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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the ex-post evaluation of the External Borders Fund for the period 2007-2010
(report submitted in accordance with Article 52(3)(c) of Decision No 574/2007/EC of the
European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007)**

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT¹

The External Borders Fund² (EBF) was created for the period 2007-2013 and given a budget of EUR 1 858 million. It is part of the general programme ‘Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows’³, which has a total budget EUR 4 032.23 million.

The purpose of the EBF is to support the creation of consistent capacity to manage migration flows and apply common border and visa management standards across the Schengen Area. It was set up to promote solidarity among Member States⁴ by providing them with financial assistance to manage their migration flows and by contributing to the development of a common integrated border management system. The EBF is implemented by 28 countries⁵ and works with a strategic multiannual programme covering the whole programming period. The yearly financial allocations are negotiated separately and laid down in annual programmes.

The Decision establishing the EBF requires the Commission to submit an ex-post evaluation report on the EBF’s implementation for the period 2007-10 by 31 December 2012⁶. This report must be based on national reports evaluating the results and impact of the national actions co-financed by the EBF⁷. Originally the Member States were required to submit their reports by 30 June 2012. However, since this deadline coincided with the end of the eligibility period for the actions of the 2010 annual programme, it was extended to 31 October 2012 so that their overall results could be included.

This report presents the main ex-post findings of 26 participating countries⁸. Together they cover a financial allocation of EUR 630 million, or 40 % of the EBF’s total allocation. To ensure comparability of their data, Member States were provided with pre-defined reporting templates discussed and amended by the Common Committee for Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows⁹. The summary of the national ex-post evaluation reports has been drawn up by a private contractor.

The following chapters discuss the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, complementarity and value added of the 2007-2010 EBF.

¹ Disclaimer: this report is based mainly on data provided by the participating Member States. While the Commission has made every effort to check these data, it cannot completely rule out inconsistencies or inaccuracies, but believes they are unlikely to undermine the validity of the conclusions.

² Decision No 574/2007/EC, OJ L144, 6.6.2007, p. 22.

³ COM(2005) 123 final. The General Programme includes three more Funds: The European Return Fund, the European Fund for Integration of third-country nationals, the European Refugee Fund.

⁴ Based on established practice the term ‘Member States’ is used to mean signatories of the Schengen Agreement, regardless of whether they are EU Member States or Associated States.

⁵ The countries participating in the EBF in 2007-10 are the Member States of the EU except the United Kingdom and Ireland, and the Schengen associated states Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Liechtenstein contributes to the EBF but does not take part. The Associated States, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EBF in 2010.

⁶ Article 52(3)(c) of Decision No 574/2007/EC.

⁷ Article 52(2)(b) of Decision No 574/2007/EC.

⁸ Luxembourg did not submit an evaluation report. Switzerland submitted its report too late to be taken into account for the aggregated synthesis report and therefore could not be included in the present report.

⁹ The SOLID Committee for short.

RELEVANCE OF THE EBF TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Relevance of the EBF to the EU at the time of its creation

Following the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, an unprecedented number of EU citizens expected to benefit from living in an area of freedom, security and justice. At the same time the EU faced new challenges in securing its external borders. In 2007 and 2008, when the Schengen *acquis* took effect in ten new countries, the external borders of Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, and Slovak Republic became internal. Neither national measures alone nor measures at EU level were sufficient to manage migration flows. Moreover, had one Schengen country failed to protect the external EU borders effectively, all would have felt the consequences.

The EBF is the first EU instrument dedicated to funding external border management. It is part of a policy toolbox which also includes the Frontex Agency, the Schengen Borders Code and the future Schengen Evaluation Mechanism. Its overall purpose is to promote solidarity among the Member States by sharing the burden of external border protection and by reinforcing their capacity to fulfil their tasks under the Schengen *acquis*.

When allocating funds to Member States' annual programmes, the EBF takes account of the tasks they assume on behalf of the Schengen Area as a whole. It also looks at each country's specific situation, such as the length of the external borders the country protects, numbers of border crossing, visas issued, and entries refused. In 2011, an assessment on the annual distribution of resources in the Member States for the SOLID funds¹⁰ was carried out. The report concluded that the application of the criteria was generally perceived as satisfactory and therefore it was not deemed necessary to amend the criteria. For bigger countries accustomed to larger migration flows, the EBF complements already existing budgets, while for smaller countries with limited means, the EBF finances significant investments that would not have been possible otherwise.

The EBF is implemented under shared management arrangements by means of annual national programmes. Each Member State has designated an authority, known as the responsible authority, to which the Commission then allocates the funding to national measures. The responsible authorities then select and manage the individual projects.

The EBF allocates support to national actions that come under five priorities¹¹:

- the establishment of the common integrated border management system as regards checks on persons and the surveillance of the external borders;
- developing and implementing the national components of a European Surveillance System for the external border and of a permanent European Patrol Network for the southern maritime borders;
- issuing visas and tackling illegal immigration;

¹⁰ Communication on the application of the criteria for the distribution of resources among the Member States under the SOLID Funds. (COM(2011)448).

¹¹ Commission Decision 2007/599/EC implementing decision No 574/2007/EC as regards the adoption of strategic guidelines for 2007 to 2013.

- establishing the IT systems required to implement the EU border and visa legislation;
- effective and efficient application of the EU border and visa legislation.

As well as contributing to national programmes, the EBF funds Schengen-wide actions. ‘Community actions’ are mainly aimed at supporting transnational actions to reinforce border control and visa policy, and to tackle emergencies along the external borders. For each year of the 2007-2010 programming period, the EBF reserved up to 6% of its available resources for these actions. As a complement to funding allocated under shared management arrangements, a number of projects supported under the Community actions are set up under direct centralised management. To these the EBF contributed up to 90% of the total eligible costs of each project.

The EBF also set aside up to EUR 10 million each year for ‘specific actions’. Unlike programmes, which are more strategic in nature, these specific actions address shortcomings identified by Frontex at specific border crossing points. Funding was limited to 80% of the total eligible costs of each action for a maximum of six months.

As part of the national programmes for Lithuania, the EBF funded the implementation of the Special Transit Scheme (STS)¹² for citizens of the Russian Federation crossing EU territory on their way to and from the Kaliningrad region. The STS compensated for fees foregone and additional costs incurred pursuant to the Protocols to the Act of Accession to the EU and the specific priorities set out in the basic act. For each year of the programming period 2007-2010, EUR 15 million was made available.

This ex-post evaluation report covers the bulk of the EBF resources allocated to national programmes under the shared management arrangements.

Relevance of the EBF throughout the Schengen Area and in the Member States during the first years of implementation

The implementation period covered by the 2007-2010 annual programmes ran from 2007 to mid-2012. During this time Member States made significant changes to their national policies, laws and institutional set-ups to strengthen their management of cross-border migration.

Meanwhile, large-scale Schengen-wide projects were set up to support Member States in their efforts to improve their management of visa processing and cross-border migration. Developed jointly by the EU and the Schengen countries, these projects required considerable staffing and financial resources to ensure that all stakeholders were ready in time for the launch date. The EBF gave priority support to the Schengen Information System II (SIS-II), the Visa Information System (VIS), and other state-of-the-art ICT tools for border protection.

The economic crisis coincided with the lifting of internal border controls and caused a reduction in migration flows. The overall numbers of third-country nationals apprehended while attempting to cross into the Schengen Area irregularly decreased, most markedly in the Czech Republic, Austria and Estonia.

However, the 2011 uprisings in North Africa contributed to a rise in migratory pressure, especially for the Mediterranean countries. High numbers of undocumented migrants were apprehended in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, with Greece accounting for

¹² Article 6 of Decision No 574/2007 establishing the External Borders Fund: ‘the Fund shall provide support to compensate for foregone fees from transit visas and additional costs incurred in implementing the Facilitated Transit Document (FTD) and the Facilitated Rail Transit Document (FRTD) scheme in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 693/2003 (1) and Council Regulation (EC) No 694/2003’.

227 420 apprehensions per year on average, or about a third of the EU total. In Central and Northern Europe, the number of entry refusals generally declined, notably for Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and the Czech Republic.

From 2009 to 2011, twelve Member States¹³ recorded a rise in the number of entry refusals. Throughout this period Spain consistently accounted for around 80% of all entry refusals for the Schengen Area. Most of these cases occurred at the Ceuta and Melilla crossings.

In view of these developments, Member States considered the EBF relevant to their national needs. Seven Member States¹⁴ reported that the objectives of their national programmes were very relevant to their needs, while 14 reported that they were reasonably relevant¹⁵. Some Member States also reported that migration flows, especially the large inflows of recent years along the southern Mediterranean border, had a significant impact on the way the EBF was implemented nationally¹⁶.

THE ROLE OF THE EBF AS A COMPLEMENT TO NATIONAL BUDGETS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

While 13 Member States¹⁷ reported having no alternative to the EBF as a funding source for their external border management, others saw the EBF as complementary to existing instruments, such as the European Regional Development Fund, Frontex, the European Social Fund and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Some of the more recent EU Member States had access to EU pre-accession financial assistance through the Schengen Facility I (2004-2006)¹⁸, the Schengen Facility II (2007-2009)¹⁹, the Special Kaliningrad Transit (2004-2006) Programme²⁰ and the Phare Programme.

The EBF provides participating countries with funding to complement their national investment in border management. Its contribution, as well as that of the participating country, varies. For instance, the EBF supported more than 50% of overall national investment in Portugal, 29% in Cyprus, but less than 10% in Denmark, Estonia, Sweden and Slovenia.

The EBF contribution to annual programmes was overwhelmingly directed towards investment in ICT systems (more than 40% of national expenditure in at least nine Member States²¹) and visa processing (more than 40% of the national expenditure in at least five Member States²²). The EBF contributed relatively less to the implementation of other basic instruments, such as consular or training activities. One reason for this choice may be the financing structure of the Fund. The EU contribution is set at 50% of the total cost of each action and at 75% for specific priority actions and for actions in countries benefitting from the Cohesion Fund. To be eligible for 75% support, Member States may finance specific priorities, generally to implement new EU initiatives. Countries that already had dedicated

¹³ BE, DK, EL, FI, HU, IT, LT, LV, NL, NO, SE, SI.

¹⁴ AT, BG, CY, EL, LV, PL, SI.

¹⁵ BE, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, IT, LT, MT, NO, PT, RO, SE, SK.

¹⁶ BG, EL, IT.

¹⁷ AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, HU, LT, LV, RO, SE, SI.

¹⁸ EE, HU, LT, LV, PL, SI, SK,...

¹⁹ BG, RO.

²⁰ LT.

²¹ CY, MT, PT, HU, ES, EL, SI, LT, BE.

²² CY, MT, HU, IT, BG.

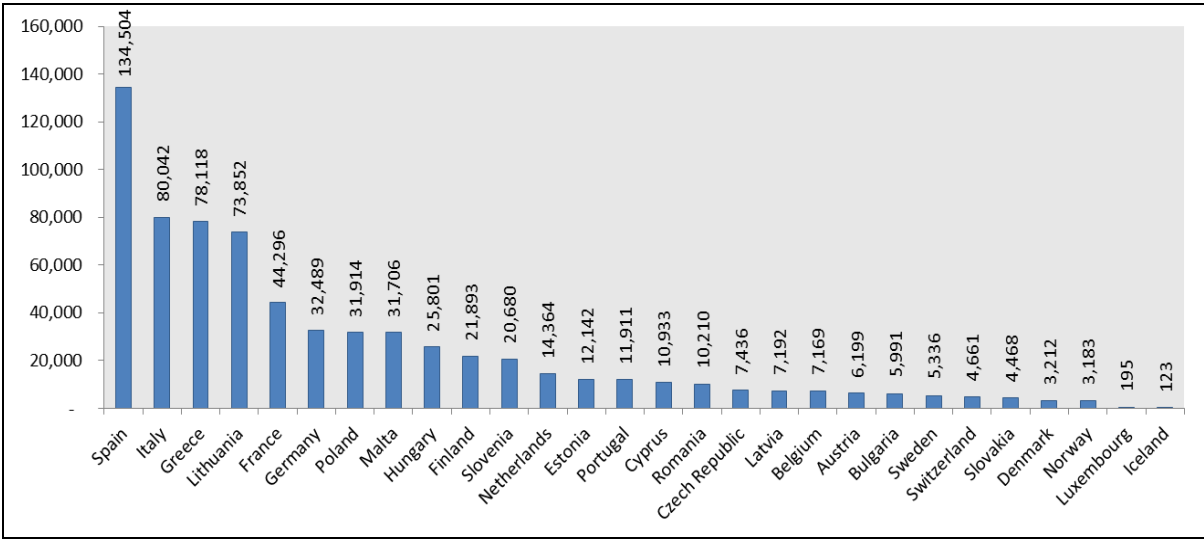
national budgets in place for certain policy areas had more room for new investment related to EU priorities.

EFFICIENCY OF THE EBF

Expenditure

In total, the total allocation for Member States in EBF funding through the 2007-2010 annual programmes was approximately EUR 630 million. Spain, Italy and Greece received about 48% of all funding between 2007 and 2010. Lithuania also received a large allocation, of which EUR 60 million was dedicated to the Special Transit Scheme (STS).

Distribution of EBF funding by Member State in thousands of euros under the 2007-2010 annual programmes.²³



The average implementation rate²⁴ for the first years of programming was 86.7%, for a total reported expenditure of EUR 546.5 million (out of EUR 630 million allocated). The implementation rate under the programme ranged from 46% in the Czech Republic (with similar figures for Denmark, the Netherlands and Greece) to 100% in four Member States²⁵. In total, 17 Member States had an implementation rate above 80% while 13 of these²⁶ had an implementation rate above 90%. Most actions were implemented under Priority 1, followed by Priorities 4, 2, 3 and 5. In terms of expenditure, the focus was on Priority 2, followed by Priorities 1, 4, 5 and 3.

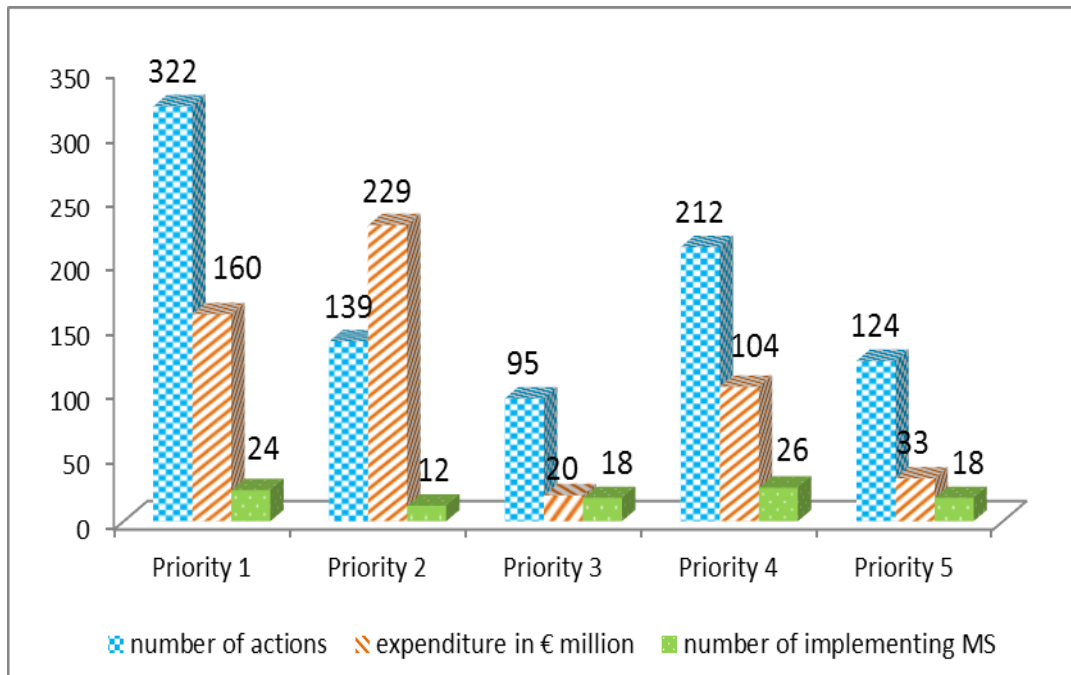
²³ IS, NO and CH started to contribute to the EBF in 2009 and adopted their first annual programmes in 2010. BG and RO joined the EBF in 2010.

²⁴ The implementation rate was calculated on the basis of figures provided by Member States. This information includes the implementation rates of annual programmes already closed by the Commission and forecasts by the Member States for the annual programmes still to be closed at the time of submission of the national ex-post evaluation reports. To be noted that DK and PL did not provide data on 2010 programme implementation. The implementation rates for CY and CZ were not final.

²⁵ DE, CY, NO, EE.

²⁶ AT, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, SK.

2007-2010 EBF by priority: numbers of actions, expenditure and numbers of Member States



All Member States except Denmark and Iceland reported having implemented actions under Priority 1, reinforcement of border management and control, with some reporting as few as two to three²⁷, while others reported over 40 actions²⁸.

Three countries²⁹ spent between 75 % and 90 % of their total EBF allocations under Priority 2, surveillance of the EU's external borders. Nine more countries³⁰ implemented actions under Priority 2. Italy and Spain together accounted for 55 % of the number of Priority 2 actions.

Most Member States implemented actions under Priority 3, issue of visas and tackling irregular immigration. Only eight did not³¹. In total, 95 actions were implemented, accounting for expenditure of EUR 20.35 million.

With regard to Priority 4, establishing and developing ICT systems for external border control and visas, all Member States implemented actions. There were 212 actions, accounting for expenditure worth EUR 104 million. Most of the Member States invested in the development of the national SIS component (EUR 24.5 million) and in the development of VIS (EUR 51.1 million).

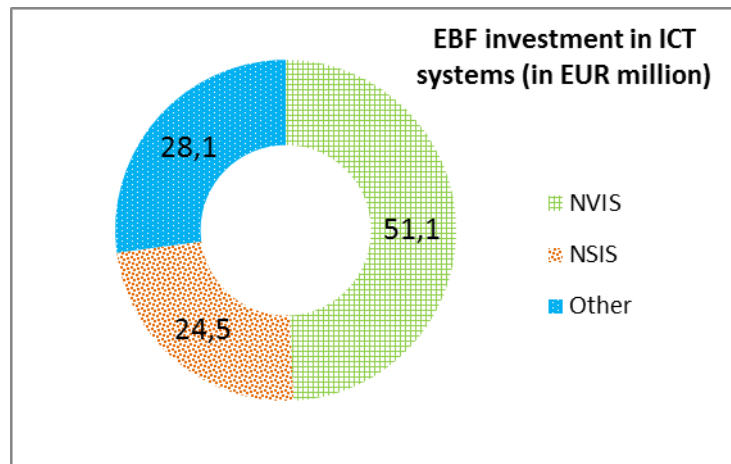
²⁷ AT, CZ, MT, RO, SE.

²⁸ EL, LT.

²⁹ ES, IT, MT.

³⁰ BG, FR, HU, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI.

³¹ EE, IS, IT, LV, LT, NL, PT, SK.



The Member States most heavily reliant on the EBF to develop their national SIS (NSIS) were Hungary, Germany, Estonia, France and Italy. Austria, Portugal, Lithuania and Finland used EBF funding to finance over 40 % of implementation costs for their national SIS. Based on the available data³², several countries³³ financed over 70 % of their national VIS (NVIS) implementation costs through EBF co-financing, while some covered between 30 % and 50 % in this manner³⁴.

Under Priority 5, application of EU external border and visa legislation, EUR 33 million was dedicated to support for training, risk analysis and development of best practices. This is a relatively low amount. Twenty Member States used EBF co-financing to train staff, spending a total of EUR 13.5 million in EBF resources on training activities.

Revisions

During the reporting period, most of the Member States³⁵ made changes to their annual programmes to make better use of their EU allocations. In doing so, they mainly changed the initially planned costs by more than 10 % of the total allocation (40 % of revisions), funded new actions (30.36 %), and changed the content of the actions (19.64 %).

Programme management costs

To manage the 2007-2010 annual programmes, Member States mostly made use of Technical Assistance provided by the Commission as part of each annual programme, although many contributed resources in kind, such as staff or equipment. Most of the EUR 18.1 million spent on technical assistance, representing 3.31 % of EBF spending during the reporting period, went on staff costs. Unlike most other Member States, Romania and Greece focused all their spending, Romania on monitoring and project management, and Greece on IT and equipment. France spent most of its technical assistance on monitoring and project management.

³² Information on total EBF expenditure on NVIS is available for 17 Member States. Of the Member States that implemented actions in this area, three did not provide data (ES, FI, NL), although Spain and Finland did provide the share of EBF resources in the total investment in their NVIS.

³³ BE, CY, DE, EL, FR, PT, IT, HU.

³⁴ ES, FI, NO, MT, AT.

³⁵ All Member States except BG, DK, EE, IS, MT, NL, NO.

Most Member States found the technical assistance helped them considerably in implementing the programmes efficiently and effectively, particularly by offsetting staff costs. According to Austria, the programmes could not have been implemented without it.

Overall efficiency

All Member States reported that the implementation of national EBF allocations had been either very good³⁶, good³⁷ or satisfactory³⁸. This is a logical consequence of the overall implementation rate (86.7%) and the fact that EBF beneficiaries are generally state institutions, which means that the implementation processes are quite straightforward.

Nonetheless, many Member States³⁹ also reported difficulties in implementing particular projects and managing actions. Projects failed or were cancelled owing to a variety of reasons, such as delays, unsuccessful procurement, and lack of experience in managing EU projects. As the annual programmes could not be launched before the Commission approved them, procurement was held up accordingly. Other reasons given for failed or cancelled projects were delays in implementing the central SIS and VIS and the EBF's lack of flexibility, requiring a formal revision procedure for substantial changes in the annual programmes.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EBF

The outputs and results achieved under the 2007-2010 annual programmes have been broken down into 12 main categories based on the EBF's priorities⁴⁰.

Integrated border management and strengthening national border surveillance (Priorities 1 and 2)

The outputs and results achieved under these priorities ranged from the purchase and upgrade of vehicles, aircraft and vessels to the modernisation and roll-out of large-scale surveillance systems and infrastructure for border inspection. They included the purchase of smaller equipment for surveillance, the day-to-day management of border crossing points, the training of staff and the roll-out of networks and communications systems.

Action category	OUTPUTS	RESULTS
Means of transport	3 153 vehicles, craft and vessels acquired or upgraded	3.6 million patrol missions performed between 3 % and 100 % of the Member States' fleet modernised with support from the EBF average response time (from alert to arrival at the scene): 67 minutes
Border surveillance	545 systems acquired or upgraded 169 entities connected	8 279 km of external borders fitted average response time: 32 minutes

³⁶ AT, EE, MT, SI, SK.

³⁷ BE, BG, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LV, NO, PL, PT, RO.

³⁸ CZ, EL, HU, IS, NL, SE.

³⁹ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

⁴⁰ Some Member States categorised their results differently. For the purposes of this report they have been grouped under the EBF priorities considered most appropriate.

systems		
Operating equipment for border surveillance	22 347 items of equipment acquired or upgraded	between 11 % and 100 % of Member States' equipment renewed average response time: 52 minutes 3 482 km of the external borders covered additionally
Operating equipment for border checks	212 881 items of equipment acquired or upgraded	27 % to 100 % of border crossing points fitted with modernised equipment time needed to check travellers: 15 seconds to 4 minutes
Border infrastructure	108 border crossing points developed or upgraded 710 places added to detention facilities at external borders 61 further items of infrastructure developed or upgraded	4 129 staff working in new or upgraded infrastructure 24 border crossing points and stations improved for the benefit of border guards and travellers processing time for travellers at external border-crossing points: between 8 and 90 minutes

Sixteen Member States⁴¹ purchased means of transport for border checks and surveillance. This included cars, mostly in Italy and Greece (2 629), motorcycles (172, of which 148 in Greece), boats (61), patrol vessels (43), helicopters (34) and aeroplanes (5). Norway used the EBF to modernise its entire fleet of snowmobiles (8), all-terrain vehicles (7) and trailers (3). Lithuania bought 100 bicycles and Romania 12 tractors for maintenance of the external border. A total of 3.6 million border patrols were carried out most across nine Member States⁴². For example, Greece carried out most of the patrols with vehicles upgraded or newly acquired through the EBF.

Spain bought the highest number of components and surveillance systems (386), mainly to expand its *Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior* ('Integrated Exterior Surveillance System', SIVE)⁴³. This enabled Spain to intercept 5 279 irregular migrants and improve the security of its maritime border, reducing irregular migration to the Canary Islands by 17.5%.

Hungary established a command and control centre and various radio control stations for border surveillance, Italy expanded national elements of the European Patrol Network, and the Netherlands set up a central control room for seaport police and maritime border guards.

Bulgaria built an integrated surveillance module along 13 km of its external border and set up an automated technical surveillance system. France updated its SPATIONAV maritime surveillance system, which now covers 95 % of its maritime borders. Malta increased the operational coverage of its maritime patrol aircraft.

In addition to these systems, a total of 22 347 items of operating equipment for border surveillance were purchased, large and small. Large equipment included a thermal imaging

⁴¹ CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IT, LT, MT, NO, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

⁴² CY, EE, EL, ES, HU, IT, MT, PT, SK. 3.14 million patrols were performed by car and 432 000 by motorcycle.

⁴³ This expenditure amounted to over €44 million, or 37.33 % of Spain's total expenditure under Priority 2.

system for helicopters bought by Austria, helicopter video-surveillance equipment bought by Belgium, and satellite image processing equipment bought by Bulgaria.

Smaller items included night vision cameras, night vision goggles, optronic systems, mobile cameras, sensor systems bought by Estonia, and camouflage and protection equipment bought by Romania. Some Member States⁴⁴, upgraded all of their operating equipment, with more modest upgrades elsewhere, as in Sweden (15%) and in the Slovak Republic (12.36%).

Overall, Hungary reported a significant expansion of its border surveillance capabilities, with a 40% increase in the length of external border covered. Greece noted that the slight decrease in apprehensions in 2011 was made possible in part by new surveillance equipment, means of transport for patrol and infrastructure co-financed by the EBF.

The types of equipment acquired or upgraded were very varied. Italy, Lithuania and Greece spent most on upgrading equipment for border checks, for instance, to verify documents. Some countries invested in small equipment, for instance, to produce thousands of local border traffic permits (Lithuania) and fibre-optic links to make document-checking systems more effective (Italy). Other countries invested in single large items, such as a centre to investigate and analyse forgery (Bulgaria). Many Member States⁴⁵ invested in document verification equipment, such as video-spectral equipment⁴⁶ and fingerprint readers⁴⁷.

Some Member States⁴⁸ bought equipment related to ABC gates⁴⁹ or the ICAO Public Key Directory, which supports the exchange of information on the authenticity ePassports between different countries⁵⁰. Equipment was modernised at all border crossing points in Austria, Malta, Norway and Slovak Republic, and at 50% of Lithuania's and 27% of Belgium's. Almost all of France's border-crossing points (97.5%) were fitted with document checking equipment.

Under the category of border infrastructure, Malta upgraded all its crossing points for the benefit of border guards and travellers, Slovak Republic 75%, Slovenia 23.8% and Poland 5%. Norway upgraded one crossing point. A few Member States⁵¹ spent EBF funding to extend or upgrade their detention facilities. Greece upgraded six detention facilities at external borders and upgraded the infrastructure at 17 crossing points. Romania renovated the headquarters of a number of its border police sectors.

Most Member States⁵² reported that actions implemented under these priorities were effective in meeting the objectives of the multiannual and annual programmes and contributed to the overall improvement of border management. A few Member States⁵³ reported that the objectives of some annual programmes were not achieved or achieved only in part, due to difficulties or delays in procuring equipment, other project delays or cancellations. Nonetheless the investments achieved a number of key goals: more, better border infrastructure and human resources, investment in innovative tools for more efficient day-to-

⁴⁴ EE, ES, NO, SI.

⁴⁵ CZ, FR, HU, MT, NO, PT.

⁴⁶ Including FR, RO.

⁴⁷ DE, HU, NO.

⁴⁸ Including DE, PT.

⁴⁹ DE, ES.

⁵⁰ AT, HU, NO.

⁵¹ EL, FR, HU.

⁵² AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, NL, NO, RO, SK.

⁵³ EE, IT, LT, PL, SE, SI.

day border surveillance, more efficient and effective control of the southern border of the European Union and better decision making.

Visa processing and tackling illegal immigration (Priority 3)

Most Member States implementing actions under this priority found that it greatly helped them to streamline their visa issuing processes and prevent irregular entry⁵⁴.

As key goals achieved, Member States reported they had updated ICT systems at their consulates, deployed immigration liaison officers (ILOs), installed new visa issuing equipment at over 280 locations and renovated their consular visa sections. A few Member States experienced implementation problems and had to cancel or limit certain actions, and were unable to meet all their original objectives.

Category of action	OUTPUTS	RESULTS
Consular infrastructure	210 visa sections newly built or renovated 257 pieces of equipment purchased to upgrade security and improve service at consulates	Over 1.8 million visas issued at new or renovated premises ⁵⁵ Fewer security threats
Visa-issuing equipment	4 905 pieces of equipment acquired or upgraded 682 locations fitted with new or upgraded equipment	Average waiting time for visa applications: 15 to 30 minutes

With regard to consular infrastructure and visa issuing equipment, a total of 210 visa sections were renovated, modernised or upgraded at the consulates of nine Member States⁵⁶. Cyprus fitted its consulates with walk-through metal detectors and multi-energy X-ray inspection systems. Hungary had planned to renovate more of its consulates, but managed just under 10%. Spain renovated entry inspection areas, waiting rooms, and area control rooms, and reported that security at its consulates had improved by 80%. As part of their renovation works, some Member States also connected their consulates to their NSIS and the NVIS, updated their ICT systems⁵⁷, and installed visa issuing equipment at over 650 locations.

Most Member States found that this priority had been of great help in streamlining their visa issuing processes and preventing irregular entry. As key results, they noted that they had improved the management of their consular services, streamlined visa processing, enhanced the security of consular buildings and electronic data, expanded ICT capacity at their consulates, improved the ability of their consular staff to intercept fraudulent applications, and stepped up pre-boarding inspection at sensitive airports.

⁵⁴ AT, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, SI.
⁵⁵ Including Schengen visas.
⁵⁶ AT, CY, CZ, ES, FR, HU, LT, MT, NL, RO.
⁵⁷ BE, RO, SI.

ICT systems in support of EU external border and visa legislation (priority 4)

Priority 4 covers upgrades and development of VIS, SIS-II and other ICT systems. A significant number of Member States⁵⁸ considered that the actions contributed successfully to the development of IT systems for necessary for the implementation of EU instruments in the field of external borders and visas. However, some⁵⁹ rated the actions as only somewhat effective, mainly owing to difficulties with their implementation. This group included Hungary, which implemented the highest number of actions under this priority.

Category of action	OUTPUTS	RESULTS
SIS	EBF contributed between 0.41 % and 92.82 % of total investment in a Member State for NSIS development	81 % to 100 % connection tests were successful 3 to 1 407 CSIS compliance tests extended SIS extended to 120 institutional stakeholders
VIS	EBF contributed between 0.27 % and 100 % of total investment in Member State for NVIS development	378 consulates connected to CVIS 407 border crossing points connected to CVIS 253 other stakeholders connected Waiting time for visa application reduced to 15-30 minutes
Other ICT systems	1 272 other ICT systems developed or upgraded	121 institutional stakeholders connected average ICT response time reduced

Eleven Member States⁶⁰ reported carrying out SIS-II compliance tests under this priority. Almost all Member State reported that these tests were 100 % successful, except for France and Finland, which had success rates of 99.2 % and 81-93 % respectively. In Finland, France, Greece and Norway, funding was mainly used to connect border crossing points to SIS-II, while in Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal and Spain, funding was mainly used to connect consulates. Germany and Denmark invested most of their funding to connect other official bodies, such as immigration authorities. Italy staffed a VIS help-desk and provided assistance via telephone and computer systems to solve technical problems, thereby avoiding interruptions and malfunctions in its visa issuing system.

Several Member States⁶¹ also updated other ICT systems and equipment, including laptops, border surveillance equipment, biometric passport readers and other document verification equipment. Two, France and Sweden, reported that their new equipment had reduced the average waiting time for visa applications to 15 minutes and 30 minutes respectively.

As the three key goals achieved under this priority, the Member States reported that they had upgraded or developed their NSIS-II, their NVIS and other useful ICT systems (such as API systems, ABC systems and FADO).

⁵⁸ AT, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, SI.

⁵⁹ CZ, DK, EE, FI, HU, NL SE.

⁶⁰ AT, DE FI, FR, HU, IT, LV, PT, RO, SE, SK.

⁶¹ BE, CZ, EL, ES, HU, LV, LT, PL, RO, SI, SK.

Effective application of EU external border and visa legislation (Priority 5)

Most Member States⁶² implementing actions under this priority judged them effective. Moreover, around two thirds⁶³ found the actions had considerably facilitated the application of EU standards and overall strategy in this area.

Category of action	OUTPUTS	RESULTS
Training and risk analysis	32 594 staff trained 1 515 operations and tools set up or upgraded (software, statistics)	49 reports issued Between 8 % and 94.03 % of staff trained per country

Hungary, Poland, France and Lithuania (and to a lesser extent the Czech Republic, Spain and Slovenia) trained the largest number of staff under this priority. In Sweden, 80 % of all relevant staff were trained, and in Austria, Malta and Norway, between 29 % and 35 %. Bulgaria trained six pilots, 10 helicopter engineers and a number of border police in air surveillance. It also set up a month-long traineeship for one official at a consulate in Turkey. None of the Member States launched any joint actions in risk analysis, although Italy did conduct training sessions on this topic.

Training ranged from basic mandatory training for border guards⁶⁴ to specialist training, for instance on document fraud⁶⁵, and included training focused on improving the harmonisation of practices across consulates⁶⁶. The fact that Latvia received fewer complaints about visa processing showed that its two online training tools, on visa issuance and the use of NVIS, were bearing fruit. New teaching methods in the Czech Republic and new teaching modules in Bulgaria helped to make these actions more sustainable.

As key goals achieved under this priority, Member States noted better application of EU standards⁶⁷, more effective application of external border and visa legislation⁶⁸, and more efficient visa staff⁶⁹.

VALUE ADDED AND LONGER-TERM EFFECTS OF THE EBF

Added value and impact

All reporting Member States assessed the overall results and achievements of the 2007-2010 annual programmes as positive to very positive⁷⁰.

⁶² AT, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LV, LT, NO, SE, SK.

⁶³ AT, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, PL, SI.

⁶⁴ SI.

⁶⁵ DE, FR.

⁶⁶ ES, HU.

⁶⁷ DE, ES, SI.

⁶⁸ LT.

⁶⁹ HU, LV.

⁷⁰ Countries rating the results as very positive: AT, BE, BG, CY, DK, ES, FR, HU, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK.

Volume: extent to which the EBF's funding contributed to the overall span of border management activities

Most countries reported that the EBF had provided substantial support to border management and control (Priorities 1 and 2), visa processing and irregular migration (Priority 3), and the VIS and SIS (Priority 4). The EBF enabled them to address specific national weaknesses and deficiencies at external borders in relation to ICT systems, border surveillance and national response capacity, means of transport and consular cooperation.

The EBF also improved the national capacities on border management and contributed to the research, development, testing and introduction of innovative and state-of-the-art technology at borders and in consulates.

More than half of the Member States⁷¹ reported that the EBF contributed significantly to addressing specific national weaknesses and/or deficiencies at external borders. However, France, Latvia and Sweden reported that the role of the EBF in addressing specific national needs was limited, as most actions had yet to be fully implemented. France said that while the EBF did provide support for the country's maritime border surveillance, its contribution to the management of migration flows and the protection of land borders was limited.

Several countries reported that the EBF helped to project an image of secure borders, while others found that this was difficult to measure.

Participating countries widely reported that the EBF had increased the impact of national, regional and local programmes and policies on the one hand, and of existing funds in the areas of the EBF's intervention on the other. Countries contributing to integrated, interoperable European surveillance systems such as EUROSUR, or to consular cooperation made similar reports.

Scope: would certain activities not have taken place if they had not been co-financed by the EBF?

According to most Member States, many actions would have been impossible or less effective without the EBF. Five Member States believed they could have achieved the same outcome without the EBF⁷², others reported that very few or none of their activities could have been implemented under the national budget⁷³ or could have achieved the same results without the EBF⁷⁴.

In countries with bigger national budgets for border management the EBF's contribution was more modest in relative figures, for example in France. However, in countries with smaller budgets, the EBF did make a difference by making possible large investments which would not have been made otherwise, especially in the current climate of spending cuts.

To what extent has the EBF helped the Member States manage migration flows?

Some Member States found that the EBF had helped them considerably⁷⁵ or to some extent⁷⁶ in managing their migration flows, although most did not or could not identify changes in migration trends which could be attributed to the EBF. The EBF had helped to manage greater

⁷¹ Fourteen in total: BG, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, HU, IT, LT, NL, PL, PT, SI.

⁷² DE, DK, FI, IS, NL. To be taken into account that IS adopted their first annual programmes in 2010.

⁷³ BE, BG, CY, EE, DK, LV, MT, PT, PL.

⁷⁴ AT, BG, CZ, ES, IT.

⁷⁵ BG, DE, ES, LT.

⁷⁶ BE, CY, EE, EL, FR, IT, MT.

passengers flows at airports and seaports⁷⁷ and to step up inspection and surveillance. Better inspection and surveillance resulted in fewer illegal crossings, more visa applications⁷⁸, and fewer apprehension⁷⁹. Italy reported carrying out more thorough external border checks after acquiring state-of-the-art equipment and upgrading existing equipment with EBF funding. This resulted in more capacity to combat irregular immigration, and saved the lives of many who would otherwise have taken dangerous sea routes in the hopes of entering irregularly.

Best practices and lessons learnt

Several best practices can be gleaned from the work done. These could benefit border management and project and programme management.

In the area of programme and project management some Member States⁸⁰ found that setting up fewer but larger actions reduced the administrative burden and ensured timely implementation. Other countries⁸¹ found that creating new bodies enabled them to manage the EBF more efficiently.

Several countries⁸² viewed cooperation with one another in implementing the EBF as a particularly good practice. They cooperated in various ways, for instance, by organising their work in groups based on geographic areas. Such cooperation can act as a catalyst for further joint projects.

In terms of lessons learnt, several countries⁸³ streamlined cooperation and communication between their national authorities and with the beneficiary agencies. This enabled them to identify and implement EBF-supported projects more quickly and to make sure actions were implemented on schedule. They conducted preliminary discussions, trained potential beneficiaries in project planning and management⁸⁴ and visited beneficiaries' premises where necessary⁸⁵.

Hungary decided to check beneficiaries' documentation for eligibility and completeness prior to submission to improve success rates and to prevent missteps due to lack of familiarity with public procurement procedures⁸⁶. The Cypriot authorities carried out on-the-spot monitoring visits to inform beneficiaries about eligibility rules, while the Dutch authorities tried to get a full overview of all costs before finalising their annual programmes. Some Member States⁸⁷ introduced special procedures to prevent the loss of allocated resources. Most Member States had to review their annual programmes to maximise the use of the available resources.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Having analysed Member States' reports and information from other sources, the Commission concludes that the EBF is meeting its objectives despite some delays in implementation. With

⁷⁷

DE.

⁷⁸

ES.

⁷⁹

EL.

⁸⁰

CY, DK, IT.

⁸¹

DK, HU, IT, NO.

⁸²

AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, FI, FR, IS, NO, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.

⁸³

AT, BE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, NL, NO, LT, PT.

⁸⁴

ES, HU, IT.

⁸⁵

FR.

⁸⁶

BG, CY, EE, FR, HU, NL, PL, SK.

⁸⁷

AT, EL, PL, SE.

a very satisfactory average implementation rate of 86.7%, the EBF is fulfilling its purpose as an EU tool for co-financing investment in the external borders and in the consulates of participating countries. In so doing it serves the interests of the Schengen area as a whole and is achieving visible, lasting results.

EBF investment during the reporting period has resulted in 3.6 million patrol missions, an overall decrease in average response time, and surveillance systems installed along 8 279 km of the external borders. Member States modernised equipment at between a third and all of their border crossing points, reducing waiting time for travellers undergoing checks. Over 1.8 million visas were issued at new or renovated consulates, and 378 consulates were connected to the central VIS. The SIS was extended to include 120 additional institutional stakeholders.

The EBF's success is partially the result of its specialised character. By focussing on external border management and visa issuance, it avoids scattering its resources. Expenditure seems to have been spread fairly evenly among the EBF's priorities. That said, Member States allocated fewer resources to upgrading consulates and visa issuance (Priority 3). These generally benefit the Member States' foreign ministries, which are not directly in charge of border management. It would be useful to create a flexible mechanism enabling relevant institutions to participate more fully.

As this was the first effort to share the management of a fund supporting such an unpredictable area of activity, some constraints were inevitable. They were compounded by the fact that funding had to be calculated and allocated annually, which affected the implementation timetable. In most cases, however, constraints were overcome by the participating countries' efficient and innovative approach described in the section on best practices and lessons learnt.

The Commission, for its part, provided continuous guidance, simplified the implementing rules and made funding available for maintenance of equipment already acquired with support from the EBF.

The flaws identified by the Member States and the lessons learnt were taken into account when preparing the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework. The general aim is to broaden the scope of Union funding in support of internal security and its external dimension, while further simplifying the delivery mechanisms and increasing flexibility, especially in response to emergencies. Better use can be made of relevant Union agencies such as Europol and Frontex.

Shared management is to be continued, but with a shift to multi-annual programming. The future Internal Security Fund will cover visa and border management, but will add a new element by integrating police cooperation in the fields of crime prevention and crisis management. Extending shared funding management to police cooperation will pave the way for more targeted and overarching support.