,41%
Total	32.907	43.980	32.070	37.360	38.920	13,96%	185.237	100%
Source: UNHCR								

Table 3.2 Asylum applications in new member states 2000 - 2004

3.2.2 Recognition rates

There has been a general trend towards a decrease in positive decisions in asylum applications – from 69,000 positive decisions in 1997 to 50,000 in 2004 (see table 3.3). During this period there also seems to have been a slight decrease in recognition rates – from nearly 16 % to 11.5 %, after having reached a peak of nearly 18 % in 2001.

Table 3.3

Recognition rate 2000 - 2004 24 Member States						
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	all member states
Postitve	78.633	82.491	65.372	51.715	49.558	327.769
All decision	431.202	473.046	432.094	415.266	388.048	2.139.656
Rate	18,24%	17,44%	15,13%	12,45%	12,77%	15,32%

Source: Eurostat, National Responsible Authorities, UNHCR. Compiled by DIHR

Table 3.3. Recognition rates 2000 – 2004 in 24 Member States

The main countries taking positive decisions on applications for asylum, which in this context means granting status according to the Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol, national legislation or temporary protection, are the UK, Germany, France and the Netherlands (see table 3.4). In absolute numbers there appears to have been an increase in recognitions, particularly in France, and to a lesser extent in Austria. In most other countries the tendency has been towards a slight decrease in recognitions, especially in the UK, Germany and Sweden in 2000-2004.

Compared to the absolute figures of recognitions in the pre-enlargement Member States, the number of recognitions in the new Member States appears to be modest[25].

In general recognition rates have been relatively stable in most countries in 2000-2004 (see tables 3.4). Most noteworthy is perhaps a decreasing recognition rate in the UK, Germany, Sweden, while Italy, with a more modest total number of asylum applications, is increasing its recognition rates. Some of the new Member States, such as Cyprus, Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia, have remarkably low recognition rates. On the other hand Malta has had very high recognition rates in 2000- 2004 (67%), although it has had relative modest numbers of applications. The highest recognition rates are in Finland (25,7 %), Sweden (23,8 %) and the UK (25 %), although both Sweden and the UK have been below their high average rates for 2000 – 2004 in the two last years.

[25] It should be noted that the figures concerning recognition rates of course do not offer any explanation for this development and such an explanation will not be attempted here, as this would fall outside the scope of the evaluation.

Table 3.4

Positive decisions, all decisions and recognition rates 2000 - 2004 14 ERF Member States 2000 - 2004 and for 10 NMS 2004

Country Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 2000 -	Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 2000 -	Country	2004	Country	2004
Austria							**Italy**							**Cyprus**		**Poland**	
Pos Conv	1.002	1.152	1.073	n/a	n/a	n/a	Pos Conv	1.247	1.093	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Pos Conv	65	Pos Conv	305
Pos Sub	0	248	898	n/a	n/a	n/a	Pos Sub	2.228	515	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Pos Sub	92	Pos Sub	832
Total pos	1.002	1.400	1.971	2.084	4.785	11.242	Total pos	3.475	1.608	3.303	2.901	3.133	14.420	Total pos	157	Total pos	1.137
All dec	20.514	26.494	29.881	36.315	20.101	133.305	All dec	18.358	17.402	16.015	13.705	9.629	75.109	All dec	5.898	All dec	5.898
Rate	4,9%	5,3%	6,6%	5,7%	23,8%	8,4%	Rate	18,9%	9,2%	20,6%	21,2%	32,5%	19,2%	Rate	2,7%	Rate	5,2%
Belgium							**Luxembourg**							**Czech R.**		**Slovak R.**	
Pos Conv	1.370	1.167	1.166	1.201	2.275	7.179	Pos Conv	17	68	44	62	82	273	Pos Conv	142	Pos Conv	15
Pos Sub	172	219	165	183	99	838	Pos Sub	0	184	35	149	307	675	Pos Sub		Pos Sub	
Total pos	1.542	1.386	1.331	1.384	2.374	8.017	Total pos	17	252	79	211	389	948	Total pos	142	Total pos	15
All dec	29.130	33.925	7.715	10.267	10.971	92.008	All dec	1.942	2.046	0	1.184	1.897	7.069	All dec	8.103	All dec	13.128
Rate	4,7%	3,4%	17,3%	13,5%	20,7%	8,7%	Rate	0,9%	3,3%		5,2%	4,3%	3,9%	Rate	1,8%	Rate	0,1%
Finland							**Netherlands**							**Estonia**		**Slovenia**	
Pos Conv	9	4	14	n/a	n/a	27	Pos Conv	1.594	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.594	Pos Conv	0	Pos Conv	19
Pos Sub	458	809	577	n/a	n/a	1.844	Pos Sub	12.123	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.123	Pos Sub		Pos Sub	20
Total pos	467	813	591	494	800	3.165	Total pos	13.717	8.745	8.610	7.820	5.463	44.355	Total pos	0	Total pos	39
All dec	2.024	2.165	3.035	3.334	2.079	12.637	All dec	69.575	70.626	58.159	58.025	20.357	276.742	All dec	11	All dec	1.125
Rate	23,1%	37,6%	19,5%	14,8%	38,5%	25,0%	Rate	19,7%	12,4%	14,8%	13,5%	26,8%	16,0%	Rate	0,0%	Rate	3,5%

Source: Eurostat and National Responsible Authorities (accentuated in black). Source of not accentuated numbers: UNHCR: Statistics 2000 table IV.1; Statistics 2001;C11;C12,C13;C21; C22 Statistics 2002, C7;C8;C10; C15;C16;C18 Statistics 2003, C7;C8;C10;C15;C16;C18 2004 Global Refugee Trends, table 6

Compiled by DIHR

Table 3.4 and 3.5 Positive decisions, all decisions and recognition rates 2000 - 2004

Table 3.5

Positive decisions, all decisions and recognition rates 2000 - 2004 14 ERF Member States 2000 - 2004 and for 10 NMS 2004

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 2000 -
France						
Pos Conv	5.185	5.049	6.326	n/a	n/a	16.560
Pos Sub	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0
Total pos	5.185	5.049	6.326	13.167	15.866	45.593
All dec	30.275	40.670	49.959	69.608	110.117	300.629
Rate	17,1%	12,4%	12,7%	18,9%	14,4%	15,2%
Germany						
Pos Conv	11.495	22.725	6.509	n/a	n/a	40.729
Pos Sub	1.589	3.376	1.598	n/a	n/a	6.563
Total pos	13.084	26.101	8.107	4.703	2.885	54.880
All dec	105.502	107.193	130.128	93.885	63.015	499.723
Rate	12,4%	24,3%	6,2%	5,0%	4,6%	11,0%
Greece						
Pos Conv	222	147	36	n/a	n/a	405
Pos Sub	175	233	111	n/a	n/a	519
Total pos	397	380	147	28	50	1.002
All dec	1.969	1.654	9.425	4.528	3.865	21.441
Rate	20,2%	23,0%	1,6%	0,6%	1,3%	4,7%
Ireland						
Pos Conv	211	458	893	n/a	n/a	1.562
Pos Sub	98	166	140	n/a	n/a	404
Total pos	309	624	1.033	1.201	1.167	4.334
All dec	12.514	15.724	10.656	11.027	13.556	63.477
Rate	2,5%	4,0%	9,7%	10,9%	8,6%	6,8%

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 2000 -
Portugal						
Pos Conv	16	7	14	n/a	n/a	37
Pos Sub	46	34	18	n/a	n/a	98
Total pos	62	41	32	3	8	146
All dec	245	199	228	97	113	882
Rate	25,3%	20,6%	14,0%	3,1%	7,1%	16,6%
Spain						
Pos Conv	386	299	185	n/a	n/a	870
Pos Sub	293	84	90	n/a	n/a	467
Total pos	679	383	275	405	371	2.113
All dec	7.544	8.956	6.237	7.168	6.670	36.575
Rate	9,0%	4,3%	4,4%	5,7%	5,6%	5,8%
Sweden						
Pos Conv	314	166	261	n/a	n/a	741
Pos Sub	6.188	4.519	5.241	n/a	n/a	15.948
Total pos	6.502	4.685	5.502	5.514	3.160	25.363
All dec	22.405	25.042	27.116	41.183	34.227	149.973
Rate	29,0%	18,7%	20,3%	13,4%	9,2%	16,9%
UK						
Pos Conv	10.373	11.179	8.100	4.265	n/a	33.917
Pos Sub	21.822	19.845	19.965	7.535	n/a	69.167
Total pos	32.195	31.024	28.065	11.800	6.265	109.349
All dec	109.205	120.950	83.540	64.940	55.045	433.680
Rate	29,5%	25,7%	33,6%	18,2%	11,4%	25,2%

Country	2004
Hungary	
Pos Conv	158
Pos Sub	177
Total pos	335
All dec	1.924
Rate	17,4%
Latvia	
Pos Conv	0
Pos Sub	
Total pos	
All dec	6
Rate	0,0%
Lithuania	
Pos Conv	12
Pos Sub	407
Total pos	419
All dec	560
Rate	74,8%
Malta	
Pos Conv	49
Pos Sub	549
Total pos	598
All dec	878
Rate	68,1%

Country	2004

Source: Eurostat and National Responsible Authorities (accentuated in black). Source of not accentuated numbers: UNHCR: Statistics 2000 table IV.1; Statistics 2001;C11;C12,C13;C21; C22 Statistics 2002, C7;C8;C10; C15;C16;C18 Statistics 2003, C7;C8;C10;C15;C16;C18 2004 Global Refugee Trends, table 6

Compiled by DIHR

Chapter 4: Relevance

4.1 Introduction

In assessing the Programme's *relevance*, the team has considered issues related to the design of the ERF and its ability to respond to key EU and national objectives and priorities. Relevance has been assessed, in particular, at two levels:

- the extent to which the national ERF strategies/programmes have been in line with the ERF overall objectives, as outlined in the Council Decision of 28 September 2000 (2000/596/EC);
- the extent to which the national programmes have been in line with perceived and documented needs for the types of intervention promoted by the ERF

4.2 The overall ERF strategy

4.2.1 The ERF strategy

The basic philosophy of the ERF-1 is summarised in the preamble of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC, section 1 and 2. Section 1 states that the preparation of a common policy of asylum, including common European arrangements for asylum is a constituent part of European Union's objective of gradually creating an area of freedom, security and justice opens to those who, forced by circumstances, legitimately seek protection in the European Union. The second section states the connection to the creation of the European Refugee Fund, emphasising that the implementation of the a common policy of asylum should be based on solidarity between Member States and requires the existence of mechanisms indented to promote a balance in the efforts made by Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. The European Refugee Fund (hereafter ERF 1) was thus launched by Council Decision 2000/596/EC in September 2000 with the general objective of promoting a balance in the efforts made by the Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugee and displaced persons. The two core mechanisms for achieving this objective are:

1) The principle of burden-sharing, which in the ERF-1 context would be achieved through a distribution of funds relative to the burden for each Member State of receiving refugee and displaced persons, and
2) The allocation of funds for so-called Community Actions, which would consist of supporting transnational projects or activities of innovative or general interest aimed at promoting cooperation at Community level.

Both components of the ERF-1 programme are intended to ensure cooperation among Member States and to ensure a general sense of a fair distribution of funds. The Community Action component is intended to promote concrete transnational actions on issues of interest for the whole Community, while at the national level the fair distribution of funds for national programmes is supposed to strengthen the development of comparable refugee management systems and structures throughout Europe.

The division of the national programme into three intervention areas – reception, integration and repatriation – is intended to cover the entire cycle of protection measures. Hence, Article 4, section 2, 3 and 4 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC, sets out a broad range of activities that are eligible for funding. The reception strand provides funding for projects covering issues such as infrastructures or services for accommodation, supply of material aid, health care, social assistance or help with administrative and judicial formalities, including legal assistance. The integration strand provides funding for housing, means of subsistence, health care and means for enabling beneficiaries to adjust to the host society. The repatriation strand encompasses information and advice about voluntary return programmes and the situation in the country of origin, vocational training and resettlement support. In a similar manner, the Community Action programme is divided into three intervention areas, namely evaluation and analysis, capacity building and awareness-raising, contributing to the objectives of analysing and evaluating the refugee and asylum seeker situation in Member States, building capacities of actors active in the field covered by the ERF, and promoting and disseminating best practices.

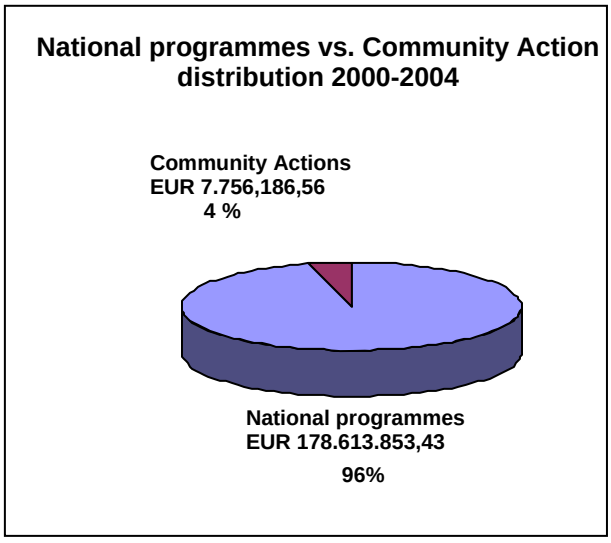
As indicated above, the question of relevance can be split into two parts, corresponding to the division of funding between national programmes (95%) and Community Actions (5 %).

4.2.2 Division of funding: Community Actions and national programmes

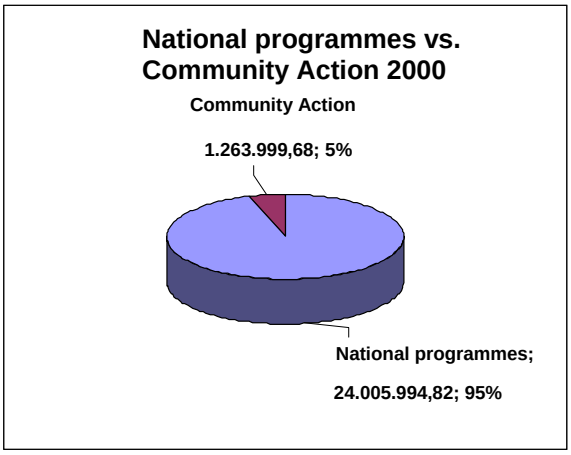
When assessing the relevance of the overall ERF strategy, one aspect to be considered is the division of funding between national programmes and Community Actions. The Council Decision establishing the

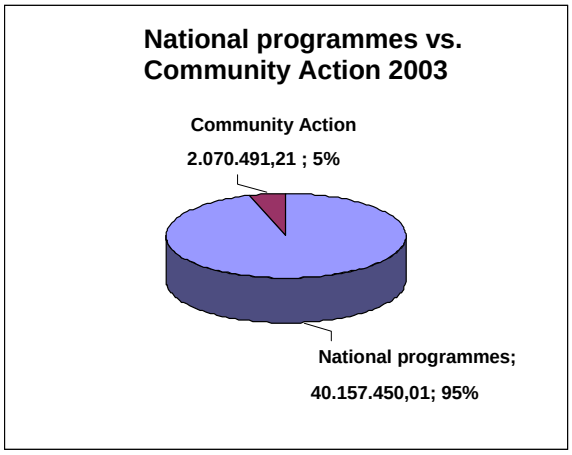
European Refugee Fund stipulates that 95% of the funds are to be allocated to the national programmes and 5% to the Community Actions. The relevance of this 95/5 proportion is questionable. The mid-term evaluation of the ERF concluded that in order for the Fund to better address its EU objectives; the amount allocated to the Community Actions should be increased[26]. This recommendation has led to an increase in Community Action funds to 7% in phase 2 of the ERF.

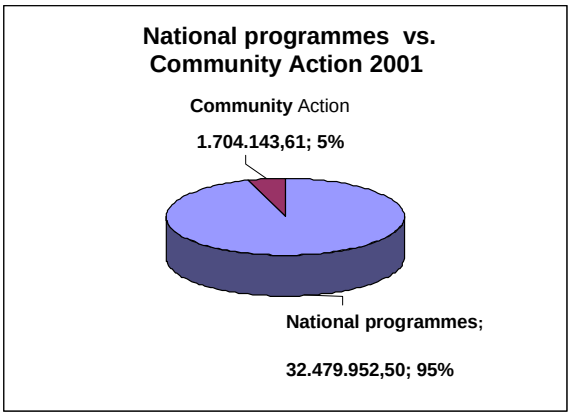
As can be seen from the tables below, the programme did not fully comply with the above distribution key at all times. The diagrams presented below show that in 2000, 2001 and 2003, funds were divided according to the 95/5 division. In 2002 and 2004, however, only 3% of the funds were allocated to the Community Actions, and as the 5% budget for Community Action was not exhausted in these years. The national programmes could then receive additional 2% to the budgeted 95 % thus bringing the share of the total allocated amount up to 97 %[27]. For the entire period, then, an average of 4% of all funds were allocated to Community Actions, while 96% were allocated to national programmes. These figures differ only marginally from the ones presented in the mid-term evaluation, which found that in terms of programmed spending, funds were divided with 94.8 % to national programmes and 5.2 % to Community Actions, while in terms of actual spending the numbers were 94.7 % and 5.3 %[28]. Thus, we observe no specific trends in the amounts of funds allocated to Community Actions from the inception of the ERF to its final year.

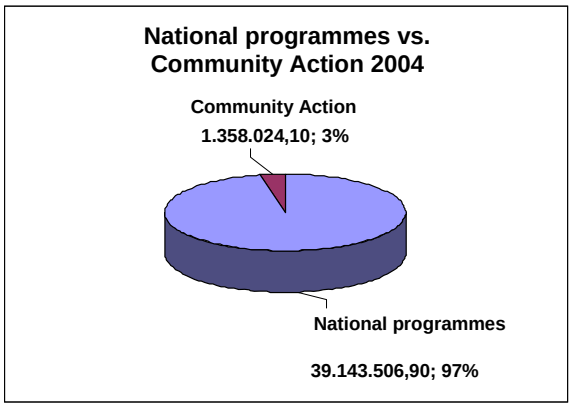


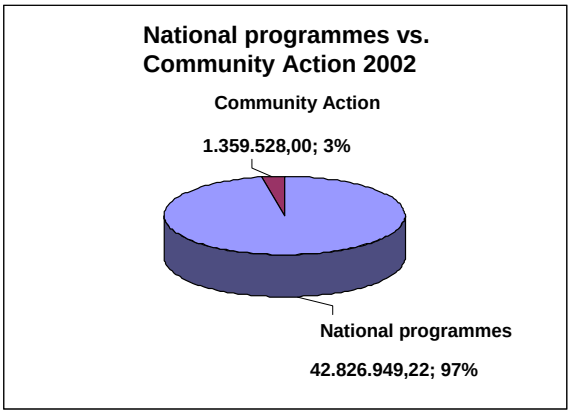
[26] Mid-term evaluation, p. 125
[27] The diagrams are based on numbers provided by the European Commission. The documents used are an overview of ERF national programmes 2000 – 2004 and an overview of Community Actions 2000 - 2004
[28] Mid-term evaluation, p.70


National programmes vs. Community Action 2000
Community Action
1.263.999,68; 5%
National programmes;
24.005.994,82; 95%


National programmes vs. Community Action 2003
Community Action
2.070.491,21 ; 5%
National programmes;
40.157.450,01; 95%


National programmes vs. Community Action 2001
Community Action
1.704.143,61; 5%
National programmes;
32.479.952,50; 95%


National programmes vs. Community Action 2004
Community Action
1.358.024,10; 3%
National programmes
39.143.506,90; 97%


National programmes vs. Community Action 2002
Community Action
1.359.528,00; 3%
National programmes
42.826.949,22; 97%

4.2.3 Division of funding among Member States

As mentioned above, the mechanism of burden-sharing is essential to the strategy of the European Refugee Fund to promote solidarity among Member States and to enhance the accessibility of protection systems in the EU for those in legitimate need of such systems. The idea of burden-sharing (now termed "responsibility sharing") is basically to distribute funds across the EU according to the relative burden for each Member State in bearing the consequences of receiving refugee and displaced persons.

According to the distribution key, the Member States were allocated an annual fixed amount for each of the 2000-2004 programming years, starting with EUR 500,000 per Member State in 2000 and decreasing by EUR 100,000 per year, ending with a fixed distribution amount of EUR 100,000 EUR in 2004. The remaining resources were then to be distributed to the Member States with 65 % in proportion to the number of asylum seekers and people benefiting from temporary protection and 35 % in proportion to the number of persons granted protection. This calculation was to be based on figures from the previous three years.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the ranking of each member state in relation to the annual distribution of funds and of the ranking of each member state in relation to the annual numbers of asylum seekers. This overview shows a high correlation between annual ranking of committed funding per Member State and its corresponding rank as a receiver of asylum applications.

While this overview indicates a high degree of fair distribution and burden-sharing, it does not sufficiently clarify the way in which the burden-sharing mechanism has functioned during the ERF-1. Table 4.2 below ranks the countries according to the ratio of asylum seekers per head of population and the ratio of asylum seekers per capita GDP. The two different rankings are comparable with the Member State ranking as recipient of ERF-1 funding.

Table 4.1

Ranking of relative commitment of ERF funds to the relative number of asylum seekers

Member States	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		total	
	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N	C	N
Belgium	7	4	7	6	7	6	7	6	7	6	7	7
Germany	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	3	1	2
Greece	10	12	12	11	12	11	12	9	12	15	12	11
Spain	9	10	9	10	10	10	10	11	11	13	10	10
France	4	5	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	1	3	3
Ireland	14	9	10	9	9	9	9	10	8	14	9	9
Italy	5	8	5	8	5	8	6	7	10	10	6	8
Luxembourg	14	13	14	13	14	13	14	13	17	18	14	13
Netherlands	2	3	3	4	3	7	4	8	4	9	4	6
Austria	8	6	8	5	8	4	8	4	6	4	8	4
Portugal	13	14	13	14	13	14	13	14	20	22	13	14
Finland	11	11	11	12	11	12	11	12	14	16	11	12
Sweden	6	7	6	7	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
UK	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1
Cyprus									18	8		
Czech Rep.									24	12		
Estonia									22	23		
Hungary									9	17		
Latvia									23	24		
Lithuania									19	21		
Malta									21	19		
Poland									13	11		
Slovak Rep.									15	7		
Slovenia									16	20		

C = ERF Commitment
N = Number of asylum seekers
Ranking: 1 = highest number, 24 = lowest number

Source: DIHR

Table 4.1 Ranking of relative commitment of ERF funds to the relative number of asylum seekers

Table 4.2

Proportion of asylum applications relative to population and GDP in 2000 - 2004, and ranking according to ERF funding commited (2000 - 2004)					
Country	Number of asylum applications per 1000 head of population (2000 - 2004)	Ranking of Member States based on number of asylum applcations relative to population *	Ranking of Member States based on number of asylum applcations relative to per capita GDP 2000 - 2004 **	Ranking of Member States based on committed ERF allocation (2000 - 2004)***	Commited funding per Member State 2000 - 2004
Austria	17,87	1	4	8	8.543.173
Belgium	11,49	5	6	7	10.334.727
Finland	2,90	10	13	11	2.913.610
France	4,19	8	3	3	18.654.748
Germany	3,94	9	2	1	42.983.751
Greece	2,44	11	10	12	2.715.489
Ireland	11,68	4	8	9	4.207.654
Italy	1,25	12	9	6	11.296.861
Luxembourg	13,68	3	14	14	1.892.046
Netherlands	7,35	6	7	4	17.014.444
Portugal	0,09	13	12	13	1.937.823
Spain	0,85	14	11	10	3.967.333
Sweden	14,31	2	5	5	13.252.434
UK	5,72	7	1	2	36.287.008
* 1 = Member State with the highest number of asylum applications relative to its population, 14 = Member State with the lowest number of asylum applications relative to its population.					
** 1 = Member State with the highest number of asylum applications relative to its per capita GDP, 14 = Member State with the lowest number of asylum applications relative to its per capita GDP.					
*** 1 = Member State with the highest commited funding 2000 - 2004, 14 = Member State with the lowest commited funding 2000 - 2004.					

Source: DIHR

Table 4.2 Proportion of asylum applications relative to population and GDP in 2000 – 2004 and ranking according to committed ERF funding

The table shows that the ranking of Member States according to the number of asylum applications relative to per capita GDP has a relatively high correlation with the ranking of ERF committed budget allocations in 2000–2004. On the other hand, there is a lower correlation when the countries are ranked according to the division of the ERF funding and the ratio of asylum applications to the total population, but still a certain correspondence prevails.

Table 4.3

Proportion of asylum applications relative to population and GDP in 2004, and ranking according to ERF funding commited (2004)					
Country	Number of asylum applications per 1000 head of population 2004	Ranking of Member States based on number of asylum applcations relative to population *	Ranking of Member States based on number of asylum applcations relative to per capiat GDP 2000**	Ranking of Member States based on committed ERF allocation 2004***	Commited funding per Member State 2004
Austria	3,04	4	4	6	2.230.280
Belgium	1,49	7	8	7	2.131.527
Cyprus	12,33	1	9	18	168.059
Czech Rep.	0,54	14	11	24	0
Estonia	0,02	22	17	22	101.264
Finland	0,69	10	22	14	392.633
France	1,03	9	1	3	4.041.961
Germany	0,43	15	3	2	8.113.022
Greece	0,41	16	14	12	459.296
Hungary	0,16	20	16	9	824.725
Ireland	1,22	8	23	8	919.091
Italy	0,17	19	10	10	741.665
Latvia	0,00	24	13	23	95.629
Lithuania	0,04	21	15	19	154.928
Luxembourg	3,93	2	24	17	171.648
Malta	3,08	3	19	21	111.840
Netherlands	0,61	12	12	4	2.972.103
Poland	0,21	18	7	13	440.490
Portugal	0,01	23	21	20	123.370
Slovak Rep.	2,10	6	6	15	372.374
Slovenia	0,59	13	20	16	343.444
Spain	0,13	20	18	11	665.287
Sweden	2,61	5	5	5	2.691.652
UK	0,68	11	2	1	10.877.221
with the lowest number of asylum applications relative to its population.					
State with the lowest number of asylum applications relative to its per capita GDP.					
funding 2004.					

Source: DIHR

Table 4.3 Proportion of asylum applications relative to population and GDP in 2004

The participation of the 10 new Member States in the ERF since 2004 also makes it relevant to analyse whether the coherence between the distributions of ERF funds in relation to the number of asylum applications per capita GDP in 2004 is prevalent. Table 4.3 thus provides an overview of burden-sharing in 2004. This table indicates that the correlation is less pronounced when all 24

countries are included, compared to the previous years. The correlation between committed ERF allocations and the ranking according to applications relative to population is only slightly less coherent than the correlation with per capita GDP. In general, however, the table seems to indicate a certain degree of fair burden-sharing also in 2004.

The evaluators made calculations by using the mechanism of Article 10 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC on the yearly distribution of funding for the years 2000-2004 and for all countries. The result was not totally accurate due to minor statistical uncertainties. The result showed however, only minor differences between the calculated amounts and actually allocated amounts per country per year as well as for the cumulated distributions for the entire period. By viewing these calculations in combination with the high correlation found between annual and total ranking of committed funding per Member State and its corresponding rank as a receiver of asylum applications, and by viewing it further with the correlation between the ranking of Member States according to the number of asylum applications relative to per capita GDP and the committed budget allocations in 2000 -2004, we can permit us to conclude that the allocation of ERF funds to the Member States in 2000 - 2004 has indeed been done in accordance to the principle Art 10 of burden-sharing.

4. 3 National ERF strategies

4.3.1 Annual national ERF strategies

The national strategies of the Member States are submitted, on a yearly basis, to the Commission in the form of a substantiated request for co-financing, following a format designed by the Commission. All requests for co-financing are based on the needs for intervention in the field of reception, integration and repatriation, as perceived and assessed by the national responsible authorities in each Member State.

The decentralised structure of the ERF further facilitated the relevance of the national strategies, as needs were determined at the national level rather than by predetermined regulative measures. However, this decentralised structure also means that it is difficult to assess the relevance of the strategies definitively. As rightly noted in the mid-term evaluation: “if the right of Member States to autonomously determine their own needs, and accordingly their right to decide the distribution of the ERF resources among the activities undertaken under the three measures [is] to be

respected, the distribution between measures must be regarded as relevant because the Member States have distributed their funding according to their own perceptions of their needs"[29].

On an overall level, the Member States seem to have had three different approaches depending on existing structures (or lack thereof) in the country prior to ERF involvement, namely:

- Establishment of structures for reception, integration and voluntary repatriation
- Improvement of existing structures
- Innovative and additional activities.

The countries that, prior to the ERF, lacked proper structures for reception, integration and repatriation, such as Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the new member states, have naturally focussed on developing such structures. In many new member states, for example, ERF funds were used to build reception centres. Those countries that already had developed structures for reception, integration and, to some extent, repatriation have primarily focussed on improving these structures or filling out gaps, supplementing state initiatives. One example of this approach is the UK in which priority was given solely to integration and repatriation measures since reception was assessed to be fully covered by government initiatives. Another example is Austria, where the strong increase in the number of asylum seekers put the national structures for reception under pressure, and the ERF 1 made it possible to address focus areas and take up initiatives that would otherwise not have adequately been addressed. In some cases, where existing structures are well-established and -functioning, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, priority has been given to innovative measures, additional to those already put in place.

Germany and Italy are good examples of two very different approaches to the implementation of the ERF. While the German approach has consisted of implementing the national strategies through a large number of NGOs or other civil society organisations, and of addressing the concrete, immediate needs of the target groups, the Italian approach has aimed to involve the local authorities and to place emphasis on the establishment of sustainable structures and mechanisms for the management of asylum and refugee issues throughout the Italian territory. The two approaches different in their underlying philosophies. The German approach reflects a continuation and further development of an asylum and refugee management system that has

[29] Mid-term evaluation, p.126

been evolving over several decades, prior to the ERF-1. It also represents a tradition of dialogue and cooperation between civil society organisations such as humanitarian NGOs, church-based organisations, labour organisations and the public sector, together with the recent trend in public management to contract out services to non-public organisations.

The Italian approach, by contrast, reflects an ambition to establish for the first time a coherent national policy, and appropriate structures, enabling an adequate management of national asylum and refugees affairs. While the German approach is a continuation of past experiences, building on cooperation with established social service organisations such as Caritas and AWO, the Italian approach has entailed greater involvement from the public sector in the management of reception conditions and integration measures, activities which had traditionally been performed by private assistance organisations with limited public sector involvement. In this sense, the Italian experience of ERF has been one of developing public sector competencies in asylum and refugee issues over a short period of time. In Germany, with its long tradition of resettling groups from the East and a large number of labour immigrants entering the integration system, the ERF could more easily fit in with established services offered to groups of refugees and asylum seekers[30].

However, nearly all the Member States have focussed their intervention strategy on concrete and isolated initiatives rather than on broad strategic initiatives. Only exceptionally has there been as complex a visionary approach as the one developed in Italy, where national responsible authorities have involved international agencies such as UNHCR, Italian NGOs and the Association of Italian Municipalities in developing a national action plan for building up a coherent system of reception, integration and repatriation. This does not mean however, that the effort to solve concrete problems in other countries has been carried out without a strategy to ensure relevance. Most countries developed strategies focussing on shortcomings and deficits in existing policies, thereby ensuring a high degree of relevance and coherence. In Ireland for example, a report issued in 2000 by an Interdepartmental Working Group on the Integration of

[30] Despite a number of differences, it should be noted that the Italian approach to establishing a comprehensive system of public responsibility vis-à-vis asylum seekers and refugees issues has some similarities with the Swedish system. The management of the social and economic rights of asylum applicants and refugees are, in both countries, implemented through local municipal administrations. The Swedish system is particularly elaborated, enabling public authorities to take a direct, active role in the administration of reception and integration measures, leaving a relatively limited role to the civil society organisations. In Italy, however, municipalities tend to sub-contract the implementation of projects to local NGOs.

Refugees, outlining shortcomings and needs in national policy, formed the framework for national ERF-1 strategies.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Italy**
Project title	**National Asylum Plan**
Managing entity	**Ministry of Interior and the National Association of Italian Municipalities**
ERF Measure	**Reception, Integration and Repatriation**

In Italy, the ERF has contributed to the establishment of a system for reception, integration and repatriation that did not exist in such a developed form before. Until 2000, the situation was characterised by a lack of a clear legal framework for reception, integration and repatriation leaving the responsibilities very much to precariously prepared local authorities and NGOs. Nevertheless, the Italian authorities defined social and economic protection of refugee and asylum seekers as a public responsibility. The authorities further decided to build the system on a voluntary approach presenting the programme as an opportunity for municipalities. If necessary, the municipalities could sub-contract NGOs in accordance to needs to be dealt with.

The basic philosophy behind the system is the concept of facilitating a very intensive process for the beneficiaries, who are not received in large reception centres but accommodated in small units with between 10 and 100 inhabitants. This philosophy allows a rather personalised reception and integration assistance in accordance with individual needs, within the general programme for reception, integration and repatriation activities. It further ensures extensive direct contacts between the individual beneficiaries and Italian operators. Also, these operators facilitate establishment and development of contacts between beneficiaries and the local community and public entities.

In Italy, the aim of the integration process is to enable beneficiaries to earn their own living and have access to their own living space. The integration process thus focuses on enabling refugees to obtain paid work and find adequate living space. The rate of successful integration for the period 2000 – 2003 is approximately 40 %.

The Italian approach of developing a general plan and concept for long-term solutions is very flexible and adaptable to evolving needs and could thus serve as an example of good practice for other countries in similar situations.

Best practice: Italy

The mid-term report had concluded that the ERF had been used more as a scheme to fund the supply of services than a demand-led instrument, and further, that the ERF was driven by the needs identified by NGOs and other organisations in the field rather than through an overarching government strategy targeting specific policy objectives.[31] Even though this conclusion is almost a cliché, emerging as it does quite frequently in reports concerning funding of NGO activities, it still has to be taken seriously. While the evaluators did find varying standards in national authorities' preparations of national strategies, it does not seem fair to characterise a deliberately decentralised structure for channelling EU co-financing in the direction of needs as identified by national authorities as being a scheme for funding the supply of services, just because it is, as in fact intended, a needs-driven programme. The national authorities identify the needs – in some

[31] Mid-term report p. 127

cases this may happen in dialogue with civil society (like in Germany and in Austria), in other cases (such as in Italy) the government develops an entire plan for municipalities and NGOs to feed into – but this does not show anything else than the fact that each member state has developed its national strategies and application for co-funding in accordance with its own particular traditions.

Judging by the project managers' responses to the questionnaire, not all find the national strategy relevant. Thus, as can be seen from the table below, while more than 60 % do find the national strategy either highly relevant or relevant to some extent to the needs of the target groups, 16.9 % find it to be of limited relevance.

	Question 14: In your opinion, to what extent does the national ERF strategy meet the present needs of the groups targeted by the ERF in your country?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	210	25.0%
To some extent	326	38.9%
To a limited extent	142	16.9%
Not at all	3	.4%
Don´t know	60	7.2%
Irrelevant	63	7.5%
Unanswered	35	4.2%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 14: ERF strategy and needs of target group

When asked about the extent to which they were familiar with the national ERF strategy, as many as 27.8 % answered that they did not know the strategy "at all" or "not very well". This lack of familiarity with the national strategy on the part of the project implementers might indicate a need for greater involvement of other actors in the drafting of national strategies. As noted in many country reports, national authorities often do not involve NGOs or other relevant actors (including refugee community organisations) in their elaboration of strategies – and the ones that do, often do so in an unsystematic and random manner. A more systematic and formalised involvement might result in a higher degree of relevance of the strategies.

	Question 13: Are your familiar with the national ERF strategy in your country?	
	Count	%
Yes, I know it very well	156	18.6%
Yes, I know it fairly well	419	49.9%
Yes, I know it, but not very well	145	17.3%
No, I don´t know it	88	10.5%
Unanswered	31	3.7%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 13: Familiarity of PM with national ERF strategies

In all the Member States, the requests for co-financing have identified areas of intervention that need to be addressed if national structures for reception, integration and repatriation are to meet the standards of a common European asylum system. National policies must also be understood to form part of a national policy agenda, given that, throughout most of Europe, issues relating to migration and asylum are politically sensitive issues. The legal frameworks regulating access to protection and the rights of asylum seekers and refugees have been subject to changes and revisions in a number of countries. As the process of meeting the objectives of a Common European Asylum Policy is clearly a gradual process that requires time, it is perhaps more accurate to characterise the relation of the ERF strategy to the national strategies as a relation of converging interests of Member States in finding common denominators for the management of issues concerning asylum.

4.3.2 Division of funding among measures

As mentioned in section 4.2, the Council Decision 2000/596/EC established a division of the Member States' programmes into three areas of intervention covering reception, integration and repatriation, and it placed few limitations on the use of funding within the overall framework. It was left entirely to the Member States to define how the ERF contribution to the funding of their national strategies could supplement the national funding within each of the three generally defined strands. The needs identified by the national responsible authorities would thus form the basis for distribution of co-financed ERF funds on the three measures.

Table 4.4 below provides an overview of the relative allocation of funds on the three measures each year in each country which enables us to understand the overall development of national

strategies during the ERF-1 period in order to meet the nationally perceived needs. The table includes only old Member States, as the New Member States were only part of the programme during the last year of the ERF-1 funding period.

The table shows a consistent pattern in the distribution among measures – a little less than half of the ERF contribution was used on reception measures, approximately one third on integration measures and one fifth on repatriation measures. Thus, most of the Member States have given priority to reception measures throughout the period. Spain and Finland are exceptions from this, as Finland allocated only 16 % of its budget for the reception measure in 2002, when the allocation of funds on reception was at its peak[32]. Spain also places less emphasis on reception measures than most of the other Member States – thus, its funding during the period ranges from 18 % to 46 % for reception.

For some Member States, the issue of reception seems to be of decreasing importance. Thus, in the UK, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, budget allocations to the reception measure have decreased over the period. In other countries, such as Sweden, Portugal and Germany, reception measures gradually became more important over the five-year period, while France has had a consistently high priority on reception measures during the entire period.

In some countries, the national strategies have gradually shifted focus from one measure to another. Belgium, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom have all increased their funding to integration measure over the implementation period of ERF-1. This shift has been especially pronounced in Belgium, where funds for integration rose from 0 % in 2000 to 71 % in 2004, in Italy with an increase from 16 % to 43 %, and in the UK where the percentage of funds allocated for integration increased from 29 % in 2000 to 47 % in 2004.

A decrease in funds for integration took place in Sweden, Germany and France, whereas in Greece, Spain and Portugal, the level of funds for integration activities remained relatively stable. Finland has throughout the period given high priority to integration, allocating more than half of the ERF budget to integration.

[32] It should be noted, however, that the evaluators did not succeed in obtaining information about Finland's allocation of funds for reception in 2004. The 0 % in 2004 thus reflects missing data.

In general, repatriation has not ranked as a priority. It is noteworthy, however, that Austria had increased its allocation of funds for repatriation over the ERF-1 period and that the UK has given particular importance to this measure, allocating between 24-46 % of funds on repatriation over the entire period. The Netherlands and Ireland have also prioritised repatriation, although this has not been a consistent pattern. Belgium has increased its priority from zero to 10-21% of its funds. Germany, Italy and Spain have kept the level of repatriation funds relatively stable, Germany on the level of 17-26 %, Spain on 16-29 % and Italy on 9-11 %. In the remaining Member States, allocations to repatriation have actually been decreasing over the period.

Table 4.6

Yearly percenatge allocation total funds on measures per country

Country	Measure	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Belgium	*Reception*	100%	64%	63%	18%	27%	47%
100%	*Integration*	0%	25%	36%	71%	52%	44%
	Repatriation	0%	10%	1%	10%	21%	9%
Germany	*Reception*	37%	37%	77%	66%	53%	56%
100%	*Integration*	37%	37%	6%	14%	21%	21%
	Repatriation	26%	26%	17%	19%	26%	23%
Greece	*Reception*	72%	57%	93%	76%	59%	78%
100%	*Integration*	28%	43%	7%	24%	41%	22%
	Repatriation	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Spain	*Reception*	18%	46%	35%	32%	26%	27%
100%	*Integration*	53%	38%	40%	53%	53%	49%
	Repatriation	29%	16%	25%	16%	21%	24%
France	*Reception*	68%	81%	97%	86%	82%	85%
100%	*Integration*	22%	14%	3%	9%	12%	11%
	Repatriation	10%	5%	0%	5%	6%	5%
Ireland	*Reception*	42%	44%	53%	38%	16%	37%
100%	*Integration*	39%	37%	42%	55%	71%	51%
	Repatriation	19%	20%	5%	7%	13%	12%
Italy	*Reception*	74%	74%	40%	48%	68%	57%
100%	*Integration*	16%	16%	46%	43%	21%	31%
	Repatriation	11%	11%	15%	9%	11%	12%
Luxembourg	*Reception*	48%	15%	41%	40%	28%	37%
100%	*Integration*	38%	66%	59%	60%	72%	54%
	Repatriation	14%	18%	0%	0%	0%	9%
Netherlands	*Reception*	64%	33%	42%	32%	22%	38%
100%	*Integration*	36%	10%	34%	46%	43%	34%
	Repatriation	0%	58%	24%	22%	35%	28%
Austria	*Reception*	76%	62%	57%	52%	34%	53%
100%	*Integration*	8%	17%	26%	22%	31%	23%
	Repatriation	16%	21%	18%	26%	35%	24%
Portugal	*Reception*	53%	53%	68%	79%	93%	63%
100%	*Integration*	5%	5%	11%	0%	7%	6%
	Repatriation	42%	42%	21%	21%	0%	32%
Finland	*Reception*	15%	16%	14%	6%	0%	12%
100%	*Integration*	58%	63%	67%	89%	100%	72%
	Repatriation	27%	21%	19%	4%	0%	17%
Sweden	*Reception*	12%	39%	42%	40%	50%	38%
100%	*Integration*	57%	48%	41%	40%	35%	43%
	Repatriation	31%	13%	17%	20%	15%	18%
UK	*Reception*	41%	35%	8%	14%	8%	15%
100%	*Integration*	29%	41%	50%	47%	46%	45%
	Repatriation	30%	24%	42%	39%	46%	39%
EU - 14	*Reception*	48%	47%	53%	45%	37%	46%
100%	*Integration*	33%	30%	28%	34%	36%	32%
	Repatriation	19%	22%	19%	21%	27%	22%

Compiled by DIHR

Table 4.4 Yearly percentage allocations of total funds per measure and per country in EU 14

This overview on the relative priority given to the three measures by the Member States over the period indicates that needs in the Member States, as perceived by the national authorities, have undergone changes according to overall trends in the refugee and asylum seeker situation in each individual country. For example, the shift in attention from reception to integration may be related to the decreasing number of asylum seekers, as outlined in chapter 3. Likewise, the overall emphasis on reception may, at least in some Member States, be partly explained by the need to prepare for the transposition of the Council Directive 2003/9/EC[33]. However, this possible connection between national priorities and the development of a Common European Asylum Policy and the standards connected to it is not mentioned in the applications for co-financing. With regard to repatriation, no pattern seems to emerge as to enable general conclusions other than the fact that the repatriation measure seems to depend to a high degree on the concrete situation of the individual country and its short-term prioritisation. In fact, some of the repatriation initiatives supported by ERF co-funding have targeted very specific groups and nationalities (Afghans, Kosovo Albanians etc.).

Table 4.7

Yearly percentage allocation total funds on measures per country					
country	**measure**	**2004**	country	**measure**	**2004**
Cyprus 100%	*Reception*	61%	Lithuania 100%	*Reception*	3%
	Integration	39%		*Integration*	62%
	Repatriation	0%		*Repatriation*	35%
Czech Republic 100%	*Reception*	0%	Malta 100%	*Reception*	0%
	Integration	0%		*Integration*	100%
	Repatriation	0%		*Repatriation*	0%
Estonia 100%	*Reception*	97%	Poland 100%	*Reception*	46%
	Integration	3%		*Integration*	45%
	Repatriation	0%		*Repatriation*	9%
Hungary 100%	*Reception*	67%	Slovak Rep 100%	*Reception*	59%
	Integration	28%		*Integration*	0%
	Repatriation	5%		*Repatriation*	41%
Latvia 100%	*Reception*	72%	Slovenia 100%	*Reception*	82%
	Integration	28%		*Integration*	18%
	Repatriation	0%		*Repatriation*	0%
NMS 100%	*Reception*	52%			
	Integration	37%			
	Repatriation	11%			

Compiled by DIHR

Table 4.5: Yearly percentage allocation total funds on measures per country (NMS)

[33] Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers

The new Member States became part of the ERF-1 programme only in 2004 and therefore the evaluation team was only able to analyse their funding priorities for this year. Data from table 4.5 show that it is not possible to discern any trends and developments in prioritisation. It can, however, be seen that reception was the priority area in seven of the ten new Member States, namely Cyprus, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Latvia and Slovenia. Malta, on the other hand, prioritised integration, and Lithuania both integration and repatriation. The Slovak Republic also put substantial emphasis on repatriation as this measure was almost as highly prioritised as reception.

It is interesting to note that the allocation of ERF co-funding by the new Member States somewhat resembles the distribution of funds identified in the mid-term evaluation, which concluded that approximately 52 % of the ERF contributions were allocated to reception measures, 28 % to integration and 21 % to repatriation. The new Member States distributed their ERF Co-financing with the figures 52%, 37 % and 11 %. Although there is still an over-emphasis on reception measures, the old Member States have since the mid-term report developed a slightly more balanced distribution of 46 %, 32 % and 22 %.

The inclusion of the new Member States into the programme in 2004 does not seem to have had any discernible effect on the directions of the programme as a whole. The relative distributions of ERF funding between the three measures have remained the same, and the difference between the allocation of funds between the new and the old Member States may be purely coincidental. This development is in line with the observation made in Chapter 3 that the inclusion of the new Member States did not lead to any dramatic changes in the number of arrival of asylum seekers to the territory of the European Union – except for the fact that the decreasing numbers of asylum seekers in Germany may be connected to inclusion of new Member States.

4.3.3 Additionality

Article 13 of the Council Decision establishing the ERF states that in relation to the national programmes, the contribution from the fund shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of the measure. The proportion may, however, be increased to 75% in Member States covered by the Cohesion Fund, i.e. Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland (until 2004) and all new Member States[34].

[34] Based on the regulation No 1164/94 of 16 May 1994, a Member States is eligible for Cohesion Funds, which: 1) has a per capita gross national product (GNP), measured in purchasing power parities, of less

Table 4.6

Total funding versus ERF contribution (EU 14 + NMS)									
Measure	Reception			Integration			repatriation		
Year	Total funding	ERF funding	%	Total funding	ERF funding	%	Total funding	ERF funding	%
2000	22.935.334,33	11.517.120,86	50%	15.703.243,62	7.449.059,44	47%	8.957.422,22	4.516.230,33	50%
2001	27.664.039,25	13.990.791,31	51%	17.821.424,95	8.760.834,14	49%	13.024.307,17	5.980.036,58	46%
2002	45.476.394,31	20.003.267,07	44%	23.974.069,60	11.275.610,86	47%	15.836.836,20	7.745.356,74	49%
2003	36.294.758,71	17.137.594,48	47%	27.418.931,28	13.119.735,15	48%	16.531.325,59	8.222.683,34	50%
2004	28.409.568,77	13.385.596,52	47%	26.718.018,52	12.150.011,89	45%	19.988.171,82	9.905.875,49	50%
total 2000 - 2004	160.780.095,38	76.034.370,24	47%	111.635.687,97	52.755.251,47	47%	74.338.062,99	36.370.182,48	49%

Compiled by DIHR

Table 4.6: Total funding versus ERF contribution

Based on figures provided by the national responsible authorities[35], table 4.6 shows the division between ERF contributions and Total budgeted contributions per year and per measure. The table shows that the ERF funding on each measure made up very close to 50%, as required by the Council Decision. Table 4.6.1 further provides the relation between ERF co funding and the national contributions per year, which is further graphically shown on the picture below the table. The average allocation of ERF funds per measure throughout the ERF-1 programme has thus been 47 % for repatriation, 48 % for integration, and 49 % for repatriation. The total average ERF contribution to the national programmes has been 48 %. The yearly average of ERF funds has ranged between 46 % in 2002 to 49 % in 2002. On some measures the yearly contribution has been exactly 50 %. This pattern confirms very accurately the finding of the mid-term evaluation, which indicated that ERF contributions made up 47.4 % of the total budget[36]. The pattern is thus very consistent and must be seen as a result of deliberate planning by the national responsible authorities. The question of additionality will be further discussed in the chapter concerning effectiveness and efficiency.

than 90 % of the Community average, and 2) has a programme leading to the fulfilment of the conditions of economic convergence as set out in Article 104c of the Treaty establishing the European Community (avoidance of excessive government deficits). Four Member States: Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland were eligible under the Cohesion Fund from 1 January 2000. The Commission's mid-term review of 2003 deemed Ireland (GNP average of 101 %) as ineligible under the Cohesion Fund as of 1 January 2004. On 1 May 2004 with the EU enlargement, all new Member States (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) were qualified for the Cohesion Fund.

[35] These amounts do not include funds for technical assistance.

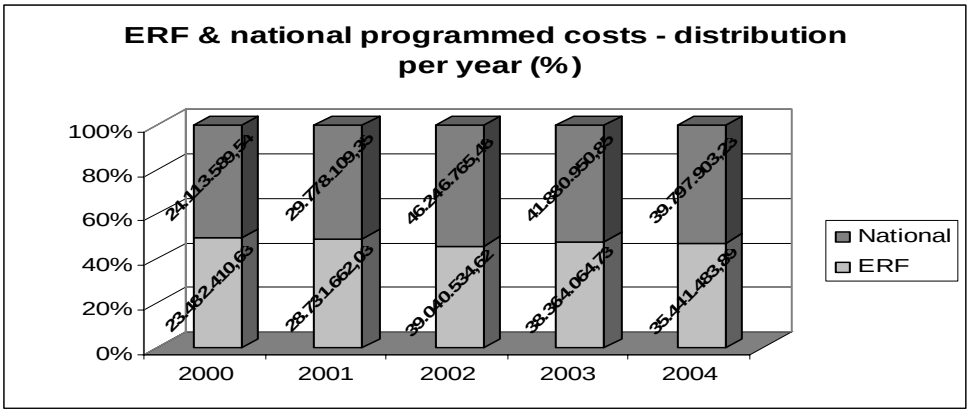
[36] Mid-term evaluation, p. 74

Table 4.6.1

Total funding versus ERF contribution (EU 14 + NMS)					
Year	Total funding	ERF funding	% of total	National funding	% of total
2000	47.596.000,17	23.482.410,63	49%	24.113.589,54	51%
2001	58.509.771,38	28.731.662,03	49%	29.778.109,35	51%
2002	85.287.300,10	39.024.234,67	46%	46.263.065,43	54%
2003	80.245.015,58	38.480.012,98	48%	41.765.002,60	52%
2004	75.115.759,12	35.441.483,89	47%	39.674.275,23	53%
total 2000 - 2004	346.753.846,34	165.159.804,19	48%	181.594.042,15	52%

Compiled by DIHR

Table 4.6.1 total funding versus ERF funding and National funding per year



Compiled by DIHR

ERF and national programmed costs, distribution per year

The general picture on the distribution of funds on measures per year is not sufficient to substantiate the consistent pattern of co-funding, given that national variations may occur. Table 4.6.2 offers an overview of the relative ERF contribution to the national programmes.

Table 4.6.2

Relative ERF Co funding of national programmes			
Implementor	ERF contribution in %	Implementor	ERF contribution in %
Austria	42%	Latvia	74%
Belgium	41%	Lithuania	55%
Cyprus	75%	Luxembourg	48%
Czech Republic	0%	Malta	27%
Estonia	72%	Netherlands	45%
Finland	48%	Poland	63%
France	46%	Portugal	75%
Germany	50%	Slovak Rep	75%
Greece	41%	Slovenia	83%
Hungary	73%	Spain	62%
Ireland	44%	Sweden	49%
Italy	50%	UK	46%

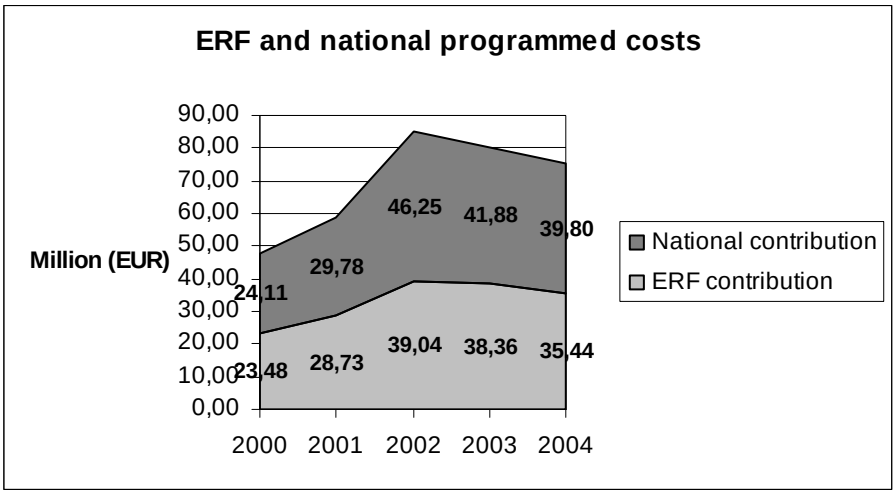
Compiled by DIHR

Table 4.6.2 Relative ERF co funding of national programmes

The table shows that in nine of the Member States, covered by the cohesion fund, ERF funds have made up close to the allowed 75 %; in eight countries ERF funds made up between 45 % and 50 %, while in four countries ERF funds made up between 41 % and 45 %. Of the remaining two, Malta seems to have received funds well below the possible maximum. As Malta did receive the share of funding in accordance with the principle of burden-sharing, the relatively low level of ERF co funding to projects in Malta is the result of a relatively high level of governmental funding. In Slovenia the total budget was EUR 347.533. Out of this amount, ERF contributed with EUR 288.502. The Slovenian national ERF programme focussed only on the strands of reception and integration with 83% allocation of ERF funds to the reception strand the majority of which (75%) has been utilized to upgrade the standards of the Asylum Home. The remaining 17% has been utilized for a variety of integration programmes. The Czech Republic decided to opt out of the ERF-1 programme for 2004 and is therefore not included.

The evaluation found a strong interest by Member States to participate in the programme. Only the Czech Republic opted out of the programme in 2004. All other countries have throughout the programme applied for co-financing, and most of them have received funds close to the maximum possible level. The analysis has also shown that the proportionality of the ERF contribution to the three measures has been very constant throughout the programme. Likewise,

all Member States have adhered to the principle of providing additional funding, the high importance attached to the programme by the Member States. The picture below illustrates the consistent parallel relation between national and ERF co-financing during the ERF-1 implementation.



Compiled by DIHR

ERF and national programmed costs

It is very clear that all the Member States have made maximum use of the opportunity for co-financing of national strategies. The high degree of adherence to and use of the ERF opportunity to co-financing national strategies is an indicator of the perceived relevance of the ERF programme and the positive interest of governments to use the ERF to enhance their own national structures in the areas of reception, integration and repatriation and to assist providing solution for asylum applicants and refugees.

4.4 Community Action strategies

4.4.1 Annual Community Action strategies

The Community Action programme was established by article 5 of the Council Decision, which stated that "up to 5 % of the Fund's available resources may be used to finance innovatory actions or action of interest to the Community as a whole, separate from the action implemented by the Member States, including studies, exchanges of experience and steps to promote cooperation at

Community level, as well as assessment of the implementation of measures and technical assistance"[37]. Between 2000 and 2004, 48 Community Actions have been implemented.

The strategy for the Community Action programme is outlined in the "Framework for Community Actions", which reviews the principles, objectives, and actions of the programme. The document states that the Community Action programme is based on an underlying principle of Community interest and innovation. In other words, all actions supported under the Community Action framework are designed to be of interest to the Community and to have an innovatory nature. More specifically, the Community Actions have the following objectives:

1. to assist in analysing and evaluating the situation in Member States and the effectiveness of measures implemented;

2. to help to build the capacity of the actors (in particular Member States, local and regional authorities, the social partners, non-governmental organisations, and recognised refugees) in the Member States and at European level who are active in fields covered by the European Refugee Fund; and

3. to promote and disseminate to practitioners and opinion-formers best practice at national and EU level.

In order to meet these objectives, activities within three strands are supported, namely evaluation and analysis, capacity building and awareness-raising, each corresponding to one of the above-mentioned objectives[38].

The Commission has responsibility for the implementation of the Community Actions, including for the elaboration and publication of calls for proposals, selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation of projects, provision of information, publicity and follow-up with regard to projects supported, and dissemination of project results. Furthermore, the Commission must have a regular exchange of views with representatives of non-governmental organisations on the design, implementation, and follow-up of the programme, as well as promote partnership and dialogue among all partners involved in the programme. The annual calls for proposals and the work

[37] Council Decision, article 5
[38] Framework, p. 3

programmes – which were introduced for the first time in 2003 – further outline the strategies and priorities of the Community Actions.

The call for proposals 2000 was very short, outlining measures to be supported, selection criteria, and award criteria. The measures to be supported included: 1) organisation of information and media campaigns, 2) cross-national networking activities, and 3) transnational actions in relation to the transfer of good practices[39]. The call reflected a wish to strengthen public awareness, to establish transnational networks and to promote the exchange of experiences in relation to good practices. It was furthermore underlined that actions should have a clear European dimension. The measures introduced in the call did not correspond with the overall measures established, but were cross-cutting. The Framework document establishing these measures was included in the call, thus contributing to a certain confusion as to the relationship between the different groups of measures.

The selection criteria for consideration of projects were: 1) capacity to finance activities properly, and 2) operational capacity to complete actions to be supported[40]. Projects that met the selection criteria were then to be further evaluated according to a list of award criteria, including aspects such as cost-effectiveness (30 %), innovation (20 %), feasibility of the project and the corresponding budget (20 %), the extent to which the action complements the strategy of the relevant ERF national programme (15 %), and the proportion of the applicant's own financial contribution (15 %). Considering that, according to the Framework for Community Action, paragraph 1, innovation is the underlying principle upon which the whole Community Action programme is built, the fact that this criterion was less important than cost-effectiveness may seem somewhat illogical, particularly in view of the fact that innovatory actions are often not cost-effective, as they are largely untested.

In the call for proposals 2001, the focus shifted from awareness-raising, networking and exchange of experiences to the effectiveness of existing policies and practice within Member States. The call was much more detailed than in 2000 in its description of the measures to be supported. These included: 1) the development of methodologies and indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of policy and practice, 2) analysis of legislation and practice, 3) analysis of possible new approaches to policy and practice, 4) transfer of information, lessons learned and good

[39] Call for proposals 2000/C 380/11, paragraph B
[40] Call for proposals 2000/C 380/11, paragraph F

practice, and 5) capacity building of refugees. Again, it is unclear how these measures corresponded with the overall measures stated in the Framework. In the award criteria, emphasis was placed on both the extent to which the actions complemented EU policy (20%) and the innovatory nature of the actions (20%). Cost effectiveness, this time, was rated lowly (10 %).

The strands, as mentioned in the Framework, were only introduced for the first time in the call for proposals 2002 and were divided into seven sub-themes. Under Strand A, *analysis and evaluation*, project proposals had to relate to (a) the provision of analysis, information and data with the aim to better implement the objectives of the ERF; (b) the analysis, inter alia, of the social, demographic and ethno-linguistic composition of diasporas of the target groups; (c) comparative factual analysis with regard to integration; (d) comparative analysis of the differences between integration systems used in the ERF Member States. Project proposals relating to Strand B, on *capacity building*, had to focus on (a) (the continuation of projects regarding) empowerment of persons enjoying a form of protection, and/or their community organisations; (b) comparative analysis of Member States' strategies, policies and practice as regards reception, integration, and voluntary repatriation of vulnerable groups; (c) transnational actions, consisting of the transfer of information, lessons learned and good practice. Projects mentioned under Strand B c had to be submitted by public authorities. Strand C, on *awareness-raising*, was left out in 2002, although projects listed under B c could have been considered as awareness-raising actions.

Besides selection and award criteria, a long list of exclusion criteria was provided by the Call for Proposals 2002. These criteria concerned, for example, the European dimension of projects, the maximum total costs, the duration of projects, and the need to include a detailed description of the project and its follow-up measures. The award criteria were again modified, brining the innovatory nature to 10 %, and the feasibility of the action and realistic nature of the budget to 20 %. Moreover, a new criterion was introduced, on the extent to which the action complements and consolidates work previously done at Community level (15 %).

In 2003, an annual work programme for the community actions, including budgetary implications and selection criteria, was published. It stated that the programme priorities would be established in the light of the projects selected in the previous years, as well as of 'recent developments in the

area of Common Asylum policy'. These 'recent developments' were not further described. Compared with the previous years, priorities and actions were further differentiated.

The text of the Call for Proposals 2003 hardly differed from the work programme. The priorities mentioned were 1) good practice and new developments in the field of voluntary return; 2) good practice and new developments in the field of resettlement, 3) protection issues relating to the situation of the ERF target groups, 4) material reception conditions and health care for asylum seekers, and 5) material reception conditions and integration of vulnerable persons. Thus, a new focus on material conditions was introduced.

The actions to be supported were, within Strand A (*analysis and evaluation*) a) the development and dissemination of information and comparable data on target groups; in Strand B (*capacity building*) c) transnational actions consisting of the transfer of information, lessons learned and good practices, d) proposals aiming at furthering capacity building and empowerment of target groups; within Strand C (*awareness-raising*) actions included d) organisation of conferences, seminars and events covering all Member States and relating to ERF actions, e) promotion of European dimension events in support of implementation of Community policy and sharing of best practice, and f) the organisation of media campaigns. Furthermore, the Call for Proposals stressed that actions should be practical in nature, with tangible and measurable results, and that they should have a transnational dimension and be complementary to actions that could be implemented through the national programmes.

For the first time, applicants had to indicate in the standard pre-programmed grant application form under which strand, priority and action their project would fall.[41] Only one category could be selected, which in practice appears to be an artificial requirement, given that, for example, a capacity building project could also include a conference or seminar.

The work programme 2004, and Call for Proposals, indicated that, because more than 50 % of the projects supported in 2000-2003 related to analysis and evaluation, and in view of the budget available for 2004, actions relating to Analysis and evaluation were not included in the specific objectives of the work programme 2004. The justification for the priorities in the work programme 2004 is identical to the work programme 2003. Priorities for 2004 were: 1) reception

[41] Call for proposals, paragraph 8

conditions and health care for asylum seekers, 2) good practice in legal assistance, 3) good practice and new developments in the field of resettlement, 4) good practice and new developments in the field of voluntary return, 5) integration and empowerment of persons benefiting from international protection, and 6) encouragement to better information and fairer perception of the situation faced by asylum seekers and refugees.

The actions to be supported were, within Strand B (*capacity building*), a) transnational actions consisting of the transfer of information and lessons learned, b) proposals aiming at furthering capacity building and empowerment of target groups; and within Strand C (*awareness-raising*), c) organisations of conferences, seminars and events covering all Member States and relating to ERF actions, d) promotion of European dimension events in support of implementation of Community policy and sharing of best practice, and the organisation of media campaigns[42]. Eligibility and award criteria were similar to those outlined in the 2003 call for proposals.

In addition to the call for proposals 2004, a Guide to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2004 was produced. Apart from a short description of the ERF, this guide includes guidelines for applicants as well as guidelines for project management. The document outlines all the practical aspects related to the submission and selection of proposals, payment of grants, acceptance of final reports and evaluation and dissemination of results. With regard to the implementation method itself, the guidelines state that "each organisation has its own management culture that the Commission respects as long as it is not discriminatory or otherwise contradictory to the principles and values of the ERF"[43]. The principle of European added value is once again underlined: "The ERF Community Actions can only fund projects that have a European added value. This does not only mean that projects must be implemented in partnership but also that actions must transcend national or local interests to become 'European projects"[44].

In conclusion, all the calls for proposals, and the priorities and measures outlined in these, together with the guide and the work programmes, are consistent with the overall objectives of the Community Actions as stated in the Council Decision. However, this does not necessarily

[42] In the work programme 2004 also an action (e) concerning "the publication and dissemination of the results of the European Refugee Fund as well as those of projects previously supported under the Framework for Community Action was listed, but not mentioned in the Call for Proposals. This action has been commissioned by the Commission to the Spanish institute Bibliomatica, and is presently in progress.
[43] Guidelines to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2004, p. 17
[44] Guidelines to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2004, p. 17

mean that they are the most relevant tools to fulfil such objectives. In order to assess the relevance of the chosen priorities and measures, as well as the changes introduced in these, there would be a need to assess the background analysis have led to these. The statement in the work programmes 2003 and 2004 that priorities have been chosen "in light of the projects selected in the previous years, as well as of recent developments in the area of Common Asylum policy" suggests that such an analysis has been conducted, at least in the years in question, although this was not made public. Likewise, it would be necessary to compare the background analysis to the overall strategy. To our knowledge, such a document outlining the overall strategy of the Community Actions does not to exist.

The evaluation team recommends, that in addition to disseminating the results of the Community Actions 2000 – 2004 through the ERF website, which is currently being developed, the Commission should actively encourage a compilation and analysis of the results of the projects carried out in particular under Strand A: evaluation and analysis. This could used by the Commission as a background paper enabling fine-tuning of the ERF strategy as a whole. It could also be used by potential ERF grant applicants to prevent duplication of actions.

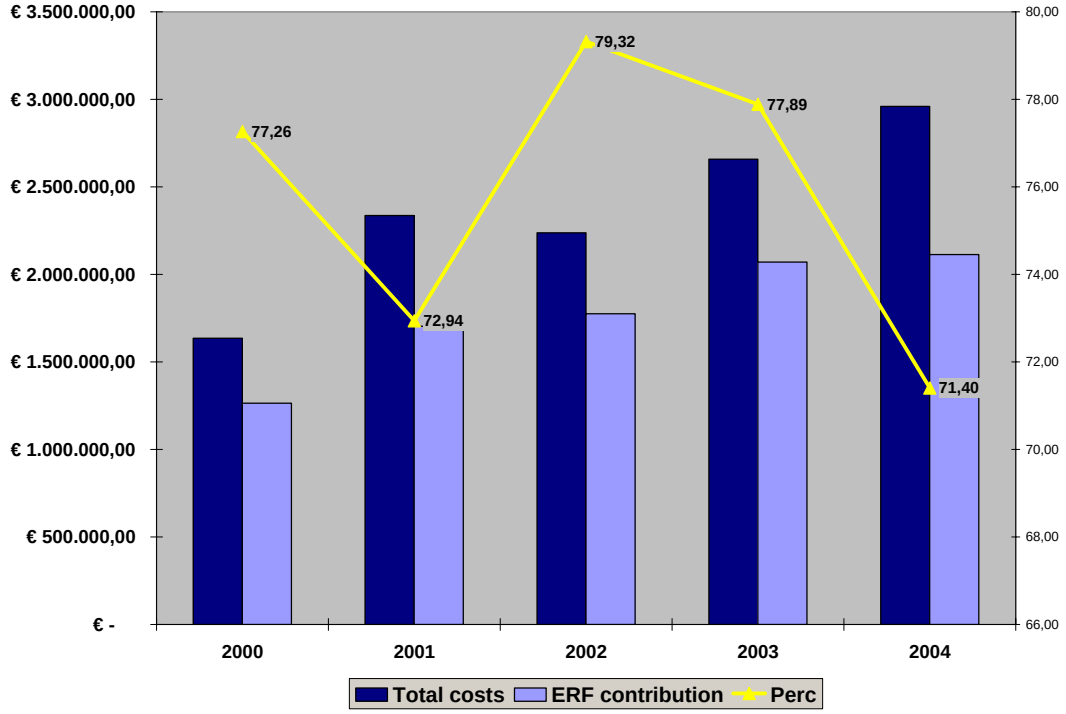
4.4.2 Additionality

The mid-term evaluation concluded that the total ERF contribution for the whole period of 2000-2002 was 74 %, a figure very close to the findings of the present report regarding 2000 – 2004. The table above shows that the ERF contributions remain below the 80 % maximum, as stated in the Council Decision establishing the guidelines for the Community Actions. This is also illustrated in the next Graph. The relatively low average percentages of ERF contributions to the total costs in 2001 and 2004 are explained by the inclusion of two projects to which respectively 50 and 37 % of the total costs were allocated as ERF grant. Thus, it can be concluded that the financial criteria established by the Council Decision seem have been followed by the Community Action programme.

Overview of Community Action budget as allocated in 2000-2004[45] [46]

	Total costs	ERF contribution	%	Budget available	% allocated
2000	€ 1.635.972,56	€ 1.263.999,68	77,26	€ 1.300.000,00	97,23 %
2001	€ 2.336.410,89	€ 1.704.143,61	72,94	€ 1.700.000,00	100,24 %
2002	€ 2.237.871,56	€ 1.775.122,73	79,32	€ 2.200.000,00	80,69 %
2003	€ 2.658.291,26	€ 2.070.491,21	77,89	€ 2.113.550,00	97,96 %
2004	€ 2.960.022,15	€ 2.113.550,00	71,40	€ 2.000.000,00	105,68 %
Total	€ 11.828.568,42	€ 8.927.307,23	75,47	€ 9.313.550,00	95,85 %

Graph 1: Total costs and total ERF grants for Community Actions, and the average percentage of the ERF contribution to the total costs per year



Total costs and total ERF grants for Community Actions and average percentage of the ERF contribution to the total costs per year

[45] Numbers based on EU overview of Community Actions 2000 - 2004

[46] Total costs in the table refers to the estimated total costs of selected projects; the ERF contribution refers to the maximum grant allocated to the selected projects; the percentage refers to the percentage of the ERF grants in relation to the total costs of projects; the budget available was the total annual budget that could be allocated to projects; and the percentage allocated refers to percentage of the total annual budget allocated.

4.4.3 Division of funding: Community Action strands

According to the Framework for Community Action, the activities to be funded fall within three categories or strands, namely:

Strand A – Analysis and Evaluation: The development and dissemination of comparable statistical series on the European Refugee Fund target groups; the development and dissemination of methodologies and indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of policy and practice in reception, integration and voluntary repatriation (benchmarking); the analysis of legislation and practice relevant to reception, integration and voluntary repatriation, with a view to evaluating its effectiveness and disseminating lessons learned; studies and research analysing possible new approaches with regard to policy and practice in the field of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation.

Strand B – Capacity Building: Transnational actions involving a range of actors from at least two Member States, consisting of the transfer of information, lessons learned and good practice. Activities may include the comparison of the effectiveness of processes, methods and tools related to the chosen themes; the mutual transfer and application of good practice; exchanges of personnel; the joint development of products, processes, strategy and methodology; the adaptation to different contexts of the methods, tools and processes identified as good practices; and/or the common dissemination of results, information materials and events. Networking activities of European-level NGOs in the fields of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation of the target groups covered by Article 3 of the ERF Decision. Capacity building of recognised refugees, in view of their full integration into the society of the Member State, possibly to include the establishment of a European Guarantee Fund.

Strand C – Awareness-raising: The organisation of conferences, seminars and events at European level; the promotion of a European dimension to events organised at national level in support of the implementation of Community policy and sharing of best practice in the field of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation; the organisation of European media campaigns and events to promote dissemination of information on refugees and asylum seekers, including information on the fight against racism and xenophobia; the publication of materials to disseminate the results of the Framework, including through the construction of an internet site providing examples of

good practice, a forum for the exchange of ideas and a database of potential partners for transnational exchange actions.

The framework, or the annual work programmes 2003 – 2004, does not establish a key for distribution among the three measures. Thus, an assessment of the relevance of the distribution of funding will, among other things, have to include consideration of the evolving needs at the EU level. These have been analysed in various projects of the Community Action programmes in 2000 – 2003, although an overview of the main conclusions of these analyses could not be found by the evaluation team. In 2002 the Call for Proposals included projects that would provide analysis, information and data "to better implement the objectives of the European Refugee Fund and against the background of the specific needs of the Common European Asylum System." As far as could be assessed, no such project has been carried out. However, this does show that the Commission was aware that such an analysis and gathering of information and data was needed for an improvement of the implementation of the ERF programmes.

In the mid-term evaluation, PLS Ramboll concluded that during 2000 – 2002, 53 % of the Community Actions focused on analysis and evaluation, 23 % on capacity building and 24 % on awareness-raising. Since in the Call for Proposals 2000 – 2001 no such distinction in strands is made, and in the list of selected projects in 2002 this distinction is also missing, it remains unclear how PLS Ramboll came to this conclusion. An analysis of a sample of 21 projects[47], selected at random, showed that the two projects of the sample in 2000 concerned, respectively, networking and awareness-raising, but included elements of all strands. For 2001, four of the sampled projects concerned analysis and evaluation, and one capacity building, but three of the five projects also had elements pertaining to the other strands. In 2002, all four projects in the sample concerned analysis and evaluation, but two of the four also had elements of awareness-raising, which strand was not included in the Call for Proposals 2002. Nevertheless, our sample for 2000-2002 shows that, indeed, the majority of projects concerned analysis and evaluation.

In 2003, for the first time the distinction in strands is introduced in the overview of selected projects. Eleven projects were selected of which, according to the list of selected projects, four concerned analysis and evaluation, five capacity building, and one awareness-raising. The table

[47] The sample concerned two projects in 2000 (total = 6), five projects in 2001 (total = 13), four projects in 2002 (total = 9), six projects in 2003 (total = 11), four projects in 2004 (total = 4).

below provides the distribution of the annual budget according to measures. The numbers on the right show each amount as a percentage of the total amounts.

Distribution of annual ERF budget for Community Action according to measures in 2003 and 2004

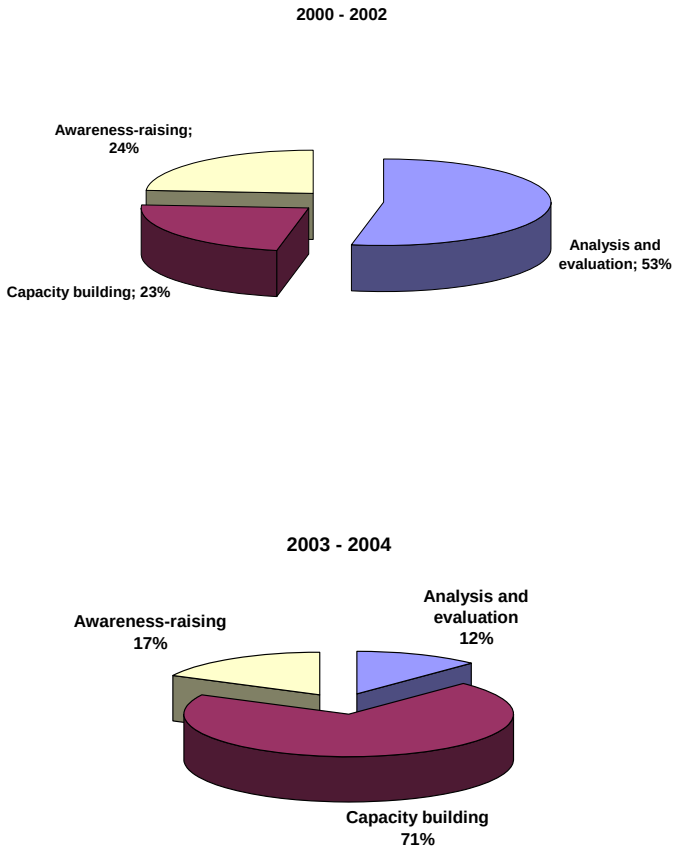
2003	Total budget	ERF contribution		Budget in %	ERF in %
Analysis and evaluation	645.783,60	505.676,65		24,29	24,42
Capacity building	1.531.136,95	1.184.628,03		57,60	57,21
Awareness-raising	481.370,71	380.186,53		18,11	18,36
Total	**2.658.291,26**	**2.070.491,21**		100,00	100,00

In 2004, two of the fourteen projects selected related to the Strand on awareness-raising, while the remaining twelve focused on Strand B, on capacity building. This is shown in the table below.

2004	Total budget	ERF contribution		Budget in %	ERF in %
Capacity building	2.521.902,52	1.765.349,30		85,20	83,53
Awareness-raising	438.119,63	348.200,70		14,80	16,47
Total	**2.960.022,15**	**2.113.550,00**		**100,00**	**100,00**

When comparing the data on the division according to strands in 2000 – 2002, provided in the mid-term evaluation, with the data for 2003 – 2004, it can be concluded that a major shift has occurred in terms of the focus on particular strands, most notably as regards analysis and evaluation – from 53 % to 12 %, and capacity building – from 23 % to 71 %. In both periods, the percentage of Strand C within the total annual budget for community actions remained relatively small.

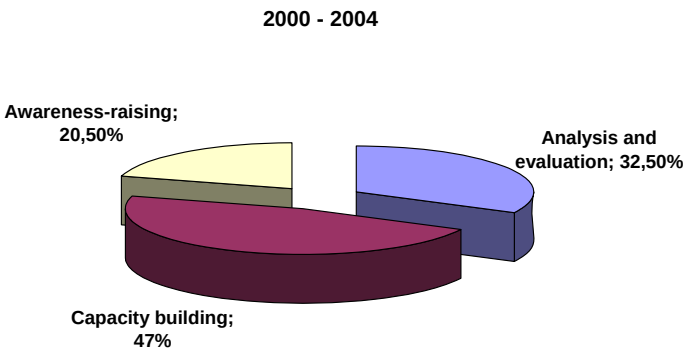
Graph 2: Allocation to Community Actions strands A, B, and C during 2000 – 2002, and 2003 - 2004



The next graph, illustrating the budget allocations to the Community Actions' strands during the whole period of ERF I, shows that almost half of the annual budgets in 2000 – 2004 benefited Capacity Building. This can certainly be attributed to the high percentage of projects relating to this strand in 2004.

Allocation to Community Action strands A, B and C in 2000 - 2004

Graph 3: Allocation to Community Actions strands A, B, and C in 2000 - 2004



However, as already mentioned, this division may appear somewhat arbitrary. Our sample of six projects from 2003 shows that five out of the six projects, which were listed under strands A or B, also included elements of strand C. In 2004 two of our four sampled projects had elements of all three strands, and one could have been registered under both strands B and C. Since in the application form only one strand can be selected, an artificial distinction between strands appears to have been made. This is confirmed by the responses to the questionnaire submitted to the CA's managers: most activities carried out by the respondents included studies and research, dissemination of information, networking activities and conferences /seminars.

Question 12: Which of the following activities are carried out in the project?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Development and dissemination of statistical series on the ERF target groups?	Count	1	10	2	13
	%	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
Development and dissemination of methodologies and indicators for evaluating?	Count	3	8	2	13
	%	23.1%	61.5%	15.4%	100.0%
Analysis of legislation and practice, with a view to to evaluating?	Count	5	6	2	13
	%	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Studies and research analysing possible new approaches?	Count	8	3	2	13
	%	61.5%	23.1%	15.4%	100.0%
Transnational actions consisting of transfer of information, lessons learned and good practice?	Count	10	1	2	13
	%	76.9%	7.7%	15.4%	100.0%
Networking activities of European level NGOs?	Count	9	2	2	13
	%	69.2%	15.4%	15.4%	100.0%
Capacity building of recognised refugees in view of integration into the society of the memeber state?	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Organisation of conferences, seminars and events at European level?	Count	10	1	2	13
	%	76.9%	7.7%	15.4%	100.0%
Promotion of a European dimension to events organised at at national level?	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Organisation of European media campaigns and events, including information on the fight against racism etc.?	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Publication af materials to disseminate the results of the Framework,eg. through the construction of internet sites etc.?	Count	6	5	2	13
	%	46.2%	38.5%	15.4%	100.0%
Other?	Count		11	2	13
	%		84.6%	15.4%	100.0%

Question 12: Project activities

In practice, a project concerning “capacity building” usually starts with an analysis and/or evaluation exercise, and may end with a conference or seminar, or other forms of dissemination and awareness-raising. The same can be said of an action concerning “analysis and evaluation” or “awareness-raising. Thus the question can be asked whether it was adequate to identify “methods” as Strands of the Community Actions, rather than specific “policy areas”, “needs” and “target groups”, as is the case in the national ERF programmes. In general, in strategy development terms, it is indeed not common to have to define the methods of an action before its specific aims have been identified.

4.4.4 The Community Actions supported

In the mid-term evaluation, the fact that the Commission had not spent all the resources allocated to the Community Actions had been interpreted as an indication that a proper selection had been made – i.e. that only the most relevant proposals had been selected. However, the mid-term evaluation also referred to the possible lack of interest in the Community Action programme and

the relatively low number of applications received, which in turn may have affected the degree of relevance of the projects supported. The number of project proposals received was indeed considered to be particularly low, thus hindering the Commission's ability to maximise the relevance of the Community Action programme. Therefore, according to the mid-term evaluation, the degree of novelty and innovation of the projects was relatively limited[48].

However, the number of applications in 2000 – 2003 contradicts these conclusions. The number of applications was: 38 in 2000 (6 selected); 38 in 2001 (31 selected); 48 in 2002 (9 selected); and in 2003 forty-one (selected 11).[49] The reasons for rejection of the applications were the non-eligibility of projects, or their low scoring, on technical grounds, by the evaluation committee. Further, our examination of a sample of final reports of selected projects shows that eighteen out of twenty-one projects in 2000 – 2003 had clearly innovative elements in terms of policy focus (e.g. situation of refugee women in the EU), direct target groups (e.g. local authorities in several countries), partnership (e.g. transnational cooperation between 'new' and 'old' countries), and aims (e.g. the promotion of the involvement of refugee community organisations in EU policy and practice).

The following sections discuss the relevance of the Community Actions in terms of partnerships, target groups, and other aspects of relevance.

Partnership

The Community Actions are meant to be innovatory or of interest to the Community as a whole, and separate from the actions implemented by the Member States. Therefore one eligibility criterion is the explicit transnational dimension of an action. Our examination of a sample of projects shows that the number of transnational partners directly involved in each action ranged from none (in all four cases with regard to research activities under Strand A) to fifteen. The average number of partners of the seventeen sampled projects was 4.4.

[48] Mid-term evaluation, p. 129
[49] No data obtained regarding the rejected proposals in 2004 (yet)

	Question 5: How many partners are involved in the management and implementation of the project?	
	Count	%
1	1	7.7%
2	2	15.4%
4	3	23.1%
More than 4	5	38.5%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 5: Project partners

The table below also shows that partners have originated from throughout the EU, without any over-representation of any particular Member States.

Question 7: Please indicate the home country of the partner organisation(s)

	Question 7. 1: Please indicate the home country of the first partner organisation	Question 7. 2: Please indicate the home country of the second partner organisation	Question 7. 3: Please indicate the home country of the third partner organisation	Question 7. 4: Please indicate the home country of the fourth partner organisation
	Count	Count	Count	Count
Austria	2	1		
Belgium	2	1		
Czech Republic		1	1	
Finland	1	2	1	
Germany	1		1	1
Greece				1
Hungary			1	1
Ireland		1		
Italy	3		1	
Lithuania				1
Malta		1		
Netherlands	1			
Portugal		1		
Slovenia			1	1
Sweden			1	
United Kingdom		1		2
Unanswered	3	4	6	6
Total	13	13	13	13

Question 7: Home country of partner organisation

In 2004, two projects with transnational partners from the new Member States were selected. Overall, the majority of the lead partners were national or international NGOs, followed by international organisations. Within our sample of CAs, education or research organisations were under-represented. Partners were also mostly NGOs, according to the responses to our evaluation questionnaire.

	Question 3: What is the status of your organisation	
	Count	%
Public authority at national level	1	7.7%
National NGO	4	30.8%
International NGO	3	23.1%
Education or research organisation	1	7.7%
International organisation	3	23.1%
Unanswered	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 3: Organisation status

Question 8: Please indicate the status of the partner organisation(s)

	Question 8. 1: Please indicate the status of the first partner organisation	Question 8. 2: Please indicate the status of the second partner organisation	Question 8. 3: Please indicate the status of the second partner organisation	Question 8. 4: Please indicate the status of the second partner organisation
	Count	Count	Count	Count
Public authority at national level	2			
Public authority at regional level		1		
Public authority at local level			1	
National NGO	5	6	6	6
International NGO		1	1	1
Education or research organisation	1	1		1
Foundation (non-profit org.)	1			
International organisation	1	1		
Unanswered	3	3	5	5
Total	13	13	13	13

Question 8: Status of partner organisations

According to the mid-term evaluation, the majority of the Community Actions were successful in meeting the objectives relating to transnational partnership. However, most of these partnerships,

it was noted, were based on previous collaboration, meaning that they were not in themselves innovative and had not necessarily encouraged new networks[50].

Question 9: On what basis was the partnership developed?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
On the basis of previous formal collaboration (UNHCR)	Count	7	5	1	13
	%	53.8%	38.5%	7.7%	100.0%
On the basis of our knowledge of the professional expertise within the other organisations	Count	5	7	1	13
	%	38.5%	53.8%	7.7%	100.0%
On the basis of organisational ties (IOM)	Count	4	8	1	13
	%	30.8%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
On the basis of previous informal contact with national/regional/local partners	Count	2	10	1	13
	%	15.4%	76.9%	7.7%	100.0%
First contact was made when the ERF call for proposals was announced	Count		12	1	13
	%		92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
I don´t know	Count		12	1	13
	%		92.3%	7.7%	100.0%

Question 9: Basis of partnership

This can also be concluded in relation to the full ERF I period, on basis of the responses to our evaluation questionnaire. This will be further elaborated in chapter 5 on effectiveness and efficiency.

Target groups

The mid-term evaluation had concluded that the target groups were relevant and in line with the Council Decision. The direct target groups were both state and non-state professionals, as well as refugees and asylum seekers. The final beneficiaries were refugees and asylum seekers[51]. On the basis of the responses to our questionnaire, the same conclusion can be drawn for the full ERF-1 period.

[50] Mid-term evaluation, p. 129
[51] Midterm evaluation, p. 129

Question 13: At which group is the project targeted (i.e. who participates in the activities)?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Professionals from government institutions?	Count	8	3	2	13
	%	61.5%	23.1%	15.4%	100.0%
Professionals from NGOs or international organisations?	Count	10	1	2	13
	%	76.9%	7.7%	15.4%	100.0%
Researchers in the field of asylum and refugee policy/law?	Count	5	6	2	13
	%	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Opinion makers?	Count	5	6	2	13
	%	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Third-country nationals or stateless persons with Geneva convention status?	Count	5	6	2	13
	%	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Third-contry nationals or stateless persons enjoying another form of protection granted by the member state?	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Third-country nationals who have applied for one of the aove protection statuses?	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Persons benefiting from temporary protection arrangements?	Count	1	10	2	13
	%	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
Persons whose right to temporary perotection is being examined?	Count		12	1	13
	%		92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
Other?	Count	3	9	1	13
	%	23.1%	69.2%	7.7%	100.0%

Question 13: Target group of project

Further, many of the actions concerned specific vulnerable groups, e.g. women, children, traumatised persons, and/or specific ethnic groups.

Question 15: Is the Community Action aimed at other specific groups?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Women	%	23.1%	53.8%	23.1%	100.0%
Men	%		76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
Family groups, e.g. families with young children, single parents,etc.	%	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	100.0%
The elderly	%	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Children	%	15.4%	61.5%	23.1%	100.0%
Traumatised persons	%	23.1%	53.8%	23.1%	100.0%
Unaccompanied minors	%	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Disabled persons	%	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Young people	%	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Specific ethnic groups or minorities	%	15.4%	61.5%	23.1%	100.0%
Other groups	%	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%	100.0%

Question 15: Aim of the Community Action

Evaluation of our sample of projects (n=21) shows that eight projects related to reception, eight related to integration, or both reception and integration, and five related to voluntary repatriation

(and reception and/or integration). As regards specific groups, three of the twenty-one projects aimed to involve refugees and/or their community organisations, two aimed to involve women, two were targeted at young people, including unaccompanied minors, two at traumatised persons, one at a specific ethnic group, and one at resettled/quota refugees.

Other aspects

Evaluation of the sample of 21 projects has shown that all of these projects met the objectives of the annual ERF Community Actions programmes. Again, this does not necessarily mean that these objectives are in line with actual needs of the target groups. While most of our sampled respondents consider that the needs of the target groups have been covered by their actions, over 69% of them also indicate that, in their opinion, the ERF Community Actions programmes only address the current needs of the target groups "to some extent".

	Question 18: In your opinion, to what extent does the EU ERF strategy meet the present needs of the groups targeted by the ERF ?	
	Count	%
To some extent	9	69.2%
To a limited extent	1	7.7%
Not at all	1	7.7%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 18: ERF strategy and needs of target group

	Question 17: Are your familiar with the EU ERF programmes	
	Count	%
Yes, I know it very well	6	46.2%
Yes, I know it fairly well	4	30.8%
Yes, I know it, but not very well	1	7.7%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 17: Awareness on ERF the programme

	Question 21: To what extent is your project in line with the ERF strategy?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	8	61.5%
To some extent	2	15.4%
Irrelevant	1	7.7%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 21: Project relevance to ERF strategy

Almost all the respondents indicate that their project would not have been implemented, or only partly, in the absence of an ERF grant.

	Question 23: Please indicate which of the following statements reflects the funding history of your project? What would have happened to the project without the ERF funding?	
	Count	%
The project would not have been implemented	11	84.6%
Only parts of the project would have been implemented	1	7.7%
Unanswered	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 23: Relevance of ERF funding for projects

4. 5 Conclusions on relevance

4.5.1 Relevance at EU level

The overall strategy of the ERF has the purpose of promoting a balance in Member State efforts in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. This is done through two different mechanisms, namely burden-sharing through national programmes distributing ERF funds to Member States and cross-country Community Actions. It was decided to divide ERF funds with 95 % to national programmes and 5 % to Community Actions. In the mid-term evaluation by PLS Ramböll, it was argued that Community Actions should receive a higher proportion of funds, an argument which is supported by the findings of the present evaluation. In the second phase of ERF, 7 % of all funds are allocated to Community Actions. The 5/95 division, as established by the Council Decision, is by and large reflected in the amounts

allocated to the two programmes throughout the period in question, with an average of 4 % of ERF funds spent on Community Actions and 96 % on national programmes.

The overall trend shows a high correlation between the number of asylum seekers and the amount of ERF funds received – i.e. the Member States receiving the most funds are the ones that have the highest numbers of asylum seekers. When examining more specifically the relation between the amount of ERF funds and the number of asylum seekers on a per capita GDP basis, there is also a relatively high correlation. However, when including new member states, the correlation between distribution of ERF funds and number of asylum applications per capita GDP as well as on the basis of the number of applications per inhabitant, is less pronounced. Calculations have shown that the burden-sharing mechanism in the Council Decision 2000/596/EC has been implemented in full. There is no doubt that the ERF funds have been distributed in accordance with the principle of burden-sharing.

Because the process of meeting the objectives of a Common European Asylum Policy is clearly a gradual process, it is perhaps more accurate to characterise the relation between the overall ERF strategy and the national ERF strategies as a relation of converging interests of Member States in finding common denominators for the management of issues concerning asylum.

4.5.2 Relevance of national programmes

All national ERF programmes implemented in 2000-2004 have been in line with Council Decision 2000/596/EC. Furthermore, the decentralised structure of the ERF has facilitated the relevance of these national programmes, as needs have been defined at the national level rather than through predetermined regulative measures.

With the exception of the Czech Republic, which opted out of the programme in 2004, all the Member States have made maximum use of the ERF budget support. The high degree of adherence to and use of the ERF opportunity to co-finance national strategies is an indicator of the perceived relevance of the ERF programme, and of the active interest of governments in using the ERF to enhance their own national structures and procedures in the areas of reception, integration and repatriation.

At the national level, the ERF strategies, or Requests for Co-financing, are based on the needs for intervention as perceived and assessed by the national responsible authorities in each country, according to the ERF's principle of decentralisation. While the decentralised structure definitely facilitates a high degree of relevance of national strategies, it also complicates any meaningful assessment of relevance overall.

Article 13 of the Council Decision establishing the ERF states that ERF contributions may not exceed 50 % (75 % in Cohesion Fund Member States) of the total cost of the measure. Thus, to the ERF funds must be complementary to state and private funds. The evaluation shows that all the Member States have adhered to this principle of additionality, indicating that, amongst national authorities, the ERF is perceived to be a relevant and useful tool to enhance national structures and procedures.

Overall, the Member States' strategies can be divided into three different approaches: *establishment* of structures for reception, integration and voluntary repatriation; *improvement* of existing structures; and *innovative and additional* activities. Regardless of approach, nearly all Member States have focussed their interventions on concrete and isolated interventions, rather than on developing broader strategic initiatives. Most strategies aim to cover areas not targeted by existing policies, thereby ensuring a high degree of relevance.

In relation to the definition of national strategies, the NRAs are entrusted with the identification of needs, which in some cases may be conducted in partnership with civil society organisations (as is the case in Germany), or with local authorities and NGOs (as is the case in Italy). However, each member state has developed its national strategies and application for co-funding in accordance with its own particular traditions.

In relation specifically to target groups, many project managers considered that the national strategies were relevant. However, more than 15 % found them to be of limited relevance. A more systematic involvement of actors other than national authorities in the development of strategies might increase the relevance of these.

All the Member States organise their strategies according to three intervention areas, as established by the Council Decision, namely reception, integration and voluntary repatriation.

Throughout the ERF-1 period, a little less than half of the total ERF funds were allocated to reception activities, one third to integration and one fifth to voluntary repatriation. Thus, most Member States have given priority to reception measures. In a range of countries, however, focus has shifted from reception to integration during the period. This shift was particularly pronounced in Belgium, Italy and the UK. In most countries, voluntary repatriation activities were only allocated a low proportion of the ERF funds – and often this proportion has decreased during the five-year period. Exceptions to this were Austria, UK, the Netherlands and Ireland, all of which have prioritised repatriation. The changes in priorities reflect national and international immigration developments, such as a decrease in the number of asylum seekers and the need to prepare for the introduction of minimum standards in the area of reception. The inclusion of the ten new Member States in the ERF in 2004 has not had any discernible effect on the direction of the programme.

4.5.3 Relevance of Community Actions

The Community Action programme was established by Article 5 of the Council Decision establishing the ERF. The strategy for the programme is included in the Framework for Community Actions, which states that all actions supported under the programme must be of interest to the Community and have an innovatory nature. The activities supported are evaluation and analysis, capacity building and awareness-raising. The Commission is responsible for management of the programme, including elaboration and publication of calls for proposals, selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation, publicity, follow-up and dissemination of results.

The annual calls for proposals outline the specific focus of the programme, the selection and award criteria, as well as the exclusion criteria. Apart from these calls for proposals and work programmes, a Guide to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions was produced in 2004, outlining all the practical aspects relating to application procedures, payment of grants, reporting, evaluation and dissemination of results. The evaluation team has evidenced that the calls for proposals, the work programmes and the guide, including the priorities and measures outlined herein, are all consistent with the objectives of the Community Action programme.

In order to assess the relevance of the chosen priorities and measures, as well as the changes introduced in these, however, there would be a need to assess the background analysis leading to

these. Likewise, it would be necessary to compare the background analysis to the overall strategy. To our knowledge, such a document outlining the overall strategy of the Community Actions does not yet exist. The evaluation team recommends that the Commission actively encourage the compilation and analysis of the results of the projects carried out in particular under Strand A: Evaluation and analysis. Such a compilation and analysis of the results of community actions, including the study on reception and integration of refugee women in the EU, analysis of refugee integration policies in EU member states, study on the different forms of incentives to promote the return of rejected asylum seekers and formerly temporary protected persons, research on refugees' contribution to the European labour market, and Separated Children in Europe Programme, could be used by the Commission as a background to the determination of its ERF strategy, as well as by potential ERF grant applicants to prevent duplication of actions.

ERF contributions to Community Actions were, throughout the whole period, well below the established 80 %, ranging from 71.4 % in 2004 to 79.3 % in 2002. It has not been possible to assess the exact division of funds according to strands over the full period, given that, until 2003, projects were not labelled according to strands. In 2003, 24.4 % of the funds went to “analysis and evaluation”, 57.2 % to “capacity building” and 18.3 % to “awareness-raising” activities. In 2004, none of the funds benefited “analysis and evaluation”, while 83.5 % went to “capacity building” and 16.5 % to “awareness-raising”. According to the mid-term evaluation, in the period 2000-2002, the majority of the funds benefited “analysis and evaluation” activities and one-fourth of the funds were allocated to “awareness-raising” and “capacity building” respectively. Our conclusion is that the overall focus of the CAs has been relevant. However, the above divisions appear to largely arbitrary. Often, projects include elements from all three strands. The choice of a strand, i.e. analysis and evaluation, capacity building or awareness-raising, remains unclear. It also unclear why the Community Actions have not adopted the strands used in the national ERF programmes, thus facilitating the interrelationship and possible synergies between the two categories of project.

The projects supported through the Community Action programme have included between 0 and 15 partners, the average number being 4.4. Partners of the lead organisations have originated from all the EU countries. Most partners were NGOs. The groups targeted through the Community Actions have been in line with those outlined in the Community Actions programme. As regards specific vulnerable groups, some actions have targeted women, youngsters,

unaccompanied minors, traumatised persons, specific ethnic groups and resettled refugees. All projects examined met the objectives of the Community Actions programme. This does not necessarily mean that these objectives have addressed the needs of the target groups. Most project managers, however, have pointed to the relevance of the strategy. Many of the projects sampled for this evaluation have included clearly innovative elements, either in terms of subject focus, target groups, partnerships or aims.

Chapter 5: Effectiveness and efficiency

5.1 Introduction

Issues of *effectiveness* are related to implementation features and outcomes, particularly as regards the achievement of the planned outputs. In assessing effectiveness, this assessment will focus on the following features:

- National project selection procedures and criteria;
- National systems of monitoring and evaluating the effects of programmes/projects in relation to stated objectives;
- National systems for integrating best practices and lessons learned;
- Effective feedback mechanisms between external and internal actors for improving performance;
- Achievement of outputs as compared to project documents;
- Achievement of programme objectives through outputs;
- Achievement of results in accordance with relevant EU standards.

Issues of *efficiency* relate to the costs of intervention and to the relationship between inputs and outputs, relative to possible counterfactuals/alternative methods – i.e. could national programmes have been carried out in other, more cost-effective ways? Efficiency is assessed, in particular, in relation to:

- The existing national monitoring mechanisms;
- The financial procedures, at national level and between the EC and the national responsible authorities;
- The efficiency of management structures in achieving goals, following up on problem areas, reporting requirements and administrative procedures;
- Budget commitments versus budget consumption (at national programme level).

5.2 Effectiveness and efficiency of organisational set-up and management procedures at EU level

As outlined in Chapter 4 on relevance, the ERF-1 programme leaves a very broad margin for decisions to Member States. Management and implementation structures of the ERF-1 should thus mirror the need for a difficult balance between central coordination and local management. The procedures for the management of the Fund are outlined in the Council Decision 2000/596/EC of 28 September 2000, articles 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19 and 20. They are further specified in the Commission Decision 2001/275/EC of 20 March 2001 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Decision 2000/596/EC as regards the eligibility of expenditure and reports on implementation in the context of actions co-financed by the European Refugee Fund, and in the Commission Decision 2002/307/EC of 18 December 2001 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Decision 2000/596/EC as regards management and control systems and procedures for making financial corrections in the context of actions co-financed by the European Refugee Fund.

The ERF has a decentralised character and the Council Decision 2000/596/EC does not foresee any role for the Commission to interfere with national strategies and priorities, thus respecting the sovereignty of the Member States on these matters. Management of the ERF at EU level is thus mainly administrative and coordinative. This can best be illustrated by the fact that the Commission approves submitted applications for co-financing developed by the Member States in order to allocate funding, but it does not interfere in their content – besides approving that the applications are eligible for funding in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Commission Decision for ERF-1.

5.2.1 Responsibilities and structures

During ERF-1, the responsibilities of the Commission were as follows:

- Overall allocation of annual appropriations according to the distribution key
- Verification of Requests for Co-financing with regard to compliance with provisions of the Council Decision and financial rules in force
- Approval of Requests for Co-financing and adoption of decision on co-financing, including the amount allocated
- Payment of funds to Member States
- Implementation of smoothly functioning management and control systems (including on-the-spot checks)

- Decision on reduction or cancellation of grants in certain cases
- Submission of mid-term and final reports to the European Parliament and the Council
- Design of the ERF II and adoption of the ERF 1 legal framework
- Management of the ERF Committee
- Mid-term evaluation framework

In relation to the Community Actions, the Commission has a range of additional responsibilities, outlined in the section below.

The responsibilities for managing the ERF lie with Unit B4 of the Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission. Within this unit, a range of desk officers has been appointed to carry out the tasks related to these responsibilities. The desks officers are the Member States' daily point of reference in the Commission and have the responsibility to fulfil the tasks related to the Commission, as outlined in the Council Decision. They are also expected to provide occasional expert assistance to the Member State representatives. Their tasks include advice and guidance in relation to requests for co-financing, administrative requirements, formats for narrative reporting, and standards for financial reporting and many desk officers are responsible for more than one Member State.

5.2.2 National strategies

Beside the overall allocation of annual appropriations according to the distribution key as discussed in the previous chapter, the Commission fulfils an important task in verifying and approving annual requests for co-financing (or national strategies). Each year the NRAs submit to the Commission their annual request for co-financing. The maximum size of the request is determined by the estimate on the allocated funding, which has been communicated by the Commission to the NRA by 1 June of the year previous to the year of implementation. The timetable for these procedures is laid down in Article 11 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC, while Article 8 defines the minimum standard format of the requests for co-financing of the three measures. The request for co-financing should, for each of the three measures, describe:

- The situation in the Member State and the requirements justifying the implementation of measures eligible for support form the fund.

- The nature and purpose, expected quantified results and the costs of the actions the member State intents to implement in relation to the three measures.

The requests for co-funding submitted to the Commission follow the standards laid down in Article 8. During the process of elaboration, NRAs often consult, on an informal basis, with their desk officers up until the point of formal submission of the request. This dialogue ensures the quality of the requests and prevents situations where revisions are needed. Despite this, there are still cases where requests do not meet the required standards and have to be re-submitted

Studies of samples of requests for co-financing show that the standard format as laid down in Article 8, can be interpreted in different ways and different level of abstraction from the very general to the most concrete. It would be helpful for the understanding of the requests for co-financing to apply a more consistent use of the terminology and definitions of the logical frame-work approach.

It is the view of the evaluators that the needs for developing a set of standard and objectively assessable measurable milestones for the national strategies have evolved during the implementation of the ERF-1, as the "Guidelines for the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating European Refugee Fund (ERF) co-financed actions in the period 2000-2004" adopted by the Commission in February 2002 has defined a "common framework for the setting of programme objectives and indicators". The guidelines state that the intention is not to impose a single framework on the Member States but rather to provide a working tool, which can be used as a frame of reference to secure a minimum of coherence in approach in order to make comparison at Community level possible. But in spite of the adoption of the guidelines, that were obviously primarily meant for evaluations and monitoring, the requests for co-financing submitted by the NRAs in 2003 in general replicate the same formats as in previous years without taking much notice of the definition of the common framework. Unfortunately the lack of consistency and accurateness in making a problem analysis, and defining the general objectives, immediate objectives, outputs, activities, corresponding results, outcomes impact and verifiable indicators as well as the concrete means for verification, has been reflected, more often than not, in the annual strategies. The value of the national strategies and subsequent reports for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating is thus watered down.

Therefore, while the evaluators have found that the Commission effectively ensure that the standards required by the Council Decision are upheld, the evaluators also found that the general quality of the requests (and of the final reports) could be raised by a more rigorous application of the logical framework approach as basis for development of comparable terminologies and indicators.

5.2.3 Monitoring

Another important task of the Commission is to monitor the implementation of the ERF co-funding programme in cooperation with the NRAs. The Commission has defined monitoring as an exhaustive and regular examination of the resources, outputs and results of an intervention. The monitoring system in the ERF programme is underpinned by a flow of continuous information and regular reporting on progress in terms of implementation and final reports, reviews, balance sheets, indicators etc.

Besides the continuous desk monitoring of implementation through reports delivered by NRAs, the Commission have also paid monitoring visits to the NRAs during the implementation of ERF-1. Most countries have had one monitoring visit and a few have had two. A typical monitoring visit consists of a number of meetings with NRAs in charge of the national ERF programme on management and administrative level and, occasionally, of concrete on-the-spot project visits. The monitoring visit focuses on procedures and conditions for commitment of ERF funding, formats of applications, selection procedures and criteria, composition of the funding of concrete projects and percentage of ERF funding, control and management systems, financial responsibilities and cash flows, and reporting systems. Following the visit, a monitoring report is issued with conclusions and recommendations.

5.2.4 Communication and support

Most NRAs have confirmed the importance of continuous communication between NRAs and desk officers at the Commission. The majority enjoy good communication with EC desk officers, they have been properly introduced to the ERF and they receive the necessary support. In some instances, NRAs mentioned a need for more frequent communication. The evaluators also found a few NRAs, who complained about poor communication and support, expressing a need for a more active role of the desk officers. In general, however, the desk officers were perceived positively as a potential source for capacity building of NRAs through dialogue. The support and

advice given to NRAs was appreciated. The idea of more frequent on-the-spot visits by desk officers, not just to check and control, but also to build a collegial working relationship to ensure continuity and follow up on observations made and dialogues raised during the implementation of the programme, emerged from time to time at meetings with NRAs. Besides the need for more frequent monitoring visits with the purpose of ensuring the implementation of smoothly functioning management and control systems, such visits could also help increase the awareness of implementers on the ERF programme and increase the visibility of the Commission at project level.

Apart from their bilateral communication with desk officers, national ERF authorities are in contact with the EU level through their participation in a committee, as laid down in Council Decision 2000/596/EC, Article 21 and in the Council Decision laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission (1999/468/EC), Articles 3 and 7. The committee consists of representatives from all Member States and is chaired by a representative of the Commission. Desk officers participate in the meetings as well. The committee meetings provide a forum for continuous communication between national responsible authorities and the Commission, and may consider any question relating to the Council Decision, raised by a chairman or by a Member State representative[52].

The committee meetings provide the only formally established mechanism for communication among member states. The committee's mandate does not allow it to function as a platform for horizontal exchanges of views and experience in the field of asylum and refugee issues, for example in order to highlight cases of best practices. Exchange of experiences and best practices within the ERF are not part of the work of the committee and consequently no time is set aside for such activities[53]. Besides meetings organised by the committee, member states have little opportunity to meet and discuss issues of common interest. Following the mid-term evaluation, the Commission hosted a major ERF conference. Some NRAs have expressed appreciation of this initiative but also found it puzzling that this initiative was never followed by other similar events. There is thus an obvious need for the establishment of a forum, additional to the committee, in

[52] Council Decision (2000/596/EC), article 21

[53] Furthermore, the fact that at times NRAs are represented by officials posted in Brussels, rather than by those officials who are actually responsible for the implementation of the ERF programme at a national level also puts limitations to what can be meaningfully discussed at these meetings, as some representatives simply do not have the sufficient knowledge.

which such activities could take place – or, alternatively, to alter the structure of the committee and make room for such activities within the committee.

5.3 Effectiveness and efficiency of organisational set-up and management procedures at national level

5.3.1 Responsibilities and structures

The management and implementation of the national programmes of the ERF is highly decentralised, meaning that most responsibilities lie with the Member States. As stated in Article 7: "The Member States shall be responsible for implementation of action supported by the Fund"[54]. Their responsibilities are, among others:

- Appointment of a national responsible authority which will handle all communication with the Commission and be responsible for management and implementation of the ERF
- Elaboration of Requests for Co-financing
- Publication of call for proposals and selection of projects
- Management and administration of projects
- Financial control of projects, including investigation of irregularities
- Monitoring and evaluation of projects, including an independent assessment
- Submission of annual summary reports and a final report

The detailed rules for management and implementation in relation to eligibility of expenditure, reports, management and control systems and procedures for making financial corrections are outlined in the above-mentioned decisions. The document Guidelines for the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating ERF co-financed actions in the period 2000-2004 (February 2002) further outlines the tools for monitoring and evaluation of ERF projects.

Despite these central guidelines, however, the ERF does work in a decentralised manner. The Commission does not interfere with national strategies or ways of implementing them. The degree of decentralisation is reflected in the wide range of different organisational set-ups, management and implementation structures adopted throughout the EU. Council Decision 2000/596/EC, Article 7 specifies that each member state shall appoint a responsible authority,

[54] Council Decision (2000/596/EC), Article 7

which shall handle all communication with the Commission. The decision further states that the appointed authority shall be a public administration, but may delegate its responsibility for implementation to another public administration or a non-governmental organisation. This provision leaves a broad margin for each Member State to develop its own responsible ERF structure fitting into the local national context. The list of appointed national responsible authorities for ERF in the 24 Member States shows which entities are responsible for the management of the ERF in each country.

National responsible authorities by country

Country	**National responsible authority**
Austria	Bundesministerium für Inneres, Sektion III – Recht, 5b
Belgium	Federal Agency for Asylum Affairs
Cyprus	Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior
Czech Republic	Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Ministry of Interior
Estonia	Aliens Department, Ministry of Interior
Finland	Ministry of Labour
France	Ministère de l'emploi, du travail et de la cohésion sociale, Direction de la population et des migrations, Bureau des réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile
Germany	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nationale Zentralstelle zur Verwaltung des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds
Greece	Department of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Solidarity
Hungary	Office of Immigration and Nationality, Ministry of Interior
Ireland	Reception and Integration Agency, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reforms
Italy	Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Centrale dei servizi civili per l'Immigrazione e l'Asilo, Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione
Latvia	Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Ministry of Interior
Lithuania	Asylum Affairs Division, Migration Department, Ministry of International Affairs
Luxembourg	Ministère de la Famille, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Jeunesse, Commissariat du Gouvernement aux Etrangers
Malta	Third Country National Directorate, Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs
Netherlands	Department of Immigration and Integration, Ministry of Justice
Poland	Ministry of Interior and Administration
Portugal	Servico de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, Ministry of Internal Affairs[55]
Slovak Republic	Migration Office, Ministry of Interior

[55] Coordination and management delegated to the EQUAL unit of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Slovenia	Office for Immigration and Refugees, Ministry of Interior
Spain	Ministry of Internal Affairs
Sweden	Swedish Migration Board
United Kingdom	Refugee Integration Section, Home Office

Most national responsible authorities run the national programmes in an efficient and effective manner. There have been a few cases of inefficient management of the fund but these have all been solved, in some instances through transfer of responsibilities for ERF management to another entity than the original (this was the case in e.g. Greece and Belgium).

The general impression in all visited countries is that the administration is perceived to be bureaucratic and a heavy burden both on the level of NRA and of project management. As an example of good practise in this respect should be mentioned that the Ministry of Interior in Austria took the consequence of this perception and decided in 2001 to spend funds for technical support on outsourcing the administration of the ERF-1 programme to a professional company, Public Management & Consulting. A section under the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) took over the task in 2004 and is now responsible for administrative issues. In Italy, another example of good practice, a secretariat (Servizio Centrale), was established at the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). This secretariat is responsible for the management of the entire plan of action concerning refugee and asylum seekers in Italy, co-financed by ERF-1. In Portugal, the Servico de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras acknowledged that its conflictive relationship with some NGOs could hamper implementation of the programme, and therefore transferred this responsibility to Portugal's office for the EQUAL Community initiative, located within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In Finland the responsibility for the ERF programme has been discharged to the Ministry of Labour. In Germany, special priority has been given to more efficient disbursement of funds to prevent projects from stopping in mid-stream; this has lead project managers to view the German NRA as distinctly different from other aspects of the German bureaucracy. Other countries have added the administration of the ERF-1 co-financing to the tasks of the NRAs, which means that the five percent for technical support becomes a supplementary source of income for funding of the administrative tasks performed by the NRA.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**Italy**
Project title	**Monitoring and Database**

Managing entity	**Servizio Centrale**
ERF Measure	**Technical Assistance**

The Servizio Centrale is the technical support unit of the Italian national programme for reception, integration and repatriation of refugees and asylum seekers. The Unit is anchored at the National Association of Italian Municipalities and has established a database that collects all essential data on the system of reception, integration and repatriation.

The database is the information centre of an internet based IT network of all participating municipalities and projects in the national programme. The projects/municipalities have the task of regularly updating (i.e. every three months) the database with the information relevant for monitoring the implementation of their project through filling out a reporting sheet with data. Access to the network requires passwords and is only given to the person appointed by the municipality to be in charge of providing accurate information to the system. The municipalities have access to the information they have provided to the database so they can monitor with accuracy their own performance. The Servizio Centrale support the updating of the database and thus has a very accurate updated overview of the concrete implementation of the entire program. The database contains all basic information about the projects, such as its location, number of staff, sub contractors, offered services and courses and habitation offered to beneficiaries. It further contains information about beneficiaries such as their personal data, attended courses, services provided for them, language proficiencies, willingness in attending further courses, profession, competences, living place, type of permission of stay, and documents.

The database can, at any given time, provide information about the turn over of the reception and integration activities, how many have entered the system, how many have left it and for which reason, how many are participating at any given time, the activities beneficiaries are pursuing, the varieties and requirements of services needed etc. The database functions mainly as a tool for monitoring the projects and for assessing concrete needs for basic support of beneficiaries, to plan for professional educational processes that can be tailor made needs and to asses concrete needs for legal counselling and assistance for beneficiaries. The database is thus an extremely efficient tool for needs assessments, reporting, and monitoring. It could probably be developed as an important tool for planning.

Best practice: Italy

It is not possible to recommend one specific approach as being better than the other, as national contexts vary to a high degree and what works in one might not work in another. However, it should not be underestimated that financial administration and management of a fund that finances projects carried out by NGOs and other non-governmental entities is a quite different task than normal public administration. It requires different resources, competencies and capacities in selecting projects, transferring funds and monitoring projects. In this context, a closer review of the appropriateness of the amount of funding for technical assistance, as laid down in Council Decision 2000/596/EC Article 12, could be carried out, assessing the correspondence between allocated funding for the administrative tasks and the requested quantity and quality of performance. More specifically, the evaluation team finds the 5 % rate to be too low when seen in relation to the demands of project administration. A small increase, based on the number or extent of projects, would be recommended.

5.3.2 National strategies and selection procedures

The national strategies are commonly developed by the National Responsible Authorities. In some cases however the yearly strategy has been developed jointly with other stakeholders such as other governmental entities and other bodies with expertise on refugee and asylum matters. In Italy for instance, the yearly strategy for ERF co-funding is developed by the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with National Association of Municipal Authorities and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In Sweden a National Consultative Group consisting of a broad number of governmental stakeholders and UNHCR develops the yearly strategy. In other countries, the NRA develops the national strategy on a consultative basis with stakeholders from other governmental bodies.

Many countries have established a steering group for the programme or a committee for selection of project proposals. These committees often include representatives from authorities responsible for the national EQUAL programme in order to ensure complementarities. The committees are often composed by other governmental or public stakeholders to asylum and refugee issues, such as Ministries of Interiors, Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Education, Ministries of Justice and municipal associations. Sometimes UNHCR is included in the committee, either in a consultancy capacity or as a full member with voting rights.

The selection of projects follows similar procedures in all the Member States, in line with the guidelines in Article 9 of the Council Decision. Calls for proposals are publicised on the NRAs' web sites and in a variety of printed media. In some Member States calls for proposals are publicised in national newspapers, and sometimes direct mail or e-mail has been used in order to ensure that potentially relevant organisations are reached. In many countries, however, it has proven difficult to find sufficient eligible organisations. In the Netherlands, for instance, it was not until 2004 that enough eligible organisations were found. Likewise, some new member states have experienced similar problems. One example is Hungary where the call for proposals had to be published three times. Whether this is due to a low number of potential applicants in the country or a poor distribution of the calls for proposals, is difficult to say, but the evaluation team recommends that the national authorities who have experienced problems in relation hereto, investigate the issue further.

Each Member State has a variety of screening procedures, some involving pre-screening on technical grounds, others involving different entities for the screening of different aspects of the

proposals. In a few instances the evaluators have identified a relative lack of transparency in the selection processes, including the rejection of projects without any transparent justification. Here the German experience is instructive, where regional authorities or local welfare organs submit forms in which they can comment on the project's relevance to their region or area of concern. These recommending authorities (the social office in a given district) eventually become local monitors of the projects as well. Also, the NRA staff works closely with applicants, assisting them to revise their applications to more acceptable forms rather than rejecting them outright.

In most countries, civil society representatives are not included in the development of national strategies or in the project selection process. Thus civil society organisations, which are often implementers of projects and possess concrete field expertise, have little formalised access to contribute to the development of national strategies. On the other hand, the inclusion of NGOs, refugee community organisations and other civil society organisations into the selection committees would clearly create situations in which conflict of interests could arise. However, in the case of the ERF, implementing organisations are not only NGOs and other civil society actors – very often, public authorities also implement projects. While there is a certain caution to include implementing civil society organisations, there does not seem to be the same awareness of the potential conflict of interest in including public authorities. The evaluation has thus found examples in some countries, e.g. Portugal and Sweden, where actors involved in the selection of projects are sometimes also involved in organisations or institutions receiving the grants. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the projects selected were not the ones that would contribute to the fulfilment of the national strategy in the most efficient and effective manner. Here the German experience is instructive: regional authorities can write recommendations for projects and then subsequently carry out some monitoring functions, thus freeing NRA staff to deal with more substantive issues.

Ireland also appears to have devised an interesting scheme to ensure a broad societal impact on the selection procedures, by including into the selection committee representatives of international, governmental and umbrella organisations such as the National Consultative Committee for Racism & Interculturalism (NCCRI), which is an independent expert body bringing together government and non-government organisations on issues of racism and interculturalism, the Churches Asylum Network, UNHCR and the North Area Health Board. The government is mainly represented by the Asylum Policy Division of the Department of Justice,

Equality and Law Reform and the Reception and Integration Agency, which is responsible for the ERF management in Ireland. Another example of good practice is Finland, where authorities share the results of the findings of the yearly independent evaluations at meetings with implementers and the reflections from these meetings are carried forward in the next submission. In Germany as well, regional meetings of implementing organisations are fed back to the selection committee in making priorities for future grants, such as in psycho-social services.

5.3.3 Transfer of funds

Sometimes evaluators were met with complaints about delayed transfer of funds from the Commission to the NRAs. National responsible authorities often complain that they do not receive the funds they are entitled to, while the Commission indicates that funds can only be paid when the Member States have fulfilled their obligations in relation to the transfer of funds, i.e. by submitting their final reports. When checking a sample of transfers, the evaluation team did not find delays in transfer of the initial 50% of the yearly allocations. For the interim payments of 30 % some transfers have taken place later than it could be expected. For some countries, when requesting the second interim payment, it seems to be a problem to prove that half of the initial payment has been spent, as the supporting documentation typically consists of financial reports from a number of implementers. For final payments the picture is similar, delays in delivery of the required annual report on implementation of the programme and final accounts will delay final payments. As the time frame of 18 months after the termination of the implementing year for fulfilling procedures to obtain final payments, should be adequate, the evaluators find that transfer of funds has followed the procedures as laid down in Article 17 of the Commission Decision 2000/596/EC.

However, in some countries the evaluators met the argument that the difficulties in obtaining interim and especially final payments created delays in cash flow. These delays prevented the NRAs from paying the implementing organisations and institutions in due time for their services, as the regulations on public spending prevented the NRA from laying out for expenses. This problem needs to be addressed by the government, however, and not by the Commission, as the Commission has no responsibility for financial arrangements between NRAs and implementers.

On the other hand, it seems that many NRAs were simply not aware of these rules, indicating a need for the Commission to clarify rules and regulations in this area. Also, since late payments

from the Commission are used by NRAs to justify delays in payments to implementers, this creates an undeserved bad publicity for the Commission. Hence, a clarification of responsibilities would benefit the reputation of the Commission.

To sum up, the evaluation team found that current management procedures do present some problems of efficiency and effectiveness in relation to funding delays, excessive administration and bureaucracy and inefficient management implementation in some Member States. No instance can be blamed for not doing their best, but the administrative structures should be reviewed in order to smooth out weaknesses and potential problems in relation to efficiency and effectiveness.

5.3.4 National Evaluations

NRAs are required to conduct their own independent annual evaluations. This amounts to seven evaluations over the five-year implementation period of the ERF-1. The table below confirms that evaluation and monitoring exercises have been conducted by all the project implementers. Many implementers, however, have expressed concern over the fact that these exercises were of limited use to them, relative to the effort involved. While most are not negative towards evaluations as such, many do express their frustration with the apparent futility of the evaluations carried out as there is no systematic follow-up to these. In Finland, however, recommendations from national evaluations are systematically included in the coming year's strategy.

% within Countries

		Question 31: Have you or another evaluator conducted monitoring and/or evaluation activities in connection with the project?						
		Yes, we have monitored and evaluated	Yes, we have monitored but not evaluated	Yes, we have evaluated but not monitored	No, we have neither monitored nor evaluated	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	84.9%	13.2%	1.9%				100.0%
	France	94.3%	2.9%	2.9%				100.0%
	Germany	30.9%	3.9%	42.2%	12.4%	7.1%	3.5%	100.0%
	Sweden	47.4%		39.5%	2.6%	10.5%		100.0%
	Spain	100.0%						100.0%
	Portugal	23.5%	23.5%	35.3%	17.6%			100.0%
	Italy	55.7%	34.4%	4.9%		4.9%		100.0%
	Greece	81.5%	18.5%					100.0%
	Netherlands	83.3%	7.1%		7.1%		2.4%	100.0%
	Finland	77.8%		22.2%				100.0%
	Austria	61.8%	5.5%	21.8%	1.8%	9.1%		100.0%
	Belgium	71.4%	5.4%	14.3%			8.9%	100.0%
	Lux	64.3%		35.7%				100.0%
	Ireland	69.2%	17.9%	5.1%			7.7%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%			50.0%			100.0%
	Estonia	50.0%	50.0%					100.0%
	Hungary	42.9%	57.1%					100.0%
	Latvia						100.0%	100.0%
	Lithuania	60.0%			40.0%			100.0%
	Poland	60.0%	20.0%		20.0%			100.0%
	Slovak Republik	50.0%					50.0%	100.0%
	Slovenia	38.5%	15.4%			7.7%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		54.2%	11.7%	21.1%	5.6%	4.3%	3.1%	100.0%

Question 31: Evaluation and monitoring of projects

At the time of the present ex-post evaluation, the national evaluations for 2004 had not been conducted yet, and not all countries had completed the evaluation of the 2003 programme. Most national evaluations concerned the first three years 2000 – 2002. Evaluations are typically sub-contracted to private agencies of professional consultants or agencies linked to independent academic institutions. The data used to evaluate the national programmes include desk studies of national strategies, collections of relevant laws and regulations, synthesis reports, narrative and financial project reports, internal summaries of meetings, and interviews with relevant staff and beneficiaries in order to measure relevance, efficiency effectiveness, outcomes and sustainability.

The quality of the national evaluations varies to a great degree. While in some countries, such as Germany, the evaluations are of a very high quality, in others they are very superficial, contributing with no systematic analysis of the programme in question. In some countries

evaluations have developed into analyses of substance and contents and into helping projects to evaluate themselves. In Finland, for example, findings are shared each year at a meeting with project coordinators and other interested parties, and reflections from these meetings are carried forward to the next submission of proposals for co-financing. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour has also arranged for the training of project managers in various aspects of good practice.

One weakness of the evaluations might be the narrow focus on administration and implementation of ERF funded projects within a national context, overlooking the programme's relations with the EU. In other words, the relation between ERF and EU migration strategies may often be overlooked in the emphasis on the national level. It remains to be discussed whether national evaluations ought to include such overall strategic issues.

A recurrent problem for the national evaluators has been the establishment of a set of measurable indicators for the evaluations, which had to be applied at project level. In the UK, good practice seems to have emerged on the issue of both meeting the difficulty of establishing measurable indicators and on creating an evaluation system that is perceived as being relevant for all, the Commission, NRAs and implementers alike. This initiative has been so successful that it deserves a detailed presentation. In order to assess the performance of ERF funded reception and integration projects the UK Home Office has developed and applied the following evaluation tools.

- Technical Support (including training for projects and capacity building)
- Annual Agency Survey (Census of all ERF and CF projects)
- Unit costing (to assess value for money of projects outputs)
- "Star-rating" (to rate the performance of projects and inform future funding decisions)
- Self-evaluation (projects were trained to undertake self-evaluation through technical support)
- Action Research (to facilitate learning and development of projects)
- A user-survey (to quantify benefits projects provided to their clients)
- A qualitative survey with users (to understand why/how projects provided benefits to users)
- Other (non-ERF funded) research (including developing Indicators of integration to enable projects to measure their impact on integration)

A consultancy company employed by the UK Home Office, has designed an evaluation approach that goes beyond audit and inspection and uses evaluation as a learning process. The evaluation model seeks to ensure that the implementers feel engaged into the process as participants, contributing to the development of the aims and best practices. In summary, the evaluation model consists of four key elements:

- Developing the Evaluation Framework & Sharing Best Practice
- Overall Impact Assessment
- Agency Studies & Action Research – provided through an annual assessment survey and separate unit costing/pricing exercise.
- Client Group Perceptions

The UK evaluation for 2003 places greater emphasis on a formative approach that is, applying the learning from the previous years of the evaluation to affect change both at project level and in the overall direction of the two funds. The key elements of the programme included:

- Data on Project Inputs and Outputs – gathering qualitative and quantitative data at key points in the project's lifespan.
- Developing Capacity and Supporting Self Evaluation – through the provision of "technical support" to individual projects.
- Promoting Good Practice – for example through the publication of a Good Practice guide, based upon case studies from funded projects.
- Project Assessment – all data held on projects, including their own self-evaluation reports, were used to provide an overall 'star rating' assessment.

Reference has been made above to the "Star Rating" System used by the Home Office, and their Consultants, MBA, to evaluate projects receiving ERF co funding support. A report, setting out details of the system, and recording the results of the process for 2003-4, was published by MBA in January 2005. Ratings were assessed on the basis of a range of indicators, including application forms, survey data, action research and evaluation reports (conducted by the project or their contractors and submitted as evidence) and project self-evaluation report, and took account of European Commission guidelines on evaluation. These were converted into a final star rating

with values from zero to five. A team of independent evaluators carried out the assessments. Each project was initially assessed then passed to a second evaluator for review. A final appeals process was available for projects querying their assessment. The rating criteria, each of equal importance, were:

- Relevance (whether the programme's objectives are relevant to the needs and priorities for refugee integration as defined by the Home Office and the European Commission);
- Efficiency (including value for money);
- Effectiveness (including the achievement of stated objectives);
- Outcomes (how well regarded by users and whether the service has led to tangible benefits for them); and
- Sustainability (the extent to which positive changes can be expected to last after the programme has ended)

Details of factors taken into account in assessing performance in accordance with these criteria are set out in the report. The report then sets out the ratings awarded to the projects assessed.

It is suggested that this "Star Rating" System could be of value, not just in the United Kingdom but in other Member States, too, in considering what is being achieved with ERF funds, and in identifying opportunities for improvement. While the "Star Rating" System in UK and the Finish participatory evaluation practice of actually seeking benefit from the evaluations to improve future implementation of projects may serve as inspiring examples of good practice, the overall priority, however, should be on establishing a commonly understood project terminology and a shared ERF methodology to be applied in national strategies and as a framework for evaluations at national and Community levels.

5.4 Effectiveness and efficiency of organisational set-up and management procedures at project level

5.4.1 Project implementing structures

The questionnaire survey shows that the projects supported are anchored within a range of different kinds of organisations and institutions, each with their own structures and procedures.

	Question 3: What is the status of your organisation	
	Count	%
Public authority at national level	25	3.0%
Public authority at regional level	21	2.5%
Public authority at local level	101	12.0%
National NGO	256	30.5%
International NGO	57	6.8%
Education or research organisation	13	1.5%
Social Partner (Employer org.)	4	.5%
Social partner (employee org.)	2	.2%
Foundation (non-profit org.)	70	8.3%
International organisation	40	4.8%
Other	241	28.7%
Unanswered	9	1.1%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 3: Status of implementing organisations

The table above offers a picture of the division among different kinds of organisations, showing the important role that civil society organisations play in the implementation of ERF-supported projects. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the largest group of implementing agencies with a frequency of 30.5 %. The second largest group of implementers is, surprisingly, the category “others” with a frequency of 28.7 %. A closer look at the questionnaires filled out by these “others” shows that, with a very few exceptions, this category is composed by publicly financed associations, advisory agencies and foundations, non profit companies offering vocational training and other kinds of community or church-based social servie and charity groups. The fact why so many of these organisations do not define themselves as NGOs in the questionnaires reflects different understandings of the term “National NGOs”, which in some cases is seen as opposed to “local” or “regional”, in other instances as opposed to “charity” or “religious association”, while yet others simply distinguish between a national NGO and a volunteer association. These distinctions between national NGOs and more locally based associations are especially pronounced in countries like Germany, France and UK. In Germany, for instance, 140 of the 282 implementing entities classified themselves as “Other”. Likewise, in countries with strong traditions for voluntary associations, faith groups, non profit associations, refugee community organisations and social assistance groups such as Belgium, Ireland and Hungary, the category “Other” comes out strong. Taking these observations into consideration, it makes good sense to view the categories of “National NGOs” and “Others” combined as one

category covering NGOs and similar civil society organisations. This group makes up 2/3 of all implementing organisations within the ERF. In France, NGOs (as defined here) represent 94.3%, in Germany they represent 80.8%, and in Ireland 79.4%.

The second largest group of implementers consists of public authorities at local level, making up 12 % of the groups implementing ERF co-financed projects. In relation to this, one has to bear in mind that in some instances, local public authorities may have a close cooperation with groups of volunteer citizens assisting public entities in implementing projects. Here it makes sense to combine public organisations at local level with public organisations at national and regional levels, and further, to include education and research organisations as these tend to be public institutions or at least heavily sponsored by the public sector, into this group of public sector institutions. On average, the public sector thus represents 19 % of all implementing entities. At country level, there are wide variations. In Italy, local public authorities represent 58 % of the implementers, in Estonia public authorities at national level represent 50 %, in Sweden local and national public authorities combined represent 44.7 % and in Finland local authorities represent 55.6 %.

When examining the types of implementing agencies, it is striking that employers organisations and organisations representing employees are so poorly represented, comprising only 0.7 % of all implementing entities. Such organisations have evident potential to become influential players in relation to reception and integration and yet they are almost absent in this field of operation. It should be borne in mind, however, that these partners may to a higher degree be present as donors or through other initiatives, notably the EQUAL programme with its specific focus on the labour market.

The table below shows that quite a high percentage of the organisations involved in the ERF carry out their projects together with other organisations or authorities.

	Question 4: Are any other organisations or authorities, in addition to your organistaion, involved in the management or implementation of the project?	
	Count	%
Yes	394	47.0%
No	437	52.1%
Unanswered	8	1.0%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 4: Project partnerships

Almost 40 % of the projects included in the questionnaire are implemented in some kind of partnership. This is especially the case in UK, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and the Slovak Republic where more than half of all projects are implemented in partnerships, as can be seen in the table below. Most projects, however, are implemented by only one organisation or institution.

% within Countries

		Question 4: Are any other organisations or authorities, in addition to your organistaion, involved in the management or implementation of the project?			
		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	52.8%	47.2%		100.0%
	France	42.9%	57.1%		100.0%
	Germany	27.3%	72.3%	.4%	100.0%
	Sweden	63.2%	36.8%		100.0%
	Spain	83.3%	16.7%		100.0%
	Portugal	17.6%	82.4%		100.0%
	Italy	90.2%	9.8%		100.0%
	Greece	22.2%	77.8%		100.0%
	Netherlands	81.0%	16.7%	2.4%	100.0%
	Finland	88.9%	11.1%		100.0%
	Austria	40.0%	60.0%		100.0%
	Belgium	58.9%	41.1%		100.0%
	Lux	14.3%	85.7%		100.0%
	Ireland	38.5%	61.5%		100.0%
	Cyprus		100.0%		100.0%
	Estonia	50.0%	50.0%		100.0%
	Hungary	14.3%	85.7%		100.0%
	Latvia		100.0%		100.0%
	Lithuania	60.0%	40.0%		100.0%
	Poland	60.0%	40.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik	100.0%			100.0%
	Slovenia	7.7%	46.2%	46.2%	100.0%
Total		47.0%	52.1%	1.0%	100.0%

Question 4: project partnerships per countries

5.4.2 Project management procedures

An important aspect of ERF management procedures is the call for proposals, inviting organisations and institutions to apply for ERF funding. The questionnaires asked the project managers whether the clarity of calls for proposals was adequate. The answers can be seen on the table below.

	Question 57: In general, how satisfied are you with the clarity of the calls for proposals from the National Programme Administration?	
	Count	%
Very satisfied	156	18.6%
Satisfied	497	59.2%
Not satisfied	71	8.5%
Don´t know	86	10.3%
Unanswered	29	3.5%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 57: Clarity of calls for proposals

The general trend is positive in the sense that 77.8 % of the implementers felt that the clarity had been either satisfactory or very satisfactory. When considering this high rate of satisfied project managers, one has to bear in mind that the questionnaire was of course filled out by those who were granted funding for their projects and not by those who were rejected by, which might of course influence the rate of satisfaction. On the other hand, most of the proposed projects did in fact end up having their projects funded. Thus, the overall assessment is that the calls for proposals have in general been clear and useful.

During implementation, most project managers need technical support from NRAs on how to manage their ERF co-financing. The NRAs are responsible for issuing eligibility criteria, guidelines, procedures, accounting formants and standards in order to assist implementers in fulfilling the Commission's requirements for good management, reporting and transparency. Beside written documentation this support is also provided through regular monitoring visits and day-to-day contact between implementers and NRAs or their technical assistance agencies.

Many project managers see financial and reporting mechanisms as overly bureaucratic and complicated. During interviews with NRAs and implementers, the evaluators were frequently told that the requirements for reporting, disbursement systems, eligibility criteria for disbursements and audits were unnecessarily complicated. The general impression has been that administrative responsibilities were time consuming and not very efficient. Some NGOs also expressed their frustration with having to use resources on project administration that could have benefited project implementation instead. This is especially the case among organisations implementing

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Luxembourg**
Project title	**Passepartout**
Managing entity	**Caritas**
ERF Measure	**Reception and Integration**

- The project was supported in 2001-2004, and was targeted at young asylum seekers and refugees, including unaccompanied minors and single teenage mothers.
- The project aimed at providing reception adapted to the needs of the youngsters, advancing their social integration and/or preparing them for their eventual return, by offering guardianship for the unaccompanied minors, orientation and social-educational assistance, vocational training with inclusion of the organisation of apprenticeships, language and IT courses and guidance to schools, social-cultural activities, psychosocial interventions, pedagogical advice, and meetings around specific themes. For Muslim girls, special activities were offered to reduce their isolation.
- The total project cost for the four-year period was EUR 465.418,47 and the total direct beneficiary population was of 2.119 youngsters (i.e. costs per beneficiary amounted to EUR 219,64).
- All planned activities have been implemented, and more were added (including the location of places for apprenticeships as well as tracing to support the asylum request or prepare for return).
- The project had established a baseline situation prior to the launch of the project, which included a well-documented description of the problem that the project was to address. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including the development of measurable indicators/benchmarks to assess the progress of the project, periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups, and internal learning).
- The project is generally seen as one of the most successful ERF-1 projects in Luxembourg. It had impact on both individual and national level:
- The most tangible examples of impact on individual level were that youngsters could integrate in Language Centres on advanced level; that a number of youngsters enrolled in apprenticeships, that fifteen of them received a national diploma and four continued working with the same employer. Youngsters who had to return to their country of origin reported that they were able to find work in their country of origin, thanks to the skills required in vocational training.
- On a national level impact was first and foremost reflected in the incorporation of the appointment of guardianship for unaccompanied minors into national law. Furthermore, it is generally expected that once the EC Directive concerning minimum standards in reception of asylum seekers has been transposed in law, the vocational training for young asylum seekers will become structural.

Best Practice: Luxembourg

small projects. In one country it was suggested that guidelines and decisions should be translated into a common language manual for implementers. The evaluation team supports this idea and furthermore recommends that NRAs reduce the amount of requirements for smaller projects in order to obtain a more reasonable relation between the amount of funds received and the amount of administrative requirements. The question is, however: what is the underlying reason for this dissatisfaction? Are the requirements too difficult to honour, or could the capacity of project management and implementing organisations improve in order to enable NGOs to meet the requirements?

In this context, a potential problem is that many national responsible authorities do not have sufficient knowledge of project management tools such as Logical Framework Approach. They

are thus often not in a position to support and assist the project managers. This lack of knowledge is also reflected in e.g. the indicators included in the individual Requests for Co-financing which are often inadequate or simply non-existing. One exception to this is Italy, where the Servizio Centrale has established a database with on-line connection to all project administrations enabling project mangers to access and provide current standardised key data information for the continuous monitoring of project development. Another is Germany, where ERF staff has received training in project management and evaluation. However, this training was neither systematic nor comprehensive.

Another, more specific, obstacle to maximum efficiency, often mentioned by project managers, is the restrictions, introduced by some national authorities to the use of ERF funds. A common example is limitations on how much can be used for salaries, which is not necessarily effective in relation to refugee and asylum seeker activities that often focus on provision of services. Also, almost all project managers mentioned the one year project period as a major obstacle to efficient project implementation.

The table below shows the overall picture in relation to project managers' use of project management tools such as indicators, monitoring and evaluations. As can be seen, most project managers (87.4 %) do carry out periodic self-assessment of project progress as well as assessment of target group needs (84.7 %). Also, quite a substantial part state that their organisation carries out internal learning activities (66.7 %).

However, in relation to the development of indicators, the number is quite low. Thus, only 54.2 % state that their organisation has developed measurable indicators. Likewise, only 46.6 % are externally assessed.

Question 32: Please indicate whether the following project management elements have been used in the project

		Yes	No	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Development of measurable indicators/benchmarks to assess the results/progress of the project?	Count	455	247	35	102	839
	%	54.2%	29.4%	4.2%	12.2%	100.0%
Periodic self-assessment of progress of project?	Count	711	51	13	64	839
	%	84.7%	6.1%	1.5%	7.6%	100.0%
Periodic external assessment of progress of project?	Count	391	302	19	127	839
	%	46.6%	36.0%	2.3%	15.1%	100.0%
Periodic assessment of needs of target group?	Count	633	106	15	85	839
	%	75.4%	12.6%	1.8%	10.1%	100.0%
Internal learning activities within your organisation?	Count	560	129	45	105	839
	%	66.7%	15.4%	5.4%	12.5%	100.0%
Other?	Count	68	132	35	604	839
	%	8.1%	15.7%	4.2%	72.0%	100.0%

Question 32: Use of project management tools

These numbers are worrisome, particularly in the light of the emphasis the EU administration puts on precisely indicators and evaluations. Without indicators, efficiency, effectiveness and impact are difficult to measure. However, since many national responsible authorities do not have thorough knowledge of project management tools, they cannot be expected to be able to assist project managers in the development of e.g. indicators – unless they receive some sort of capacity building in relation to project management tools.

The complaints of complicated and time-consuming bureaucracy indicate a need to heighten the capacity of NRAs to absorb and concretely implement managerial and administrative requirements of the ERF (an issue also touched upon above). There is also a need for transferring the managerial and administrative requirements to implementers by the NRAs in a positive spirit of mutual effort, a need that will be particularly acute for the new Member States. Perhaps the Finish example of organising training sessions for each project manager, financial managers, steering committee members, and other project staff of implementing organisations on management and financial regulations, payment procedures reports and visibility instructions of ERF funding could serve as an example of how to ensure a more effective and efficient management.

5.4.3 Communication and support

Bearing in mind the complaints mentioned by many during country missions, it is a bit surprising, but also encouraging, to note that nearly 77 % of the respondents of the questionnaire were satisfied or fully satisfied with the technical support from the NRA to carry out projects and that nearly 69 % finds that NRAs have been helpful in achieving the maximum results of the projects.

% within Countries

		Question 55: To what extent do you consider that you have received the necessary technical support from National Programme Administration in your own country to carry out the project?						
		Fully satisfied with support	Generally satisfied with support	Somewhat satisfied with support	Not satisfied	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	11.3%	26.4%	50.9%	9.4%		1.9%	100.0%
	France	31.4%	31.4%	28.6%	8.6%			100.0%
	Germany	62.4%	23.0%	8.5%		4.6%	1.4%	100.0%
	Sweden	36.8%	50.0%	10.5%			2.6%	100.0%
	Spain			100.0%				100.0%
	Portugal	52.9%	47.1%					100.0%
	Italy	50.8%	34.4%	14.8%				100.0%
	Greece		100.0%					100.0%
	Netherlands	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%	2.4%	7.1%	4.8%	100.0%
	Finland	88.9%	11.1%					100.0%
	Austria	30.9%	54.5%	7.3%		5.5%	1.8%	100.0%
	Belgium	7.1%	32.1%	35.7%	8.9%	16.1%		100.0%
	Lux	57.1%	35.7%	7.1%				100.0%
	Ireland	20.5%	59.0%	12.8%			7.7%	100.0%
	Cyprus		50.0%		50.0%			100.0%
	Estonia		100.0%					100.0%
	Hungary	14.3%	78.6%	7.1%				100.0%
	Latvia			100.0%				100.0%
	Lithuania		80.0%	20.0%				100.0%
	Poland	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%				100.0%
	Slovak Republik	50.0%	50.0%					100.0%
	Slovenia	30.8%		23.1%	7.7%		38.5%	100.0%
Total		41.0%	35.9%	15.9%	1.9%	3.3%	2.0%	100.0%

Question 55: By countries: Technical support from NRA to projects

% within Countries

		Question 58: To what extent has the management structure of the ERF in your own country helped you achieve the maximum results from the project?						
		It has been a great help	It has generally been helpful	It has been of limited help and even somewhat of an obstacle	It has been an obstacle to achieving results	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	7.5%	35.8%	43.4%	3.8%	7.5%	1.9%	100.0%
	France		5.7%		91.4%	2.9%		100.0%
	Germany	47.5%	35.8%	9.9%		5.3%	1.4%	100.0%
	Sweden	26.3%	55.3%	2.6%		13.2%	2.6%	100.0%
	Spain		50.0%	33.3%	16.7%			100.0%
	Portugal	76.5%	23.5%					100.0%
	Italy	17.2%	31.1%	9.8%		27.0%	14.8%	100.0%
	Greece	22.2%	77.8%					100.0%
	Netherlands	19.0%	64.3%	4.8%	2.4%	4.8%	4.8%	100.0%
	Finland	66.7%	33.3%					100.0%
	Austria	27.3%	50.9%	3.6%		9.1%	9.1%	100.0%
	Belgium	1.8%	42.9%	28.6%	12.5%	14.3%		100.0%
	Lux	42.9%	7.1%		50.0%			100.0%
	Ireland	15.4%	71.8%	2.6%			10.3%	100.0%
	Cyprus		50.0%	50.0%				100.0%
	Estonia		50.0%	50.0%				100.0%
	Hungary	21.4%	71.4%	7.1%				100.0%
	Latvia						100.0%	100.0%
	Lithuania	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%				100.0%
	Poland	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%				100.0%
	Slovak Republik		50.0%				50.0%	100.0%
	Slovenia	15.4%	7.7%	23.1%	7.7%	7.7%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		28.2%	40.5%	11.3%	6.1%	8.8%	5.0%	100.0%

Question 58: By countries: Assistance of national ERF management structures for achieving results

The above tables reveal that in Finland, the rate of satisfied or fully satisfied project managers were 100 % on both question 55 and 58. At the same time it is interesting to note that project managers from Austria, Ireland, Italy and Greece seemed to be more satisfied now than mentioned in the Mid-term report[56]. Furthermore, the tables show that there are great differences among countries – for instance, in Belgium only 7.1 % are fully satisfied, and in Spain and Latvia project managers are only somewhat satisfied.

The picture of Finnish project managers as being highly positive towards the support received was confirmed during the country visit, where project managers expressed high regard for the administration of the programme as being supportive, informative, relaxed and as non-

[56] Mid-term evaluation, p. 162

bureaucratic as it is possible to be, given the need for accountability and transparency. However, in the first years of the ERF programme, when Finland supported many small projects, some project managers did find the bureaucratic demands difficult to comply with. This was improved when the programme started supporting a few big projects instead. In Germany as well, NRA staff were praised for their rapid feed-back to project implementers' problems and for their visits in which concrete problems were resolved.

The overall picture is slightly modified by the results shown in table 58. The percentage of project managers who are satisfied with the help from national management structures is a bit lower with only 68.5 % thinking that national management structures have been either a great help or generally been helpful. Now, where only 1.9 % answered that they were not satisfied with the support received, as many as 17.4 % answer that the management structures have been either 'of limited help and even somewhat of an obstacle' or has been 'an obstacle to achieving results' which must be considered a relatively high level of dissatisfaction. However, when comparing with the mid-term evaluation in which 29% of all project managers said national management structures were an obstacle to obtaining results, it must be concluded that the level of dissatisfaction has nonetheless diminished dramatically in the last two years. The country specific statistics show that while most German (83.3 %), Portuguese (76.5 %) and Finnish (66.7 %) project managers consider the national management to have been of great help, no Spanish project managers think so. 91.4 % of all French project managers and 50.0 % of all project managers in Luxembourg even think it has been an obstacle to achieving results.

Since the ERF is a decentralised mechanism with most management responsibilities delegated to the national authorities, the Commission is not supposed or expected to have any contact with project managers at national level. The evaluation team has therefore not included any analysis of the relations between the Commission and the project managers implementing ERF-supported projects.

5.4.4 Mechanisms for exchange of experiences

In Germany, there are periodic meetings among organisations working in the same region or in the same field, facilitating the establishment of certain uniform standards and the dissemination of best practices. Unfortunately, in most other countries the evaluators found that horizontal exchange of experience, sharing of best practices and learning between projects were

insufficiently realised. Many Member States have not established systematic mechanisms for ensuring communication among implementers, which hinders exchange of experiences, best practices and eventually efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of projects. In many countries the NRAs simply did not see it as being an important task for the NRA or their technical support unit to organise horizontal meetings between implementers. Furthermore, in larger countries the expenses in relation to organising such meetings would be substantial, which in itself sets limits for such activities. However, the implementers themselves usually do not have the financial capacity to organise meetings and seminars or build up web-sites for that purpose.

It is the opinion of the evaluators that mechanisms for exchange of experiences are essential to the success of the ERF and that such mechanisms should be an integrated part of all national ERF structures. As discussed earlier, the yearly national evaluations could provide a very good starting point for such processes of mutual learning. Here again, the German example is instructive: the German NRA participates in or co-organises meetings of project implementers in certain key sectors. However, even here, the national evaluations are insufficiently utilised. Both Ireland and UK have also established mechanisms such as a web-based project database, annual conferences and a Good Practice guide for exchange of experiences on national level. Furthermore, the evaluators find that increasing standards and creating common systems requires systematic exchange of experience, mutual learning and high lightening of best practices, which requires fora for discussion. The need for a for exchange of experiences does not only concern implementing agencies on a national level, but on European level as well, facilitating dialogue among implementing agencies across borders. The evaluation team suggests that the creation of such a forum for implementers become part of national strategies.

5.5 Effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation

5.5.1 Distribution of funds

ERF funding has been distributed to Member States as shown in the table below. In total the European Commission allocated 178,613,853 EUR for the national ERF co-financing ERF-1 programme over the period 2000 – 2004. The issue of burden-sharing and allocations of funds to the participating countries has been discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to relevance. The figures in

the table show total allocations for each country including expenses for technical assistance (maximum 5% allocated funds). The Commission has provided the figures[57].

Table 5.1

Commitment of ERF funding per member states 2000 - 2004							
Member states	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	total pr country	%
Belgium	1.223.202	1.869.725	2.729.083	2.381.192	2.131.527	10.334.727	5,87%
Germany	6.218.899	8.391.364	10.324.675	9.935.792	8.113.022	42.983.751	24,42%
Greece	652.057	629.043	535.611	439.481	459.296	2.715.489	1,54%
Spain	745.291	837.462	933.064	786.229	665.287	3.967.333	2,25%
France	2.255.054	3.156.228	4.133.680	5.067.825	4.041.961	18.654.748	10,60%
Ireland	632.205	709.110	965.573	981.675	919.091	4.207.654	2,39%
Italy	1.956.105	2.741.881	3.460.943	2.396.268	741.665	11.296.861	6,42%
Luxembourg	528.972	480.529	411.195	299.703	171.648	1.892.046	1,08%
Netherlands	2.984.949	3.642.650	4.175.006	3.239.737	2.972.103	17.014.444	9,67%
Austria	912.382	1.454.754	1.938.106	2.007.650	2.230.280	8.543.173	4,85%
Portugal	534.238	518.816	457.006	304.394	123.370	1.937.823	1,10%
Finland	651.386	673.605	671.256	524.730	392.633	2.913.610	1,66%
Sweden	1.808.617	2.555.670	3.326.823	2.869.672	2.691.652	13.252.434	7,53%
UK	2.902.640	4.819.118	8.764.928	8.923.101	10.877.221	36.287.008	20,62%
Cyprus					168.059	168.059	
Czech Rep.					0	0	
Estonia					101.264	101.264	
Hungary					824.725	824.725	
Latvia					95.629	95.629	
Lithuania					154.928	154.928	
Malta					111.840	111.840	
Poland					440.490	440.490	
Slovak Rep.					372.374	372.374	
Slovenia					343.444	343.444	
Total amount	24.005.995	32.479.953	42.826.949	40.157.450	39.143.507	178.613.853	

Source: DG JHA, compiled by DIHR

Table 5.1 Commitment of ERF funding per member states 2000 -2004

The funds are further divided into 3 strands, namely reception, integration and voluntary repatriation. This entails the possibility of an artificial separation of the financial contributions, based upon a narrow, legalistic definition of the groups targeted by the action. The three strands reflect the groups targeted by the action during three different stages of their residence in the EU. The reception strand mainly reflects asylum seekers, who have applied for protection, but are awaiting a final decision. The integration strand reflects recognised refugees, whether through the

[57] The evaluators have also received figures from National Responsible Authorities. These amount to 165.159.808 EUR. However, this figure does not include the 5 % for technical assistance, which is included in the allocation from the Commission, and it includes UK figures for 2003 and 2004, which have to be omitted as the data available for these years are insufficiently reliable to be included in the evaluation report[57]. Omitting these figures and adding the 5 % for technical assistance there would however still be a discrepancy of 1.5 % between the figures provided by the NRAs and those provided by the Commission.

Geneva Convention, national legislation, or temporary protection arrangements, that need to be integrated into their host societies. The repatriation strand covers refugees and rejected asylum seekers who are encouraged to take the informed decision of returning to their countries of origin on a voluntary basis.

In practice, the division of funds according to strands does not amount to much more than an administrative requirement for the applications for co-financing. In relation to a range of activities, such as language courses, psycho-therapeutic assistance and vocational training measures, it makes no sense to divide target groups into refugees and asylum seekers or to categorise the project in question as solely a reception or solely an integration project. In spite of the legal differences in rights of asylum seekers and of refugees, their needs on a number of issues such as psychotherapeutic assistance remain the same and are equally justifiable to be met.

Thus, while the division of ERF funding into three strands is an excellent administrative instrument for ensuring adequate focus on the needs of refugees at all stages of migration, it also entails a danger of an artificial compartmentalisation of funds for projects, which carried out in practice (not allowing mixing reception and integration projects, where it make sense) could be detriment to achieving effects and efficiency of projects.

Table 5.3

ERF programmed co-finaning of reception, integration and repatriation in Member States									
Measure									
Year	Reception	%	Integration	%	Repatriation	%	%	total 2000 - 2004	%
2000	11.517.120,86	49%	7.449.059,44	32%	4.516.230,33	19%	100%	23.482.410,63	14%
2001	13.990.791,31	49%	8.760.834,14	30%	5.980.036,58	21%	100%	28.731.662,03	17%
2002	20.003.267,07	51%	11.275.610,86	29%	7.745.356,74	20%	100%	39.024.234,67	24%
2003	17.137.594,48	45%	13.119.735,15	34%	8.222.683,34	21%	100%	38.480.012,98	23%
2004	13.385.596,52	38%	12.150.011,89	34%	9.905.875,49	28%	100%	35.441.483,89	21%
total 2000 - 2004	76.034.370,24	46%	52.755.251,47	32%	36.370.182,48	22%	100%	165.159.804,19	100%

Sources: Natinoal responsible authorities, Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.3 ERF programmed co-financing of reception, integration and repatriation in Member States

Table 5.3 (please see footnote 55 for the issue of consistency between table 5.3, table 5.4 and table 5.1) provides an overview on the distribution of ERF funds on the three measures during the period 2000-2004 of the ERF-1. There is a consistent pattern of allocating nearly half of ERF funds to activities related to reception, approximately one-third to integration activities and one

fifth to repatriation. It is especially striking to see the consistent pattern related to repatriation, as the repatriation activities in many countries in 2000-2001 seemed to be part of a new area of systematic work, but the average around 20 % for repatriation shows that initial hesitations in some Member States on this measure were counterbalanced by high priority in other Member States.

Table 5.4

Total national programmed funding of reception, integration and repatriation in Member States									
Measure	Reception	%	Integration	%	Repatriation	%	%	total 2000 - 2004	%
2000	22.935.334,33	39%	15.703.243,62	27%	8.957.422,22	15%	100%	47.596.000,17	14%
2001	27.664.039,25	47%	17.821.424,95	30%	13.024.307,17	22%	100%	58.509.771,38	17%
2002	45.476.394,31	53%	23.974.069,60	28%	15.836.836,20	19%	100%	85.287.300,10	25%
2003	36.294.758,71	45%	27.418.931,28	34%	16.531.325,59	21%	100%	80.245.015,58	23%
2004	28.409.568,77	38%	26.718.018,52	36%	19.988.171,82	27%	100%	75.115.759,12	22%
total 2000 - 2004	160.780.095,38	46%	111.635.687,97	32%	74.338.062,99	21%	100%	346.753.846,34	100%

Sources: National responsible authorities, Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.4 Total national programmed funding of reception, integration and repatriation

The table 5.4 above represents the total amount allocation of funds. It is obvious by studying the figures that the relative distribution of the total funds on the three measures closely corresponds to the distribution of ERF co-financing. The relative difference in the total commitment of funds on the three measures is less than one percent. The national allocations of funding to the three measures have thus been approximately half of the funding to reception activities, one third on integration activities and approximately one fifth on repatriation activities. It should be recalled, however, that some repatriation projects can be expensive, in that they may involve not just advising or training but also homeland visits or foreign visits by NRA staff. This was the case in a German voluntary repatriation project in which NRA staff went to Bosnia.

According to both table 5.3 and 5.4, reception received the largest allocation of funding, both nationally and as ERF co-funding. There is a striking homogeneity between the relative allocation of national and ERF funding. Approximately 46 % of the total ERF-1 funding 2000-2004 has been spent on improving reception conditions in the Member States, while 47 % of total funding allocation has been spent on this purpose. Integration activities have in total received 32 % of the total national allocation of funding as well as 32 % of the ERF co-financing whereas repatriation was allotted 21-22 % of the resources.

The table 5.5 below provides an overview of the relation between the total ERF amounts programmed for the measures of reception, integration and repatriation in the years 2000-2003

and the ERF amounts actually spend on the respective measures. As not all Member States could provide figures for 2003 and none of them for 2004, the table does not encompass all Member States in 2003 and none in 2004.

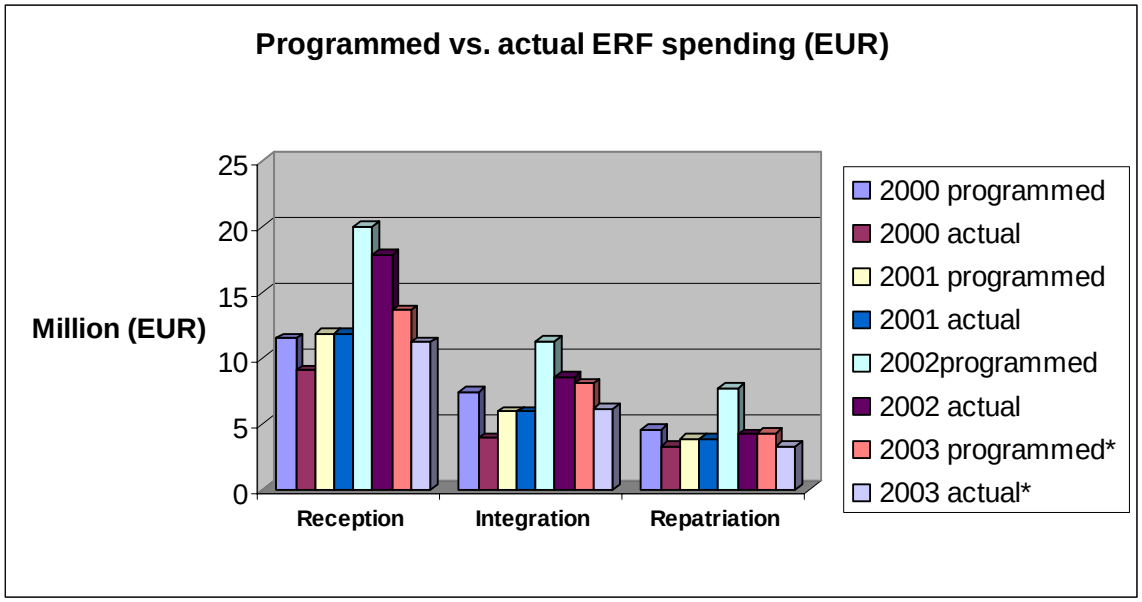
Table 5.5 Programmed versus actual ERF spending 2000 - 2003

Programmed versus actual ERF spending 2000 - 2003 in Euro and %								
Measure	Reception	%	Integration	%	Repatriation	%	Total	%
2000 programmed	11.517.120,86	49%	7.449.059,44	32%	4.516.230,33	19%	23.482.410,63	100%
2000 actual	9.076.980,27	39%	3.918.287,23	17%	3.232.707,41	14%	16.227.974,90	69%
2001 programmed	13.990.791,31	49%	8.760.834,14	30%	5.980.036,58	21%	28.731.662,03	100%
2001 actual	11.831.715,84	41%	5.942.687,95	21%	3.826.261,05	13%	21.600.664,83	75%
2002programmed	20.003.267,07	51%	11.275.610,86	29%	7.745.356,74	20%	39.024.234,67	100%
2002 actual	17.885.713,28	46%	8.532.617,65	22%	4.205.169,89	11%	30.623.500,82	78%
2003 programmed*	13.634.146,41	53%	8.074.901,55	31%	4.249.472,65	16%	25.958.520,61	100%
2003 actual*	11.200.555,59	43%	6.179.231,55	24%	3.317.350,65	13%	20.697.137,78	80%
Total programmed	59.145.325,65	50%	35.560.405,99	30%	22.491.096,30	19%	117.196.827,94	100%
Total actual	49.994.964,97	43%	24.572.824,37	21%	14.581.488,99	12%	89.149.278,33	76%

*2003: Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Potugal, Spain and UK are not included as they could not provide figures on actual spending

Compiled by DIHR

For the total period, only 76 % of the programmed costs have been spent, but it is a fairly constant pattern of only spending from 69 % to 80 % of allocated funds. The table shows a gradual improvement over the period in terms of execution of programmed resources. It can thus be concluded that the Member States over the years improved their planning skills and in finding adequate projects for co-financing by the ERF. The table also shows that the relation of funding on European level has been fairly constant between the three measures during the three years.



Programmed vs. actual ERF spending

We will now see whether the homogeneity between national contributions and ERF contributions can also be found in relation to actual expenses. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 below provides an overview on the relation between programmed and actual costs on reception measures of the ERF-1 programme during the period 2000-2003 divided by strands and comparable between total programmed costs and ERF co-financing. It should be noted that the figures for 2003 do not cover all member states and that 2004 could not be included because the final accounts have not been made in most member states.

Table 5.6

TOTAL programmed and actual costs for the recpetion measure, 2000 -2003						
Measure	Reception	% of	Reception	% of	difference	% of
Year	annual programmed per measure	programmed costs per measure	Annual actual costs per measure	total measure costs	programmed - actual costs	programmed per measure
2000	22.935.334,33	18%	17.804.101,51	17%	5.131.232,82	22%
2001	27.664.039,25	21%	24.501.279,54	23%	3.162.759,72	11%
2002	45.476.394,31	35%	40.444.797,83	38%	5.031.596,47	11%
2003*	32.791.310,64	25%	24.197.284,82	23%	8.594.025,82	26%
total	128.867.078,53	100%	106.947.463,70	100%	21.919.614,84	17%
*2003: Finland, Greece, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.6 TOTAL programmed and actual costs for reception measure, 2000 - 2003

Table 5.7

ERF co funding programmed and actual costs reception, 2000 -2003						
Measure	Reception	% of	Reception	% of	difference	% of
Year	annual programmed per measure	programmed costs per measure	Annual actual costs per measure	total measure costs	programmed - actual costs	programmed per measure
2000	11.517.120,86	19%	9.076.980,27	18%	2.440.140,59	21%
2001	13.990.791,31	24%	11.831.715,84	24%	2.159.075,47	15%
2002	20.003.267,07	34%	17.885.713,28	36%	2.117.553,79	11%
2003*	13.634.146,41	23%	11.200.555,59	22%	2.433.590,82	18%
total	59.145.325,65	100%	49.994.964,97	100%	9.150.360,68	15%
*2003: Finland, Greece, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.7 ERF co funding programmed and actual costs reception 2000 - 2003

The two tables tell us that the relation between programmed and actual costs is almost identical for national funds and ERF co-funds over the three years. The relative amount allocated is practically identical with the relative amount spent – even the relative size of unspent funds is the same for both national and ERF funds. The relation between allocated funds and costs, for both total amount and ERF co-financing, is showed below on table 5.8 and 5.9.

Table 5.8

TOTAL programmed and actual costs for the integration measure, 2000 -2003						
Measure	Integration	% of	Integration	% of	difference	% of
Year	annual programmed per measure	programmed costs per measure	Annual actual costs per measure	total measure costs	programmed - actual costs	programmed per measure
2000	15.703.243,62	21%	8.494.543,88	16%	7.208.699,74	46%
2001	17.821.424,95	24%	13.039.199,26	24%	4.782.225,69	27%
2002	23.974.069,60	33%	18.313.289,06	34%	5.660.780,54	24%
2003*	16.179.947,08	22%	13.819.163,41	26%	2.360.783,67	15%
total	73.678.685,25	100%	53.666.195,61	100%	20.012.489,64	27%
*2003: Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Potugal, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.8 TOTAL programmed and actual costs for the integration measure, 2000 - 2003

Table 5.9

ERF co financing programmed and actual costs integration, 2000 -2003						
Measure Year	Integration annual programmed per measure	% of programmed costs per measure	Integration Annual actual costs per measure	% of total measure costs	difference programmed - actual costs	% of programmed per measure
2000	7.449.059,44	21%	3.918.287,23	16%	3.530.772,21	47%
2001	8.760.834,14	25%	5.942.687,95	24%	2.818.146,19	32%
2002	11.275.610,86	32%	8.532.617,65	35%	2.742.993,21	24%
2003*	8.074.901,55	23%	6.179.231,55	25%	1.895.670,01	23%
total	35.560.405,99	100%	24.572.824,37	100%	10.987.581,62	31%
*2003: Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Potugal, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.9 ERF co financing programmed and actual costs integration, 2000 - 2003

The two tables 5.8 and 5.9 provide a similar picture for the relation between allocated national funds and ERF co-funding for the integration measure. Again we see that the relative ERF co-funding is practically the same as the national funding in regard to both allocation and costs of the integration measure.

Table 5.10

TOTAL programmed and actual costs, repatriation measure, 2000 -2003						
Measure Year	Repatraition annual programmed per measure	% of programmed costs per measure	Repatriation Annual actual costs per measure	% of total measure costs	difference programmed - actual costs	% of programmed per measure
2000	8.957.422,22	19%	7.132.838,67	23%	1.824.583,54	20%
2001	13.024.307,17	28%	8.063.943,05	26%	4.960.364,13	38%
2002	15.836.836,20	34%	8.544.199,03	28%	7.292.637,17	46%
2003*	8.663.527,11	19%	7.176.617,83	23%	1.486.909,28	17%
total	46.482.092,70	100%	30.917.598,58	100%	15.564.494,12	33%
*2003: Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Potugal, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.10 TOTAL programmed and actual costs, repatriation measure 2000 - 2003

The two tables 5.10 and 5.11 provide yet another overview of the same relations, this time concerning the repatriation measure. And again the same result emerges: that the ERF contribution to actual costs is the same as the ERF contribution to programmed costs, which again corresponds very closely to the relation between national allocations and actual costs.

Table 5.11

ERF programmed and actual co funding repatriation measure, 2000 -2003						
Measure	Repatriation	% of	Repatriation	% of	difference	% of
Year	annual programmed per measure	programmed costs per measure	Annual actual costs per measure	total measure costs	programmed - actual costs	programmed per measure
2000	4.516.230,33	20%	3.232.707,41	22%	1.283.522,92	28%
2001	5.980.036,58	27%	3.826.261,05	26%	2.153.775,54	36%
2002	7.745.356,74	34%	4.205.169,89	29%	3.540.186,85	46%
2003*	4.249.472,65	19%	3.317.350,65	23%	932.122,01	22%
total	22.491.096,30	100%	14.581.488,99	100%	7.909.607,31	35%
*2003: Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Potugal, Spain and UK are not included						

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.11 ERF programmed and actual co funding repatriation measure, 2000 - 2003

The tables confirm that the ERF has quite constantly co-funded the same relative share of the costs for implementation of the national strategies and that under-implementation has lead to the same relative under-spending of allocated funds between total costs and co-financed costs.

The tables also reveal the difference between annual programmed costs and actual costs, thus illustrating the overall planning quality. The reception measure has an average difference between allocated funds and actual consumption of 17 %, with an annual difference ranging from 11 to 26 %. As for ERF co-financing, the difference between planned spending and actual costs amounts to 15 %. The integration measure has apparently been more difficult to plan. Here the average difference between planned spending and actual costs amounts to 27 %, with a difference between allocated ERF funds and actual costs of 31 %. For repatriation, the difference between planned expenses and actual costs is even higher with 33 % for total costs and 35 % for ERF funding.

It is interesting to note that while planning on the integration strand seems to improve gradually over the period, showing in a diminishing difference between planned expenses and actual costs, changes in relation to reception and repatriation do not seem to follow a specific pattern – on the contrary, variations between planned and actual costs go up and down in an unpredictable manner throughout the whole period. The reason for the lower degree of efficient planning in relation to reception and repatriation activities should probably be attributed to the fact that the context in which these activities are carried out is highly unstable – for instance, the number of arriving

asylum seekers is difficult to foresee. Likewise, voluntary repatriation is fully dependent on the conditions in the home countries of the returnees.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Germany**
Project title	**Heimatgarten: Voluntary return and humanitarian reintegration of refugees**
Managing entity	**Arbeiterwohlfart (AWO) Bremerhaven**
ERF Measure	**Voluntary return**

Key project activities

- The project was supported under each of the five ERF funding years. It was one of the major recipients of ERF funds in the field of voluntary return.
- The project consists of 17 sub-projects to assist returnees to ex-Yugoslavia, and beginning in 2004, to the CIS countries. Activities have included preliminary advice to asylum-seekers and refugees contemplating return, assistance with legal formalities, material assistance for locating housing, job training or microcredits to help returnees establish themselves, social and medical assistance, transport and special programs to help vulnerable groups (elderly, sick, handicapped and traumatized people), and special assistance to women and children. Additional project activities have included information conferences on drug counselling and working with traumatized refugees. From an initial focus on Bosnian refugees, Heimatgarten has also begun derivative projects for refugees from Serbia, Montenegro, the CIS states, Kosovo and individual assistance to African refugees. In 2005, a "House of Trust" was opened in Srebenica and an assessment trip undertaken in Kosovo to organize return activities there.
- In the period 2000-2004, total ERF financing for the 17 sub-projects was EUR 2,803,283. Of these, the four main Bosnia return projects (Heimatgarten II-V) received EUR 1,944,137. Approximately 350 persons have been helped directly.

Key success factors

- Heimatgarten has developed a comprehensive program of voluntary return advice which allows refugees to take the initiative. It takes in the real needs of returnees and attempts to mobilize their human potential. It therefore offers a range of services from legal counselling to therapeutic and pedagogical assistance, to job training and economic support. It focuses on families and communities rather than individuals.
- It is a long-term investment, and is therefore realistic in its goals.
- The EFF grants, both return-related and the conference grants, have helped Heimatgarten staff develop professional competence in all aspects of return-related work. The notion of "reintegration" into the country of origin has been consolidated via this project.
- Through several sister organizations in the AWO network in Germany, it has established strong relations with local refugee support services in various Länder.
- The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through the development of measurable indicators/benchmarks to assess the results/progress of the project; and periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups).
- Using its field offices in the Bosnia, it has established viable partners in the home countries of the refugees so that the projects can be sustainable.
- Heimatgarten has attempted to take away the stigma of return as some kind of defeat for refugees, and has successfully legitimized voluntary return in an environment where it was under suspicion as a covert means of "getting rid" of asylum seekers. It has therefore helped legitimize asylum-seekers' attempts to seek a better life, also in their home countries.

Best Practice: Germany

In terms of cost pr beneficiary, the evaluation team has not been able to carry out any detailed studies. However, judging from the information received by NRAs, the cost pr. beneficiary varies from 20 EUR to 1500 EUR, with the most expensive cost still being less than many other EU programmes. Unsurprisingly, reception activities seem to be the cheapest, and repatriation activities the most expensive. Such programmes require detailed and up-to-date information on the possibilities for safe return, hence the need for in-country assessments and visits by refugees and project staff – activities which are potentially much more expensive than regular integration and reception activities.

Generally, the strategies for implementation, and the actual implementation, of the three measures have been efficient economically. The variations between the measures is not surprising, given that NRAs do not always have a similar level of experience in all the thematic areas covered by the ERF (this is particularly true in the case of voluntary repatriation measures, where efficiency could only be improved through a greater capital of experience in the design and implementation of such measures).

5.5.2 Additionality

The Council Decision 2000/596/EC establishing the ERF-1 does not place any major limitations on the use of funding within the overall framework described above. However, it does limit the ERF contribution to a maximum of 50 % of the total costs of measures (75 % for Member States covered by the Cohesion Fund – Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal and the New Member States from 1st May 2004 – Article 13, section 2). Article 13 also refers to the general principle that EU funds for regional projects should be additional to Member State funds, not a substitution for them.

Table 5.12

Total funding versus ERF contribution									
Measure	Reception			Integration			repatriation		
Year	Total funding	ERF funding	%	Total funding	ERF funding	%	Total funding	ERF funding	%
2000	22.935.334,33	11.517.120,86	50%	15.703.243,62	7.449.059,44	47%	8.957.422,22	4.516.230,33	50%
2001	27.664.039,25	13.990.791,31	51%	17.821.424,95	8.760.834,14	49%	13.024.307,17	5.980.036,58	46%
2002	45.476.394,31	20.003.267,07	44%	23.974.069,60	11.275.610,86	47%	15.836.836,20	7.745.356,74	49%
2003	36.294.758,71	17.137.594,48	47%	27.418.931,28	13.119.735,15	48%	16.531.325,59	8.222.683,34	50%
2004	28.409.568,77	13.385.596,52	47%	26.718.018,52	12.150.011,89	45%	19.988.171,82	9.905.875,49	50%
total 2000 - 2004	160.780.095,38	76.034.370,24	47%	111.635.687,97	52.755.251,47	47%	74.338.062,99	36.370.182,48	49%

Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.12: Total funding versus ERF contribution

Table 5.12 provides an overview of the relative ERF co-financing in relation to total commitments for the implementation of the national strategies. Overall, the co-financing of the three measures has been close to, but below the 50% limit. For each measure, each year, the level of co-financing is also very close to 50 %. In 2001, the reception measure showed a level of co-financing of 51 %, which reflects the fact that Member States covered by the cohesion fund that year were funded above the 50 % limit (Greece 64 %, Portugal 75 % and Spain 60 %). It can thus be confirmed that the level of ERF resources allocated has been in line with article 13 of the Council Decision. This, however, does not verify that EU funds have been additional to, rather than a substitution for, Member State funds.

The Council Decision 2000/596/EC has opted for a very decentralised implementation structure, leaving as a matter of principle[58] the initiative and definition of needs for co-financing to the Member States. It does not clarify or defines in any detail how the additionality principle should be operationalised and managed[59]. Strategically, the requirement for additionality is thus a matter of policy definition in each Member State. Leaving it to the Member States to define their national ERF policies reflects an aspiration to secure the actual relevance of the ERF programme. The philosophy behind this, clearly, is that needs for co-financing should be decided as close to the level of the problems as possible. This explains the high level of interest of the Member States in making maximum use of the ERF resources. However, in relation to the principle of additionality, the Council Decision 2000/596/EC does not foresee any prerogatives for the Commission to interfere with national strategies and priorities.

[58] 12th, 13th, 14th recital and art 7 and 8 of the Council Decision 2000/596/EC

[59] No reference to this has been made in Commission decision 2001/275/EC, or 2002/307/EC, both of which otherwise lay down detailed implementation rules for 2000/596/EC

The question can thus be raised of the extent to which ERF resources might have substituted for regular, national funding. Given the decentralised structure for the identification of ERF needs, which enables each Member State to determine, autonomously, its national needs, the only way to measure issues of additionality would be through an assessment of the extent to which national ERF activities might have supported measures which, on the basis of the national legislative framework, are defined as measures of "public obligation". Based on the findings of the country visits, and the various ERF documents to which the evaluators have had access, there is no evidence to suggest that the principle of additionality might not have been respected. On the contrary, in most of the Member States, the evaluators have clearly determined that the needs addressed by the ERF measures could not have been adequately supported through existing public services and legislation. Most projects were in fact pursuing activities that appeared to supplementary to existing systems and structures and, in some cases, innovative.

5.5.3 Target groups

According to the Council Decision the ERF's eligible target groups include:

1. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons having the status defined by the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees, and permitted to reside as refugees in one of the Member States.
2. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons enjoying a form of international protection granted by a Member State.
3. Any third-country nationals or stateless persons who have applied for one of the forms of protection described in points 1 or 2
4. Third-country nationals or stateless persons benefiting from temporary protection arrangements in a Member State
5. Persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined in a Member State.

The target groups defined by the Commission in its Decision 2000/596/EC is in fact identical to those defined in the Council Directive on minimum standards for temporary protection and

Council Directive on minimum standards for the qualification as refugees or as people in need of subsidiary protection[60].

As it stands, the definition of ERF target groups covers, comprehensively, the different categories of people with a legitimate need for protection in the EU. However, the definition does not cover, even implicitly, nationals of the host countries (including naturalized migrants). As some evaluators and project implementers have remarked, this could be seen as an omission, particularly in relation to integration projects, where inclusion or involvement of nationals would have been both relevant and conducive to enhanced project effects and results. It makes little sense to refer to integration without including the community into which individuals are to be integrated. The same observation was also made in the mid-term evaluation[61]. Whether this exclusion is purely conceptual or whether it limits, in practice, a comprehensive approach to integration by ERF projects, is difficult to establish. However, the evaluation team did identify, in some Member States, examples of projects which involved nationals as participants.

Notwithstanding the above observations, the table below shows that all the ERF target groups have benefited, fairly evenly, by the national programmes. The table also indicates that at project level, the awareness of the actual legal status of the individual members of the target group is not very high, as more than half of the respondents' states that their project also targeted persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined, while this category according to the Member States' statistics is 0. The answers may however be correct, as the projects may very well have addresses needs that also would characterise this category of persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined. Some project managers may thus have answered question 9 from a more theoretical approach, understanding the question as an inquiry on who of the ERF eligible groups *could be targeted* by the projects, while others may have answered concretely on who of the ERF eligible groups *actually were targeted*. It is more important to see the answers to question 9 as an indication on the fact that the actual needs of the various categories of the target group in many instances are transversal needs, where the actual legal

60 Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.
Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of protection granted

61 Mid-term evaluation, p.246

status of the individual beneficiary has very little practical relevance. This issue has also been discussed in relation to the three measures in section 5.5.1

Question 9: At which of the following ERF eligible groups is the project targeted?

	Third-country nationals or stateless persons having status as defined by the Geneva convention	Third-country nationals or stateless persons enjoying another form of protection granted by the member state	Third-country nationals who have applied for on of the above protection statuses	Persons benefiting from temporary protection arangements in your country	Persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined in your country	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	59.7%	48.4%	66.4%	57.7%	54.7%	13.9%
No	40.3%	51.6%	33.6%	42.3%	45.3%	86.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The total number of answers in each category is 839

Question 9: Eligible groups targeted by projects

While the ERF does not privilege any of the target groups, the Council Decision does, however, refer to the fact that vulnerable groups should receive particular attention. The table below shows the ERF projects' focus on different target groups, some of which could be characterised as vulnerable. The table indicates that projects have targeted women more than any other group. Specific ethnic groups and disabled persons, on the other hand, rank lowest among all the target groups. Elderly people also rank low, although higher than unaccompanied minors. This is surprising in view of the attention given to unaccompanied minors in many ERF national strategies. However, this can largely be explained by the fact that, in absolute terms, the number of unaccompanied minors is in general considerably lower than all the other target groups.

Question 10: Who is the direct target group(s) of the project (i.e. who participates in project activities

		Yes	No	Total
Women	%	72.0%	28.0%	100.0%
Men	%	66.5%	33.5%	100.0%
Family groups, e.g. families with young children, single parents,etc.	%	49.7%	50.3%	100.0%
The elderly	%	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
Children	%	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%
Traumatised persons	%	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
Unaccompanied minors	%	29.6%	70.4%	100.0%
Disabled persons	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Young people	%	44.2%	55.8%	100.0%
Specific ethnic groups or minorities	%	22.4%	77.6%	100.0%
Other groups	%	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%

The total number of answers in each category is 839

Question 10: Direct target groups of projects

Overall, it can be concluded that the indicators provided by the questionnaire have confirmed that the target groups supported by the projects have been largely identical to those defined in the Council Decision, and in line with the needs expressed by the Member States. Looking at the final beneficiaries of the project activities, the findings are practically identical to those relating to the projects' target groups, thus suggesting that project activities planned for specific target groups have indeed managed to reach out to them and to provide the concrete benefits planned by the projects. The table below lists the ERF projects' final beneficiaries.

Question 11: Who are the final beneficiaries (i.e. the end users) of the project?

		Yes	No	Total
Women	%	72.8%	27.2%	100.0%
Men	%	69.7%	30.3%	100.0%
Family groups, e.g.families with young children, single parents, etc.	%	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
The elderly	%	36.6%	63.4%	100.0%
Children	%	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%
Traumatised persons	%	49.0%	51.0%	100.0%
Unaccompanied minors	%	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%
Disabled persons	%	24.6%	75.4%	100.0%
Young people	%	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%
Specific ethnic groups or minorities	%	23.7%	76.3%	100.0%
Other groups	%	18.6%	81.4%	100.0%

The total number of answers in each category is 839

Question 11: Final beneficiaries of projects

On the basis of the questionnaire completed by the project managers in all the Member States, it is also possible to assess whether the national ERF strategy has generally been perceived by the implementers as meeting the needs of the groups targeted by the ERF. The table below indicates that more than two thirds of the responding project managers considered that the national ERF strategies did to "some" or to "a high" extent meet the current needs of the groups targeted by the ERF nationally.

It is interesting to note that most of the negative answers originated from Italy, Greece, Belgium, and Cyprus, where more than 25 % of the respondents considered that the national ERF strategies were only meeting the needs of the target groups to a "limited extent". However, with the exception of Belgium, these are also countries where active public policies in favour of the ERF target groups have only recently been established, thus explaining the negative assessment made by practitioners with a more long-standing experience of, and familiarity with, interventions in favour of asylum seekers and refugees. This could also be interpreted as reflecting the project managers' concern about the ability of the national authorities to meet the needs of the target groups, within and outside of the ERF.

% within Countries

		Question 14: In your opinion, to what extent does the national ERF strategy meet the present needs of the groups targeted by the ERF in your country?							
		To a high extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don´t know	Irrelevant	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	9.4%	43.4%	15.1%		9.4%	20.8%	1.9%	100.0%
	France	51.4%	37.1%	8.6%		2.9%			100.0%
	Germany	35.5%	41.5%	10.6%		2.1%	9.9%	.4%	100.0%
	Sweden	13.2%	57.9%	5.3%		5.3%	15.8%	2.6%	100.0%
	Spain		100.0%						100.0%
	Portugal	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%					100.0%
	Italy	4.9%	29.5%	27.0%		22.1%	6.6%	9.8%	100.0%
	Greece		48.1%	48.1%			3.7%		100.0%
	Netherlands	35.7%	40.5%	11.9%	2.4%	7.1%		2.4%	100.0%
	Finland	55.6%	33.3%				11.1%		100.0%
	Austria	25.5%	30.9%	21.8%		10.9%	5.5%	5.5%	100.0%
	Belgium	14.3%	26.8%	33.9%	3.6%	16.1%	1.8%	3.6%	100.0%
	Lux	78.6%	14.3%			7.1%			100.0%
	Ireland	17.9%	48.7%	23.1%			2.6%	7.7%	100.0%
	Cyprus		50.0%	50.0%					100.0%
	Estonia	50.0%	50.0%						100.0%
	Hungary	35.7%	14.3%	7.1%				42.9%	100.0%
	Latvia		100.0%						100.0%
	Lithuania	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%					100.0%
	Poland	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%			40.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik	50.0%	50.0%						100.0%
	Slovenia	30.8%	23.1%				7.7%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		25.0%	38.9%	16.9%	.4%	7.2%	7.5%	4.2%	100.0%

Question 14: By country: ERF strategies and needs of target groups

As can be seen in the table below, the majority of responding project managers considered that they were familiar with the national ERF strategy. It can thus be inferred that the responses to the question on whether the ERF strategy meets the needs of the target groups are informed answers.

	Question 13: Are your familiar with the national ERF strategy in your country?	
	Count	%
Yes, I know it very well	156	18.6%
Yes, I know it fairly well	419	49.9%
Yes, I know it, but not very well	145	17.3%
No, I don´t know it	88	10.5%
Unanswered	31	3.7%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 13: Awareness of national ERF strategies

On the basis of the above indicators, it can therefore be concluded that the national ERF strategies have reflected, to a large extent, the needs of the target groups. This finding was confirmed in the course of the face-to-face interviews with the project managers, which have established the relevance of the ERF national strategies in addressing the concrete needs of the target groups.

5.6 Effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation

5.6.1 Number of projects

More than 2,050 projects[62] have been co-funded by the European Refugee Fund in 2000-2004. Of these, approximately 1,107 projects related to measures on reception of asylum seekers, 760 to integration of refugees, and 183 to voluntary repatriation. While these figures are reported in table 5.13, it should be noted that some uncertainty prevails regarding the exact figures in some of the Member States.

As can be seen, the two Member States with the largest number of projects are Germany and Italy. Many countries do, however, support a large number of projects – either as a conscious strategy (as in Ireland) or as a result of a large number of applicants. While supporting a large number of small projects may benefit a large number of organisations, thus strengthening civil society in that country, it can have implications for efficiency and effectiveness, and these need to be taken into consideration. One solution to this would be to simplify administrative requirements for smaller projects.

[62] Within the framework of this evaluation it has been necessary to adopt a definition of a 'project' that was adapted to the regulations of the ERF-1 programme. Because ERF-1 resources were only deployed on the basis of yearly funding periods, there was a need to define an ERF project as 'a project activity within one of the three ERF measures during a single funding year'. This means that projects that have applied for, and have received funding over successive financial years have been included as separate projects, each covering a one-year funding period. Equally, projects that, according to the NRAs, were addressing more than one ERF Measure have been included as separate projects, according to the number of Measures they were covering. This definition may of course inflate the total number of projects, but reflects more accurately the funding logic of the ERF-1, and its administrative procedures.

Table 5.13

ERF co funded projects 2000 - 04, by country and measure

country	Reception	Integration	Repatriation	total
Austria	66	35	15	116
Belgium	37	98	14	149
Cyprus	2	3	0	5
Czech Rep.	0	0	0	0
Estonia	2	0	0	2
Finland	5	33	8	46
France	112	11	3	126
Germany	472	91	67	630
Greece	18	10	0	28
Hungary	0	1	2	3
Ireland*	20	42	4	66
Italy	216	210	5	431
Latvia	1	1	0	2
Lithuania	1	4	1	6
Luxembourg	10	9	0	19
Malta	0	2	0	2
The Netherlands	27	33	24	84
Poland	4	1	1	6
Portugal*	8	6	5	19
Slovak Rep	2	0	1	3
Slovenia	5	8	0	13
Spain*	8	6	5	19
Sweden	72	84	22	178
UK*	19	72	6	97
Total	1.107	760	183	2.050

* It should be noted that the total number of project may be somewhat higher as final figures for 2003 and 2004 from UK, Ireland, Portugal and Spain have not been available

Source: National Responsible Authorities, Compiled by DIHR

Table 5.13: ERF co funded projects 2000– 2004, by country and measure

5.6.2 Target groups

Based on information from the country visits and the country evaluations, the evaluation team estimates that in total, more than 600.000 people were directly targeted by ERF projects. The evaluation team regard this estimation to be conservative. The actual figures have not been available from *all* countries. The estimation of the total number of beneficiaries is thus based upon figures reported in the country reports of Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Luxembourg, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany (2000 – 03), Estonia, Ireland, Poland and Greece. The number of beneficiaries in France 2000 – 02 (94.610) has also been included in the calculation. The sum of these figures is 521.619 beneficiaries.

Having in mind that no figures from UK, Sweden, and Finland and some of the New Member States has been included, and that the figures for the years 2003 – 04 for France and the year 2004 for Germany are neither included, it is reasonable to assume that the total figure may well be much higher than the above mentioned 600.000. It should be mentioned that these figures do not include users of web pages, but only project - beneficiaries within the defined target groups as reported in country reports. In this regard it should be mentioned, that without a comprehensive and coherent indicator system providing definitions of beneficiaries there may be variations from country to country in reporting numbers. The conservative estimation of the total number of 600.000 targeted people provides thus only a reliable rough indication of the overall magnitude of the program.

The projects that responded to the questionnaire have targeted very different groups in terms of size. As can be seen from the table below, some projects have targeted only a few people while others targeted several thousands beneficiaries. 27.8 % of all the projects have focused on relatively small target groups of up to 99 persons, while approximately 15 % have focused on target groups of between 100 and 200 persons and 200 to 500 persons. Very few projects have worked with target groups of more than 5.000 people.

In relative terms, Greece (18.5%), the Netherlands (16.7%) and Finland (22.2%) are the countries with the largest number of projects targeting large groups of 5,000 people or more. Sweden (57.1%), Spain (66.7%), Cyprus (50%) and Hungary (63.6%) are those with the largest number of projects targeting groups of less than 100 people.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Ireland**
Project title	**CANAL INTERCULTURAL DROP-IN CENTRE**
Managing entity	**CANAL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP**
ERF Measure	**Reception and Integration**

- The project concerned a community based group that reflects and celebrates ethnic diversity, raising cultural awareness and promoting social inclusion and equality through information and social support, and networking with other relevant bodies to achieve better results
- The key activities were a community led research on purpose and activities of the Centre; the development of a creative and effective communication strategy; the development of policies for the management of the Centre (e.g. intercultural policy, child protection guidelines and health and safety policies); the development of a database of volunteers and the conduct of a volunteers' skills audit, especially amongst asylum seekers and refugees; the development of a volunteers' policy and the provision of effective training and support to volunteers; the establishment of a membership system and facilitation of involvement of members and volunteers (especially asylum seekers and refugees) in planning, reviewing, evaluation and management in the work of the Centre; the development of links with existing social, educational, childcare, youth, information, arts and other relevant services, both local and statutory bodies in the area; and a programme of intercultural activities, including cultural nights, culinary events, dramas and sports.
- The total costs of the project were €111.057,97 with an ERF contribution of € 31.977,97. The number of direct beneficiaries amounted to 500.
- Most planned activities have been implemented. It was decided to include a detailed research programme on the integration needs of refugees, which resulted in a delay of the completion of all activities.
- Prior to the launch of the project, a base line situation was established, which included a well-documented description of the problem that the project was to address and the definition of indicators. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups, periodic self-assessment, and internal learning).
- One of the innovative approaches was empowering most of the asylum seekers and refugees through education and giving them the opportunity to express themselves through sports and cultural exchanges (e.g. food exhibitions, fashion parades and other cultural understanding activities). Language and computer classes were included in the project. The Drop-In centre provided a welcoming social space for the asylum seekers and refugees, it advocated social inclusion and empowered most of the asylum seekers and refugees to either re-educate themselves or get gainful employment.
- The project had impact both nationally and locally. On a national level, the community organisation was involved campaigns against racism, and submissions were made to the Ministry of Justice on the Immigration Residency Bill that will be enacted next year and on the Garda consultation on recruitment of ethnic minorities into the police. Locally, a high level of integration was achieved in the neighbourhood.

Best Practice: Ireland

% within Countries

		Question 41:How many beneficiaries have been directly involved in the project activities - what is the size of the target group?							
		Unanswered	0-99 persons	100-199 persons	200-499 persons	500-999 persons	1000-4999 persons	5000 or more persons	Total
Countries	UK	13.2%	28.3%	17.0%	11.3%	3.8%	17.0%	9.4%	100.0%
	France	42.9%	17.1%	2.9%	17.1%	8.6%	11.4%		100.0%
	Germany	19.9%	28.0%	14.2%	20.2%	8.9%	8.5%	.4%	100.0%
	Sweden	15.8%	68.4%	7.9%	7.9%				100.0%
	Spain	16.7%	66.7%				16.7%		100.0%
	Portugal		23.5%	52.9%	23.5%				100.0%
	Italy	15.6%	44.3%	27.9%	4.9%	7.4%			100.0%
	Greece	11.1%		7.4%	18.5%	7.4%	37.0%	18.5%	100.0%
	Netherlands	7.1%	19.0%	9.5%	11.9%	11.9%	23.8%	16.7%	100.0%
	Finland	11.1%	22.2%		44.4%			22.2%	100.0%
	Austria	16.4%	9.1%	30.9%	29.1%	7.3%	5.5%	1.8%	100.0%
	Belgium	51.8%	12.5%	5.4%	17.9%	8.9%	3.6%		100.0%
	Lux	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%	42.9%				100.0%
	Ireland	12.8%	15.4%	5.1%	10.3%	12.8%	30.8%	12.8%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%	50.0%						100.0%
	Estonia	100.0%							100.0%
	Hungary	14.3%	50.0%	14.3%		7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	100.0%
	Latvia	100.0%							100.0%
	Lithuania	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%					100.0%
	Poland	60.0%				20.0%	20.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik	50.0%	50.0%						100.0%
	Slovenia	30.8%	46.2%	15.4%			7.7%		100.0%
Total		20.6%	27.8%	16.0%	15.7%	7.4%	9.3%	3.2%	100.0%

Question 41: By countries: Size of direct beneficiary/target group in projects

Of the people targeted, most project managers (59.0 %) have answered that between 76% and 100% have benefited from the projects, while only 2.0 % have considered that less than 25 % had benefited. These figures, even allowing for some positive embellishing by project managers, nevertheless indicate a fairly high level of effectiveness.

Some countries – for example Greece, Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg – do however present fairly low percentages compared to the overall picture. Thus, in Greece, only 48.1 % of the project managers believe that more than 75 % have benefited from the project activities, in the Netherlands and Belgium the proportion is 33.3 %, while in Luxembourg it is as low as 12.5 %[63].

[63] It should be noted, however, that the number of people who have not answered this question is relatively high as well

% within Countries

		Question 42: What percentage of the target group would you say have benefited directly from the project activities?					
		Unanswered	0-25 percent	26-50 percent	51-75 percent	76-100 percent	Total
Countries	UK	18.9%	1.9%	3.8%	7.5%	67.9%	100.0%
	France	57.1%				42.9%	100.0%
	Germany	25.2%	2.1%	4.6%	4.3%	63.8%	100.0%
	Sweden	44.7%	2.6%	7.9%	2.6%	42.1%	100.0%
	Spain				16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	Portugal					100.0%	100.0%
	Italy	10.7%			14.8%	74.6%	100.0%
	Greece	51.9%				48.1%	100.0%
	Netherlands	28.6%	9.5%	16.7%	11.9%	33.3%	100.0%
	Finland	33.3%		22.2%		44.4%	100.0%
	Austria	23.6%	5.5%	3.6%		67.3%	100.0%
	Belgium	53.6%	1.8%		8.9%	35.7%	100.0%
	Lux	78.6%				21.4%	100.0%
	Ireland	23.1%		5.1%	15.4%	56.4%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%				50.0%	100.0%
	Estonia	50.0%				50.0%	100.0%
	Hungary	21.4%		14.3%	7.1%	57.1%	100.0%
	Latvia	100.0%					100.0%
	Lithuania	20.0%	20.0%			60.0%	100.0%
	Poland	60.0%			20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Slovak Republik	50.0%				50.0%	100.0%
	Slovenia	38.5%		7.7%		53.8%	100.0%
Total		28.5%	2.0%	4.1%	6.4%	59.0%	100.0%

Question 42: By countries: Percentage of target group benefiting of activities

Whereas most project managers (45.9 %) were satisfied with this “benefit ratio”, approximately 9 % stated that the level was less than planned. 32.9 % thought it was almost identical. The Spanish project managers expressed a particularly high level of disappointment, with 83.3 % of them stating that the number of beneficiaries was less than planned. The same indication was given by 58.8 % of the Portuguese project managers.

% within Countries

		Question 43: Does the number of persons actually benefiting meet the expectations you had at the inception of the project?						
		The number was the same or exceeded the number planned	The numbe was almost the same	The number was less than we had planned	Few or no people benefited from the project	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	54.7%	22.6%	9.4%		11.3%	1.9%	100.0%
	France	34.3%	17.1%				48.6%	100.0%
	Germany	50.4%	39.4%	3.2%		2.8%	4.3%	100.0%
	Sweden	36.8%	21.1%	7.9%		34.2%		100.0%
	Spain		16.7%	83.3%				100.0%
	Portugal		41.2%	58.8%				100.0%
	Italy	33.6%	66.4%					100.0%
	Greece	70.4%	29.6%					100.0%
	Netherlands	40.5%	23.8%	31.0%		2.4%	2.4%	100.0%
	Finland	88.9%	11.1%					100.0%
	Austria	80.0%	10.9%	7.3%			1.8%	100.0%
	Belgium	21.4%	21.4%	21.4%	3.6%		32.1%	100.0%
	Lux	57.1%	21.4%			21.4%		100.0%
	Ireland	64.1%	7.7%	17.9%			10.3%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%		50.0%				100.0%
	Estonia			50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Hungary	42.9%	28.6%	21.4%		7.1%		100.0%
	Latvia						100.0%	100.0%
	Lithuania	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%				100.0%
	Poland	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%				100.0%
	Slovak Republik			100.0%				100.0%
	Slovenia	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%		7.7%	53.8%	100.0%
Total		45.9%	32.9%	9.5%	.2%	4.1%	7.4%	100.0%

Question 43: By countries: Project results versus planned expectations

5.6.3 Types of activities

Bearing in mind the very comprehensive definition of the themes that are eligible for funding, we have examined the kinds of concrete activities actually performed in each of the three intervention areas, reception, integration and repatriation. According to our questionnaire responses, the most frequent activities in the respondent group are the provision of social services or help with administrative, interpretation and legal formalities. The second most frequent activities are language training, counselling and assistance in job search.

Question 8: Which of the following activities are carried out in the project?

		Yes	No	Total
Food, clothing and other forms of basic material aid	%	28.1%	71.9%	100.0%
Housing or shelter-related services	%	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
Social services/help with administrative or legal formalities	%	55.4%	44.6%	100.0%
Cash benefits	%	25.7%	74.3%	100.0%
Individual professional counselling	%	42.7%	57.3%	100.0%
Group-based professional counselling	%	32.8%	67.2%	100.0%
Health care	%	22.4%	77.6%	100.0%
Networks or discussion groups for ERF direct target groups	%	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%
Networks or discussion groups for professionals	%	34.4%	65.6%	100.0%
Training professional staff	%	31.2%	68.8%	100.0%
Primary or secondary school education	%	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%
Higher education	%	10.8%	89.2%	100.0%
Vocational training	%	22.3%	77.7%	100.0%
Language training	%	42.2%	57.8%	100.0%
Courses designed to help integrate into the host society	%	37.2%	62.8%	100.0%
Sport or leisure time activities	%	37.3%	62.7%	100.0%
Assistance in job search	%	42.6%	57.4%	100.0%
Development of information material concerning integration	%	36.5%	63.5%	100.0%
Development of strategies or methodologies	%	32.3%	67.7%	100.0%
Fact-finding of situation in country of asylum seekers´ origin	%	23.4%	76.6%	100.0%
Organisation of return journey for repatriation	%	20.9%	79.1%	100.0%
Reintegration in the country of origin after repatriation	%	13.2%	86.8%	100.0%
Other	%	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%

The total number of answers in each category is 839

Question 8: Type of activities carried out

A more detailed description of the type of projects conducted under each strand reveals a range of activities. The list below does not pretend to be exhaustive, but should encompass the most typical activities undertaken in projects co-funded by ERF.

Reception	• Temporary accommodation in apartment or collective centres • Provision of food and clothing • Legal counselling and information • Legal aid for second instance procedures • Language courses • Alphabetisation (where needed) • Access to health care systems • Teaching how to access local public administration and institutions • General orientation and counselling about social behaviour in approaching local society • Assistance to obtain residence and working permits when possible • Assistance to integrate children of asylum seekers and refugee into the public school system • Care taking and assistance for the special needs of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees • Psychosocial assistance • Psychotherapy for traumatised asylum seekers and refugees • Care taking of especially vulnerable groups such as lonely heads of families and disabled persons
Integration	• Information dissemination on rights and duties of citizens • Assistance to unaccompanied minors • Language training • Counselling in mapping out possibilities of individual refugees in relation to the labour market and qualifications • Concrete and individual assistance in job searching and intermediates for accessing possible employers • Professional training courses • Vocational training in professional environments • Counselling and concrete and individual assistance in accessing local housing markets
Repatriation	• Counselling about support possibilities and condition in countries of origin • Dissemination of information about countries of origin • Return support programs providing assistance to solve practical problems connected to return such as: o Procurement of documents, o Logistic assistance o Funds for return costs o Funds for initial adaptation to life in home country

Type of projects conducted under each strand

The country evaluations indicate that no real serious attempt has been made to document and preserve knowledge on best practices. All countries have excellent projects, but a systematic collection of evidence on results and accomplishments has not been sufficiently integrated into project activities, which would otherwise bring the activities further from the stage of being a good idea, combined with good intentions and day to day results into a mainstreamed best practice.

The interventions mentioned above can all be characterised as activities that have a direct effect on the defined target groups as they will benefit directly from the assistance provided to them. Other types of intervention are more indirect in their effects on the target groups and are designed to improve the administrative structure of the projects[64].

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Belgium**
Project title	**Adapted support and monitoring of Russian returnees**
Managing entity	**Flemish Refugee Council**
ERF Measure	**Voluntary repatriation**

- The project was supported in 2004-2005.
- The project focused on research of migration motivations of the Russian-speaking community and development of a return program to the Russian Federation.
- The key activities were identification of local supporting organisations in the country of origin; implementation of migrant organisations in the return process; support of 20 Russian returnees; development of a practical manual for social workers; research of the migration motivation of the Russian-speaking community; development of a structural dialogue about voluntary return with the Russian-speaking community.
- As a result of the project, the migration motivation was analysed in a research report. Furthermore, 20 persons voluntary returned to the Russian Federation.
- Six organisations in Belgium collaborated with the project among which Russian community organisations; in the Russian Federation two organisations were responsible for monitoring of the returnees and supporting the reintegration process.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 176.500.
- All planned activities have been implemented and all aims have been met.
- Prior to the launch of the project, a base line situation was established, which included a well-documented description of the problem that the project was to address, and the development of indicators. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through internal learning).
- A practical guide was developed for social workers to support them in assisting returnees. This is the first practical publication about voluntary return. The methods described in the guide will be disseminated.
- Other organisations in Belgium, such as Fedasil, are interested in exploring the role migrant organisations can play in voluntary return and in the collaboration with partner organisations in the country of origin. The focus on monitoring is an innovative approach.

Best Practice: Belgium

This distinction between activities benefiting individuals and those benefiting structures is of course rather artificial and may be variously interpreted. In practice many projects help to improve structures while providing concrete benefits to individuals. The entire National Action Plan in Italy is an example on how building up structures and benefiting individuals is done simultaneously through the same activities and projects[65]. We have listed examples of structural interventions in the table below. The list is not exhaustive, but it does provide a good overview.

[64] The European Commission: Guidelines for the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating European Refugee Fund (ERF) co-financed actions in the period 2000 – 2004.
[65] The mid term report therefore concluded that Italy had spent approximately 50 % of their resources on both direct assistance to individuals and on supporting systems and structures. Mid-term evaluation p. 103.

The measures chosen for intervention for improvement of structures are first and foremost pointing at qualifying structures to meet the need on the ground, and not much consideration seems to have been given to aspects of developing common policies. This is remarkable because especially the structural interventions could be suitable for transnational exchange of best practices and mutual inspiration. However, according to the experience of the evaluators gathered during their missions in the Member States this apparently did not occur. Member States are simultaneously implementing projects trying to solve the same kinds of problems, they are building up the same capacities, are facing similar and very comparable obstacles – but they are all working as if they were the only ones involved in these issues. It can be concluded that the ERF has not managed very well to enhance practical cooperation on structural issues between Member States, facilitating mutual inspiration and exchange of best practices.

Structural interventions	• Development of country documentation concerning the country of origin of asylum seekers and refugees
	• Monitoring development in national and international asylum law and in case law
	• Capacity building of:
	  o Public officials working in the field of asylum
	  o Psychosocial operators
	  o Volunteers assisting refugees and asylum seekers
	  o Counselling services (Para juridical, repatriation)
	• Improvement of counselling services
	• Improvement of accommodation and social assistance
	• Building up measures for protection of unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedures
	• Building up networks for:
	  o Counsellors of refugee and asylum seeking women
	  o Therapeutics working with refugee and asylum seekers with traumas.
	  o Guardians of unaccompanied minor refugees and asylum seekers
	  o Public officials working on asylum issues
	• Various refugee and asylum related research activities
	• Building up public administrative structures for the management of refugee and asylum issues in relation to integration and to facilities their access to social and economic rights
	• Establishment of counselling facilities
	• Improvement of:
	  o Structures for counselling
	  o Interpretation services for asylum seekers
	  o Housing conditions
	  o Living conditions of unaccompanied minors
	  o Knowledge on mental health complaints by asylum seekers
	  o Repatriation methods for asylum seekers with medical problems
	• Development of:
	  o Methods to alphabetisation of illiterates
	  o Methods for better integration and inclusion of refugees into society
	  o Methods to improve healthy social emotional development of asylum seekers of 4 – 8 years of age.

List of structural intervention activities

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**Greece**
Project title	**Multifunctional Center of Social Support and Integration of Refugees**
Managing entity	**Hellenic Red Cross**
ERF Measure	**Integration**

Key project variables

- The project was supported under each of the five ERF funding years, and was one of the very few "Integration" actions in Greece.
- The project aimed to provide, under one roof: information, counselling, mediation, material help, rent assistance, Greek language courses, supportive teaching for refugee children, contacts with Greek employers, recreational and intercultural activities for refugee children, sport activities, a telephone help line, and an intercultural café, for asylum seekers and refugees in Greece.
- The total project cost for the five-year period was EUR 743,118.32, for a total direct beneficiary population of 11,047 (i.e. EUR 67 per beneficiary).

Key success factors

- All planned activities have been implemented, and additional ones were added (Greek language courses for illiterate refugees; cooperation with other national and European projects).
- The project had established a baseline situation prior to the launch of the project, which included a well documented description of the problem which the project was to address, and indicators to assess change/progress in relation to the baseline situation. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through the development of measurable indicators/benchmarks to assess the results/progress of the project; and periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups).
- The project has adopted innovative approaches and implementation methods in the Greek context. This has included approaching the issue of "integration" through a range of complementary measures, rather than fragmentarily; and the fact that most of the project activities were implemented by both refugees and Hellenic Red Cross staff.
- The project has also contributed to advancing the notion of harmonised national asylum policies within the EU, through participation in activities organised by PERCO (the European Red Cross' platform for cooperation on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants' issues), and close cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.

Best practice: Greece

5.6.4 Implementation of activities and achievement of results

When assessing effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation, one important aspect to consider is the degree to which planned activities have been implemented. The table below shows that 69.4 % of the respondents stated that all planned activities had been implemented and 25.1 % stated that most planned activities were implemented. Assuming that "most planned activities have been implemented" means that the projects have been relatively successful, it give us cumulated success rate of 94.5 %.

	Question 29: To what extent have the activities in the project been implemented?	
	Count	%
All planned activities have been implemented	582	69.4%
Most planned activities have been implemented	211	25.1%
Less than half of planned have been carried out	14	1.7%
Don´t know	6	.7%
Unanswered	26	3.1%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 29: Implementation of activities

When looking at individual countries, it becomes clear that, although the majority of project activities have been implemented, some countries have nevertheless experienced problems. In Sweden, Belgium, Portugal, Ireland, and Lithuania less than half of all project managers have stated that all planned activities have been implemented. In Slovenia, Estonia and Sweden, a substantial amount of project managers have stated that less than half of all activities have been implemented[66]. In Germany, Greece, France, Cyprus and Austria, on the other hand, effectiveness in relation to implementation of activities seems to have been extremely high. Overall, most project managers (72.6 %) state that the implementation has not been delayed and has followed the original time schedule, as shown in the table below.

	Question 24: Has the implementation of the project followed the original time schedule?	
	Count	%
Yes, and it will not be delayed	609	72.6%
Yes so far, but its going to be delayed	22	2.6%
No, it is/was delayed	149	17.8%
Unanswered	59	7.0%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 24: Timing of project implementation

Looking more specifically at each measure, we find the following:

[66] It is possible, however, that some of the project managers who are currently implementing ERF projects have misunderstood the question and have answered that not all activities have been implemented *as yet*.

% within ERF strand

		Question 29: To what extent have the activities in the project been implemented?					
		All planned activities have been implemented	Most planned activities have been implemented	Less than half of planned have been carried out	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
ERF strand	Reception	69,1%	26,3%	1,5%	,8%	2,3%	100,0%
	Integration	71,1%	22,3%	2,1%	1,0%	3,5%	100,0%
	Voluntary repatriation	68,9%	26,2%	1,9%		2,9%	100,0%
	Reception/integration	71,9%	25,0%			3,1%	100,0%
	Unanswered	55,2%	34,5%			10,3%	100,0%
Total		69,4%	25,1%	1,7%	,7%	3,1%	100,0%

Question 29: Completion of planned activities

The table shows that within each strand more than 2/3 of the projects have been successful in implementing all planned activities and nearly 1/3 have implemented more than half of the activities. This means that none of the three measures can be singled out as being less successful than the others.

Question 20: Please describe any changes you have made in the project since it started

		Major changes	Minor adjustments	No changes	Unanswered	Total
Changes in overall objectives?	Count	27	260	469	83	839
	%	3.2%	31.0%	55.9%	9.9%	100.0%
Changes in specific or immediate objectives?	Count	46	314	390	89	839
	%	5.5%	37.4%	46.5%	10.6%	100.0%
Changes in the target group?	Count	42	148	553	96	839
	%	5.0%	17.6%	65.9%	11.4%	100.0%
Changes in the methods or other inputs?	Count	46	346	359	88	839
	%	5.5%	41.2%	42.8%	10.5%	100.0%
Changes in the definition of outputs or results?	Count	51	228	472	88	839
	%	6.1%	27.2%	56.3%	10.5%	100.0%
Changes in projects administration?	Count	48	231	473	87	839
	%	5.7%	27.5%	56.4%	10.4%	100.0%
Other changes?	Count	29	226	411	173	839
	%	3.5%	26.9%	49.0%	20.6%	100.0%

Question 20: Change of project plans after start of implementation

The table above shows that only a very small number of projects were changed, substantially, during implementation. Most projects actually report no changes at all, or only minor changes. The main changes were in relation to minor adjustments of method or other inputs (41,2 %), while 37,4 % of the projects underwent minor adjustments in specific or immediate objectives

and 31 % adjusted their overall objective. As we are speaking of minor adjustments relative to a high level of implementation of activities, such adjustments should be seen, in the main, as an expression of sound project management.

Thus, approximately 95 % of the planned project activities in all the participating Member States were implemented, which must be considered a fairly high implementation rate. However, successful implementation does not mean that the planned results have been achieved.

	Question 38: To what extent have the planned project results been achieved?	
	Count	%
All planned results have been fully achieved	449	53.5%
Most planned results have been achieved	316	37.7%
Less than half of the planned results have been achieved	19	2.3%
Don´t know	17	2.0%
Unanswered	38	4.5%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 38: Achievement of project results

The table above shows that 53.5 % of the projects have achieved all their planned results, while 37.7 % have achieved more than half of the planned results. The rate of success is thus generally very high. In Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia a large number of project managers have stated that less than half of all results have been achieved. However, this might be explained by the fact that these project managers are in still implementing their projects. Other countries which show some deviances from the overall picture are Spain and Finland, where more than 65 % of all the project managers have indicated that not all planned results have been achieved. In Greece and Luxembourg, on the other hand, more than 90 % have stated that all planned results have been achieved.

If the question on planned activities is combined with that on results achieved, the following picture emerges:

Count

		Question 38: To what extent have the planned project results been achieved?				
		All planned results have been fully achieved	Most planned results have been achieved	Less than half of the planned results have been achieved	Don´t know/ Unanswered	Total
To what extent have the activities in the project been implmented?	All planned activities have been implemented	397	159	4	22	582
	Most planned activities have been implemented	36	150	5	20	211
	Less than half of planned have been carried out	0	5	9	0	14
	Don´t know/Unanswered	16	2	1	13	32
Total		449	316	19	55	839

Cross tabulation 1 between achieved results and implemented activities

The table above shows that out of 839 respondents, 397 (more than 47 %) have stated that their projects had both achieved their planned results and implemented all their planned activities. 345 projects had either achieved more than half of their planned results or implemented more that half of their planned activities or both. This leaves only 97 projects (11.6 %) as potentially unsuccessful projects, although 51 of these did not answer the questionnaire.

	Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*	
	Count	%
Yes	397	47.3%
No	442	52.7%

Cross tabulation 2 between achieved results and implemented activities

Although the evaluators have tried to compare success between public authorities and civil society implementers, no clear conclusions can be drawn due to a low response rate of questionnaires from Sweden, one of the two countries with the highest involvement of public

authorities. The other country with a strong participation of public authorities, Italy, does not show any significant variations from the total group of projects EU-wide. The table below provides an overview of the two categories of project distributed within the three measures.

Rate of success by strands (percentage)

% within ERF strand

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
ERF strand	Reception	49.2%	50.8%	100.0%
	Integration	49.1%	50.9%	100.0%
	Voluntary repatriation	32.0%	68.0%	100.0%
	Reception/integration	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	Unanswered	41.4%	58.6%	100.0%
Total		47.3%	52.7%	100.0%

* This question is based on recoding of question 29 and 38 in the questionnaire

Count

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
ERF strand	Reception	191	197	388
	Integration	141	146	287
	Voluntary repatriation	33	70	103
	Reception/integration	20	12	32
	Unanswered	12	17	29
Total		397	442	839

Rate of success by strands (total numbers)

While the reception and integration measures show a similar rate of success of 49 %, the repatriation measure's rate is 32 %. This can be explained, generally, by the fact that the projects might have been less experienced in the implementation of such types of measure, and by the fact that decisions on voluntary repatriation are closely linked to external factors such as

developments in safety and security conditions in home countries, which are beyond the factors that can be planned for in advance in repatriation projects.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Austria**
Project title	**INTO Wien & INTO Salzburg**
Managing entity	**Evangelisches Hilfswerk in Österreich**
ERF Measure	**Integration**

In Vienna and in Salzburg, projects called INTO has developed a holistic concept for integrating refugee individuals and families through addressing all integration issues in a systematic way and through a strongly participatory process based upon a plan of action, jointly developed between the INTO and the individual refugee and the refugee family.

The program aims at providing the refugee with:

- Adequate knowledge of German language
- Basic knowledge about the Austrian society, culture and politics empowering the refugee to participate actively in the Austrian society
- A livelihood as adequate as possible to the qualifications of the refugee
- Housing
- Stable social conditions and the competency to solve problem without external support

The program is based on analysis of individual needs of the refugee and the refugee family, thus tailor making the integration program to fit the individual refugee for a period of one to one and a half years. The program encompasses individual social counselling, family and psycho-social counselling, legal advice on all needed matters, language courses, assistance to improve education and qualifications, intensive assistance in searching for adequate jobs in relation to individual qualifications and the actual opportunities on the labor market, support to searching for proper and affordable accommodation, loan-fund for initial payments for accommodation, general information about society, public services and the Austrian way of life.

The program is similar to the program offered by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), but very intensive and personalized. The project manager of INTO Wien has indicated that the success rate of integrating refugees is very high (more than 80 %) in terms of employment and becoming self-supporting.

Best practice: Austria

The table also displays a fourth measure, the combined "reception/integration" measure. This measure has had a considerably higher level of success rate than the other three measures, reaching a rate of more than 62 %. This combined measure represents 32 projects whose funding shifted from one measure to another over the five-year funding period, and which targeted both asylum seekers and refugees. The success rate for this type of projects indicates that a rigorous distinction between the two measures does not contribute to increased success at a project level. It should be noted, however, that a number of projects registered under the two measures on reception and integration could also be called "combination projects", albeit with administratively

distinguishable funding sources derived either from the funding allocation for integration or that for reception.

Therefore, rather than contributing to success, the distinction between integration and reception measures appears to create situations of cumbersome adjustments of real needs to the formal distinctions of the ERF's funding strategies. The ERF participating countries in fact follow relatively different processes for the inclusion of asylum seekers into society after the positive assessment of admissibility of the asylum application under the Dublin and third country procedures. In some countries the asylum seekers have more immediate access to integration processes such as school education, language courses, vocational training, the health sector, while in other countries access to rights are more restricted until the final decision on the asylum application. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends keeping the three ERF strands as they are, but only as indicators for the allocation of overall funding at Member State level, and not as a rigorous requirement for the definition of projects and thus for the allocation of project funding. It could be left to the NRAs, as an administrative decision, to decide whether to administer the reception and integration measures distinctively, or as a combined reception-integration measure, on a project-by-project case.

The following sections looks in more detail at the effectiveness of project implementation regarding the two categories of projects, the very successful ones with full implementation of all activities and full achievement of results and those with a less optimal performance ratio. The section also discusses effectiveness of projects overall.

Question 22: Did you establish a baseline situation prior to the launch of the project, against which the results of the project could be measured? * Have all planned

Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 22: Did you establish a baseline situation prior to the launch of the project, against which the results of the project could be measured?	Yes	81,1%	69,0%	74,7%
	No	12,8%	16,5%	14,8%
	Don´t know/Unanswered	6,0%	14,5%	10,5%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 22: Establishment of baseline situation related to successful and less successful projects

The table above shows that the very successful projects had established, with more frequency than the other category of projects, a baseline situation prior to launching the projects, against which the results of the projects could be measured. The table below shows the relative difference between the very successful projects and less successful projects in term of their ability to follow the time schedule originally established.

Question 24: Has the implementation of the project followed the original time schedule? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 24: Has the implementation of the project followed the original time schedule?	Yes, and it will not be delayed	80,1%	65,8%	72,6%
	Yes so far, but its going to be delayed	1,5%	3,6%	2,6%
	No, it is/was delayed	12,8%	22,2%	17,8%
	Unanswered	5,5%	8,4%	7,0%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 24: Time schedule related to successful and less successful projects

The very successful projects have a rate above average, while the rate for not following the original time schedule or expecting it to be delayed or actually being delayed is below average. However, for both categories overall, some 72.6 % of all the projects appear to have followed the original time schedule.

The five tables below relate to the external conditions for the implementation of projects, which any project manager should have factored in their project proposal and project design, e.g. time limitations, administrative or managerial obstacles, costs, insufficient preparation, change of project partners, etc. The tables show that the very successful projects that managed to implement all activities and to achieve their planned results have been less affected by factors which sound planning and management procedures should be able to reduce or overcome. They also show that projects in general were only affected by these problems to a limited extent.

Question 26.3: Did insufficient time for project implementation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.3: Did insufficient time for project implementation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,5%	4,5%	2,6%
	To some extent	6,0%	16,1%	11,3%
	To a limited extent	15,1%	14,3%	14,7%
	Not at all	65,5%	42,5%	53,4%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	12,8%	22,6%	18,0%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26: Efficiency of project implementation

Question 26.6: Did administrative or managerial problems in your organisation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.6: Did administrative or managerial problems in your organisation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,5%	1,8%	1,2%
	To some extent	7,1%	7,2%	7,2%
	To a limited extent	9,8%	16,7%	13,5%
	Not at all	69,8%	53,8%	61,4%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	12,8%	20,4%	16,8%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.5: Did unexpected project costs challenge the ability of the project to chieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.5: Did unexpected project costs challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,5%	1,8%	1,2%
	To some extent	6,5%	7,0%	6,8%
	To a limited extent	13,4%	16,7%	15,1%
	Not at all	66,8%	55,0%	60,5%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	12,8%	19,5%	16,3%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.4: Did insufficient project preparation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.4: Did insufficient project preparation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent		1,8%	1,0%
	To some extent	,5%	3,6%	2,1%
	To a limited extent	2,5%	15,4%	9,3%
	Not at all	83,4%	59,5%	70,8%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	13,6%	19,7%	16,8%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.7: Did change of project partners challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.7: Did change of project partners challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent		2,0%	1,1%
	To some extent	,3%	4,1%	2,3%
	To a limited extent	1,8%	4,3%	3,1%
	Not at all	82,4%	63,3%	72,3%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	15,6%	26,2%	21,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The six tables below show the way in which projects have been affected by problems related to the management and planning of projects. The tables relate to start-up delays, project assumptions, overall conditions, changing needs, lack of target groups, and lack of target groups' participation.

Question 26.1: Did delays in the start-up of the project challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.1: Did delays in the start-up of the project challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,8%	7,5%	4,3%
	To some extent	5,0%	11,8%	8,6%
	To a limited extent	12,1%	13,1%	12,6%
	Not at all	68,8%	48,4%	58,0%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	13,4%	19,2%	16,4%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.8: Did project assumptions defined prior to commencement of the project prove invalid, and by that challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.8: Did project assumptions defined prior to commencement of the project prove invalid, and by that challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,3%	3,6%	2,0%
	To some extent	3,8%	7,2%	5,6%
	To a limited extent	5,8%	14,0%	10,1%
	Not at all	75,6%	54,3%	64,4%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	14,6%	20,8%	17,9%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.9: Did changes in the overall conditions of the project challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.9: Did changes in the overall conditions of the project challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,3%	,9%	,6%
	To some extent	4,8%	2,9%	3,8%
	To a limited extent	6,3%	19,9%	13,5%
	Not at all	75,6%	55,4%	65,0%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	13,1%	20,8%	17,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**Ireland**
Project title	**The Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture**
Managing entity	**SPIRASI**
ERF Measure	**Reception and Integration**

- The project was supported in 2001- 2004, and was targeted at traumatised or indirectly traumatised persons due to torture, rape, or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence (incl. close relatives to traumatised persons).
- The CCST is a specialist centre for the holistic care and rehabilitation of survivors of torture in a manner that compliments existing statutory services in order to contribute to an improvement in their quality of life and integration into Irish society.
- The key activities were: medico-legal assessments; medical consultation and referrals; psychosocial support services; provision of complimentary therapies; counselling; public awareness and training.
- The total ERF contribution in 2001 – 2004 to the project was € 501.498,81, with a number of beneficiaries amounting to 1400 (meaning €358 per beneficiary). Besides, it also provided indirect services, such as training, and the development of guidelines.
- All planned activities have been implemented, and additional ones were added Since the project aims to respond to the needs of clients, it remained flexible in the activities that it is involved in; at times new activities were introduced or old activities changed to better suit client needs.
- Prior to the launch of the project a base line situation was established, which included a well-documented description of the problem that the project was to address. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through the development of measurable indicators/benchmarks to assess the results/progress of the project; periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups, and internal learning).
- The project started activities in 2001. Previously no other NGO was involved in this area in Ireland, and no specialised support was available to survivors of torture, the target group now have the benefit of specialised medical and psychosocial support, as well as tertiary prevention**.**
- The project has impacted on health services policy and the policy of the Department of Justice. The health services have devised a regional health policy for ethnic minorities with the collaboration of the project, and guidelines for the use and interpretation of medical legal reports have been produced in collaboration with the legal services and statutory departments involved in the asylum determination process.

Best Practice: Ireland

Question 26.10: Did changes in evolving needs among project target group/beneficiaries challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.10: Did changes in evolving needs among project target group/beneficiaries challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	1,0%	2,0%	1,5%
	To some extent	6,5%	5,7%	6,1%
	To a limited extent	18,1%	23,8%	21,1%
	Not at all	61,7%	49,8%	55,4%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	12,6%	18,8%	15,9%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.11: Did insufficient knowledge of project target group/beneficiaries challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities beer implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.11: Did insufficient knowledge of project target group/beneficiaries challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	,5%	1,6%	1,1%
	To some extent	2,3%	4,8%	3,6%
	To a limited extent	6,0%	12,7%	9,5%
	Not at all	76,3%	59,5%	67,5%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	14,9%	21,5%	18,4%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.12: Did limited interest from the target group in participating in project activities challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.12: Did limited interest from the target group in participating in project activities challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	1,0%	1,6%	1,3%
	To some extent	,5%	2,9%	1,8%
	To a limited extent	14,6%	22,4%	18,7%
	Not at all	71,0%	52,9%	61,5%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	12,8%	20,1%	16,7%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The last four tables relate to risks connected with project inputs, i.e. lack of NRA support, changing donor strategies, lack of equipment and technical infrastructure and "other problems" in general.

Question 26.2: Did delays or difficulties in receiving support from the National Program Administrator challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.2: Did delays or difficulties in receiving support from the National Program Administrator challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	15,4%	9,5%	12,3%
	To some extent	11,6%	13,3%	12,5%
	To a limited extent	18,1%	19,2%	18,7%
	Not at all	45,8%	36,9%	41,1%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	9,1%	21,0%	15,4%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.13: Did unexpected change in donor priorities challenge the ability of the project to acheive its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.13: Did unexpected change in donor priorities challenge the ability of the project to acheive its goals?	To a high extent		3,2%	1,7%
	To some extent	1,0%	3,4%	2,3%
	To a limited extent	2,3%	7,7%	5,1%
	Not at all	74,1%	61,5%	67,5%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	22,7%	24,2%	23,5%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.14: Did lack of essential equipment, infrastructure or technical problems challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.14: Did lack of essential equipment, infrastructure or technical problems challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent		2,0%	1,1%
	To some extent	3,3%	6,6%	5,0%
	To a limited extent	15,1%	14,7%	14,9%
	Not at all	61,5%	54,3%	57,7%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	20,2%	22,4%	21,3%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question 26.15 Did other potential problems challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals? * Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?* Crosstabulation

% within Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*

		Have all planned activities been implemented, and have all planned results been fully achieved?*		
		Yes	No	Total
Question 26.15 Did other potential problems challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	To a high extent	1,8%	6,8%	4,4%
	To some extent	4,5%	3,8%	4,2%
	To a limited extent	3,5%	,9%	2,1%
	Not at all	30,7%	22,2%	26,2%
	I don´t know/Unanswered	59,4%	66,3%	63,1%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The many tables shown above have substantiated that in general the projects co funded by ERF have been satisfactory effective and that NRAs manage to select well planned projects with a high probability to succeed. The evidence gives reason to assume that well planned and well prepared projects have better chance to reach the ultimate successes than those that are less well

prepared. This conclusion can hardly surprise anyone, but the general level of projects who have managed to implement all planned activities and those who have obtained the results planned for, and the indicating questionnaire of a low degree of problems caused by lack of proper planning permit us to conclude that the ERF programme have been effective. In spite of complaints about administrative and organisational structural problems and about excessive bureaucracy as reported earlier in this evaluation the implementers are actually performing well.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**Belgium**
Project title	**Formation of Providers and Consumers of Interpretation Services**
Managing entity	**VMC**
ERF Measure	**Reception and Integration**

- The project was supported in 2003- 2005: the methodology was developed during the first year and implemented in the second year. The key objective was the enhancement of the quality of interpretation services which would contribute to the improvement of the quality of reception of the final target groups.
- The key activities were basic education of social interpreters, basic education of consumers, and a train-the trainers programme.
- The key results were basic education of social interpreters, followed by a practical exam and certification; an instruction video for those who use interpreter services; and a network of interpreters who have been trained in social interpretation. Further, a colloquium was organised and a video produced.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 213.345,12. The total number of beneficiaries amounted to 741 (trainees and trainers).
- All planned activities have been implemented, and all goals have been met. In the first year, instead of implementing two basic education programmes six were implemented. Therewith the basis of the programme was broadened.
- The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through indicators, periodic self-assessment, external assessment, and assessment of the needs of the target groups).
- The curriculum for the basic education in social interpretation has been established for the whole region of Flanders and colleges of higher education are willing to integrate it in their regular programme, indicating a high degree of impact.
- From various sides, requests have been made for the instruction video.
- Social interpretation has been put on the agenda of federal and regional governments.

Best Practice: Belgium

5.6.5 Resources

The tables below show the relation between resources and activities, as well as between resources and results. All indicate a high level of efficiency. Thus, 86,9 % of the project managers state that project activities could not have been implemented with fewer resources, and 77,5 % indicate that the same resources could not have supported more activities.

	Question 33.1: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The project activities could have been implemented with fewer resources (financial and human) within the existing project organisation"	
	Count	%
To some extent	16	1.9%
To a limited extent	66	7.9%
Not at all	729	86.9%
Do not know	9	1.1%
Unanswered	19	2.3%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 33.1: Efficiency of resources for implementation of activities

	Question 33.2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The same resources (financial and human) could have supported more activities through a different project arrangements"	
	Count	%
To a high extent	2	.2%
To some extent	41	4.9%
To a limited extent	56	6.7%
Not at all	650	77.5%
Do not know	62	7.4%
Unanswered	28	3.3%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 33.2: Efficiency of project structure in relation to activities

The most sceptical project managers in this respect were found in Italy and Finland, where 9.0 % and 11.1 % respectively considered that, to some extent, activities could have been implemented with fewer resources. In Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary and the Slovak Republic, 18.9 %, 35.7 %, 21.5 % and 50 % of the respondents respectively stated that the same resources could have supported more activities. Overall, 89.7 % of the respondents consider that project results could

not have been achieved with fewer resources, and 77.2 % indicate that the same resources could not have generated more results.

	Question 35.1: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The project results could have been achieved with fewer resources (financial and human)"	
	Count	%
To a high extent	5	.6%
To some extent	2	.2%
To a limited extent	43	5.1%
Not at all	753	89.7%
Do not know	12	1.4%
Unanswered	24	2.9%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 35.1: Efficiency of resources for achieving results

	Question 35.2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The same resources (financial and human) could have generated more results through different project arrangements"	
	Count	%
To a high extent	6	.7%
To some extent	12	1.4%
To a limited extent	77	9.2%
Not at all	648	77.2%
Do not know	66	7.9%
Unanswered	30	3.6%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 35.2: Efficiency of project structure in relation to results

As to whether the resources could have generated more results, Portuguese, Lithuanian and Hungarian project managers, with 23,5 %, 20,0 % and 14,3 % of the responses, indicate that, to some extent, the resources could have generated more results. Spain, Greece, Cyprus, and Estonia are the most optimistic ones, with 100 % of the project managers considering that resources could not, to any extent, have generated more results.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**The Netherlands**
Project title	**Tesfa - Himilo**
Managing entity	**SOM-VAO**
ERF Measure	**Integration**

- The project was supported in 2004-2005.
- Tesfa Himilo is a project run by an Ethiopian and Somalian community organisation for Ethiopian and Somalian refugees in Amsterdam and surrounding. The objective of the project was to facilitate integration of the target group in the Dutch society, especially with regard to employment, internships, and social participation.
- The key activities were job interview training, computer training, language courses, job recruitment with consultants from their own organisations from Ethiopia and Somalia and a job hunter, dissemination of information and awareness-raising through radio programmes and website, women activities, youth activities, as well as the creation of a platform of refugee organisations.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 254.370. The total number of beneficiaries of the project was 300; the cost per person amounted to € 509.
- All activities were implemented and all aims met without major adjustments.
- As a result of the project, 19 Ethiopians and Somalis found employment, people were stimulated to look for work or social participation, 20 people received support to setting up their own enterprise, 10 women have learnt the alphabet and 24 have learnt Dutch, knowledge and experiences have been exchanged and new contacts have been made.
- On a community level, the project has resulted in a higher level of information among Dutch organisations about Ethiopian and Somali refugees, and they now approach the community organisation when relevant. The project has thus formed a bridge between the refugee community and Dutch institutions.

Best Practice: The Netherlands

5.7 Effectiveness and efficiency of Community Actions

In relation to the Community Actions, the mid-term evaluation assessed the level of goal attainment to be high but with room for improvement in relation to e.g. project time frames, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Partnerships were considered to play an important part in achievement of results. Efficiency seemed to be relatively high, as most Community Action managers stated that activities could not have been carried out with fewer resources. Cooperation with DG JAI was considered to have been very fruitful for the effectiveness of management procedures.

However, there appeared to be room for improvement in relation to the following areas: increased content-oriented cooperation with DG JAI; better publicising of projects; better timing in issuing of calls for proposals; and extension of the one-year project cycle[67]. Therefore, in the following paragraphs special attention will be paid to the level of goal attainment, programme and project

[67] Mid-term evaluation, p. 198

time frames, monitoring and evaluation, and efficiency, as well as to feed back mechanisms between actors in national and community actions programmes.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**United Kingdom**
Project title	**Resource**
Managing entity	**World University Service – Retas**
ERF Measure	**Community Action**

- The project was supported in 2003- 2004.
- The aim of the project was to analyse and evaluate from refugees' point of view elements, practices and policies that have contributed to (or obstructed) the integration of refugees in the EU labour market**.**
- The project was implemented in partnership with UAF (the Netherlands) and OCIF (Belgium; now Flemish Refugee Council). It built on the results of a previous Community Action (FREE), and the results of the present Community Action are now being used in an EQUAL funded project, implemented by the same partners.
- The project presented the first Europe wide research on this issue, linking refugees' skills and qualifications to current and projected labour market shortages in the EU.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 302.924.
- 297 refugees were interviewed in 14 EU countries, mainly employed in health and social care, engineering and IT. Fourteen country reports were produced, describing the results of the study. The employment policies and activities for refugees were studied in the participating member states, and recommendations were formulated to improve refugees' access to the labour market. A conference was organised for 150 delegates from 14 EU countries to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders for refugees' potential contribution to the labour market. Then, in various countries new networks were established between professional bodies, governments and refugee agencies.
- All aims were met without major adjustments.
- A monitoring instrument was developed prior to the implementation of the project. The project was monitored and evaluated by this instrument. Further, through meetings and interviews, feedback was given about the progress of the project. Researchers were asked to complete a questionnaire about the progress of the research. Likewise, attendees of the conference completed a questionnaire regarding the conference and the results of the study.
- The project promoted positive images of refugees by highlighting case studies of successfully integrated refugees; it identified successful pathways to employment and described how barriers can be overcome based on refugees' experiences; and it outlined priorities for the allocation of resources, for example the need for more scholarship/grants and funding for refugee and refugee community organisations.

Best Practice: Community Action

5.7.1 Goal attainment

The evaluation of the at random selected sample of projects in the Community Actions programmes 2000 – 2003[68] reveals that the aims of thirteen of the seventeen projects (76 %) were met. Of three projects, not all aims were met, and of one project (of 2002) no final report (or final financial statement) was found. To a certain extent, this is reflected in the response on the questionnaire as well.[69]

[68] No final reports of projects of 2004 are available yet.
[69] One of the respondents is presently implementing a community action

	Question 44: To what extent have the planned project results been achieved?	
	Count	%
All planned results have been fully achieved	5	38.5%
Most planned results have been achieved	4	30.8%
Don´t know	1	7.7%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 44: Achievement of project results

Nevertheless, a variety of bottlenecks in the implementation of projects and other factors that influenced the goal attainment were mentioned. Most problems were related to the cooperation with (new) partners at local level, mostly not being the partners directly involved, the lack of (accessible) data and information, the identification and / or cooperation of aimed target groups (asylum seekers and refugees), and problems with staff. Some of these problems may be prevented by advancing the use of earlier established networks, databases and gathered information through giving access to the results of the Community Actions and national projects and their contact addresses.

Problems encountered at the start or during project implementation (Community Action)

Problems encountered at the start or during implementation of the project (more than one type of problem could have been encountered)	**Number**
Problems with cooperation (local) partners	4
Lack of, or difficulties in access to data and literature	3
Identification and/or cooperation of individuals of aimed target group	3
More time needed for preparation visits to countries of origin, the organisation of a conference and/or the publication of results	3
Aims were too ambitious	2
Changes of staff	2
Problems with timely recruitment of staff	1
Problems with finding partners in other countries	1
Problems related to differences in context, including culture	1

Based on the evaluation of the sample it can be assessed that problems encountered at the start or during the implementation of ERF Community Actions are diverse, and not in all cases time-related. This is partly reflected in the response on question 30 of the questionnaire as well. [70]

Question 30.1: Implementation delays

	Question 30.1: Did delays in the start-up of the project challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	1	7.7%
To some extent	2	15.4%
To a limited extent	4	30.8%
Not at all	5	38.5%
Unanswered	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

Please note that the question has been rephrased as compared to the questionnaire for reasons of clarity'.

	Question 30.12: Did limited interest from the target group in participating in project activities challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	
	Count	%
To a limited extent	4	30.8%
Not at all	4	30.8%
I don´t know	1	7.7%
Unanswered	4	30.8%
Total	13	100.0%

Please note that the question has been rephrased as compared to the questionnaire for reasons of clarity'.

Question 30.12: Project activities related to target groups

Nevertheless, it also can be concluded that problems such as lack of accessible data, lack of cooperation of (local) partners and/or problems in identifying and cooperation of individuals belonging to the aimed target group, might have been prevented by a longer time for preparation, and / or the inclusion of a pilot phase in the project. In general, international (oriented) organisations did not encounter problems in the identification of or coordination with local

[70] Not all answers on question 30 are included. The answers show the same diversity as mentioned with regard to the sample of projects.

partners, while e.g. some national organisations and research institutes did. The establishment of networks of potential partners needs time, and / or access to already established networks of international (oriented) organisations.

Almost half of the respondents of the questionnaire will enter in cooperation with all of their partners another time. It should be noted, however, that the same number of respondents (six) represented international (non) governmental organisations.

Question 10: Level of satisfaction with partner

	Question 10: Would you enter into cooperation with these partners another time?	
	Count	%
Yes, certainly with all partners	6	46.2%
Yes, certainly with some partners	3	23.1%
Yes, we might be involved with some or all partners	1	7.7%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

The problems encountered during the implementation phase often led to requests of amendments to the grant agreement regarding changes in the original outline of the project, including in budget items, as the evaluation of the sample of projects 2000 – 2004 showed. This is reflected in the response on the questionnaire as well.

Question 24: Please describe any changes you have made in the project since it started

		Major changes	Minor adjustments	No changes	Unanswered	Total
Changes in overall objectives?	Count		6	6	1	13
	%		46.2%	46.2%	7.7%	100.0%
Changes in specific or immediate objectives?	Count	1	3	8	1	13
	%	7.7%	23.1%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Changes in the target group?	Count			12	1	13
	%			92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
Changes in the methods or other inputs?	Count	1	4	6	2	13
	%	7.7%	30.8%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Changes in the definition of outputs or results?	Count	1	3	8	1	13
	%	7.7%	23.1%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Changes in projects administration?	Count		4	8	1	13
	%		30.8%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Other changes?	Count		3	7	3	13
	%		23.1%	53.8%	23.1%	100.0%

Question 24: Changes of projects after start of implementation (community action)

5.7.2 Timeframes

Some interviewed project managers regretted the short time between the publication of the Call for Proposals and the given deadline for submission of their project proposal. Mostly this was related to the time needed to contact potential partners, to develop and to come to an agreement about the contents of the project and its financial implications, and/or the specification of the budget. This certainly may cost quite some time that, according to a few interviewed project managers, in particular smaller organisations cannot afford. Some expressed that after the experience of having invested many days and hours in the preparation of a project proposal, which subsequently was rejected, they decided to refrain from a next submission of a grant application.

In general the time between the publication of the Call for Proposals in the Official Journal of the European Commission and on its website and the deadline for submission was around two months, with exception of 2000 in which a time of six weeks was given, and of 2004 in which an extension of the two months with six weeks was given because of technical problems with the online application form. The dates of publication of the Call for Proposals were, with exception of 2000 (which was December 2000), around March – April of each year. This implies that in practice applicants who are familiar with the Community Actions and its timeframes start to check the ERF website around this publication date; potential applicants not being familiar with the time frames may, however, miss that date.

Some interviewed project managers also complained about the long period between submission of a project proposal and the notification of the Commission about its decision regarding the awarding of a grant. Based on the documents provided by the Commission, including the at randomly selected sample of projects, this particularly seems having been the case in 2004: while the Call for Proposals mentions as latest start date permitted 31 December 2004, grant agreements of the selected projects were signed in May 2005. In 2001 – 2003 most projects started in December of the same year, and some in January, February, or March. The explanation for the later start was, as far as could be assessed, the request of the Commission to adjust details of the proposal and/or the budget of the selected project before the grant agreement could be signed (and the first payment could be sent).

In 2000 – 2002 the maximum project duration was limited to 12 months. In the 2003 the maximum duration of projects Strand B, Capacity Building, was extended to 18 months; the maximum duration of projects falling under Strand A and C remained 12 months. In 2004 projects of the two Strands, B and C, could last up to 18 months. It is too early to assess whether the extension of the duration of the projects to a maximum of 18 months will be sufficient to avoid requests for extensions, as was often the case with regard to projects implemented in 2000 – 2003. The sample of projects showed that frequent extensions of the duration of the projects were requested by project managers, varying from one to six months.

Question 28: Implementation time schedule (Community Action)

	Question 28: Has the implementation of the project followed the original time schedule?	
	Count	%
Yes, and it will not be delayed	4	30.8%
Yes so far, but its going to be delayed	1	7.7%
No, it is/was delayed	7	53.8%
Unanswered	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

	Question 30.3: Did insufficient time for project implementation challenge the ability of the project to achieve its goals?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	3	23.1%
To some extent	1	7.7%
To a limited extent	3	23.1%
Not at all	2	15.4%
I don´t know	1	7.7%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Please note that the question has been rephrased as compared to the questionnaire for reasons of clarity'.

Question 30.3: Planning of time for implementation (Community Action)

Therefore, the decision taken by the Commission to extend the project duration up to 18 months seems to have been based on their practice in 2000 – 2003, and follows the recommendation of the mid-term evaluation.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**Sweden / Community Action**
Project title	**Separated Children in Europe Programme**
Managing entity	**Save the Children Sweden**
ERF Measure	**Reception**

Key project variables

- The project was supported by the ERF under the Community Actions in 2002. The total project cost was EUR 412,752, 80 % of which derived from the ERF (EUR 330,202).
- The overall aim of the Separated Children in Europe Programme is to develop greater consistency of policy and practice for work with one of the most vulnerable groups of children in Europe, that is to say separated children in need of international protection. The Programme has sought to continue to identify and promote best practices responses to the situation of children entering Europe, who seek protection through the asylum system as well as through other international instruments. The main focus of the work is on reception issues, strategies, policies and practice.
- The ERF funded support has financed specific components of the programme, namely a) the empowerment of separated children and young people to participate in the process of the national assessments and the development of a comparative European analysis; b) the undertaking of comparative analysis of EU-member states reception strategies, policies and practices regarding separated children
- The project has built a regional network of civil society organisations on separated children covering the majority of the EU member states as well as a number of neighbouring countries. Additionally, these organisations participate in national networks with the relevant public authorities.

Key success factors

- Direct contribution to the ERF development objective of policy convergence and equalized conditions for refugees and asylum seekers. This has been achieved firstly through the programme's focus on process, i.e. strengthening the comparative perspective on national policies through facilitating the flow and exchange of information on the situation of separated children and documenting national practices to address this situation. Secondly, the programme has contributed to the substantive strengthening of the national legislation and policies by using the documentation in national advocacy work.
- The programme has contributed to achieving tangible long-term results on these ambitious overall objectives through changes in legislation and policies in a number of countries. Irrespectively, the outputs delivered in relation to documentation and exchange of information on the situation of separated and the national policies are valuable results in their own right.
- Through its focus on the wider European origins and problems of separated children, the programme has adopted innovative approaches and implementation methods to the issue.

Best Practice: Community Action

5.7.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Since 2003, applicants have to indicate in the grant application how they intend to monitor and evaluate their project. Further, they have to include a timetable for the implementation. Besides this explicit request, evaluation of the sample of projects 2000 – 2003 showed that in final reports

project managers report about their internal and/or external evaluation, although in the questionnaire three project managers report not having evaluated their project.

	Question 35: Have you or another evaluator conducted monitoring and/or evaluation activities in connection with the project?	
	Count	%
Yes, we have monitored and evaluated	8	61.5%
Yes, we have monitored but not evaluated	2	15.4%
No, we have neither monitored nor evaluated	1	7.7%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 35: Monitoring and evaluation (Community Action)

However, besides the timetable since 2003, indicators for monitoring and evaluation are not defined, and the way in which projects are monitored and evaluated is determined by the project leaders and partners. Some projects are monitored by assessing what activities have been carried out, and/or evaluate a project on basis of outputs and results. Others include external evaluation in the form of questionnaires to be completed by partners, and/or target groups, or organise discussions with them for evaluation of specific activities. In those cases satisfaction and/ or impact may be assessed. In two cases of the sample, extensive evaluations of the projects in question were carried out by an external professional evaluator.

The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire established a baseline situation prior to the launch of their project, and one-third defined indicators to monitor and evaluate their project.

	Question 26: Did you establish a baseline situation prior to the launch of the project, against which the results of the project could be measured?	
	Count	%
Yes	9	69.2%
No	3	23.1%
Unanswered	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 26 and 27: Establishment of baseline studies (Community Action)

Question 27: Please indicate the extent to which the following elements have been included in the baseline situation

	A well documented description of the problem whcich the project was to adress?		Indicators to asses change/progress in relation to the baseline situation?		Other?	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	9	69.2%	4	30.8%	1	7.7%
No			3	23.1%	1	7.7%
Don´t know			1	7.7%	2	15.4%
Unanswered	4	30.8%	5	38.5%	9	69.2%
Total	13	100.0%	13	100.0%	13	100.0%

Desk officers of the ERF unit monitor and evaluate the projects on basis of the mid-term and final reports of projects. The expected results and activities, as described in the project description on basis of which a grant agreement was made, form the key indicators for the monitoring and evaluation by the Commission. In some cases desk officers also attend activities that form part of projects, such as seminars and conferences. In those cases a report is made which is included in the final evaluation process.

Evaluation of the expected results of projects in the sample revealed that results are sometimes confused with outputs and / or impact. Examples are respectively 'publication of a report' and 'public understanding enhanced'. The last mentioned was not evaluated, besides not being easy to assess. In one case long term results, beyond the duration of the project, were given, which are impossible to assess at the end of a project. The Guide to the ERF "Community Actions" 2004 seems to tackle this problem: Section 2, point 2.2.1 of the guidelines states: "*The project must be a way to solve or reduce a specific problem. Applicants are requested to focus on clear targets. General statements on policies or overarching objectives must be avoided.*" The four projects of 2004 in the sample abided this point. The Guide further states, in 2.2.2, that "A precise description of objectives and, if possible,[71] indicators should be included […]". Without indicators, however, external monitoring and evaluation remains problematic, in particular with regard to impact, EU added value and sustainability.

[71] The underscore is included by the evaluators

5.7.4 Support

In general, respondents expressed their satisfaction with the administration of the ERF programme of the Commission, although 30 % of them opine that the management has been of limited help for the achievement of the maximum results from the project.

Question 61: Satisfaction with programme administration (Community Action)

	Question 61: In general, how satisfied are you with the administration of the ERF programme from Brussels?	
	Count	%
Very satisfied	5	38.5%
Satisfied	6	46.2%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

	Question 63: To what extent has the management structure of the ERF helped you achieve the maximum results from the project?	
	Count	%
It has been a great help	1	7.7%
It has generally been helpful	4	30.8%
It has been of limited help and even somewhat of an obstacle	4	30.8%
Don´t know	2	15.4%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 63: Support of the management structure for results achievement (Community Action)

One respondent comments that the management of ERF is a positive example of EU Commission best practice. However, quite a few of the respondents do not agree with that. Some of them regret the complicated financial administration required by ERF. They think that with a less complicated monitoring and reporting system, better 'value for money' can be obtained. Others mention the delay in the decision of the Commission about their project proposal, and/or the delay in receiving the first payment. Smaller organisations are not able to pre-finance the start of a project. One referred to the delay in the signing of the grant agreement, and one commented that additional support could be given in the field of networking and information exchange between implementing organisations realising Community Action projects, for example through the ERF website. This would facilitate the start of a project.

5.7.5 Resources

The chapter on relevance provided an overview of the available budgets for the annual programmes of the Community Actions in 2000 – 2004, and the totals of the allocated grants. With exception of 2002, the allocation of the available budget ranged from 97 to 106 %. The low percentage of the allocated budget in 2004, of 81 %, is unexplained. A sufficient number of projects, i.e. forty-eight, were submitted of which nine were selected. With regard to that year, the reasons for rejection of project proposals were not listed. Nevertheless, the average allocation of the annual budgets in the total period of ERF I remained sufficiently high, namely 96 %.

	Total costs	ERF contribution	%	Budget available	% allocated
2000	€ 1.635.972,56	€ 1.263.999,68	77,26	€ 1.300.000,00	97,23 %
2001	€ 2.336.410,89	€ 1.704.143,61	72,94	€ 1.700.000,00	100,24 %
2002	€ 2.237.871,56	€ 1.775.122,73	79,32	€ 2.200.000,00	80,69 %
2003	€ 2.658.291,26	€ 2.070.491,21	77,89	€ 2.113.550,00	97,96 %
2004	€ 2.960.022,15	€ 2.113.550,00	71,40	€ 2.000.000,00	105,68 %
Total	€ 11.828.568,42	€ 8.927.307,23	75,47	€ 9.313.550,00	95,85 %

Overview on ERF co financing Community Action

During the whole period of ERF-1, requested grants had to amount to a minimum of € 40.000,00 and to a maximum of € 400.000,00. These figures did not change with the extension of the duration of time of projects in 2003 and 2004. It is too early to assess whether the maximum amount of grant should not have been raised with the extension of the duration of projects.

Only 23 % of the respondents of the questionnaire thought that the available financial resources were sufficient to achieve the aims of their project. Further, the majority of respondents opine that the project activities could not have been carried out with fewer resources or that with the same resources, but with a different project arrangement, more results could have been achieved.

A few respondents comment that it is extremely difficult (for smaller organisations) to pre-finance parts of the projects, and to find additional funds. In their opinion, the percentage of the ERF financial contribution to projects should be raised to 100 %, or the inclusion of contributions 'in kind' should be allowed.

Questions related to efficiency of use of resources (Community Action)

	Question 43: Have the financial resources available been sufficient to achieve the project objectives?	
	Count	%
Fund were sufficient	3	23.1%
Funds were relatively sufficient	3	23.1%
Funds were barely sufficient	3	23.1%
Funds were inadequate	2	15.4%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

	Question 37.1: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The project activities could have been implemented with fewer resources (financial and human) within the existing project organisation"	
	Count	%
To a limited extent	1	7.7%
Not at all	10	76.9%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

	Question 39.2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: "The same resources (financial and human) could have generated more results through different project arrangements"	
	Count	%
To a limited extent	1	7.7%
Not at all	10	76.9%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

No data were provided (yet) regarding the actual costs of projects and the related ERF contributions. A calculation of the available figures regarding the total costs and ERF contributions of the projects in the at randomly chosen sample revealed that the average percentage of the actual ERF grant in relation to the allocated ERF grant was 95,92 %. In 2000 – 2003 a total sum of € 6.813.757,23 was allocated to project as ERF support. If the percentage of expenditure of the sample of projects of 2000 – 2003 is representative, a total sum of € 6.536.019,57 has been expended in those years.

5.7.6 Feed back mechanisms between actors in community actions and national programmes

In the Call for Proposals 2002 the possibility to submit a project proposal that continues or consolidates work previously done at Community level is introduced, and included in the award criteria, rating with 15 % relatively high (in comparison with the rate of innovatory nature of 10

%). This decision seems rightfully taken, since it may be assumed that the effects, as well as impact and sustainability of projects that built further on previous activities will be higher. The more, since newly built networks in the Community easily fade away if not actively maintained, as one of the interviewed project managers commented. Four of the organisations represented in the randomly chosen sample (19%; n=21) made use of this possibility to build further on previous activities.

Further, evaluation of the sample revealed that in a few cases cross-fertilisation took place between community actions, or between a community action and a national project being implemented in the same year. This could be increased by a kick-off meeting of community actions project leaders with the ERF unit, as one of the respondents of the questionnaire suggests, and / or improved information about previous and actual community actions and national projects. Both national authorities and project managers regret the limited provision of information about community actions, the partners of the project leaders, and the results of the actions. Evaluation of the sample showed that in a few individual cases organisations implement a national project building further on a community action, or vice versa for instance develop good practice on national level, whereupon they develop a community action to share this good practice with European partners. Evaluation of the sample also gave the impression that in some cases parallel or overlapping activities are taking place at Community and national level, or parallel and overlapping networks are newly built, apparently without the implementers being aware of it.

5.8 Conclusions

5.8.1 Effectiveness and efficiency of organisational set-up and management procedures of national programmes

EU level

The decentralised structure of the national ERF programmes, as outlined in the Council Decision, leaves selected responsibilities to the European Commission. At EU level, tasks related to management of the ERF are mainly related to administration and coordination. The responsibilities are: overall allocation of annual funds, verification and approval of requests for co-financing, payment of funds, verification of the effective functioning of management and control systems, decisions on reductions or cancellations of grants, submission of mid-term and final reports to the European Parliament and the Council, the management of the legal framework

governing the ERF, and the management of the ERF Committee. The unit responsible for these tasks is Unit B4 of the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission. Desk officers are responsible for the actual implementation of responsibilities.

The verification and approval of requests for co-financing is one of the major tasks of the desk officers. The elaboration of the requests for co-financing follows the standards laid down in Article 8 of the Decision. Often, NRAs consult with desk officers, thus ensuring that the standard of the request is consistent with Commission demands and preventing revisions of the requests. The evaluation team found that there is a need for developing and applying a set of standard tools (e.g. Logical Framework Approach) for the elaboration of these requests for co-financing or national strategies. The requests analysed as part of the present evaluation show, more often than not, a certain lack of consistency and accurateness in conducting problem analysis, and defining objectives, outputs, activities, results, impact and corresponding indicators. Another major task of the desk officers is the monitoring of implementation of national programmes. This is done through communication with NRAs, desk studies of reports delivered by NRAs as well as monitoring visits to the countries in question. In general, desk officers are perceived positively by NRAs to be a potential source for capacity building and their support is appreciated. Many mentioned that more frequent visits could contribute to establishing worthwhile relations and information exchanges between ERF project managers and the Commission.

Apart from their bilateral communication with desk officers, NRAs communicate with the Commission through their participation in a committee, consisting of representatives from all Member States and representatives from the Commission. The committee is the only formal mechanism for communication among Member States. However, because it does not allow for any systematic exchange of experiences and best practices as such, many NRAs feel that the committee does not fully cover their needs in a satisfactory manner. While some NRAs have had limited meetings with each other (e.g. Germany with Austria and Greece with Cyprus, Finland and Austria), no activities have been put in place to facilitate such exchanges of experiences. It is suggested that a forum for such activities could be established as an integrated part of ERF management structures.

National level

Due to its decentralised structure, the ERF places most responsibilities at national level. These include, in particular: appointment of a national responsible authority to handle all ERF matters, elaboration of requests for co-financing, publication of calls for proposals, management, administration, financial control, monitoring and evaluation of projects and submission of annual and final reports to the Commission. The degree of decentralisation is reflected in the wide range of different organisational set-ups, management and implementation structures in place in the various Member States.

Of the funds received from the Commission, national authorities are allowed to spend up to 5 % on technical assistance. Most national authorities view especially the financial management of the ERF as bureaucratic and a heavy burden. In this context, it is important to be aware that management and administration of a fund that finances projects carried out by NGOs and other non-governmental entities often require skills and procedures that go beyond those required for normal public administration. The evaluation team therefore recommends a closer review of the appropriateness of the amount of funding for technical assistance.

National responsible authorities develop the requests for co-financing, in some cases in cooperation with other stakeholders such as other government entities or civil society representatives. This is the case in Sweden and Italy, for instance. In relation to selection of projects, national authorities also often include other actors. In most countries, however, civil society organisations are not invited to participate in the development of national strategies, nor in the selection of projects. One reason for this exclusion is of course the fear of potential conflicts of interest. However, it should be born in mind that public institutions also implement ERF-supported projects. Thus, the inclusion of these in the processes of developing national strategies and selecting projects might be potentially conflictual.

Calls for proposals are published on NRA websites and in the media. In many countries, however, it has proven difficult to find sufficient eligible applicants. Whether this is due to a low number of potential applicants in the country or a poor distribution of the calls for proposals, is difficult to say, but the evaluation team recommends that the national authorities who have experienced problems in relation hereto, investigate the issue further.

Member States present a variety of screening procedures, some involving pre-screening on technical grounds, others involving different entities for screening of different aspects of the proposals. In a few instances, the evaluators identified a relative lack of transparency in these processes, including in relation to rejection of projects without transparent justifications.

National authorities are also responsible for annual evaluations of the ERF programme in their country. During country visits, many project managers expressed a certain fatigue with these evaluations, noting that in many cases their benefits were often limited. The evaluations are typically carried out by private agencies, professional consultants or agencies linked to independent academic institutions. In a few cases, government institutions related to the national authority in charge of ERF carry out the evaluations. A recurrent problem for most evaluators has been the lack of measurable indicators to be applied at project level. One exception to this is the UK where a range of tools and indicators have been developed to ensure the relevance of evaluations. In particular the Star Rating system, rating projects according to criteria such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, outcomes and sustainability, is assessed to be a well-functioning tool, suitable for duplication elsewhere.

In relation to financial administration, national authorities are, amongst other things, responsible for the transfer of funds to projects. While many project managers complain that transfer of funds from the national authorities is often delayed, a recurrent claim from most national authorities is that these delays are often due to delays in transfers of funds from the Commission. This seems primarily to be the case in relation to the annual interim and final payments. According to national authorities, these delays created problems in relation to the organisations supported. While there is no doubt that the Commission cannot be made responsible for these problems, as national authorities have a responsibility to rule out funds, it is also obvious that there is a need for clarification of rules and regulations in relation to transfer of funds, since most national authorities do not always appear to be aware of their responsibility to lay out funds.

The evaluation team found that current management procedures do present some problems of efficiency and effectiveness in relation to funding delays, excessive administration and bureaucracy and inefficient management implementation in some Member States. No instance can be blamed for not doing their best, but the administrative structures should be reviewed in order to smooth out weaknesses and potential problems in relation to efficiency and effectiveness.

Project level

The projects supported by ERF funds are anchored in a range of different kinds of organisations and institutions. Most of these are NGOs, representing almost 2/3. In France, Germany and Ireland, NGOs even make up 80 % or more of all implementing agencies. The second largest group of project implementers are public authorities, representing 19 % of all implementing agencies. A group that is hardly represented is the group of employer organisations and organisations representing employers – together these two kinds of organisations represent less than one percent of all agencies. Almost 40 % of all implementing agencies carry out their activities in cooperation with a partner organisation or institution.

Project managers receive technical support from national authorities on how to manage their ERF funding. This is provided through written guidelines and other documentation as well as through visits and other personal contact. The first time project managers are in contact with NRAs is when they respond to the call for proposals. Most project managers (77.8 %) find the call for proposals very clear, while less than 10 % have a more negative view. In relation to administrative and management requirements during project implementation, however, many project managers consider these to be unnecessarily complicated, time consuming and not very efficient. They also mention the fact that national authorities' restrictions to the use of ERF funds, such as limitations on the use of funds for salaries, are often an obstacle to efficient project management.

The evaluation team often found that national authorities had insufficient knowledge of project management tools, thus being unable to assist project managers in a satisfying manner. This is also reflected in the requests for co-financing which most often do not include even basic project management tools such as indicators. Supporting this observation is the questionnaire survey which shows that almost half of all project managers have not developed measurable indicators. This number is worrisome, particularly in light of the emphasis which the EU administration now places on the development of indicators at project design stage for all its financial instruments.

Despite these observations, most project managers are in fact very satisfied with the support they receive from the national authorities. There are, however, great differences among countries. In particular Finland presents a very positive view on national authorities. In Germany, despite

hundreds of projects and a small staff, the rate of satisfaction reaches 85 %. Likewise, project managers in Austria, Ireland, Italy and Greece are more positive than what was expressed in the mid-term evaluation. Meanwhile, in Belgium, on the contrary, only 7.1 % are fully satisfied. When comparing with the mid-term evaluation, the level of satisfaction has increased.

The evaluation team found that not many countries had established mechanisms for exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices among the projects supported. Most did not see it as a task for NRAs to carry out, and since the majority of project implementers did not have the financial capacity to organise such activities, it was simply not done. One exception to this is Finland, where NRAs organise training sessions for project managers, financial managers, steering committee members and other project staff.

5.8.2 Effectiveness and efficiency of national programme implementation

The funds of the ERF are divided into three strands. This division is, however, in most cases analytical rather than real, and national authorities approach it with a certain degree of pragmatism. Funds are divided with approximately half of all funds to reception, 1/3 to integration and 1/5 to voluntary repatriation, a pattern that has been consistent throughout the funding period. The total allocation of funds to ERF projects, including both public and private contributions, also follows this pattern. This is furthermore the case for actual costs.

Throughout the period, between 69 and 80 % of all funds have been spent, improving gradually over the years. It can thus be concluded that Member States over the years have improved their planning skills. Judging from the numbers, it appears that the reception strand has been easiest to plan correctly, as the actual costs are relatively close to the programmed amounts, while integration has been more difficult and voluntary repatriation the most difficult, presenting the greatest variations between actual costs and programmed amounts.

Based on information from NRAs, the evaluation team assesses the cost per beneficiary to vary from 20 to 1500 EUR, with reception activities being the cheapest and voluntary repatriation activities being the most expensive.

In relation to additionality, the general picture shows that ERF co-financing has been very close to, but below, the 50 % limit set by the Council Decision. This does not show whether the EU

principle that funds should be additional to Member State funds and not a replacement to these has been respected. Given the decentralised structure for the identification of ERF needs, which enables each Member State to determine, autonomously, its national needs, the only way to measure issues of additionality would be through an assessment of the extent to which national ERF activities might have supported measures which, on the basis of the national legislative framework, are defined as measures of "public obligation". Based on the findings of the country visits, and the various ERF documents to which the evaluators have had access, there is no evidence to suggest that the principle of additionality might not have been respected. On the contrary, in most of the Member States, the evaluators have clearly determined that the needs addressed by the ERF measures could not have been adequately supported through existing public services and legislation. Most projects were in fact pursuing activities that appeared to supplementary to existing systems and structures and, in some cases, innovative.

Most project managers and national authorities have considered the ERF target groups to be relevant and the target groups supported by the projects are largely identical to those defined in the Council Decision. Most projects target women in particular, while few focus on specific ethnic groups and disabled people. This is the case in relation to both direct target groups and final beneficiaries. Some noted that limitations in relation to target groups have strained the effectiveness of their projects. For example, the fact that nationals cannot be included in project activities diminishes the effectiveness of many integration projects. The evaluators have, however, found many examples of projects that chose to overcome these apparent restrictions and to include e.g. nationals in some of their project activities. Despite these limitations, more than 2/3 of project managers considered that the national ERF strategy in their country meets the needs of the target groups, indicating a high degree of effectiveness.

More than 2.050 projects have been co-financed by the ERF. Of these, approximately 1.107 relate to reception, 760 to integration and 183 to voluntary repatriation. The Member States with the highest number of projects are Germany with 630 projects and Italy with 431. While the German projects are mainly implemented by NGOs, the Italian ones are part of an overall state strategy.
While supporting a large number of small projects may benefit a large number of organisations, thus strengthening civil society in that country, it can have implications for efficiency and effectiveness, and these need to be taken into consideration. One solution to this would be to simplify administrative requirements for smaller projects.

The projects supported target very different groups as regards size. 27.8 % have targeted groups of up to 100 people and 19.9 % have targeted groups of more than 500 people. In Greece, Netherlands and Finland, many projects target large groups, while in Sweden, Spain, Cyprus and Hungary they target small groups.

In total, more than 600.000 people belonging to the target groups have been reached as beneficiaries.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**France**
Project title	**Platform for reception of asylum seekers**
Managing entities	**France Terre d'Asile / Forum Réfugiés and others**
ERF Measure	**Reception**
Key project variables	
❖ This project and others of its kind by FTDA, Forum Réfugiés and other organizations, have been supported with ERF funding in France since 2002. ❖ The project aimed to provide, under a single roof information on access to social services and the asylum system, a legal address, counselling, contacts with authorities, material help, and links to the system for allocation of a place in asylum centres for asylum seekers in France.	
Key success factors	
❖ The Platform's targets for the number of beneficiaries have consistently been exceeded without additional funding. All planned activities have been implemented, and new ones have arisen out of the cooperation. ❖ Figures show an enormous difference in the success of asylum applications based on whether a person was or was not placed in an asylum centre. Some of this is due to a failure to meet formal requirements such as time limits. Simple measures such as providing a legal address and a point of contact with all relevant authorities thus make a large contribution to ensuring that the claims of deserving applicants are not rejected. ❖ The platform projects took their point of departure in close cooperation between civil society and the public authorities and in a clear understanding of the situation on the ground. The baseline information available through these channels included a well documented description of the problem which the project was to address ❖ The close cooperation established through the platforms has had "spin offs" in related areas including an improved system to track the allocation of asylum centre places using a common database. ❖ The project has adopted innovative approaches and implementation methods in the French context. ❖ The existence of a "guichet unique" of this kind provides a more orderly framework for the meeting between asylum seekers and the public authorities, contributing to better relations with the surrounding community.	

Best Practice: France

Most project managers (59.0 %) believe that between 76 and 100 % of the people targeted have benefited from the project. Very few (2 %) think that the number is less than 25 %. The most sceptical project managers are found in Greece, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

When looking at activities and the extent to which they have been implemented, the questionnaire survey shows that in more than 90 % of all cases, all or most planned project activities have been implemented. A few countries experienced problems – in e.g. Sweden, Belgium, Portugal, Ireland and Lithuania less than half of all project managers state that all planned activities have been implemented. There are no marked variations between the three measures in terms of implementation of activities – within each strand more than 2/3 of the projects have been successful in implementing all planned activities and nearly 1/3 have implemented more than half of their activities. Most projects followed the original time table and were not delayed. Very few projects underwent substantial changes during the implementation period. The ones that did, did so in relation to adjustment of methods or objectives.

The high implementation rate of activities is reflected in the level of achieved results. 91.2 % of all project managers indicate that all or most planned results have been achieved. The group of projects that have both implemented all activities and achieved all results amounts to 397 – or 47.3 % of all, which must be considered relatively high. The number of highly successful projects is slightly higher in the groups of reception and integration projects, while voluntary repatriation presents a fairly low number. This can be explained by the relative complexity of implementing successful repatriation measures and the general lack of experience, in this policy area, by many implementing NGOs. The group of projects with the highest success rate, however, were found within the group of projects whose funding shifts from one measure to another – in other words, projects that focus on both reception and integration. This indicates that a rigorous distinction between measures does not necessarily contribute to success, and that this distinction should be taken as an indicator for allocation of funding rather than a requirement for definition of projects.

In the group of the most successful projects (defined as the ones that have implemented all activities and achieved all results), more have established a baseline situation prior to project launch, compared to the group of less successful projects. The successful projects have also, to a higher degree than other projects, followed the established time schedule. Finally, the group of most successful projects were also less affected by external problems such as insufficient time for project implementation and unexpected project costs than projects in the group of less successful projects. In general, however, all projects were relatively well-prepared and encountered only few problems. The evaluation team concludes that the projects supported through the ERF have been effective and efficient in their implementation of activities, and that NRAs have managed to select well-planned projects with a high probability to succeed.

The project activities most frequently supported have been the provision of social services and help with administrative, interpretation and legal formalities. The second most frequent activities were language training, counselling and assistance in job search. While it is the assessment of the evaluation team that most activities have been successful, it is not possible to document this, as no attempt has been made to document and preserve best practices.
The activities of the ERF can be divided into activities that benefit individuals e.g. provision of services, language courses, counselling and education to individuals)and activities that benefit structures or systems(e.g. development of documentation, building of reception facilities, facilitation of networks and monitoring). In practice, however, projects may pursue both types of activities.

The measures chosen for intervention for improvement of structures are first and foremost pointing at qualifying structures to meet the need on the ground, and not much consideration seems to have been given to aspects of developing common policies. This is remarkable because especially the structural interventions could be suitable for transnational exchange of best practices and mutual inspiration. However, according to the experience of the evaluators gathered during their missions in the Member States this apparently did not occur. It can be concluded that the ERF has not managed very well to enhance practical cooperation on structural issues between Member States, facilitating mutual inspiration and exchange of best practices.

5.8.3 Effectiveness and efficiency of Community Actions

Effectiveness and efficiency of Community Actions has been assessed in relation to goal attainment, programme and project time frames, monitoring and evaluation, and feed-back mechanisms.

The evaluation team concludes that of the sample of project studied, 76 % projects achieved the planned results. This result is reflected in the questionnaire responses. Problems related to project implementation were difficulties in partner cooperation, lack of data and information, identification and cooperation with target groups and staff problems. In general, international organisations encountered few cooperation problems with partners, while some national organisations and research institutes did. The problems encountered often led to requests of amendments to the grant agreement.

Some of these problems might have been prevented by introduction of a pilot phase. In particular the development of methodologies for capacity building and research needs a pilot phase. Also, many project managers express a need for longer project preparation periods than the current 2 months. It takes time and money to establish relations with potential partners and to agree on project design and contents. In fact, some organisations stated that the experience of having invested a lot of time and money into developing a project that was subsequently rejected, meant that they did not want to apply again.

The standard project period was extended from 12 months to 18 in 2003, following several requests. It is too early to say whether this extension is sufficient or there is a need for further extension to 24 months or longer. Often, projects were delayed and contracts had to be prolonged.

Monitoring and evaluation are in theory an integrated part of all projects, as all applicants have to include in their application considerations as to how they plan to monitor and evaluate their projects. In practice, however, some organisations report not having evaluated and monitored their projects. The remaining organisations use different kinds of evaluation tools, such as external evaluations, questionnaire surveys involving partners and beneficiaries or assessment of activities. The majority of project managers responding to the questionnaire state that they have

established a baseline situation prior to launch of their project, facilitating sound evaluations. However, many have not established indicators and the ones that have, often seem to confuse results, outputs and impact.

Desk officers of the Commission monitor and evaluate Community Actions based on the reports submitted. In some cases, they also attend project activities. One respondent comments that the management of ERF is a positive example of EU Commission best practice. However, quite a few of the respondents do not agree with that. Some of them regret the complicated financial administration required by ERF. 30 % state that management had been of limited help.

The grants allocated to Community Actions vary from 40.000 EUR to 400.000 EUR. It is too early to assess whether the maximum amount should have been raised with the extension of project periods. Only 23 % of project managers responding to the questionnaire thought the available financial resources were sufficient. The majority think that resources could not have been spent more efficiently. Calculations on available figures from a sample of projects show that the average percentage of funds spent, compared to amounts allocated, is almost 96 %.

The evaluation team noted that in a few cases, cross-fertilisation took place between Community Actions or between a Community Action and a national project. Such cooperation could be strengthened through kick-off meetings with Community Action implementers and Commission staff and through increased information about Community Actions among national authorities. The evaluation further shows that in some cases, organisations implement a national project building on a Community Action and vice versa. In some cases, however, the two programmes also overlap each other.

Chapter 6: Complementarities and coherence

6.1 Introduction

Assessment of *coherence and complementarities* will consist, mainly, of measuring the possible synergies between the ERF interventions and measures supported through other EU instruments, in particular the EQUAL Community Initiative, at national as well as EU level. The internal consistency of national programmes, and their complementarities with other national interventions in the field of asylum and refugee affairs, will further be considered.

6.2 Overview of other initiatives

The following chapter gives a brief overview of other EU initiatives. While there are several programmes that, in theory, present risks for overlaps and potentials for complementarities with the ERF, as can be seen from the following overview, in practice this discussion mostly relate to EQUAL. The chapter will therefore focus primarily on this programme.

Although not an EU initiative, the UNHCR is included in this overview, since the organisation must be considered as one of the key actors in the field of refugees and asylum seekers. In total, the EU spends 8 billion EUR annually on refugees. As a comparison, UNHCR spends 1 billion (although, of course, a significant proportion of this amount originates from EU funds).

6.2.1 EQUAL

EQUAL forms part of the European Union strategy to create more and better jobs and to ensure that no one is denied access to these jobs. In the Communication establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL, it is stated that "the aim of EQUAL is to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market, through transnational co-operation. EQUAL will also take due account of the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers"[72]. The mission of EQUAL is to promote a more inclusive work life through fighting discrimination and exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic

[72] Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market, C (2000) 853, 14.04.2000

origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. EQUAL is built upon principles such as partnership, innovation, empowerment, transnationality, thematic approaches, and mainstreaming.

EQUAL is supported by the EU with a total budget allocation of 3.274 billion EUR for 2001-2006. Two calls for proposals for EQUAL projects in the Member States have taken place so far, the first one in 2001, and the second one in 2004[73]. Recipients are primarily non-profit private organisations, public organisations, private organisations, semi-public organisations, and social partners (trade unions and employers), organised in the so-called Development Partnerships. Outcomes from Development Partnerships are shared across all the participating countries through the so-called European Thematic Groups. There are five such groups bringing together DPs along the following themes:

- employability
- entrepreneurship
- adaptability
- equal opportunities
- asylum seekers

Action in respect of asylum seekers is programmed either as a sectoral Development Partnership (i.e. a national partnership involving all the appropriate partners to support social and vocational integration for asylum seekers), or as a geographical Development Partnership in a territory where there is a high concentration of asylum seekers[74]. The Thematic Group on asylum seekers is lead by Sweden and the Netherlands. The Asylum Seekers European thematic group aims to play a role in the identification and dissemination of good practice and policy lessons to help asylum seekers integrate into society. The lessons learned from EQUAL activities will be used to promote changes at local or regional level as well as at political and administrative level. The asylum seekers theme within EQUAL has specific characteristics. Firstly, it is closely linked to EU policy on the Common European Asylum Policy (CEAP), which is being taken forward by DG Freedom, Security and Justice, a policy which goes beyond Employment and Social Affairs.

[73] http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm
[74] Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the guidelines for the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market, C (2000) 853, 14.04.2000, p. 6

Secondly, activities within the theme address a diverse target group living within changing policy and legislative contexts that vary between Member States. Finally, the number of Development Partnerships involved in the theme is much lower than in the other EQUAL themes[75].

In the Communication establishing the guidelines for the second round of EQUAL, the inclusion of the theme of asylum seekers is said to have "enabled a greater understanding of the variations between Member States and the way in which national policies affect the access of asylum seekers to the labour market and education and training. The transnational dialogue within the partnerships has enhanced learning at the practical and operational levels because of the similar challenges faced across the EU"[76].

6.2.2 ARGO

ARGO is an action programme for administrative cooperation at European Union level in the fields of asylum, visas, immigration and external borders, replacing in part the Odysseus programme. The ARGO programme covers the period from 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2006 and has a budget of 25 million EUR. The objectives of the programme are to promote cooperation between national administrations responsible for implementing Community rules and to ensure that proper account is taken of the Community dimension in their actions; to promote the uniform application of Community law; to encourage transparency of actions taken by the national authorities and to improve the overall efficiency of national administrations in their tasks. The programme supports activities related to the following themes: external borders, visa, asylum and immigration. The types of activities supported are training, staff exchange, use of IT file handing and procedures, evaluations of the impact of common rules and procedures, promotion of best practices, operational activities (e.g. setting up of common operative centres), studies, research, conferences, seminars, mechanisms for consultation with governmental and non-governmental organisations, activities in third countries, and the fight against fraud. The ARGO programme thus touches upon many of the ERF's own areas of intervention.

[75] http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/activities/etg5_en.cfm
[76] Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions establishing the guidelines for the second round of the Community Initiative EQUAL concerning transnational co-operation to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market, COM (2003) 840 final, 30.12.2003, p.6

6.2.3 Daphne

The Daphne programme was established by Decision 293/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 January 2000[77] and has the purpose of promoting preventive measures to fight violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk. The financial framework for the implementation of the period from 2004 to 2008 is set at 50 million EUR. The programme promotes transnational actions to set up multidisciplinary networks; to ensure expansion of the knowledge base, exchange of information and identification and dissemination of good practice; to raise awareness of violence among targeted audiences; to study phenomena related to violence and possible methods of preventing it. It also supports the implementation of complementary actions such as studies, formulation of indicators, data gathering, statistics, seminars and other activities to reinforce the programme's knowledge base[78].

6.2.4 Leonardo

The Leonardo programme was established by Council Decision 94/819/EC and extended by Decision 1999/382/EC. Phase 2 of the programme, covering the period from 2000 to 2006, has a budget of 1.150 million EUR. The programme seeks to consolidate a European co-operation area for education and training through active support to the lifelong training policies conducted by the Member States, and to innovative transnational initiatives for promoting the knowledge, aptitudes and skills necessary for successful integration into working life and the full exercise of citizenship. The objectives of the programme are to:

- improve the skills and competencies of people in initial vocational training at all levels
- improve the quality of and access to continuing vocational training and life-long acquisition of skills with a view to increasing adaptability
- promote and reinforce contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship[79]

[77] The second phase of the programme was established by Decision No. 803/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 adopting a programme of Community action (2004 to 2008) to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk

[78] For further information on the programme, see the website http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/daphne/funding_daphne_en.htm#

[79] Council Decision 1999/382/EC

In implementing these objectives, "particular attention shall be paid to people at a disadvantage in the labour market, including disabled people, to practices facilitating their access to training, to the promotion of equality, to equal opportunities of women and men and to the fight against discrimination"[80].

6.2.5 Comenius

The Comenius action is a part of the Socrates programme. The action was established by Decision No. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates'. The overall budget for the second phase of Socrates is 1.850 million EUR. Comenius' share of this is approx. 500 million EUR[81]. The objectives of Comenius are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness. In the area of promotion of intercultural awareness in school education, which is clearly the area that presents greatest similarities with ERF focus areas, activities have the goal to:

- promote enhanced awareness of different cultures;
- develop intercultural education initiatives for the school education sector;
- improve the skills of teachers in the area of intercultural education;
- support the fight against racism and xenophobia;
- improve the education of children of migrant workers, occupational travellers, gypsies and travellers[82].

6.2.6 Grundtvig

Like Comenius, the Grundtvig action is part of the Socrates programme. The action is aimed at enhancing the European dimension of lifelong learning. It supports a wide range of activities designed to promote innovation and the improved availability, accessibility and quality of educational provision for adults, by means of European co-operation. The programme addresses a

[80] Council Decision 1999/382/EC
[81] E-mail correspondence with EAC Comenius, 27.10.05
[82] Information from website,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/index_en.html

great variety of educational providers, but the final beneficiaries are adults who wish to learn in order to increase their capacity to play a full and active role in society and develop their intercultural awareness; improve their employability by acquiring or updating their general skills; and enhance their capacity to access or re-enter formal education schemes. The programme is divided into four areas, namely transnational cooperation projects, learning partnerships, mobility for training of educational staff and networks[83].

6.2.7 UNHCR

Among non-EC initiatives, activities conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should obviously be mentioned. The UNHCR was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. UNHCR raises funds through governments, foundations and private donors so that refugees can be assisted immediately with food, shelter and other essentials distributed by the agency's implementing NGO partners. Longer-term solutions also depend on the participation of civil society and refugees themselves. While UNHCR is directly concerned with the international protection of refugees, its overall mission is to provide operational support and co-ordination to a wide range of private and public actors who work in the interest of refugees. In Europe, the UNHCR focuses its work on the politicisation of immigration and asylum issues and the introduction of tougher national laws as well as on the harmonization of EU immigration and asylum legislation[84].

6.3 Complementarities and coherence: national programmes at EU level

Because of their core objectives, scope and organisational features, the main potential overlap in EU-supported activities in the field of asylum and refugees affairs is between the ERF and EQUAL. A range of mechanisms have been put in place at EU level in order avoid this and to ensure complementarities between ERF and EQUAL. DG JLS officials attend all major meetings and events organised by the EQUAL Asylum Seekers Community Initiative Programme, just as

[83] Information from website,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/grundtvig/home_en.html
[84] Information from www.unhcr.ch

EQUAL representatives participate in relevant ERF meetings with the purpose of ensuring complementarities with ERF. Furthermore, national requests for co-financing are checked with EQUAL desk officers to avoid possible overlapping with the EQUAL programmes.

Furthermore, the ERF is mentioned in relation to EQUAL's own activities in the area of asylum seekers in the Communication establishing the guidelines for EQUAL. Likewise, in the mid-term evaluation of EQUAL, the ERF is also mentioned: "Recommendations for second round of EQUAL: Promote complementarities of EQUAL and ERF"[85].

Finally, it should be noted that EQUAL representatives, as well as the other Commission services concerned, were duly consulted during the design phase of the second phase of the ERF, precisely in order to avoid overlapping. Likewise, prior to adoption by the Commission, the proposal was subject to inter-service consultation, including DG Employment.

Since EQUAL will be phased out in the near future, the issue of complementarities between ERF and EQUAL is no longer relevant. However, the fact that mechanisms were put in place at EU level to avoid overlaps between the two funds while they were still functioning is a good indicator that there is awareness of risks of overlaps and potentials for complementarity within the institution in general.

6.4 Complementarities and coherence: national programmes

6.4.1 Complementarities and coherence at national level

The present evaluation has found that, at the level of national authorities, various mechanisms are in place for the purpose of diminishing the risk for overlaps between the ERF and other EU programmes, in particular EQUAL.

In many Member States, ERF and EQUAL representatives participate in each other's meetings in order to avoid overlaps and strengthen cooperation. In the Netherlands, for example, EQUAL representatives participate in ERF Steering Committee meetings and vice versa, ensuring awareness of complementarities and a sharp division of tasks between the two funds. The same is the case in Italy and Greece. Likewise, all new member States also seem very aware of the

[85] EQUAL mid-term evaluation, Bernard Brunhes International, 2004, p. 181

importance of establishing formal mechanisms for cooperation. Such formal mechanisms, however, do not always ensure optimal cooperation. In Austria, despite the fact that ERF and EQUAL representatives participate in each other's meetings, the evaluator notes that cooperation was very poor.

In other member States, the entity managing the ERF is also managing other EU programmes. In Portugal, the EQUAL representative is also responsible for coordination and management of the ERF. Furthermore, it has been decided that while ERF focuses on reception and repatriation, EQUAL focuses on integration activities. In Finland ERF authorities are also managing EQUAL, ARGO, Socrates and Leonardo programmes. Thus, in most countries representatives from the two programmes are well aware of and actively seek to complement each other's initiatives.

Some countries, however, seem to have very weak coordination mechanisms between ERF and EQUAL and, correspondingly, very little knowledge of potential overlaps. This seems to be the case in e.g. Sweden and Austria. Although participation in each other's committees has been formally established, in practice coordination has been weak. In Belgium, the national responsible authorities hardly knew of EQUAL, although an EQUAL representative participates in the selection committee. In Ireland, liaison officers of the departments concerned have been appointed as responsible for avoiding overlaps, but the coordination and management of the EQUAL fund is delegated to a private consultancy. The national responsible authorities had no knowledge of EQUAL, and there was in fact an overlap between the two programmes in terms of participating organisations, aims and activities. In Luxembourg, ERF and EQUAL were originally supposed to cooperate on a project but disagreements between the two resulted in the annulment of the agreement. Finally, Poland also presents certain overlaps.

In relation to other programmes such as ARGO, Daphne, Leonardo, Comenius, and Grundtvig, no country reports mention any instances of overlaps. In some countries, such as Finland, the entity responsible for managing the ERF is also responsible for managing other EU programmes, thereby ensuring automatic complementarities. In many countries, national authorities and project managers simply had no knowledge of these other programmes. This was especially the case in the new Member States. In the Netherlands and Spain, there was a solid knowledge of other EU programmes among national authorities as well as project managers.

In relation to UNHCR, there seems to be high awareness of the need to avoid overlaps. Thus, for example, in the new Member States where UNHCR had previously played an important role, the organisation has reduced its involvement proportionally with the increased involvement of the ERF. The same has been the case in some of the old Member States, e.g. Austria and Greece. UNHCR representatives also participate in ERF related meetings in many countries.

6.4.2 Coherence and complementarities at project level

At project level, more than 40 % of all project managers have implemented in the past, or are currently implementing, other refugee and asylum seeker related EU programmes or projects, as can be seen from the table below. Nearly 50 % have never implemented any such projects. The country specific statistics provide further information. In countries such as the Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden, less than 30 % of all project managers have implemented other refugee and asylum seeker related EU programmes or projects. In Spain, Greece and Latvia, on the other hand, all project managers either have implemented or are currently implementing related EU programmes or projects. Likewise, in Portugal, Finland and Hungary, more than 60 % of project managers have implemented or are implementing related programmes or projects.

% within Countries

		Question 62: Is your organisation involved in any other refugee and asylum-seeker related EU programmes or projects?					
		Yes, we have been in the past but are not currently	Yes, we are currently implementing	No, we have never implemented	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	17.0%	35.8%	35.8%	9.4%	1.9%	100.0%
	France	20.0%	25.7%	51.4%		2.9%	100.0%
	Germany	15.6%	23.0%	52.5%	5.7%	3.2%	100.0%
	Sweden	13.2%	13.2%	31.6%	42.1%		100.0%
	Spain	66.7%	33.3%				100.0%
	Portugal	23.5%	52.9%	23.5%			100.0%
	Italy	4.9%	38.5%	52.5%		4.1%	100.0%
	Greece	51.9%	48.1%				100.0%
	Netherlands	7.1%	21.4%	61.9%	4.8%	4.8%	100.0%
	Finland	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%			100.0%
	Austria	16.4%	23.6%	52.7%	1.8%	5.5%	100.0%
	Belgium	7.1%	16.1%	69.6%		7.1%	100.0%
	Lux	7.1%	14.3%	78.6%			100.0%
	Ireland	7.7%	25.6%	56.4%		10.3%	100.0%
	Cyprus		50.0%	50.0%			100.0%
	Estonia			50.0%	50.0%		100.0%
	Hungary	7.1%	57.1%	7.1%	7.1%	21.4%	100.0%
	Latvia		100.0%				100.0%
	Lithuania	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%		100.0%
	Poland		80.0%	20.0%			100.0%
	Slovak Republik			50.0%		50.0%	100.0%
	Slovenia	7.7%	38.5%	15.4%		38.5%	100.0%
Total		14.4%	27.9%	48.0%	5.1%	4.5%	100.0%

Question 62: By countries: Involvement of ERF supported organisations into other EU programmes

When asked whether the ERF overlaps with any other EU funding, very few people thought so. 3.3 % thought that it overlaps to a "high" or to "some" extent, 14.8 % thought that it does to a "limited extent" and 27.5 % thought that it does not overlap at all. These numbers are almost identical with the ones found in the mid-term evaluation, where 2 % thought it overlapped to some extent, 13 % to a limited extent and 31 % did not think it overlapped at all[86].

[86] Mid-term evaluation, p. 231

	Question 65: In your opinion, does the ERF overlap with any other EU funding?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	2	.2%
To some extent	26	3.1%
To a limited extent	124	14.8%
Not at all	231	27.5%
Don´t know	317	37.8%
Unanswered	139	16.6%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 65: Perception of overlapping between ERF and other programmes

However, in both the present survey and the mid-term survey, a large proportion of people answered that they do not know or did not answer at all. When disregarding these, the picture looks slightly more concerning. Thus, when focusing on the people who actually have an opinion on the potential overlaps (i.e. 383 people), it turns out that of these, 7.3 % think that the ERF overlaps to a high or some extent, while 32.4 % think that it overlaps to some extent. 60.3 % think that it does not overlap at all.

The country specific statistics show that in fact, only Swedish project managers find that the ERF overlaps to a high extent – and of these, only 5.3 % think so. That Swedish project managers are most critical might be a result of poor cooperation at the level of national authorities. 40 % of all Lithuanian project managers think that the ERF overlaps to some extent, while 22.2 % of Finnish and 16.7 % of Spanish project managers do. All Latvian, 50 % of the Hungarian and 55.6 % of the Greek project managers only think the ERF overlaps to a limited extent. Spanish and Portuguese project managers seem to be most confident, as more than 80 % of these project managers states that the ERF does not overlap at all[87]. This satisfaction corresponds well with the fact that in both Spain and Portugal, national authorities have well-established mechanisms for ensuring complementarities.

When asked more specifically whether they find that the ERF overlaps with other EU refugee and asylum seeker programmes or projects in relation to the *target groups* of the different initiatives, 13.2 % think that it does to a high or to some extent, while 11.2 % think it does to a limited

[87] The specific statistics are not included in the text but can be consulted upon request

extent. As a comparison, when asking about the relationship between the target groups of ERF and EQUAL, the mid-term evaluation found that 12% thought they were complementary and 28% thought that they were overlapping to a high or to some extent[88]. While these number in themselves do not indicate a risk for overlaps, when considering the number of people who have not answered, have answered that they don't know or that the question is irrelevant, then the picture changes and the number does seem relatively high. In other words, of all the people who have an opinion on the potential overlaps (here 308 people), as many as 36.0 % (or 111 people) think that the different initiatives overlap to either a high or to some degree, while 33.4 % (or 103 people) think that they do not overlap at all.

	Question 63: In your opinion, to what extent do the ERF and these other refugee and asylum-seeker related EU programmes adress overlapping needs of similar target groups?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	17	2.0%
To some extent	94	11.2%
To a limited extent	94	11.2%
Not at all	103	12.3%
Don´t know	77	9.2%
Irrelevant	408	48.6%
Unanswered	46	5.5%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 63: Perception of addressing overlapping target group needs by ERF and other programmes

When asked about overlaps in relation to *objectives*, the pattern is almost identical. Thus, 7.1 % believe that there are overlaps to a high or to some degree, while 9.4 % believe that there is to a limited extent and 11.0 % do not think they overlap at all. As a comparison, in the mid-term evaluation, 18% said they were complementary while 19% said they overlapped to a high or some extent. Of the people who have an opinion on whether the ERF overlaps or not (in relation to this question, 231 people), almost 26 % think it overlaps to a high or some extent, 34.2 % think it does to a limited extent and 39.8 % think it does not overlap at all.

[88] Mid-term evaluation, p. 229

	Question 64: In your opinion, to what extent do the ERF and these other refugee and asylum-seeker related EU programmes pursue overlapping objectives?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	6	.7%
To some extent	54	6.4%
To a limited extent	79	9.4%
Not at all	92	11.0%
Don´t know	85	10.1%
Irrelevant	446	53.2%
Unanswered	77	9.2%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 64: Perception of pursuing overlapping objectives by ERF and other programmes

The fact that quite a large number of project managers believe that there are certain overlaps between the ERF and other EU programmes and projects is reflected in the next table, outlining the number of people who think that their project would have been eligible under other EU funds. 11.2 % actually think that their project would be eligible under other funds, while 29.6 % think that it would not. In particular Italian, British, Finnish, Cypriot and Lithuanian project managers think that their project would have been eligible under other EU funds. These figures correspond well with those on opinions on overlaps.

% within Countries

		Question 69: Do you think your project would have been eligible under any other EU fund(s)?				
		Yes	No	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	30.2%	22.6%	43.4%	3.8%	100.0%
	France		42.9%	57.1%		100.0%
	Germany	11.7%	30.5%	51.8%	6.0%	100.0%
	Sweden	10.5%	21.1%	68.4%		100.0%
	Spain		50.0%	50.0%		100.0%
	Portugal		58.8%	41.2%		100.0%
	Italy	17.2%	17.2%	54.1%	11.5%	100.0%
	Greece		55.6%	44.4%		100.0%
	Netherlands	7.1%	23.8%	64.3%	4.8%	100.0%
	Finland	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%		100.0%
	Austria	9.1%	34.5%	50.9%	5.5%	100.0%
	Belgium	8.9%	23.2%	51.8%	16.1%	100.0%
	Lux			100.0%		100.0%
	Ireland		30.8%	56.4%	12.8%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Estonia		100.0%			100.0%
	Hungary		64.3%	35.7%		100.0%
	Latvia		100.0%			100.0%
	Lithuania	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%		100.0%
	Poland		80.0%	20.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik		50.0%		50.0%	100.0%
	Slovenia	15.4%		46.2%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		11.2%	29.6%	52.3%	6.9%	100.0%

Question 69: By countries: Perception of possible overlapping between ERF and other EU programmes

However, while a substantial degree of project managers do seem to believe that there are overlaps between the ERF and other EU programmes and projects, very few have actually applied for funding for their project with some of these other programmes or projects. Thus, as can be seen from the table below, only 5.8 % of all project managers participating in the survey have applied for funding elsewhere in the EU system.

	Question 67: Have you applied for funding for this project from any other EU-sources?	
	Count	%
Yes	49	5.8%
No	739	88.1%
Unanswered	51	6.1%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 67: ERF funded projects that applied for funding from other EU sources

Although low, the number is still higher than the one found in the mid-term evaluation, which states that only 3% had applied for other EU funding for this project. Even though it is a very low number, it still raises the issue of a possible overlap of activities and the duplication of EU resource allocations[89]. The range of the problem becomes clearer when looking at the country specific statistics, which show that the main share of project managers who have applied for funding elsewhere comes from a limited number of countries, namely the UK (17 %), Italy (13.9 %) and Belgium (19.6 %)[90].

It should be noted that in general, and as can be inferred from the above, many people did not answer the questions regarding complementarities and coherence in the questionnaire and of the ones who answered, many answered that they did not know or that they found the question irrelevant. The mid-term evaluation experienced similar problems in relation to these questions. This could be an indication that most people simply do not have a broad knowledge of EU initiatives. The mid-term evaluation recommended a clarification about objectives and target groups at EU and national level[91]. The present evaluation further recommends that initiatives be launched to broaden the knowledge of other EU programmes and projects.

6.5 Coherence and complementarities: Community Actions

At EU level, the Community Actions' work programme is subject to inter-service consultation, including DG Employment (which is responsible for EQUAL), prior to its adoption by the

[89] Mid-term evaluation, p. 231-232
[90] The specific statistics are not included in the text but can be consulted upon request
[91] Mid-term evaluation, p. 231

Commission. Furthermore, the selected Community Actions projects that present risk of overlapping with EQUAL are then checked with EQUAL desk officers.

According to the mid-term evaluation, 47% of Community Action managers had experience in the implementation of EQUAL-funded projects. 12% considered that the target groups of the two programmes were complementary, while 41% stated that they had overlapping target groups. In relation to objectives, 35% found that the two programmes were complementary, while 24% considered that they were overlapping. 53% stated that the ERF overlaps with other EU funding.

In the present evaluation, a cross-fertilisation between the ERF Community Actions and EQUAL or Daphne projects has been witnessed in 28,5 % of the sampled cases, meaning that data and experiences from one EU-funded project have been, or will be used in the context of another EU-funded project, thus contributing to a high degree of complementarities and coherence.

Question 69 and 71 (Community Action): Overlapping between ERF and other EU programmes

	Question 69: In your opinion, to what extent do the ERF and these other refugee and asylum-seeker related EU programmes adress overlapping needs of similar target groups?	
	Count	%
To some extent	2	15.4%
To a limited extent	3	23.1%
Not at all	1	7.7%
Don´t know	1	7.7%
Irrelevant	1	7.7%
Unanswered	5	38.5%
Total	13	100.0%

	Question 71: In your opinion, does the ERF overlap with any other EU funding?	
	Count	%
To some extent	3	23.1%
To a limited exte	4	30.8%
Not at all	1	7.7%
Don´t know	2	15.4%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

The difference between complementarities and overlaps can, however, at times be difficult to define in precise terms. Thus, according to 38.5 % of project managers participating in the survey, ERF and other EU programmes address overlapping needs of similar target groups. Likewise, 53.9 % think the ERF overlaps with other EU funding to “some” or “a limited extent”. The programmes INTI, Daphne, Return Initiative, EIDHR and EQUAL are mentioned. Only two of the questionnaire respondents have, however, considered that their ERF Community Actions could have been eligible for funding other EU programmes.

	Question 73: Have you applied for funding for this project from any other EU-sources?	
	Count	%
No	11	84.6%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 73: ERF funded projects that applied for funding from other EU sources (Community Action)

In light of the finding that, in some cases, data and experiences from ERF Community Actions are used for other EU programmes, in particular for EQUAL projects, this is not surprising. A certain degree of overlap, however, can be considered to enhance the complementarities of the programme.

	Question 75: Do you think your project would have been eligible under any other EU fund(s)?	
	Count	%
Yes	2	15.4%
No	8	61.5%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 75: Perception of overlapping (Community Action)

6.6 Coherence and complementarities: National programmes and Community Actions

The mid-term evaluation had concluded that there was a certain degree of cooperation between Community Actions and national programmes, but not as much as could have been hoped. The national responsible authorities seemed to be more familiar with the Community Actions led by organisations located in their own country than with Community Actions led by organisations established in other countries[92].

These findings are confirmed by the present evaluation. In most of the Member States, limited awareness of the Community Actions by the national responsible authorities has been evidenced. In the UK, national authorities had no knowledge of any Community Actions, even though seven

[92] Mid-term evaluation, p. 129

British organisations received funding from this programme. In Greece and Belgium, awareness is also low, among national authorities as well as NGOs. The same is trued in most of the new Member States.

Although NGOs generally seem to have better knowledge of the Community Actions than the national authorities, there are still countries in which there is an alarmingly low level of knowledge. In Ireland, for instance, while the national responsible authorities were involved in a Community Action (together with the Finnish Ministry of Labour), few project managers were familiar with the Community Action programme, although information about the existence of ERF community actions is provided by the national ERF Guidelines.

In the Netherlands, on the other hand, awareness of Community Actions is relatively high; however all have lamented the lack of coherence between the two programmes. In Spain, both national authorities and NGOs appear to be well informed about the Community Actions. In Finland, complementarity between the national programme and Community Actions was high, and cooperation between the projects was considered to be very valuable by the Ministry of Labour. In Slovenia, the national responsible authorities even made a point of informing organisations about the existence of the Community Actions, as alternative possibilities for funding.

There is no explicit or conscious effort, by the Community Action promoters, the authorities or the Commission, to link, in any strategic manner, the Community Actions to the national programmes. There is limited awareness overall, among relevant EU stakeholders, of the outputs generated by the Community Actions. This can be attributed to a largely sub-optimal dissemination, by the Commission or the Community Action promoters, of the key products (e.g. EU comparative reports, conference proceedings, etc.) resulting from the projects.

Despite this lack of encouragement from the Commission, other Community Action implementers do, however, actively contribute to greater complementarities between the two programmes. Thus, as many as 38 % of the questionnaire respondents report that they have been or are presently involved in a national ERF project.

	Question 66: Is your organisation involved in any project supported by a national ERF programme?	
	Count	%
Yes, we have been in the past but are not currently	2	15.4%
Yes, we are currently implementing	3	23.1%
No, we have never implemented	5	38.5%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 66: Complementarities between Community Action and national ERF programme

In the chapter on effectiveness and efficiency, it was already noted that a few agencies had implemented national ERF projects, which built on the results of previous Community Actions, and vice-versa. To a certain extent, this is also reflected in the finding that approximately 30 % of the respondents have indicated that national ERF programmes were taken into account in the course of designing and implementing a Community Action. It can thus be concluded that, despite the lack of encouragement from the NRAs or the Commission, some of the implementing agencies have actively contributed to establishing some degree of coherence and complementarities between ERF Community Actions and national projects.

	Question 67: To what extent has the Community Action project taken the national ERF programmes into account when designing and implementing the project?	
	Count	%
To a high extent	1	7.7%
To some extent	3	23.1%
To a limited extent	2	15.4%
Not at all	3	23.1%
Do not know	1	7.7%
Unanswered	3	23.1%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 67: Pursued synergies between ERF national and Community Action programmes

6.7 Conclusions on complementarities and coherence

The evaluation team has looked at coherence and complementarities between national programmes and other initiatives, between Community Actions and other initiatives, and between national programmes and Community Actions.

6.7.1 Coherence and complementarities of national programmes

The evaluation had found that, in theory, a range of other initiatives – EQUAL, ARGO, Daphne, Leonardo, Comenius, Grundtvig and UNHCR – present possibilities for complementarities as well as, in some cases, risks of overlaps. In practice, however, it is primarily EQUAL that plays a significant role in relation to ERF.

When considering coherence and complementarities between national programmes and other initiatives at EU level, the present evaluation found that both ERF and EQUAL officials seem to be fully aware of the potential overlap – and complementarities – between EQUAL and ERF. A DG JLS official attends all major meetings and events organised by the EQUAL Asylum Seekers Community Initiative Programme with the purpose of ensuring complementarities with ERF. Furthermore, ERF requests for co-financing are checked with EQUAL desk officers.

At national level, it was found that many authorities were aware of the relationship with EQUAL. In some cases, the authorities responsible for implementation of the ERF are also responsible for the implementation of EQUAL. This is the case, for example, in Portugal and Finland. In other countries, such as the Netherlands, Italy, Greece and most of the new Member States, formal mechanisms for ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlaps are in place. In a range of other countries, however, coordination between the two programmes is very poor. This seems to be the case in Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland.

In relation to other EU-funded programmes, many national authorities showed limited knowledge of such programmes. In Finland, the Netherlands and Spain, however, the level of knowledge was considered to be high. In relation to the UNHCR, there seemed to be high awareness of the need

to avoid overlaps. Particularly in the new Member States, the UNHCR was actively involved in ERF meetings and coordination, thus ensuring complementarities.

At a project level, the questionnaire survey shows that more than 40 % of all the project managers either had implemented or were implementing other EU projects in the field of refugees and asylum seekers. In Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium less than 30 % had implemented other EU projects, while the rate was a high as over 60% in Spain, Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Finland and Hungary.

Only a small number of project managers consider that the ERF overlaps with other EU programmes. However, a large proportion of the project managers acknowledged that they were not fully familiar with other EU-funded programmes. When disregarding these and focusing on those who actually had an opinion on the subject, almost 40 % considered that there was an overlap with the ERF to a “high” or “some” extent. The same pattern is repeated when project managers are asked whether they think the ERF overlaps with other programmes specifically in relation to target groups and objectives. Spanish and Portuguese project managers seem to be most confident of the complementarities between the ERF and other EU programmes. These are also countries in which most project managers have had some experience with other EU programmes.

A very low number of project managers (approx. 5 %) have applied for funding for their project through other EU sources. It could be argued that this indicates that, in effect, most project managers do not consider that the ERF overlaps with other EU programmes. If they did, the number of project managers having applied for funding elsewhere would probably have been higher.

6.7.2 Coherence and complementarities of Community Actions

When considering complementarities and coherence between the Community Actions and other initiatives, the evaluation found that at EU level measures were taken to ensure complementarities with EQUAL. Thus, the work programme is subject to inter-service consultation, including with DG Employment. The Community Actions that present risk of overlapping with EQUAL are checked with EQUAL desk officers.

The evaluation furthermore finds that approximately 30 % of the projects examined show a certain cross-fertilisation between ERF Community Actions and projects supported under EQUAL and Daphne, facilitating exchange of experiences and data between different EU-funded projects and enhancing complementarities and coherence.

The difference between complementarities and overlap can, however, be difficult to define, and the questionnaire responses show that more than 50 % of project managers think the ERF overlaps with other EU funding. Likewise, almost 40 % think that the ERF and other EU programmes address overlapping needs of similar target groups. Nonetheless, only 15 % think that their project would have been eligible for funding elsewhere. It is recommended that the Commission investigate whether these findings reflect a high degree of complementarities or simply overlaps.

6.7.3 Coherence and complementarities: National programmes and Community Actions

In relation to complementarities and coherence between national programmes and Community Actions, the evaluation has found that although these are in fact both part of the ERF, complementarities and cooperation between the two has in many cases been weak. For example in Greece, the UK, Greece, and Belgium, responsible authorities have very little or no knowledge of Community Actions, even though in some instances organisations from their own country were implementing Community Actions. In the Netherlands and Finland, however, complementarity between the national programme and Community Actions was found to be very high and cooperation between projects was considered to be very valuable. In Ireland, national responsible authorities were actively involved in a Community Action with the Finnish Ministry of Labour. Likewise, in Slovenia, the national responsible authorities made a point of informing organisations about the existence of Community Actions as alternative possibilities for funding. Most other new Member States did not appear to have any knowledge of Community Actions. Knowledge of Community Actions seems to be higher among NGOs than among national authorities. In some countries, however, most notably in Ireland, knowledge of Community Actions among NGOs is also alarmingly low.

In general, there seems to be no effort by the Commission, the organisations implementing Community Actions or the national responsible authorities to link the Community Actions to the

national programmes in a strategic manner. Furthermore, there is limited awareness of the outputs generated by the Community Actions.

Despite this lack of encouragement from the Commission, some Community Action implementers do, however, actively contribute to greater complementarities between the two programmes. Thus, almost 40 % of questionnaire respondents say that they are or have been involved in national ERF projects. Likewise, 30 % state that they, when designing and implementing their project, had taken the national ERF programmes into consideration.

Chapter 7: Impact, added value and sustainability

7.1 Introduction

Impact, added value and sustainability will be measured, among other things, in relation to:

- The improvement in the situation of the target groups;
- Changes in specific national priorities or national strategies as a result of documented improvement in the situation of the target groups;
- Improvements in national systems, e.g. new laws, new or improved procedures and practices in relation to reception, integration and repatriation;

7.2 Impact of national programmes

First, the assessment of impact was faced with a few obstacles. One of these was the fact that the annual evaluations carried out at national level were of such a varying quality, that the team was not able to rely on them in any systematic manner. Likewise, the fact that many national responsible authorities have not developed indicators or carried out baseline studies has made it difficult to draw up comparable conclusions.

Since the ERF programme has only been implemented for a year in the new Member States, impact in relation to the national programmes in these countries is extremely difficult to assess. Thus, the new Member States are only included to a lesser degree in the present chapter.

7.2.1 Impact on EU level

Impact practices at the EU level in terms of developing common approaches or methodologies based upon best practices, has been limited. One reason for this, which was mentioned by most national authorities, might be the lack of mechanisms for exchange of experiences and best practice among national programmes. Only Greece has referred to the fact that the ERF has facilitated exchange of good practice in a satisfying manner. Some organisations have developed methodologies and models for best practice that have been disseminated throughout Europe – one example is IOM which is involved in voluntary repatriation projects in most countries, another is the Finnish Red Cross which developed a best practice model for reception and integration of

refugees with extensive use of volunteers which was introduced to national and European cooperation networks as a best practice model for Red Cross workers. These are, however, relatively isolated examples, and it is clear that the ERF could benefit from a more systematic approach to EU exchanges of experience and best practices. Greater impact at the EU level might be achieved, for example, through the establishment of a distribution system for publications produced within the ERF. Although many might not be directly applicable in other national settings they can still inspire new approaches and methodologies if and as appropriate. Other tools for exchanges of experience and best practice would be the update of the ERF website, including a database of projects supported under the ERF, annual conferences with the participation of all national authorities and the exchange of annual reports among national authorities.

The evaluation has thus not been able to identify much evidence of impact of the ERF-1 activities at a Community level in terms of developing common standards. As previously explained, the ERF 1 has been implemented in a period in which development of common minimum standards for asylum and refugee issues in the European Union became an issue of high priority. In relation to minimum standards, the Council has passed some directives, and it is easy to establish points of affinity between ERF-1 activities and issues covered by these Council Directives. However, beyond identifying such points of affinity, it can only be said that activities funded by the ERF-1 have indeed supported the strengthening of structures regarding reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees, all areas which have become subject to minimum standards laid down in Council Directives.

It can of course be argued that, because of its decentralised structure, the ERF-1 was not designed to generate, directly and as one of its core objectives, impact at Community level. Conversely, it is difficult to imagine how a programme with such a high degree of national relevance could have been implemented on the basis of an EU centralised structure. That said, the process of meeting the objectives of a Common European Asylum Policy is a gradual process that requires time. The ERF 1 programme has increased awareness among member states of their need to establish transnational cooperation on converging interests, and to find common denominators for the management of issues concerning asylum. Such increased awareness could, to a large extent, be seen as a programme impact at Community level.

On the level of beneficiaries it is encouraging to note that the ERF 1 program had the effect of reaching out to at least 600.000 persons from the target group. This may on a longer term have the impact of contributing to increased public awareness on the usefulness of building up coherent and systematic structures for reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees in order to preserve the social cohesion and balance of the societies in EU.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**United Kingdom**
Project title	**Voluntary Assisted Returns & Re-integration Project (VARRP)**
Managing entity	**International Organization for Migration (in association with the Home Office, Immigration and Nationality Directorate)**
ERF Measure	**Voluntary Repatriation**
Key project variables	
❖ Following a pilot scheme in 1999, the project received funding in each of the years covered by the Evaluation – 2000-2004 inclusive. ❖ The total project cost for years 2000-2003 inclusive was €8,134,272, including ERF funding of €3,912,221 (the UK figures for 2004 have not yet been finalised). ❖ Since 2002, in addition to travel being arranged free of charge, reintegration aid has been available to those who have sought asylum at some stage, and who have opted to leave voluntarily. Reintegration aid can cover training schemes, and in some cases such issues as assistance to set up in a business (for example by the purchase of a boat) or provision of courses. ❖ Between 2000 and 2004 inclusive, a total of 7,723 people have returned under the auspices of the project.	
Key success factors	
❖ The UK Government is committed to reducing the gap between the numbers of persons refused asylum and those returned, and the VARRP has played an important part in this, with steady increases in numbers of persons leaving under the project from 20002-2004 inclusive. Indeed, in 2003-2004 voluntary returns and assisted voluntary returns accounted for some 23 % of all returns of failed asylum seekers from the UK. ❖ There are substantial cost advantages in using voluntary as opposed to enforced departure (the average cost of VARRP, per returnee in 2003, was €1,200 - including reintegration assistance- whereas the average costs of enforced removal is estimated as €18,800, including costs of detention, and €2,800 excluding detention costs). ❖ Most significantly, voluntary departure provides a dignified conclusion to what may have been a traumatic period for applicants, in which asylum may have been refused. ❖ VARRP is considered to be wholly consistent with the European Commission's policy on returns. ❖ IOM reports that the UK programme is being used as a template for schemes in other countries.	

Best practice: UK

7.2.2 Impact at national level

At a national level, the impact of the ERF has been evidenced, primarily (or most clearly), within concrete initiatives such as the establishment of reception facilities. This has been the case in most of the new Member States, such as Estonia, as well as in many pre-enlargement member

states, such as Greece, where ERF funds have contributed substantially to the increased capacity of the country to accommodate larger numbers of asylum applicants. Through the ERF, five major reception centres have been supported in Greece, including the establishment of two new centres. Other examples include the Netherlands, where ERF funds have been used to create reception facilities for unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers with unacceptable behaviour; and Portugal where ERF funds made up the main source of funding for one reception centre.

The National Action Plan in Italy is an example of how the ERF 1 has had an impact on the full national system of administering asylum/refugee measures. The ERF resources have provided a crucial support to the implementation of the Italian National Action Plan. As a result of implementing the plan, a new concept for reception and integration, fitting the Italian policy/administrative environment, was developed.

In other countries, the ERF has also been a strong vehicle for the introduction of voluntary repatriation programmes. This was especially the case in the UK where the Voluntary Assisted Returns and Reintegration Project, VARRP, implemented by the IOM, has been of major strategic and operational importance. The programme accounts for more than 20% of all returns, a number that has been increasing since the beginning of the project. While the programme has obviously had an impact on the people involved, it has also had an impact on national budgets, being remarkably cheaper than enforced removal, thus potentially releasing funds for use in other areas. Furthermore, the project is being used by IOM as a template for other projects. Spain and Ireland are other countries in which the ERF has had a major impact on voluntary repatriation. Some project managers do however claim that impact is limited due to restrictions in relation to eligible activities and target groups[93].

[93] For example, it is not possible to include activities related to re-integration into country of origin after repatriation.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**The Netherlands**
Project title	**Refugees in the Health Care Business**
Managing entity	**University Asylum Fund (UAF)**
ERF Measure	**Integration**

- The project was supported in 2001-2002. The project aimed at guiding refugees with a higher education to employment in the health care sector.
- Key activities were the recruitment and selection of refugees on basis of their level of education, personal capacities and motivation for study or a job in the care business; the guidance and (when necessary) financial support to 50 refugees in an intensive preparatory programme of training and education leading to work in the care business; the guidance and (when necessary) financial support to 300 refugees during their education at a university or college for higher education in health care; study of the specific bottlenecks in relation to exiled doctors' access to Dutch health care; and the guidance of 25 post graduate refugees to employment in health care.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 304.295. The total number of beneficiaries of the project was 494, the cost per person amounting to € 616.
- 42 refugees followed the preparatory programme; 25 of them found employment; 336 refugees entered university or a college for higher education in health care. For 89 post graduates, employment could be found.
- Prior to the launch of the project a base line situation of the problems to address was described and indicators defined. The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through indicators and external assessment).
- Results of the research became part of the national discussion on the qualification of refugee medical doctors, and will be integrated in an assessment methodology for this specific target group presently developed by the Ministry of Health.

Best Practice: The Netherlands

As can be inferred from the examples above, impact at national level took different shapes and forms. The different types of impact can be divided into three: impact on national policy and practice; impact at an organisational level; and impact at the individual level.

Impact on national policy and practice

With regard to national policy and practice, the impact of the ERF has been relatively limited, when judging from the national evaluations. This does not mean that there have been no examples of good practice, but simply that these seem to be isolated examples rather than part of a systematic trend. The strengths of the ERF thus seem mainly to relate to short term achievements and particularised examples of impact.

Some of the clear cases of impact on national policy are e.g. Luxembourg, where the ERF has played an important role in the legal establishment of the appointment of guardianship for unaccompanied minors. In Ireland, the ERF was involved in the development of the National Action Plan against Racism and the Ethnic Minority Health Strategy. In Belgium, the ERF contributed to the drafting of a new law on reception. Also, a successful project on employment

resulted in a decree on the inclusion of diploma validation and assessment of competencies in mainstream labour mediation. In Greece, the ERF enabled the definition of national policy in relation to target groups, including the development of a standard definition. Likewise, the ERF was instrumental in the development of a Ministerial Decision on provision of medical care to asylum seekers and refugees.

Another aspect of impact on national policy and practice relates to *mainstreaming* – the degree to which experience derived from successful ERF projects is incorporated into national legislation or practice. One example of this is the methodology developed by the Dutch organisation Perspectief to reach former unaccompanied minors, which will now be implemented in eight cities. The Dutch Ministry of Health has adopted another project. In Luxembourg, some ERF projects have been mainstreamed into national practice as well. In Austria, a project on reception of unaccompanied minors has been mainstreamed into national practice. In Belgium, a curriculum for interpretation education might be integrated into higher education institutions. Likewise, an ERF project on training of civil servants is now run by an education institution. In Finland, the project Kotin Päin in Vantaa near Helsinki developed an integration model for children and a cooperation model for parents and school staff. This model is now used extensively in many schools and social welfare offices. A job assistance service developed by a Greek NGO is now widely used by local employers. A range of ERF projects have resulted in publications such as a handbook for the refugee communities, a guide on peer group work for integration, a guide on the health care system etc. Most of these publications have been distributed nationally, thus contributing, potentially, to the mainstreaming of best practices. Finally, Italy is good example of successful mainstreaming. The National Action Plan has enabled the development of a well functioning structure for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Italy, which is in line with mainstream European standards and which did not exist before the launch of the ERF. Prior to the ERF and the design of the National Action Plan, asylum and refugees issues were not covered by any national legislative support framework. The ERF was thus conducive to the inclusion of a structure for reception and integration in Italy's the national legislative framework.

Despite such examples of successful mainstreaming of ERF activities into national practice, however, none of the ERF participating countries appears to have adopted a systematic approach to mainstreaming. It is thus suggested that there would be merit in the national authorities including guidelines for mainstreaming in their annual strategies. Mainstreaming of good

practices into national practice entails a process of policy development, which is obviously difficult to plan for in an annual strategy. Guidelines for mainstreaming could, however, include considerations as to collection of evidence of good practice and establishment of processes for national dialogue.

While it can be argued that the examples of impact of the ERF on national policies and practices that have been evidenced by the evaluation team have not been the result of a deliberate strategy, certain factors indicate a potential for increased impact. For example, many country evaluators have mentioned the fact that ERF had contributed substantially to raising awareness of refugee and asylum seeker related issues among national authorities. In Spain, for instance, the ERF programme raised awareness in relation to a range of issues such as unaccompanied minors and reception facilities at border points. In Ireland, the fund has raised awareness of issues such as the need for interpretation and treatment of traumatised people. Furthermore, it must be assumed that the fund has contributed to general awareness-raising on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers among public opinion, given that a high number of projects received publicity in the national media. Of these, almost 60 % of project managers considered the publicity to be positive, while 20 % thought it was irrelevant. Less than one percent had received negative publicity.

	Question 49: Did your project receive any publicity in the media?	
	Count	%
Yes	546	65.1%
No	162	19.3%
Don´t know	25	3.0%
Unanswered	106	12.6%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 49: Publicity of projects

There are several reasons for the limited impact of the ERF at the national level. One reason for the sub-optimal impact on national policies could be the lack of systematic exchanges of experiences, best practice and lessons learned among the organisations supported by the ERF, leaving each project isolated and with no tools to disseminate results and enhance impact. Likewise, the lack of systematic approaches to mainstreaming hinders the sustainability and continuous impact of ERF activities. Finally, there are a range of practical issues that in one way or another can be said to strain the potential for impact. For example, all national authorities and most project managers mention the short project period of one year as an obstacle to impact.

Also, the focus on several small projects, rather than a small number of large projects, might also limit impact. In Finland, it was suggested to focus on consortia of organisations with a view to increasing the potential for impact. It is noteworthy that, in the second phase of the ERF, the length of the project period has been increased, and many national authorities have shifted their support from several small organisations to a small number of large ones. Thus, it would appear that the second phase of the ERF presents a greater potential for impact on national policy and practice.

Impact at the organisational level

At the organisational level, the ERF appears to have had a major impact, judging from what project managers and national authorities have expressed in questionnaires and interviews. For example, many representatives of both NGOs and government institutions have stated that participation in the ERF has strengthened them or their organisation in relation to project management skills, coordination and cooperation among NGOs, as well as among NGOs and government institutions, the establishment or improvement of networks, and the exchange of best practices (although many admittedly stated that this particular aspect could be improved).

Finally, some organisations have indicated that even the mere fact of receiving ERF funding has enabled them to market themselves as "worthy of funding". This was the case among smaller British organisations, many of whom stated that, in effect, the ERF funding had enabled many to market themselves as organisations worthy of funding and as such meriting consideration.

In Greece, for example, the ERF has contributed to greater cooperation between government authorities and NGOs, resulting in, among other things, NGOs being entrusted with full management of reception centres and the Greek Council for Refugees with the responsibility for centralising allocation of accommodation places across the various reception centres.

Impact at an individual level

At an individual level, the ERF has had a relatively major impact, reaching more than 500,000 people through its activities[94]. The fund has, among other things, contributed to elderly refugees

[94] This only includes direct beneficiaries. Albeit not part of the ERF target group, the national population has also been influenced by ERF projects. In Ireland and Belgium, for example, ERF has contributed to increased understanding of refugee and asylum seeker issues as well as a reduction in racism and host community scepticism.

breaking out of isolation, to facilitation of employment, strengthening of language skills, provision of services, improved organisation within refugee communities, and overall empowerment of refugees and asylum seekers.

59.0 % of project managers have estimate that between 76% and 100% of the beneficiaries targeted through the ERF have benefited directly from the projects.

	Question 42: What percentage of the target group would you say have benefited directly from the project activities?	
	Count	%
Unanswered	239	28.5%
0-25 percent	17	2.0%
26-50 percent	34	4.1%
51-75 percent	54	6.4%
76-100 percent	495	59.0%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 42: Total level of benefit for the target groups of project activities

No strand of activities appears to present a higher level of impact than others, as can be seen from the table below. Of the project managers implementing reception activities, 61.1 % have answered that between 76% and 100 % of the target groups have benefited of the ERF activities, while among integration and voluntary reception managers, the numbers are 58.5 % and 58.3 %. Thus, the differences among the strands are minimal.

% within ERF strand

		Question 42: What percentage of the target group would you say have benefited directly from the project activities?					
		Unanswered	0-25 percent	26-50 percent	51-75 percent	76-100 percent	Total
ERF strand	Reception	27.1%	3.4%	2.6%	5.9%	61.1%	100.0%
	Integration	30.3%	.3%	4.2%	6.6%	58.5%	100.0%
	Voluntary repatriation	20.4%	2.9%	8.7%	11.7%	56.3%	100.0%
	Reception/integration	40.6%		3.1%		56.3%	100.0%
	Unanswered	44.8%		6.9%		48.3%	100.0%
Total		28.5%	2.0%	4.1%	6.4%	59.0%	100.0%

Question 42: Level of benefit for the target groups of project activities by strands

7.3 Added value and innovation in national programmes

One way of measuring the added value of the ERF is to consider whether the programme supports activities that would be carried out regardless of ERF support or activities that are dependant on ERF support. When asked whether their project would have been carried out without ERF support, most project managers, 65.7 %, answered that the project would not have been implemented, while only 1.0 % answered that the project would have been implemented regardless of the ERF support. 29.6 % stated that only parts of the project would have been implemented.

	Question 19: Please indicate which of the following statements reflects the funding history of your project? What would have happened to the project without the ERF funding?	
	Count	%
The project would not have been implemented	551	65.7%
The project would have been implemented anyway	8	1.0%
Only parts of the project would have been implemented	248	29.6%
Unanswered	32	3.8%
Total	839	100.0%

Question 19: The added value of ERF in terms of implemented projects

These numbers do to a certain degree support the assumption that the ERF generates added value in the area of refugees and asylum seekers, given that a range of projects would not have been implemented in the absence of the ERF. Compared to the mid-term evaluation, the number of people answering that the project would have been implemented anyway is lower in the present evaluation. In the mid-term evaluation, 68 % had answered that the projects would not have been carried out, while 4 % had indicated that they would have been and 28 % said that only parts of the projects would have been implemented. However, regardless of these minor differences, both surveys indicate a relatively high degree of added value.

That said, the mid-term evaluation found that in certain countries (such as Austria, Spain, Luxembourg, Portugal, France and the Netherlands), the number of managers stating that the projects would have been carried out regardless of ERF support was relatively high, questioning the added value of the ERF in these specific national contexts. This was supported by interviews

indicating that funds in these countries primarily support pre-existing and standard activities rather than new and innovative activities, thus generating impact but possibly not added value in the ERF policy areas[95].

The present evaluation has not, to the same degree, identified any diverging patterns among the different participating countries. Thus, the only two countries where a substantial number of people have answered that their project would have been carried out regardless of ERF support, are France with 8.6 % and Portugal with 17.6 %. There are, however, a range of countries in which more than half of all the project managers have stated that some activities would have been implemented regardless of ERF support. These are the UK, Portugal, Netherlands, Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. Likewise, many country evaluators note a tendency to support existing activities, thereby minimising the added value of the programme.

[95] Mid-term evaluation, p. 234

% within Countries

		Question 19: Please indicate which of the following statements reflects the funding history of your project? What would have happened to the project without the ERF funding?				
		The project would not have been implemented	The project would have been implemented anyway	Only parts of the project would have been implemented	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	47.2%	1.9%	50.9%		100.0%
	France	65.7%	8.6%	25.7%		100.0%
	Germany	82.3%	.4%	16.3%	1.1%	100.0%
	Sweden	89.5%		10.5%		100.0%
	Spain	66.7%		33.3%		100.0%
	Portugal	23.5%	17.6%	58.8%		100.0%
	Italy	61.5%		23.8%	14.8%	100.0%
	Greece	55.6%		44.4%		100.0%
	Netherlands	40.5%		59.5%		100.0%
	Finland	88.9%		11.1%		100.0%
	Austria	61.8%		38.2%		100.0%
	Belgium	50.0%		44.6%	5.4%	100.0%
	Lux	92.9%		7.1%		100.0%
	Ireland	43.6%		48.7%	7.7%	100.0%
	Cyprus	50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Estonia	50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Hungary	64.3%		35.7%		100.0%
	Latvia	100.0%				100.0%
	Lithuania	40.0%		60.0%		100.0%
	Poland	40.0%		60.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik			100.0%		100.0%
	Slovenia	46.2%		15.4%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		65.7%	1.0%	29.6%	3.8%	100.0%

Question 19: By countries: The added value of ERF in terms of implemented projects

The degree of innovation is difficult to assess – the same activity can be innovative in one context and standard in another. That said, however, it is our assessment that the majority of activities supported through the ERF could bet be considered as standard activities in the context in which they were implemented. There are, of course, exceptions to this trend. One example is Luxembourg, where the ERF has been seen as a kind of laboratory – a mechanism to develop new types of service such as the cultural mediators. Likewise, Finland considers the ERF as an instrument specifically dedicated to innovation and "good ideas". Furthermore, the Netherlands

has consciously used the ERF as a fund for innovation. Other examples worthy of mention are some of the activities in the new Member States. In many of these countries, immigration is a recent phenomenon, meaning that few refugee and asylum seeker related activities have taken place to date. In Cyprus, for example, the ERF has supported the elaboration of needs assessment in the policy areas covered by the Fund – the first of its kind in the country. In Slovenia, the ERF has supported innovative approaches to integration, such as multi-ethnic self-help groups.

BEST PRACTICE

Country	**The Netherlands**
Project title	**Perspectief**
Managing entity	**Refugee Council Utrecht**
ERF Measure	**Voluntary repatriation**

- The project was supported in 2003-2004. The project offered a program for approx. 150-250 former unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedure. The project is the leading local facility in the fourth biggest city of the Netherlands.
- The key objective was the promotion of voluntary repatriation through a re-conceptualisation of the concept of repatriation. This included trying to get the home country and the self into a new perspective for both, shifting push factors (get out) into pull factors (come home), and using the fact of a double cultural identity to promote chances in the homeland for work in Western companies/NGO's, and the development of a methodological tool for how to approach and deal psychologically with voluntary repatriation.
- The key activities were individual coaching by professional social workers; legal analysis of asylum procedure; making use of an internet café, home newspapers, and new home music to get into free touch with the homeland; using an outreaching approach to get into touch with target group; creating a meeting point; establishing a network of companies and NGO's willing to hire people who were repatriating; and providing group information on countries by native counsellors and group activities when approaching the home authorities.
- The total costs of the project amounted to € 394.670.
- The results of the project were, among others, that 264 former unaccompanied minors from 30 different countries were reached. A significant general shift took place from suicidal and drop-out behaviour to a new and more open perspective. A high proportion of the people involved agreed to get in touch with the homeland authorities with a view to get readmitted, when their chances in the legal procedure were considered to be very small or nonexistent. Negotiations and relations with embassies improved throughout the project. Twelve youngsters successfully returned to their home country within the project period, while many more were waiting for their authorities to recognize them and provide their travelling papers.
- Some 75 companies and NGO's were approached and a substantial number of these were interested in cooperating. About 250 professionals (social workers, schools, therapists, etc) were reached and informed about the specific problems of the target group.
- The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including through indicators, periodic self-assessment, external assessment, assessment of the needs of the target groups, and internal learning).
- Eight medium-sized to big cities in the Netherlands are considering to implement similar projects in their own city.

Best Practice: The Netherlands

Furthermore, in many of the participating countries the ERF has indeed been conducive to innovative initiatives, given that the ERF resources were spent on issues that were supplementary

to those which governments were already required to address on the basis of existing national legislation. This has enable some national authorities to address new issues, build new structures, strengthen intervention areas in need of extra support, and target vulnerable groups that might otherwise have been neglected. In this sense, many of the ERF activities have thus been innovative.

In general, however, because of their methodological approach, many ERF activities should be characterised as "typical" or "traditional" within the refugee and asylum management sector. The same type of projects has been replicated in virtually every country, even if approaches and methodologies may have differed according to national context. The evaluators have come across a number of interesting projects or methodological concepts that would merit more exposure and discussion at the EU level. There is thus a dramatic lack of a strategy to disseminate innovative developments and examples of best practice. While the establishment of such mechanisms has not really been foreseen by the ERF, the evaluation team cannot stress enough the importance of strengthening horizontal exchanges of methodologies, best practice, and innovative concepts between NRAs and EU projects implementers.

Innovative activities of course entail risks of failure, which might cause difficulties in obtaining initial or further funding. The evaluation team has not been able to examine rejected project proposals with a view to ascertaining whether innovative projects have been overlooked in any systematic manner. It is clear, however, that national responsible authorities often follow "safe", bureaucratic routines and that creative, innovative and "risky" proposals may be considered more difficult to assess, to monitor or to evaluate, thus favouring more established and conventional approaches. The need for quantitative evaluation exercises can also create an obstacle to more innovative approaches, which may focus on the development of qualitative, long-term, or generalised competencies.

BEST PRACTICE	
Country	**Ireland**
Project title	**Developing a Whole Schools Approach to the Integration and Inclusion of Refugees and Ethnic Minorities**
Managing entity	**City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC)**
ERF Measure	**Integration**

- The project was supported in 2001-2002. The project supported the integration of refugees into the Irish education system by encouraging and supporting schools in developing inclusive, intercultural policies and practice on a whole-school basis.
- The objectives were to support the integration of refugees into the Irish education system, and to encourage and support schools in developing inclusive, intercultural policies and practice on a whole-school basis.
- The key activities were training of teachers as well as research among staff, students, parents and school management on attitudes to diversity, and the opportunities and challenges this presents for schools.
- The key results were an examination and analysis by the three participating schools of their practice and the development of new policy and practice appropriate to an intercultural student body. The project research provided new information on how schools were coping with the arrival of refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrant students, and provided a model of whole-school planning in relation to interculturalism, which could be offered to other schools.
- The total costs of the project were € 132.065 with an ERF contribution of € 74.927; the number of direct beneficiaries amounted to 147 staff of three schools, and 210 students and their parents. Over 1.700 students and their parents benefited indirectly from the project.
- Most planned activities have been implemented. It was planned to produce a manual for schools, based on the experience of the project, to guide them through the process of whole-school planning for interculturalism and inclusion. Due to lack of funding, this was not possible.
- The project has been both monitored and evaluated (including periodic assessments of evolving needs of the target groups, periodic self-assessment, periodic external assessment, and internal learning).
- The project was innovative in several aspects. It supported schools in a whole-school approach to interculturalism; it facilitated collaboration with schools on research on intercultural issues; it promoted networking and cooperation among the three schools in their work to develop a new policy and practice. The second phase of the project, which is not funded by the ERF, includes ten new schools to further develop and mainstream the approach.
- The success of the pilot project has resulted in collaboration between the CDVEC and the School Development Planning Initiative (national support service for school development planning). Results of the ongoing action research are thus being fed into the national system and school policy.

Best Practice: Ireland

7.4 Sustainability of national programmes

Sustainability does not seem to be a highly prioritised issue in the overall ERF strategy. It is not mentioned in the Council Decision establishing the ERF, neither as part of the overall objectives of the Fund, nor as criterion for selection of projects. Likewise, not many national strategies include considerations related to the sustainability of the programme or of the projects supported. This situation raises the issue of how to understand the concept of sustainability in a programme such as the ERF. Financial sustainability of the particular projects depends on the continued inclusion of the project as part of the national strategy, even after ERF funding to the project

ends. Mainstreaming of the project activities is another way of ensuring sustainability, including the activities as part of national practice. This might entail closure of the project in question as public entities may take over implementation of activities. Finally, sustainability of projects and activities can also be discussed in terms of continuous needs. Answers to questions regarding sustainability will thus implicitly also entail assessment of the needs for the activities in question. The evaluators find that the concept of sustainability has not been sufficiently clarified in the ERF. It is therefore recommended that discussions on the definition and use of the concept of sustainability be initiated.

Some countries have started to take these issues into consideration. Finland is one example. The national report concludes that the emphasis on regional cooperation and joint planning at local level is likely to strengthen sustainability. Furthermore, the report notes that the more 'realistic' orientation after 2002 has meant that the national strategy has included more long-term strategic elements, which have also contributed to greater sustainability.

At project level, the level of sustainability appears to be relatively high, at least judging from the answers given by project managers in the questionnaire survey. Thus, 71.4 % of the project managers state that all or some of the project activities will continue at the end of their ERF funding. This number is slightly lower than the one presented in the mid-term evaluation, which stated that, for 78 % of the projects, all or some activities will continue. When looking at the country-specific statistics, project managers in . Luxembourg (42%) and Hungary (71.4%) are highly confident that all activities will continue at the end of the ERF funding.

In Greece, on the other hand, as many as 33.3 % do not anticipate that activities will continue at the end of the ERF projects. This is in contrast to the position expressed by the national authorities, who have indicated their intention to compensate for the loss of Community funding should the ERF come to an end. In other countries, the managers of small projects have also expressed their concern in relation to the sustainability of their project, particularly in view of the fact that fewer projects will be supported under the second phase of the ERF.

% within Countries

		Question 51: Will one or more of the activities continue at the end of the ERF funding period?					
		Yes, all activities will continue	Yes, some activities will continue	No	Don´t know	Unanswered	Total
Countries	UK	20.8%	54.7%	7.5%	13.2%	3.8%	100.0%
	France	42.9%	20.0%	20.0%	11.4%	5.7%	100.0%
	Germany	25.5%	44.0%	19.1%	9.2%	2.1%	100.0%
	Sweden	15.8%	65.8%	10.5%	7.9%		100.0%
	Spain	16.7%			83.3%		100.0%
	Portugal	17.6%	47.1%		35.3%		100.0%
	Italy	54.9%	12.3%		32.8%		100.0%
	Greece	18.5%	37.0%	33.3%	11.1%		100.0%
	Netherlands	14.3%	71.4%	4.8%	9.5%		100.0%
	Finland		88.9%	11.1%			100.0%
	Austria	40.0%	54.5%	3.6%	1.8%		100.0%
	Belgium	19.6%	55.4%	21.4%	3.6%		100.0%
	Lux	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%			100.0%
	Ireland	35.9%	30.8%	10.3%	12.8%	10.3%	100.0%
	Cyprus		50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Estonia		100.0%				100.0%
	Hungary	71.4%	21.4%		7.1%		100.0%
	Latvia		100.0%				100.0%
	Lithuania	60.0%	20.0%		20.0%		100.0%
	Poland	40.0%	40.0%		20.0%		100.0%
	Slovak Republik		50.0%		50.0%		100.0%
	Slovenia		7.7%	7.7%	46.2%	38.5%	100.0%
Total		30.3%	41.1%	12.4%	13.9%	2.3%	100.0%

Question 51: By countries: Possible continuation of ERF funded projects after end of funding period

When asked to specify who would fund project activities should the projects not receive further ERF funding, most project managers expected to receive support from either their own organisation (38.0 %) or the government (34.1 %), while 18.5 % anticipated that the EC would continue to fund activities. In general, however, these figures are lower than those presented in the mid-term evaluation, which indicated less optimism as to the future funding of project activities. Thus, in the mid-term evaluation survey, 47 % believed that their own organisation would fund project activities, 37 % thought that future support would be provided by the government, and 31 % considered that the EC would continue funding the projects.

Question 53: Who will be likely to fund your activities after termination of the ERF funding?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Our own organisation	Count	319	435	85	839
	%	38.0%	51.8%	10.1%	100.0%
Project partners	Count	114	640	85	839
	%	13.6%	76.3%	10.1%	100.0%
Government funding	Count	286	466	87	839
	%	34.1%	55.5%	10.4%	100.0%
EU funding	Count	155	599	85	839
	%	18.5%	71.4%	10.1%	100.0%
Other sources	Count	163	591	85	839
	%	19.4%	70.4%	10.1%	100.0%
It is unlikely that any other organisation will be willing to fund this project	Count	88	650	101	839
	%	10.5%	77.5%	12.0%	100.0%
It is unlikely that any other organisation will be willing to fund this project because we have fulfilled our goals	Count	18	720	101	839
	%	2.1%	85.8%	12.0%	100.0%
Don´t know	Count	123	631	85	839
	%	14.7%	75.2%	10.1%	100.0%

Question 53: Funding of continuation of projects after termination of ERF

7.5 Impact of Community Actions

As was described in Chapter 5 on effectiveness and efficiency, the level of achievement of results of the Community Actions in ERF-1 has been adequate. Excluding the projects implemented in the annual programme 2004, which are still to be completed, most projects have reached all or part of their aims. The projects may have had an impact at the level of the target groups or the organisations involved, or at a national and/or Community level, in terms of improvement of the situation, integration of good practice and lessons learned, and/or changes in systems, policies, and strategies.

However, no indicators have been defined to assess such impact, nor is the assessment of the impact of projects included in the final evaluation conducted by the desk officers of the ERF unit. The evaluation team recommends that indicators be developed and that impact assessments of projects be included as an integral part of the Community Action programme, to be carried out after finalisation of projects.

The evaluation of the sample of projects showed that, apart from the projects directly targeting asylum seekers and refugees, impact is most often described in terms of publication and

dissemination of project results, seminars and conferences organised, and the establishment of transnational networks.

However, with regard to publication and dissemination of results, quite often projects were completed before the actual publication of their results. One project manager interviewed for this evaluation has thus indicated that, at the end of his Community Action, there were hardly any resources left for dissemination of results, thereby reducing considerably the possibilities for wider impact of project results. Often, results are published on the website of the lead organisation, as this is a cheap way to ensure dissemination. Some projects produced a CD-ROM for use in other countries, but interviews during the national ERF evaluations have led to the impression that only few respondents were aware of the existence of these CD-ROMs.

Regardless of these factors, the project managers interviewed were very positive about the results and impact of community actions. According to most of them, compared to national ERF projects, the synergy produced by the transnational activities has often led to better results and impact at an organisational level. In some cases, it has led to the mainstreaming of good practice at a national level.

7.6 Added value of Community Actions

Actions with EU added value are defined in the Guide to the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2004 as ‘actions that transcend national or local interest.’ Thus, in order to obtain added value, successful experiences of Community Actions should be replicated in other European countries, information (materials, conclusions, lessons learnt, etc.) should be disseminated and exchanged at European level, and Community Actions should contribute to, or be consistent with European policy issues.

All projects of our selected sample showed a clear transnational dimension. The responses to the questionnaire confirm this finding: the majority of the respondents report that they have implemented actions on transfer and dissemination of information, lessons learned and good practices, networking activities among NGOs at European level, and organisation of conferences and seminars at the European level. As mentioned above, the average number of transnational partners of the lead organisations was 4.4. The four research institutes that did not have any direct transnational partners have conducted, however, comparative research activities on all or a

number of EU Member States. All the sampled projects refer, in their final reports, to the dissemination and exchange of experiences, and to the results disseminated through publications, and/or seminars and conferences.

As already mentioned, in some cases national ERF projects have built on experiences gained through their in a Community Action, meaning that experiences were replicated. No evidence was found that the Community Actions were not in line with existing EU policies.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, 85 % of the respondents to the questionnaire report that their Community Action would not have been implemented without the ERF grant, thus suggesting a high degree of added value.

7.7 Sustainability of Community Actions

Community Action managers are required to indicate, in their final reports, the type of project follow-up they intend to conduct. However, Community Actions are not evaluated after completion of their contractual activities, and therefore it is not possible to assess whether such follow-up activities have indeed been implemented, and the degree of sustainability of the projects.

However, about half of the respondents to the questionnaire consider that all or part of the activities will continue, with financial support from their own organisation, their project partner, their government, the EU, or other sources. Thirty percent did not know how the continuation of the project activities, or part of them, would be financed.

Question 57 and 59 (Community Action): Continuation of ERF funded projects after termination of ERF

	Question 57: Will one or more of the activities continue at the end of the ERF funding period?	
	Count	%
Yes, all activities will continue	3	23.1%
Yes, some activities will continue	4	30.8%
No	2	15.4%
Don´t know	2	15.4%
Unanswered	2	15.4%
Total	13	100.0%

Question 59: Who will be likely to fund your activities after termination of the ERF funding?

		Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Our own organisation	Count	1	10	2	13
	%	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
Project partners	Count	1	10	2	13
	%	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
Government funding	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
EU funding	Count	2	9	2	13
	%	15.4%	69.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Other sources	Count	1	10	2	13
	%	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
It is unlikely that any other organisation will be willing to fund this project	Count		11	2	13
	%		84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
It is unlikely that any other organisation will be willing to fund this project because we have fulfilled our goals	Count	3	8	2	13
	%	23.1%	61.5%	15.4%	100.0%
Don´t know	Count	4	7	2	13
	%	30.8%	53.8%	15.4%	100.0%

7.8 Conclusions on impact, added value, innovation and sustainability

The above assessment has shown that impact has been hindered by a couple of major obstacles, one being the lack of high quality annual evaluations at national level, and the other one relating to the lack of indicators established prior to the launch of the programmes. Also, in relation to the new Member States, the short period of implementation does not enable the study team to assess issues of impact adequately..

7.8.1 Impact, added value, innovation and sustainability of national programmes

Impact of the national programmes has been assessed at the EU and national levels.

Impact practices at the EU level in terms of developing common approaches or methodologies based upon best practices, has been limited. One reason for this might be the lack of systematic mechanisms for exchanges of experiences, best practice and lessons learned. The ERF 1 programme has, however, increased awareness among member states of their need to establish transnational cooperation on converging interests, and to find common denominators for the management of issues concerning asylum. Such increased awareness could, to a large extent, be seen as a programme impact at Community level.

On the level of beneficiaries it is encouraging to note that the ERF 1 program had the effect of reaching out to at least 600.000 persons from the target group. This may on a longer term have the impact of contributing to increased public awareness on the usefulness of building up coherent and systematic structures for reception, integration and repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees in order to preserve the social cohesion and balance of the societies in EU.

At the national level, impact has been identified, primarily, in the context of concrete initiatives such as the establishment of reception facilities. In some cases, the ERF has also supported seminal programmes and projects in the field of voluntary repatriation. The various examples of ERF impact in different contexts show that there are several different types of impact, namely impact at the level of national policy and practice, impact at the organisational level and impact at the level of individuals.

With regard to national policy and practice, the ERF's impact has been relatively limited. While there are examples of ERF-supported activities influencing national policy-making, these are often isolated and do not form part of an overall, systematic approach to mainstreaming within the ERF. On the other hand, the ERF has contributed substantially to raising awareness, among national authorities, of issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, including the need for attention to unaccompanied minors, the need for interpretation services and reception facilities at border points, to mention only a few. This indicates a potential for further, future impact at the level of national policy and practice.

There are several reasons for the limited impact at the level of national policy and practice. One is the lack of mechanisms for exchange of experiences and a systematic approach to mainstreaming. Furthermore, a range of practical issues, such as the one-year project period and the size of the organisations supported, might also influence the level of impact achieved.

At the level of the organisations, the study team has evidenced that the ERF has have had a very positive impact. Both project managers and national authorities state that the ERF has strengthened project management skills within their organisations, cooperation among NGOs as well as between NGOs and government institutions, including through the establishment and improvement of networks. Many respondents, however, have reported on the lack of mechanisms for exchanges and communication within the ERF.

At the level of the individuals, the ERF has reached more than 500,000 people. It has, among other things, contributed to breaking the isolation of refugees, facilitating employment, strengthening language skills, enhancing the provision of services, and strengthening the self-organisation and overall empowerment of target groups. The majority of project managers have indicated that between 76% and 100 % of the groups targeted have benefited directly from the ERF activities.

This evaluation has found that added value of the national programmes in 2000-2005 has been relatively high. Thus, 65.7 % of all project managers have stated that their projects would not have been implemented without the ERF support. Only two countries, Portugal and France, present relatively high numbers of projects that would have been implemented regardless of ERF support. There are, however, a range of countries in which more than half of all project managers have indicated that some project activities would have been implemented in the absence of the ERF. Likewise, during the interviews in all the participating member states, many people have noted a tendency by ERF programmes to support existing rather than new activities, thereby minimising the added value of the funds.

The level of innovation of the ERF is difficult to determine, given that project activities can be standard in one context and innovative in another. In many of the participating countries the ERF has been conducive to innovative initiatives, given that the ERF resources were spent on issues that were supplementary to those which governments were already required to address on the

basis of existing national legislation. This has enabled some national authorities to address new issues, build new structures, strengthen intervention areas in need of extra support, and target vulnerable groups that might otherwise have been neglected. In this sense, many of the ERF activities have thus been innovative.

In general, however, because of their methodological approach, many ERF activities should be characterised as "typical" or "traditional" within the refugee and asylum management sector. The same type of projects has been replicated in virtually every country, even if approaches and methodologies may have differed according to national context. The evaluators have come across a number of interesting projects or methodological concepts that would merit more exposure and discussion at the EU level. There is thus a dramatic lack of a strategy to disseminate innovative developments and examples of best practice. While the establishment of such mechanisms has not really been foreseen by the ERF, the evaluation team cannot stress enough the importance of strengthening horizontal exchanges of methodologies, best practice, and innovative concepts between NRAs and EU projects implementers.

In relation to sustainability, the evaluation team concludes that this had not figured as a priority in the development of ERF strategies, at the EU or national level. The evaluators furthermore find that the concept of sustainability has not been sufficiently clarified and it is therefore recommended that discussions on the definition and use of the concept of sustainability be initiated. The level of sustainability at project level is considered to be relatively high, at least when judging from the project managers' responses to the questionnaire. More than 70 % state that all or some project activities will continue after the ERF funding comes to an end. Most project managers rely on their own organisation, the government or the EC for continued funding.

7.8.2 Impact, added value and sustainability of Community Actions

Because no indicators have been defined to assess impact, and that the assessment of impact is not included in the final reports of Community Actions, impact has been difficult to assess. The evaluation of a sample of projects suggests that impact is primarily understood in terms of dissemination of results, organisation of seminars and the establishment of transnational networks. The evaluation team notes that in relation to the dissemination of results, many Community Actions have experienced problems, particularly in terms of a lack of resources for this activity.

Regarding added value, the evaluation team concludes that, in their formulation, the Community Actions present a high degree of added value, given that all Community Actions focus on activities that transcend national interests. All projects have had a clear transnational dimension: they all work in transnational partnerships, they focus on the transnational dissemination of information and they seek to establish transnational networks. In practice, however, the dissemination of information could be enhanced.

In relation to sustainability, approximately half of all project managers consider that all or parts of their activities will continue. 30 % do not know who will fund their activities at the end of the ERF funding and 20 % do not anticipate that they will receive further funding to continue their activities.

Chapter 8: Recommendations

8.1 Recommendations to EC regarding the scope of the ERF

1. The definition of ERF target groups covers, comprehensively, the different categories of people with a legitimate need for protection in the EU. However, the definition does not cover, even implicitly, nationals of the host countries (including naturalized migrants). As some evaluators and project implementers have remarked, this could be seen as an omission, particularly in relation to integration projects, where inclusion or involvement of nationals would be both relevant and conducive to enhanced project effects and results.

2. Another, related, suggestion, brought up by project managers implementing voluntary return projects, and fully supported by the evaluation team, concerns the possibility to include returned refugees and asylum seekers as one of the ERF target groups, thus opening up for reintegration activities upon return to the countries of origin.

3. The evaluation team recommends keeping the three ERF strands as they are, but only as indicators for the allocation of overall funding at Member State level, and not as a rigorous requirement for the definition of projects and thus for the allocation of project funding. It could be left to the NRAs, as an administrative decision, to decide whether to administer the reception and integration measures distinctively, or as a combined reception-integration measure, on a project-by-project case.

4. There might be merit in discussing possibilities for introducing the same strands under the Community Action and national ERF programmes, thus facilitating the interrelationships and possible synergies between the Fund's two key programme components.

5. The current rate of 5 % for technical assistance seems insufficient, taking into consideration the amount of requirements connected with the management of the ERF. It is therefore recommended that an increase in the amounts allocated to technical assistance, possibly based on the number or nature of projects in each Member State, be considered.

8.2 Recommendations to EC regarding Community Actions

6. There might be merit in considering an increase in the proportion of Community Action funds, additional to the increase already introduced within the second phase of the ERF, for the purpose of strengthening transnational initiatives. An alternative to this could be the introduction of transnational initiatives within the ERF national programmes, managed by the national authorities.

7. There is no document outlining the overall strategy of the Community Actions programme. The evaluation team recommends that the Commission actively encourage the compilation and analysis of the results of the projects carried out under Strand A: evaluation and analysis of the Community Actions. This could be used by the Commission as a background paper for the determination of its overall ERF strategy, as well as by potential ERF grant applicants to prevent duplication of actions.

8. The evaluation team recommends the introduction of a pilot phase in the grant agreement for Community Actions. Based on an assessment of the results of the pilot phase, it is decided whether to continue or end project support.

9. A few Community Action managers comment that it is difficult (for smaller organisations) to pre-finance parts of the projects, and to find additional funds. In their opinion, the percentage of the ERF financial contribution to projects should be raised to 100 %, or the inclusion of contributions 'in kind' should be allowed.

10. The distribution of the Community Action call for proposals, published in the Official Journal of the EC and on the ERF website, is rather limited. It is therefore recommended that the call also be sent to ERF national authorities with the request to distribute it among their network. This would furthermore encourage links between national and community ERF websites

11. Complementarity between national programmes and Community Actions is in many cases very poor. The evaluation team recommends the establishment of formal structures for communication between Community Actions and national programmes, including

procedures for notifying national authorities of Community Actions on their territory, as well as dissemination of Community Action results.

12. Indicators or models for indicators for Community Action projects should be developed and impact assessments of projects be included as an integrated part of the Community Action programme, to be carried out after finalisation of projects.

8,3 Recommendations to EC regarding monitoring and evaluation

13. Mechanisms for exchanges of experience among national authorities should be put in place, either through an extension of the mandate of the committee or through the establishment of an additional forum. This could take the form of an annual conference, a comprehensive and up-to-date website with examples of best practices and link to a facilitated discussion forum for NRAs and project managers, or a mechanism for sharing project reports and publications.

14. There is a need for more frequent monitoring visits for the purpose of ensuring the implementation of smooth management and control systems. Furthermore, such visits could help increase the awareness of implementers about the ERF programme as a whole, and increase the visibility of the Commission and EU policy aims at project level. This would also enable Commission desk officers to gain a greater insight into various aspects of the ERF project cycle at national implementer's level.

8.3 Recommendations to EC regarding guidance

15. There is a need for clarification of rules, requirements and guidelines relating to the management of the ERF, in particular in relation to responsibilities between the Commission, national authorities and project implementers as regards transfer of funds and payments.

16. The examination of a sample of requests for co-financing shows that the standard format can be interpreted in different ways and different levels of abstraction. It would be helpful in the development of the requests for co-financing, and for their subsequent use

as national strategies, to apply a more consistent use of terminology and definitions in the format, possibly through introducing a more rigorous application of a coherent approach.

17. It is recommended that national staff appointed to work on ERF be offered a well-tailored course on ERF administrative and management procedures.

18. The evaluation has found that there was limited knowledge among national authorities and project managers of other, complementary EU funds and programmes. There might be merit to consider the production of a folder providing an overview of all the relevant EU support programme in the area of asylum, refugee and migration policy to be distributed among ERF participants.

19. National authorities should be asked to consider, in their national strategies, the ways in which they will be likely to mainstream worthwhile activities and best practice derived from the national ERF projects. Mainstreaming entails a process of policy development which means that there are naturally limits to the elaboration of mainstreaming activities in annual strategies. However, national strategies could include considerations as to collection of evidence of worthwhile activities and good practice and the establishment of processes for national dialogue.

20. There seems to be little consideration of the concept of sustainability in the ERF programme. It is recommended that the Commission initiate discussions with national authorities with the purpose of defining the meaning of the concept and that, once defined, the concept be included as an aspect of all national ERF strategies.

8.4 Recommendations to EC regarding impact

21. A greater impact on EU level might be achieved through the establishment of mechanisms for exchange and dissemination of results such as a distribution system for publications developed within the ERF, an updated website, annual conferences and exchange of annual reports among national authorities.

8.5 Recommendations to national authorities regarding scope

22. Since the national ERF budget resources are limited, and cannot be expected to produce impact through support for "grandiose" projects, there might be merit in focusing at least part of the ERF national budgets on promoting the Fund as a laboratory for innovative ideas, the development of methodologies and exchanges of best practices.

23. It is recommended that the process of formulation of national strategies be more participatory, ensuring broad societal impact through the involvement of civil society representatives and end users of the ERF.

24. The relation between the individual national strategy and the overall ERF strategy should be considered when developing national strategies, including the potential of national strategies and programmes to contribute to the EU's overall policy aims.

25. It is the opinion of the evaluators that mechanisms for the exchange of experiences are essential to the success of the ERF and should be integrated into all national ERF structures. The evaluation team suggests that all national authorities foresee, as part of their national strategies, the establishment and maintenance of a forum for documentation and exchange of experience. In order to ensure complementarity, dialogue and cooperation among the projects supported, the evaluation team would encourage the organisation of annual meetings with representatives of all the national implementing agencies.

26. It is recommended that national authorities establish a mechanism for facilitation of dialogue between themselves, Community Action implementers and other project implementers.

8.6 Recommendations to national authorities regarding monitoring and evaluation

27. National responsible authorities should develop user-friendly tools for reporting and evaluation, including the development of indicators and tools for self-assessment. There are examples of national participatory evaluation systems, which could serve as inspiration.

28. In order to maximise the use of national evaluations, the evaluations should be included as an integrated part of national strategies, thus ensuring that their results are used as inputs to the improvement and adjustment of future national strategies. Furthermore, the results of national evaluations should be disseminated to all the project managers, either through distribution of the reports or through seminars, thus providing mechanisms for a process of mutual learning.

8.7 Recommendations to national authorities regarding guidance

29. It is recommended that national authorities, to the degree possible in view of the requirements from the Commission, reduce the amount of administrative requirements imposed on the project managers (particularly on small implementing agencies, or on projects receiving only a very small amount of ERF resources). Also, account should be taken of the fact that many organisations receive support from several donors and thus often have to meet several different types of reporting requirements.

30. In relation to this, it is recommended that national authorities limit additional restrictions on eligibility rules for the funds. Many project managers have noted that in particular restrictions on the use of funds for salaries limit effective and efficient project implementation.

31. In order to maximize the number of applications there might be merit in investigating broader venues for dissemination of the calls for proposals and information in order to reach all potential applicants.

8.8 Recommendations to national authorities regarding impact

32. Close cooperation between the national responsible ministry and other relevant ministries and public agencies can contribute to the ERF's impact on a range of complementary policy areas in each Member State.

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