



ASYLUM, MIGRATION
AND INTEGRATION FUND



The ex-post evaluation report of the national programme of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for Hungary

2014-2020 funding period

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1. Introduction

In accordance with Article 57 of the horizontal Regulation (EU) No 207/2017, each Member State must evaluate the implementation of EU co-financed programmes following their closure. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the Programme achieved its objectives, its impact, and the lessons learned for future planning.

The task at hand involves preparing the ex-post evaluation report of the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) for the financial period 2014-2020. This evaluation encompasses 72 projects that were supported and implemented under the Fund. Each Member State, including Hungary, is required to submit this ex-post evaluation to the European Commission by December 31, 2024, in accordance with Article 57 of the horizontal Regulation.

The Delegated Regulation (EU) No 207/2017 issued by the European Commission stresses that the ex-post evaluation report for the 2014-2020 period requires a highly unified approach to facilitate integrated analysis at the EU level. For this reason, Member States must follow templates developed by the Commission and use the defined indicators.

The ex-post evaluation report on the 72 projects implemented with AMIF support was developed based on the following key questions, aligned with the expectations outlined in the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 207/2017 and Table 1 of Annex 1 of the Commission's background note, utilizing available project information and indicators:

- Effectiveness
 - How did AMIF contribute to achieving the objectives set out in Regulation (EU) No 516/2014?
 - How did the Fund support legal migration to Hungary (economic and social needs, integrity of the immigration system, integration of third-country nationals)?
 - How did the Fund contribute to strengthening and developing all aspects of the Common European Asylum System, including its external dimension?
 - How did the Fund strengthen fair and effective return strategies?
- Efficiency
 - Were the general objectives of the Fund achieved at a reasonable cost?
- Relevance
 - Did the interventions financed by the Fund meet the actual needs (addressing changing demands, providing emergency assistance)?
- Coherence
 - Were the objectives outlined in the National Programme consistent with those financed by other EU funds in similar work areas?
 - Was coherence ensured during the implementation of the Fund (coordination mechanisms between the Fund and other interventions with similar objectives)?
- Complementarity

- Did the objectives set in the National Program and the corresponding implemented measures complement those established under other domestic policies?
- EU Added Value
 - What added value (quantity, scope, role, process) did EU support provide?
- Sustainability
 - Will the positive effects of projects supported by the Fund likely persist after the cessation of AMIF funding?
- Simplification and Reduction of Administrative Burden
 - Was the management procedures of the Fund simplified, and were the administrative burdens on beneficiaries reduced?

To comply with the requirement of uniformity, the ex-post evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix. This matrix explored the connections between questions, evaluation criteria, supporting indicators, and documents (evaluation criteria – evaluation questions and sub-questions – assessments, causal effects) in alignment with the "Evaluation Questions, Sub-Questions, and Indicative Evaluation Criteria, AMIF" table included in Annex 1 of the Commission's background note.¹

In accordance with Article 56(3) of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014, the Responsible Authority (RA) commissioned independent experts to carry out an ex-post evaluation of the 2014-2020 national program of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

To this end, the RA launched a public procurement procedure (reference number: EKR000937742024) for the preparation of the ex-post evaluation report on the AMIF. The tender documentation required the applicants to demonstrate the involvement of at least one expert who had verifiable experience in preparing at least one evaluation report related to EU-funded projects or programmes.

The selected expert is not affiliated with any entity involved in the management or audit of the AMIF programme and is therefore considered fully independent in both functional and hierarchical terms.

¹ Webinar of 20 July 2023 on the key elements of the Ex post evaluation Home Affairs Funds 2014 2020, Consolidated Background Note - October 2023.

2. Executive summary

The intervention logic

Between 2014 and 2024, the main drivers for the implementation of the Programme, apart from the economic challenges and the Covid-19 epidemic, were changes in asylum policy.

The National Programme was based on the 2013 Migration Strategy, which was aligned with Hungary's EU and international legal obligations. The main objectives of the Strategy were to improve the asylum system (SO1); to support legal migration and the integration of third country nationals (SO2); to combat irregular migration and to effectively implement return programmes (SO3).

After 2015, changes in asylum legislation and institutional changes (closure of reception centers, border fencing, establishment of transit zones) have had a significant impact on the achievement of the Fund's objectives. They also had a significant impact on the number of people targeted by the Fund, for example, the number of beneficiaries of international protection has decreased significantly.

A total of 72 projects were implemented with AMIF support during the period under review, 52 of which provided some kind of service to third country nationals. 23 projects in the Objective SO1, 40 in the Objective SO2, and 9 in Objective SO3 were supported by the Fund during the whole period. Most of them, 76% (55 projects), were funded in the first half of the funding period, before 2018. This corresponds to 17 projects in the second half of the funding period. In total, the projects supported by the Fund reached more than 34,000 third-country nationals with their services. The majority of third-country nationals were assisted by projects supported under Objective SO1 (23 500 persons; 69%). Integration projects supported the integration of 7 800 third-country nationals and projects under Objective SO3 supported 2 800 third-country nationals, of whom 649 contributed to the humane return of 649 persons.

Effectiveness

Asylum – Reception (SO1)

In the period 2014-2020, Hungary's asylum law was amended several times to improve the efficiency of migration management. The main objective was to reduce illegal migration through border barriers, transit zones and fast-track procedures. Although AMIF supported more trainings and quality improvement projects, their impact remained limited due to changes of circumstances. For example, the intercultural training of specialized staff, quality assurance projects and the development of the country information database supported by the Fund have had an indirect impact on 21,000 asylum seekers.

The AMIF supported the expansion of reception centers and the improvement of supply conditions (e.g. Bicske and Vámosszabadi), but after the 2015 migration crisis, the focus shifted from reception centers to the operation of transit zones. In the transit zones, the programme provided the complementary services that were also supported in the reception centers (psychosocial assistance, interpretation, recreational programmes, etc.). The percentage of accommodation capacity in the new reception infrastructure created was zero, in line with the changed legislative and institutional environment.

The EU Qualification Directive aims to standardize the rights of people in need of international protection. The Programme has supported projects linked to the Directive (e.g. family reunification, labour market integration, access to social benefits), but the impact of these is difficult to measure, as is the precise impact of changes in the legislative environment.

Many projects supported by the Programme have provided good practices and significant services to beneficiaries of international protection, and the training projects implemented have helped to ensure the quality and improvement of the procedures guaranteed by the Qualification Directive. Overall, the Programme has contributed to progress in the successful implementation of the Qualification Directive, but the sustainability of the positive impact of the training projects has not been ensured.

The Programme allowed for the training of asylum caseworkers and the revision of the quality manual for asylum procedures, but their impact cannot be assessed in the second half of the period, given the changes mentioned above. No evaluation of the effectiveness of the asylum system was carried out under the programme. The redeployment of staff following the reorganization of the institutional system had an impact on achievements. However, the performance of the Programme level indicators shows that Hungary has made progress towards the national objective (NO1) through the programme.

Hungary had planned to resettle 40 refugees at the beginning of the funding period, but the resettlement programme did not continue after 2015. The Programme supported one resettlement programme, which led to the successful resettlement of 22 persons. No firm conclusions can be drawn from the programme.

Integration and legal migration (SO2)

The Programme has played an important role in supporting the integration of third-country nationals, particularly in taking into account economic and social needs, such as labour market needs. Vast majority of the projects funded have focused on labour market integration through skills development, language training and on entrepreneurship skills.

The number of third-country nationals residing in Hungary stagnated at the beginning of the period under review, and then increased from 2018 onwards. The most significant factor in the increase in numbers was the arrival of workers due to labour demand. While the Migration Strategy, the backbone of the Programme, aimed to make Hungary an attractive country for third-country workers, the projects supported by the Programme did not attract more third-country workers – that was not their role, as they provided assistance to those already in Hungary.

In Hungary, until 2018 and the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, projects funded by the Fund were the main instrument for the effective integration of third-country nationals, as there were hardly any other actors providing support in this field. Among the projects supported by the Programme, the impact of projects promoting intercultural dialogue remained marginal, but the positive effects of competence-building projects could be sustained over a much wider and longer period. The total number of local, regional and national policy frameworks/measures/instruments (involving civil society, migrant communities and all stakeholders) put in place for the integration of third-country nationals as a result of actions supported by the Fund was 117 during the period under review, almost double the number planned (167%).

Capacity building for integration and legal migration was a priority area of the National Programme. The Fund supported the development of local action plans for integration and services to facilitate access to the labour market, such as mentoring and training. During the period of support, 26 relevant projects were implemented; the numbers of which shows that labour market integration was particularly relevant to the objectives of the Programme. On this basis, the integration of third-country nationals can be considered the most successful area. The number of target group supported by integration measures was 6 609, representing a 132% completion rate.

Return

The number of returns supported by the Programme has steadily decreased over the period evaluated. The Fund has made a substantial contribution to accompanying the return process by supporting voluntary return programmes, in particular with regard to the sustainability of returns and effective readmission in countries of origin and transit.

Under the voluntary return, reintegration and information programmes, 1 841 people received assistance (118% of the initial target). The total number of voluntary returnees during the grant period was 649, representing 3.8% of the total number of returnees (17 050). The

voluntary returnees returned in the framework of projects implemented by IOM. This means that the Programme has contributed to the effective implementation of voluntary return programmes, but no projects supporting forced returns have been implemented.

The Programme has supported several projects in the field of return capacity development. It has contributed to increasing the vehicle capacity for safe and humane transport of the target group – 33% of the original target. The Fund supported the training of return staff, which resulted in 668 staff being trained during the period, representing 136% of the initial target. The renovation and conversion of the Nyírbátor detention centre was also a significant development, eliminating previous conditions and meeting several EU requirements, but without increasing the number of places.

Solidarity

As one of the countries most affected by the migration and refugee flows in 2015 and in 2022-23, Hungary was interested in developing effective solutions to deal with the high number of asylum and temporary protection applications and to provide adequate services to the target group.

Efficiency

The efficiency of AMIF was supported by strict cost control and governance mechanisms. Measures to prevent fraud and irregularities were effective. The key to the success of the Programme was the proportionate and efficient use of resources, which, according to feedback from beneficiaries, in most cases allowed for high quality implementation.

The distribution of funding over the period under review has fluctuated significantly, from 12 percent of funding in 2018 to 39 percent in 2022-23, mainly to support Ukrainian refugees. By the end of the period, the Fund's absorption rate was 84.5 percent, a relatively good result given the changes in the sector. The Responsible Authority's administrative capacity has been steadily increasing since 2014, and in this respect 2017 and 2022 can be considered as a balanced year, with a proportional increase in the number of projects and administrative workload.

Relevance

Due to changes in asylum legislation and institutional system following the 2015 migration crisis, the objectives of the interventions set out in the National Programme in 2013-14 had to be reassessed. The impact of the new legislative environment and the reorganized institutional system on SO1 (Reception – Asylum) has already brought radical changes from 2016 onwards, which have had a negative impact on ongoing projects. Nevertheless, interventions have been redesigned to respond to real needs in the changed circumstances. During the period, the number of target groups has steadily decreased, affecting projects

funded under SO3 in addition to SO1. Despite the steady reduction in the target group, the interventions concerned responded to real needs.

The Programme has not been able to fully absorb the effects of changes in asylum and migration policy (e.g. reduced target groups and care systems, asylum professionals). At the level of project implementation, this has in many cases affected the duration of projects and resulted in a reduction of indicators/loss of resources for SO1 and SO3. For SO2, the main difficulty was due to the fact that the Responsible Authority did not announce call for proposal on integration measure for a longer period of time, but the crisis situation in Ukraine allowed the Programme to fully respond to the needs that arose.

Coherence

There were no other EU-funded programmes in this field in Hungary during the period under review. Accordingly, coherence is not a relevant issue for the Programme and the projects it supports. There is no information on individual conflicts of interest or parallel funding between the Programme and other EU funded programmes. The specific objectives of the AMIF National Programme are independent of the objectives set out in other planning documents.

The interventions from other sources, with a similar objective to the measures of the Programme, took place at the end of the period, in the field of reception and care of refugees from Ukraine. In addition to the interventions of the State and AMIF, several interventions with similar objectives were carried out, for example with the support of international organizations. The Programme's interventions supported areas and activities that were complementary to the basic services provided by the State or were aligned with other actors supporting activities in the field. In the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, actions implemented through the Fund addressed all three specific objectives of the Programme. It can be said that these actions were consistent with other interventions with a similar objective. In addition to this coherence, the Fund's actions also provided a gap-filling service.

Complementarity

In Hungary, interventions with complementary objectives were not evaluated during the programming period because there were no projects financed by other EU funds in line with the objectives of the Programme. Although there may have been elements of EU operational programmes (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund) that could have been aimed at supporting the inclusion and integration of the AMIF target group, there were no calls for proposals specifically aimed at the inclusion of third-country nationals.

However, the fact that the Ministry of the Interior is a voting member of the Monitoring Committees of the operational programmes is a guarantee of complementarity.

EU added value

The Programme has contributed to strengthening, among other things, the following values and mechanisms: cultural diversity, cooperation between civil society and governmental organizations, stability of the civil society, promotion of social inclusion and the core values of human dignity, and last but not least, strengthening the sense of belonging to the European Union.

In the event of interruption of the Fund's support, the beneficiary organizations would not be able to operate their additional services. The fragile situation of those organizations which, as new players, provide niche complementary services to the target group of the Fund should be highlighted. In their case, the gaps between calls for proposals also jeopardize the sustainability of their services.

For most of the period under review, no progress can be reported on the further development of the Common European Asylum System. However, in 2022, with the mass influx of Ukrainian refugees, the Programme responded in all respects to the needs arising: a number of projects were aimed at the first reception and the reception and care of persons entitled for temporary protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection, and support for their integration efforts which fully met the requirements of Community law.

Sustainability

The sustainability of projects supported by the Fund has been influenced by a number of factors, including the social, political and economic environment.

As there is no data available based on follow-up or efficiency studies of the projects implemented, the assessment of sustainability cannot be data-driven. Based on our fieldwork, it can be concluded that both supporting and inhibiting factors played a role in the sustainability of the positive impacts on the direct and indirect target groups of the projects. Supporting factors include the multiplier effect, social work is available after the project is completed and contacts between professionals. In terms of inhibiting factors, the changing

legislative environment, the lack of resources in the civil sector, changes in the institutional system, etc. are among the factors to be taken into account.

Simplification and Reduction of Administrative Burden

The innovative procedures put in place by the Fund have brought limited simplification for the beneficiaries of the Fund. In particular, multiannual programming has brought simplification for those beneficiaries of the Fund whose projects were not affected by the legal changes and related institutional reorganizations. For the organizations affected by the legislative changes, the administrative burden of keeping up with the changes was considerable. In addition, the IT system (Monitoring and Information System for the Internal Funds – BAMIR), which was to send reports on the progress of projects and the accounting of expenditure, was not functioning properly at the start of the Programme. Initially, administration was paper-based, which made the process difficult for all concerned.

The simplified cost options were more widely used in the second half of the period under review, which has meant a significant reduction in the administrative burden for the organizations concerned. However, it should be stressed that the benefits were mostly generated during the implementation of projects for integration purposes and were typically related to projects in the SO2 area. The feedback from beneficiaries shows that the professional support provided by the Responsible Authority throughout the period evaluated was professional and conscientious.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In Hungary, the effectiveness of the AMIF program in the 2014–2020 period was significantly influenced by the changing legal and political environment. While the implementation of SO2 objectives (integration and legal migration) proved to be the most successful, SO1 (asylum) and SO3 (return) objectives were significantly affected by changing regulations. Nevertheless, within the framework provided by EU legislation, the RA demonstrated exceptional flexibility, with 84.5% of available resources being used and support provided to more than 34,000 third-country nationals.

Flexible programming, including adaptation to crisis situations, particularly during the influx of Ukrainian refugees, and multi-annual projects ensured continuity of services. Efforts to reduce administrative burdens, in particular through the introduction of simplified cost options, reduced administrative burdens, particularly for SO2 projects, although the benefits were not evenly distributed across the objectives.

At the beginning of the period, integration projects that received separate funding for individual activities led to fragmentation of services. Later, complex projects were encouraged but posed barriers for smaller NGOs due to high entry thresholds. Despite challenges, the Fund

remained the primary or sole resource for many Hungarian NGOs, whose sustainability is uncertain without continued support.

3. Intervention logic

3.1. The socio-economic context in the relevance of AMIF

The period was characterized by complex socio-economic processes that created significant challenges. In the second half of the period, economic growth was affected by the COVID-19 epidemic and the war in Ukraine, which combined to impact on the integration of third-country nationals. It mainly affected beneficiaries of international or temporary protection, but this was improved by the fact that they were able to enter the labour market more easily due to the emerging labour shortages.

Both the Migration Strategy and the Programme emphasize that third-country nationals coming to Hungary to work should be allowed to do so under conditions that ensure their housing and, by extension, their livelihood. The Programme also provided services for them, but their depth and number were less significant than the forms of support envisaged for beneficiaries of international or temporary protection.

3.2. Establishing the National Programme

At the beginning of the period under review, in 2013, Hungary's first Migration Strategy was prepared, which presents Hungary's migration strategy for 2014-2020. Taking into account the European Union's legislation, expectations and recommendations on the subject, the Strategy set out in a single document all the circumstances that are likely to be taken into account in the course of the legislative tasks and the implementation of the legislation in force in the field of migration in the country.

The Strategy focused on supporting legal migration in general: it promoted the inflow of skilled labour, with a particular focus on shortage occupations and the Hungarian diaspora, while facilitating the conditions for legal migration. At the same time, it set out the fight against illegal migration for 2014: Hungary will take tough action against illegal migration, introducing measures to prevent illegal entry and stay.² The Strategy has ensured the adequate reception and integration of beneficiaries of international protection, paying particular attention to human rights aspects and the promotion of social integration.³ Resources for the

² In the area of illegal migration, a dedicated priority area has been given to the prevention of illegal migration, the detection of abuse and counterfeiting and the modernization of migration legislation. The Strategy calls for joint action with the European Union, in particular in the area of return and expulsion conventions.

³ The need for third-country nationals to respect Hungarian and European standards and to receive appropriate support for successful integration has been identified as a cornerstone of integration. The aim was to promote social inclusion and ensure social welfare for immigrants.

implementation of the Strategy were identified in the document, the main one being the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which was expected to provide the financial means to achieve the Strategy's objectives.

The National Programme, a seven-year strategic planning document (2014-2020) linked to the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), was developed in line with the Strategy. Based on the Migration Strategy, specific and national objectives were defined with the involvement of relevant policy actors. The design of the measures and the indicators associated with the targets were based on the statistical reports for the period 2011-13.

3.3. Changes in asylum policy

At the start of the AMIF funding period, the asylum field was affected by major legislative changes and institutional changes as a consequence of the 2015 migration crisis.

- In 2015-2016, border procedures were introduced in transit zones, which were responsible for processing asylum applications, and in parallel Hungary established a secure border barrier on its common borders with Serbia and Croatia. The Hungarian government declared a "mass immigration crisis situation", which allowed the application of special measures.
- In 2015, there were 5 open reception centers (with a total of 2 100 places), 3 asylum detention centers (with 670 places) and a community shelter (with 140 places), with a total capacity of almost 3 000 people. A transit zone was opened on the Hungarian-Serbian border in 2016 (with 400 places). The total capacity was 2 250 in 2016 and 850 in 2017. After the closure of the transit zones, a total of 450 places were available for asylum seekers in May 2020 (a reception centre with 215 places, an asylum detention centre with 105 places and a community shelter with 140 places).

This has been adjusted to the number of asylum seekers: 29 432 in 2016, 500 in 2019 and 31 third-country nationals in 2023.

Hungary did not participate in the EU's 2015 refugee quota system, which was designed to distribute asylum seekers between Member States.

- As of 2017, under the modified Asylum Act, asylum applications could only be lodged in transit zones and applicants were obliged to stay there until their application was examined.
- In 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union rules detention in transit zones illegal, and Hungary has emptied the transit zones and changed the way asylum applications are submitted. Under the new rules, third-country nationals who intend to request the asylum from Hungarian authorities as a first step had to submit the

intention to the Hungarian diplomatic mission in Belgrade or Kiev and then apply for asylum in Hungary.

- In 2022, as a result of the war in Ukraine, Hungary took swift action to receive and support Ukrainian refugees. Those arriving from Ukraine were granted temporary protection, allowing them to stay and work in the country.

3.4. Changes in the number of target groups

In 2013, the annual number of asylum applications was 19 000, rising to 43 000 in 2014 and 177 000 in 2015 – due to the escalation of the civil war in Syria and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2016, the number of asylum seekers dropped significantly to 29 000, with the erection of the border barrier and the introduction of stricter border protection measures. In the period 2017-2019, the number of asylum seekers has continued to decrease, with only 4 000 applications in 2017, for example. Travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 epidemic further reduced the number of asylum seekers, with only 117 asylum applications registered in 2020. As a result of the war in Ukraine, a significant number of third-country nationals fleeing the war arrived in Hungary from the beginning of 2022, many of whom were granted temporary protection.

The number of third-country workers legally entering Hungary remained relatively low between 2014 and 2017 (11 000).⁴ After this stagnation, the number of third-country workers started to increase from 2018: 19 000 in 2018 and 39 000 in 2019.⁵ In 2020 and 2021, there were already around 47 000 third-country workers in Hungary, rising to 51 000 in 2022.

⁴ Between 2014 and 2016, a significant share of third-country workers came from Ukraine, Serbia and China, mainly finding work in construction, agriculture, services and trade. The country's labour market has become increasingly open to these groups, especially in shortage occupations, leading to an increase in the number of workers in the following years.

⁵ From 2017, as labour shortages increased, the demand for foreign workers increased and the government took several measures to facilitate the employment of third-country nationals, such as simplifying the issuing of work permits in certain shortage occupations. As a result, by 2018, the number of workers from Ukraine and Serbia had increased, and there were also significant numbers of arrivals from Mongolia and Vietnam.

3.5. Implementation of the National Programme

Based on the objectives of the Strategy, Hungary has prepared, in consultation with the European Commission, its National Programme for AMIF, which sets out the following specific objectives for AMIF:

- Further develop the CEAS by improving reception conditions, asylum procedures, maintaining and further developing the resettlement programme (SO1).
- Promoting legal migration and the social integration of third-country nationals legally residing in Hungary (SO2).
- Effective action against irregular migration by ensuring efficient and sustainable return, in particular voluntary return: by developing humane and specialized reception facilities, by improving the transport capacity of authorities dealing with return procedures, by participating in assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes and by improving the implementation of escorted removals (SO3).

At the beginning of the 2014-2020 programming period, there was a short ramp-up period in terms of the number of projects, after which both the Responsible Authority and the beneficiaries faced several challenges due to changes in the legislative environment. The changes in the asylum field have had a fundamental impact on the system of objectives and measures set out in the National Programme, i.e. the evolution of the number of projects supported by the Programme per year, the areas and objectives of implementation and the amounts of funding.

These changes have affected the specific objectives of the Fund in the following ways:

- The SO1 (Reception/Asylum) and SO3 (Return Measures) projects were launched at a time when the number of asylum seekers was gradually decreasing. As a result, some projects faced difficulties in implementation and in achieving the planned indicators.
- In the case of SO1, changes in the legislative environment and related institutional reorganizations have made it very difficult to implement some projects and achieve the objectives set.
- The achievement of the national SO2 targets for 2016-2018 was well on track. However, the Responsible Authority did not launch any integration call for proposals until the outbreak of the war in Ukraine (only two projects were launched in the interim period in the SO2 area).
- The changes have also caused serious difficulties in the implementation of SO3 projects. Several measures have been cancelled or only partially completed.

Changes in the specific objectives at indicator level have led to:

- In 2016, it became clear that the creation of a new reception centre and a new detention centre (for returnees) was not justified, so the relevant indicators – SO1: C2.1, C2.2; S1, SO3: S31 – could not be met during the funding period (in 2020, these targets were removed from the set of targets – indicators to be achieved.)
- In 2017, Hungary decided not to plan further relocations, so the SO1 C6 indicator was only partially met (55%).
- SO2: Measure C4 – cooperation with other Member States for integration purposes has not been implemented due to lack of real needs.
- The feasibility of projects planned in third countries has become risky due to the Fund legislation, so Hungary has withdrawn from the implementation – SO1: S2 (2019-2020).

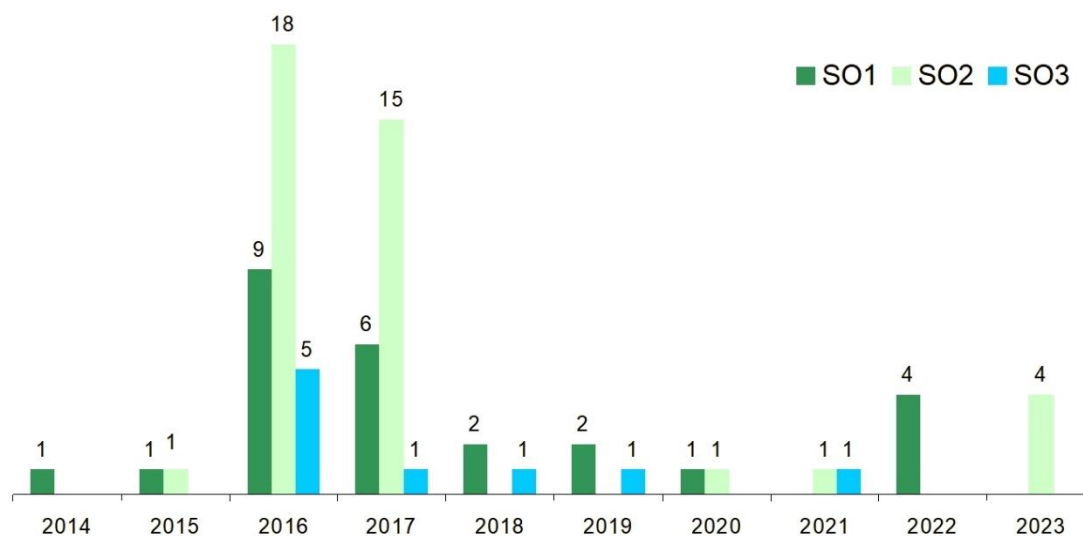
Due to the changes at indicator level detailed above, the Responsible Authority has been forced to modify the indicators at Programme level in 2019-2020. In the meantime, other unexpected events (Covid-19; Russian-Ukrainian war) have taken place which has had a significant impact on the implementation of the Programme:

- Due to the Covid-19 epidemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war, the funding period has been extended twice, so the end of the implementation period has been changed to 30 June 2024.
- The unfortunate events in Ukraine have created an opportunity to use the significant uncommitted resources in all three specific objectives and to ensure that the actions implemented achieve their objectives.

3.5.1. Number of projects implemented with Fund support

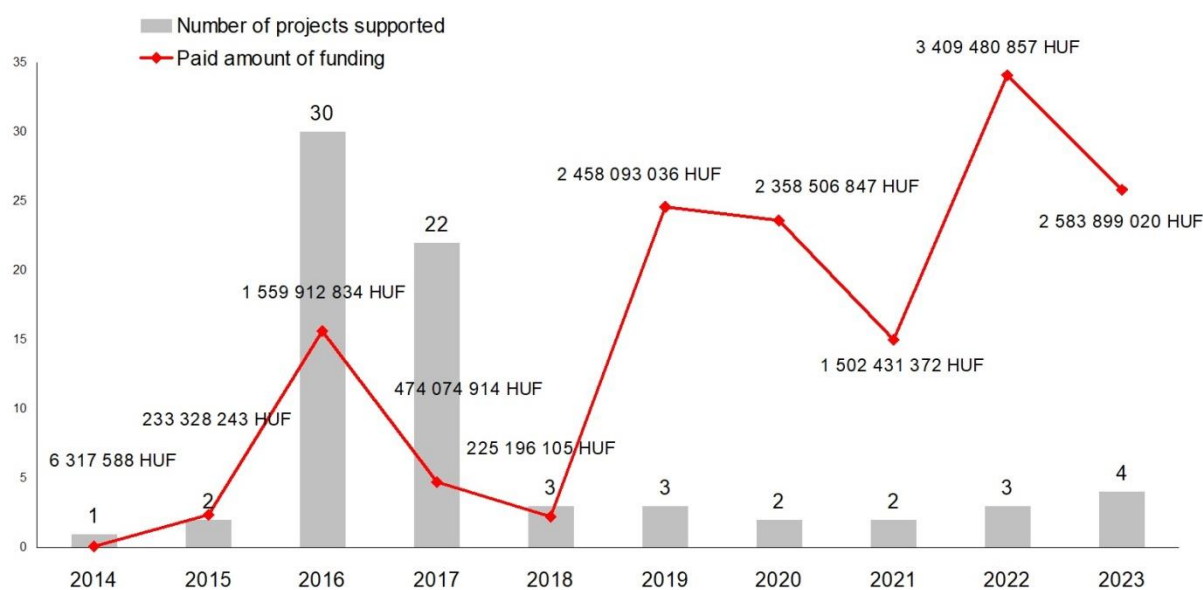
In the 2014-2020 funding period, a total of 72 projects have been implemented with Fund support in Hungary (in addition to 3 Technical Assistance projects). 23 projects have been funded in SO1, 40 in SO2 and 9 in SO3 until 30 June 2024. Most of them, 76% (55 projects), were funded in the first half of the funding period, before 2018, while 17 were funded in the second half of the funding period.

Chart 1: *Projects implemented with the support of the Fund according to their start date, 2014-2023.*



The distribution of aid amounts paid out to projects over the whole programme period was the opposite. The Programme committed only 17% of the total amount of grants disbursed over the whole period up to 2018.

Chart 2: *Number of projects supported and amounts of aid paid per year, 2014-2023.*

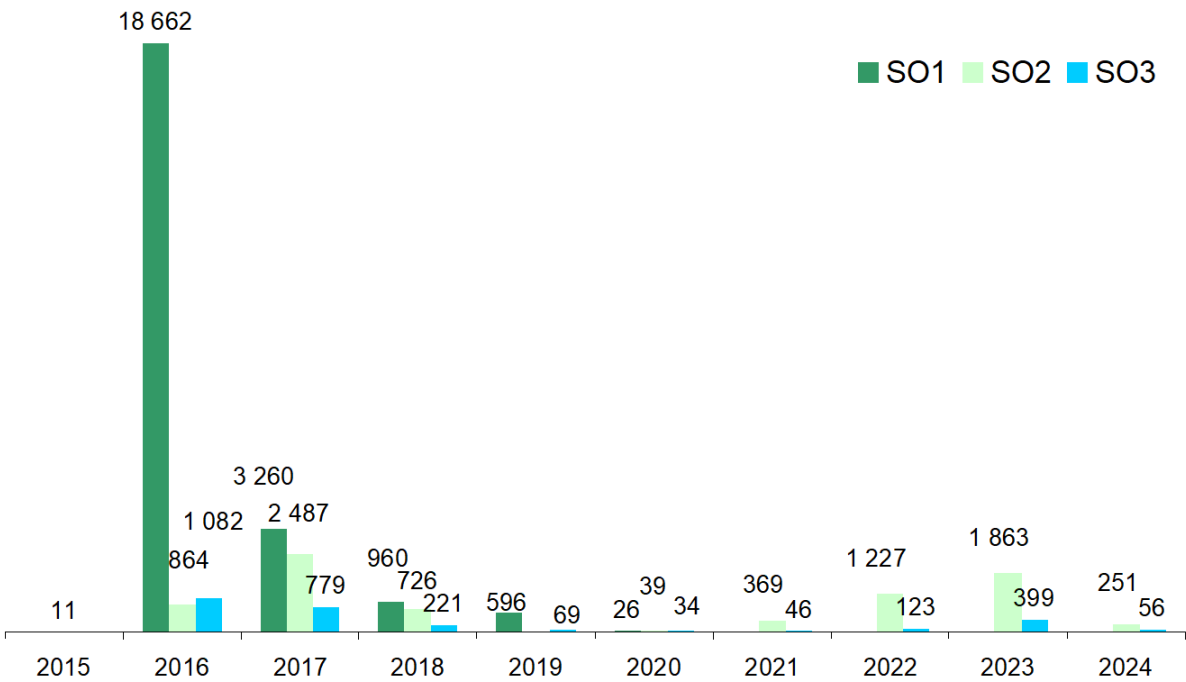


In total, the projects supported by the Fund have involved more than 34 000 third-country nationals in their services. Most third-country nationals were assisted by projects under Objective SO1 (23 500; 69%). Integration projects supported the integration of 7 800 third-country nationals and Objective SO3 projects supported the humane return of 2 800 target persons. The following projects provided the most direct or indirect assistance to the most people per target area:

- EN/2016/PR/0017 - Migrating the long way (SO1-NO1), EN/2017/PR/0019 - Services in the transit zone (SO1-NO1), EN/2016/PR/0021 - Starting a new life (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2020/PR/0010 - Integration Programme for Socially Deprived Refugees from Third Countries (SO2-NO2), EN/2020/PR/0005 - Integration Programme for Socially Deprived Third Country Nationals (SO2-NO2), EN/2020/PR/0001 - Open Paks (SO2-NO2).
- EN/2016/PR/0001 - Support services for persons in return proceedings (SO3-NO1)

Of the 72 projects supported, a total of 52 provided assistance to third-country nationals.

Chart 3: *Number of third-country nationals per objective by year of involvement in the project*



4. Evaluation findings by questions and sub-questions

4.1. Effectiveness

4.1.1. Further development of the Common European Asylum System

How did the Fund contribute to strengthening and developing all aspects of the CEAS, including its external dimension?

In the context of the harmonization of Hungary and the CEAS framework, the Programme resources have enabled Hungary to develop asylum procedures, reception conditions and return practices in line with EU directives (e.g. Asylum Procedures Directive, Reception Conditions Directive). The Programme supported capacity building of authorities and asylum staff, for example through training programmes, including training on modules of the CEAS. It also supported mechanisms that contributed to the efficiency and quality assurance of the asylum process. In the development of reception conditions, it gave priority to supporting complementary services, in particular in reception facilities (reception centers, asylum detention centers, transit zones). However, the Programme included elements (such as the development of a mechanism for early identification of vulnerable persons or age determination of unaccompanied minors) which were not implemented.

The Programme supported the expansion of the capacity of reception centers and the improvement of the conditions of care (e.g. Bicske and Vámoszabadi), but due to the change of legislation and the restructuring of the institutional system, the capacity of the reception centers was not increased, as the focus shifted from reception centers to the operation of transit zones. In the transit zones, the Programme continued to provide the complementary services that were also supported in the reception centers (psychosocial assistance, interpretation, recreational programmes, etc.).

The AMIF's priority area of action was to support integration, and the Fund therefore earmarked the largest share of the total amount allocated to this specific objective for the financial period (more than 40 percent). In the first two years of the programming period, the Fund supported a total of 34 integration projects, including language training, intercultural projects (involving schools and local communities), housing projects and other projects promoting labour market integration. These 34 projects accounted for 85% of the total number of projects supported in the integration objective area over the entire programming period. However, in terms of costs, this represented only 21% of the total resources allocated

to integration. It is important to note here that these 34 funded projects were in response to calls for proposals by the Responsible Authority for a specific strand of integration, i.e. complex measures were less prominent in the first two years of the programming period. This also resulted in low amounts of funding being allocated to individual projects in terms of costs. This started to change from 2020 onwards, when the Russian-Ukrainian war led to a wider availability of funds for integration.

The National Programme has earmarked more than 30 percent of the total resources for the 2014-2020 financial period for actions in the area of return. However, the changes in the asylum field have led to a reduction in the number of indicators for the planned measures on the field of return as well – which, in terms of costs, accounted for only 20% of the total resources for the measures implemented.

4.1.1.1. What progress was made towards strengthening and developing the asylum procedures, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

In the period 2014-2024, most of the legislative changes on illegal migration have been in the direction of tightening up the legislation, with the aim of reducing illegal migration, through physical border closures and the creation of transit zones. The measures taken have had an inevitable impact on the objectives set in the Programme, the number of staff targeted by the Fund and the additional needs.

The following projects were aimed at improving (SO1/NO1) and evaluating (SO1/NO2) asylum procedures:

- EN/2016/PR/0022 - Training of EASO Training Curriculum modules, Anti Burnout Training for Asylum Officers (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0023 - Quality assurance in the asylum procedure (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2018/PR/0006 - Training in asylum, intercultural and English language skills for officials (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2020/PR/0009 - Migration related Mass Action Management and Coordination System (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0024 - Development of country information services through subscription, training, conference (SO1-NO2)
- EN/2018/PR/0005 - Development of country information services through subscription, study, conference (SO1-NO2)
- EN/2017/PR/0018 - Effective legal assistance for asylum seekers (SO1-NO1)

All but two of the projects were implemented by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (formerly the Immigration and Asylum Office), one by the National Police Headquarters and one by the Ministry of Justice.

The National Police Headquarters IT upgrade was completed in 2022. As a result of the technological development, it has become possible to issue Temporary Residence Certificates (TTRs) quickly and accurately for potential beneficiaries for temporary protection, facilitating the legal and administrative management of refugees' stay.

The projects implemented by National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing / Immigration and Asylum Office contributed to improving the skills of their staff (e.g. through training on asylum procedures). 89% of the original targets were met (source of data: SO1 indicator R3).

4.1.1.2. What progress was made towards strengthening and developing the reception conditions, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

In Hungary's Migration Strategy and the corresponding National Programme, the objective was to increase the capacity of reception centers due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers and EU obligations.⁶ The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund have been an important source of funding for Hungary to implement its capacity building plans. The Programme has supported the development of reception centers, including the expansion of accommodation facilities, the improvement of the quality of care and the provision of complementary services. The European Commission has also encouraged Hungary to develop its reception capacity in line with the objectives of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

Unlike originally planned, the migration crisis of 2015 and the new legislative environment that followed have significantly altered the original vision.

During the period of the migratory influx, the following four projects were implemented in the reception centers:

- EN/2016/PR/0017 - Wandering the long road (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0021 - The beginning of a new life (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2017/PR/0007 - In hope of a better life (SO1-NO1)

⁶ The number of asylum applicants increased significantly between 2013 and 2014. The infrastructure and capacity of reception centers could no longer cope effectively with the increased number of applicants. The government's initial aim was to expand the capacity of existing reception centers (e.g. Debrecen, Bicske, Városszabadi) and the creation of new temporary facilities was also considered. In the case of Debrecen and Városszabadi, specific expansion plans were prepared, including infrastructure development, new accommodation, and expansion of basic services. New temporary camps were planned in the eastern and southern regions of the country to relieve pressure on central reception facilities.

- EN/2017/PR/0011 - We are all different (SO1-NO1)

The percentage of targeted beneficiaries reached 97% through projects to improve the conditions for inclusion supported by the Fund (data source: indicator SO1 R1). This rate is close to the target, which was already almost fully achieved by the end of 2017 (90%). Subsequently, the number of people in the target group decreased to such an extent (see chapter 3) that the implementation of projects to improve the conditions and services for inclusion became redundant.

Projects providing additional support services to improve the conditions for inclusion (e.g. psycho-social assistance, community programmes, interpretation services) have improved the conditions for inclusion.

Three other projects were implemented in the transit zones with the help of the Fund, which contributed to the improvement and maintenance of reception conditions:

- EN/2017/PR/0019 - Development of services in the transit zone (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2018/PR/0002 - Development of services in the transit zone II (SO1-NO1)
- EN/2018/PR/0007 - Development of services in the transit zone III (SO1-NO1)

In the second half of the funding period, storage capacity was built in the Vámosszabadi Reception Centre (HU/2020/PR/0004 - Comprehensive infrastructure development of National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing reception centers (Vámosszabadi, Nyírbátor) (SO1-NO1)).⁷

The indicators for strengthening and improving reception conditions are the following, which cannot underpin progress due to the changing asylum environment:

- The percentage of new reception infrastructure accommodation capacity created was zero (indicator SO1 R2). The number of places converted into accommodation for unaccompanied minors supported by the Fund also remained unchanged (indicator SO1 R4).
- The SO1 I4 and I5 background indicators (number of asylum seekers and first-time asylum seekers; number of asylum seekers considered as unaccompanied minors) show that the asylum system was most overloaded in 2015, and then this pressure decreased from 2016 onwards, converging to 0 by the end of the period under review.

In the context of the reception of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, the Fund supported another project in SO1 (HU/2020/PR/0007 - Reception in Hungary of refugees from Ukraine as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war (SO1-NO1)). The project provided significant support by providing services and temporary accommodation for the first reception.

⁷ The renovation of the Nyírbátor Asylum Detention Centre and the Vámosszabadi Reception Centre was not completed under the project.

4.1.1.3. What progress was made towards the achievement of a successful implementation of the legal framework of the qualification directive (and its subsequent modifications), and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

The Qualification Directive aims to harmonise at EU level the rights and conditions for recognition of beneficiaries of international protection (e.g. refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection)

It is important to note that the implementation of this Directive has been supported by a number of projects in the SO2 target area. These projects have also contributed to the successful implementation of the legal framework of the Qualification Directive. This was the case, for example, in the first half of the implementation period:

- HU/2016/PR/0019 - Pilot project to support family reunification in Hungary (SO2-NO1) - supported the realization of the rights enshrined in Article 23 of the Directive, with a focus on the importance of family unity.
- EN/2016/PR/0005 - Skills On! (SO2-NO2) - Article 28 of the Directive entitles people under protection to appropriate social benefits. This project has helped to put these rights into practice.
- EN/2016/PR/0011 - Work for you (SO2-NO2) - has contributed to the enforcement of employment rights as set out in Article 26 of the Directive.
- EN/2016/PR/0009 – Mentoring-Job (SO2-NO2) - Helped refugees' autonomy and social integration, contributing to the implementation of the employment rights set out in Article 26 of the Directive.

These projects have not only supported the implementation of the legal framework of the Directive, but have also contributed to the promotion of the practical application of the law and social inclusion. In the second half of the period under review, projects that contributed to the fulfillment of the legal framework of the Qualifications Directive included:

- Development of services in the transit zone Projects II and III – contributing to the enforcement of the rights set out in Article 30 of the Directive.

The Programme has helped to ensure the successful implementation of the legal framework of the Qualification Directive, with many of the projects it has supported providing good practices and meaningful services to recognized refugees. Furthermore, the training projects implemented by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (e.g. HU/2016/PR/0022 - Training of modules of the EASO Training Curriculum) have helped to ensure the quality and improvement of the procedures guaranteed by the Qualification Directive (Article 4 of the Directive). The Fund has contributed to the successful implementation of the Qualification Directive, but the sustainability of the positive impact of the training projects has not been ensured.

The SO1 I6 indicator shows the convergence between Member States on the recognition rate of asylum seekers from the same country of origin. In the case of Hungary, this indicator has been negative throughout the period.

4.1.1.4. What progress was made towards enhancing Member State capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies and procedures, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

Hungary has taken steps to develop, monitor and evaluate its asylum policy and procedures in the period 2014-2024, and projects supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund have played an important role in this process. These have been implemented in the following areas:

Developing intercultural competences and training for civil servants. The general objectives of the relevant projects were to improve the intercultural skills and knowledge of administrators:

- EN/2016/PR/0022 - EASO training for asylum caseworkers against burnout, which could help increase the efficiency of asylum procedures.
- HU/2016/PR/0024 and HU/2018/PR/0005 - development of National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing services, with seminars and conferences that have provided the Office's staff with new knowledge.
- EN/2017/PR/0009 - University-level training of official asylum interpreters could improve the quality of the procedure as a secondary additional factor.

It is important to underline that these projects were mainly carried out in the period 2016-18. After 2018, no projects have been supported by the Fund in this area. Furthermore, no research projects financed by the Fund have been carried out in the field.

Two indicators provide guidance in this area: the number of projects financed by the Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate Member States' asylum policies, and the information products and fact-finding missions carried out on the country of origin. The indicators show the following:

- The number of country-of-origin information products and fact-finding missions carried out with the help of the Fund reached 1265% - the target was 20 (data source: indicator SO1 C4).
- The number of projects supported by the Fund for the development, monitoring and evaluation of Member States' asylum policies reached around 100% (data source: SO1 C5 indicator)

Based on the achievement of the programme-level indicators, Hungary has made progress towards this national objective with the help of the Fund.

4.1.1.5. What progress was made towards the establishment, development and implementation of national resettlement programmes and strategies, and other humanitarian admission programmes, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

The National Programme includes the following funding priority (SO1 NO3): selection of persons for resettlement, e.g. by providing travel expenses, interpretation costs, daily allowance. Expected result: effective selection missions, resettlement of selected persons.

Hungary allowed for the resettlement of 20-20 refugees in 2014 and 2015 by Government Decree 86/2014 (18.III.2014). In the remaining years of the period under review (2017-2024), Hungary did not resettle any.

The indicator SO1 C6 shows that 22 refugees were resettled and admitted during the whole period under review, which is 55% of the target (40 persons). The relevant projects under National Objective 3 were HU/2016/PR/0002 - Selection Mission 2014/2015 (SO1-NO3) - which selected the 22 targeted persons, and HU/2016/RP/0001 - National Resettlement Programme (Special cases) - the latter resettled the selected persons.⁸

On the one hand, it can be concluded that a resettlement programme has been implemented, but on the other hand, no conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the single resettlement programme at the beginning of the period.

⁸ As a background, the project HU/2017/PR/0001 - Evaluation of resettlement programmes were implemented to facilitate possible further resettlements.

4.1.2. Integration – legal migration

How did the Fund contribute to supporting legal migration to the MS in accordance with their economic and social needs, such as labour market needs, while safeguarding the integrity of the immigration systems of MS, and to promoting the effective integration of TCNs?

The Fund approached the economic and social needs of third-country nationals as described in the Migration Strategy. This approach was comprehensive and progressive. The majority of projects addressing the integration of the target group focused on labour market integration and related skills development (e.g. language training, entrepreneurship). During the period, the number of beneficiaries of international protection decreased and the number of third-country nationals arriving for employment started to increase from 2018.

During the period one project was dedicated to research reflecting the socio-economic and labour market needs of third-country nationals in Hungary (SO2 C5 indicator). The remaining research projects not only fall short of meeting the programme-level indicators, but also failed to contribute to the development, monitoring and implementation of effective integration policies.

Despite the above-mentioned circumstances, the impact of integration projects financed by the Fund is of particular importance for the integration of third-country nationals.

4.1.2.1. What progress was made towards supporting legal migration to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs, such as labour market needs, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

The number of third-country nationals staying in Hungary stagnated at the beginning of the period under review, then increased from 2018 onwards: between 2014 and 2017, it was around 15-16 thousand, in 2018 it was 25 thousand, in 2019 it was 44 thousand, in 2020 and 2021 52 thousand, rising to 85 thousand in 2024 (source: Hungarian Statistical Office (HCSO); Migration of Foreign Nationals). Despite the increase, their share is not significant in relation to either the total population or the employed population.

The most significant factor contributing to the increase in numbers was the emergence of workers from labour needs, with government support. Under these circumstances, it is not possible to assess precisely how the Programme has contributed to this improvement. However, progress in this area is evident.

In the period under review, the Fund financed several projects supporting the integration of third-country nationals into the labour market – language courses, training, social work,

counseling, traineeships, entrepreneurship promotion (16 projects in total, of which 14 in 2015-18 and 2 after 2019). The results of these projects have not been evaluated or measured in a follow-up way, so it is not possible to know in numerical terms the medium- and long-term impact on the labour market integration of participants. Accordingly, it is not possible to establish in an exact way the extent of the Fund's contribution in this respect.

The Migration Strategy, the backbone of the Programme, aimed to make Hungary an attractive country for third-country workers, but the projects supported by the Programme did not attract more third-country workers – that was not their role, as they provided assistance to those already in Hungary.

The relevant indicators for the field of inquiry are:

- The total number of people targeted by the Fund for integration measures under national, local and regional strategies was 6 609, a 132% implementation rate. This may show that projects financed by the Fund are able to help a significant part of the target group to integrate (data source: indicator SO2 R2).
- The share of third-country nationals with a long-term residence permit varies significantly between 2014 and 2024 (Indicator SO2 I1, source: data on foreign nationals entering or leaving Hungary in the given year and foreign nationals residing in Hungary with a permit on 1 January of the given year). This shows that, after stagnating until 2018 (10-11%), the share of third-country nationals holding a long-term residence permit within the total group of foreign nationals residing in Hungary with a permit increases to 34% (more than tripling) by the end of the period under review. The main factor in this increase is the continuous and significant rise in the number of legal entrants for employment purposes.⁹

4.1.2.2. What progress was made towards promoting the effective integration of third-country nationals, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

In Hungary, until 2018 and the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, projects financed by the Fund were the main instrument for the effective integration of third-country nationals, as there were hardly any other actors (such as UNHCR) providing support in this field. The arrival of refugees from Ukraine brought a fundamental change on the donor side: churches, international organizations, charities, grassroots civil society organizations, businesses (e.g. employers) also contributed to the effective integration of this smaller group of refugees.¹⁰

⁹ The data differ from the cell values reported in row SO2 I1 of the MS Level Indicators table SO2, which was calculated ex-post on the basis of Eurostat data - presumably because not only third country nationals were taken into account in the calculation of the indicator.

¹⁰ The Fund can contribute to the integration process of about 50% of Ukrainian refugees residing in Hungary, as dual nationals are not covered by the Fund.

The projects financed by the Fund directly aimed at developing and running programmes to promote intercultural dialogue were:

- EN/2016/PR/0031 - Colors Festival 3.0 (SO2-NO2)
- EN/2016/PR/0033 - World travel in the colorful village (SO2-NO2)
- HU/2016/PR/0034 - House of Cultures, House of Culture of our Country (SO2-NO2)
- EN/2016/PR/0035 - ImmigroFest - The Host City (SO2-NO2)

In addition to projects to promote intercultural dialogue, projects focusing on the following areas are of particular importance:

- For local integration programmes, HU/2017/PR/0012 - Migrants in the city: developing local integration services in Budapest (SO2-NO3)
- Preparing educational institutions to welcome migrant students EN/2016/PR/0016 - Welcoming kindergartens and schools (SO2-NO2)
- In the context of civil society and community participation, EN/2016/PR/0030 - Law - Activity - Community (SO2-NO2)
- As well as ensuring the participation of migrant communities in local decision making or policy design through the EN/2016/PR/0029 - Complex training and mentoring programme to strengthen migrants' political participation (SO2-NO2)

There have also been a number of integration-oriented projects directly aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of integration, such as HU/2016/PR/0010 - Labour market and integration services for migrants in higher education (SO2-NO2).

With the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, the Responsible Authority concentrated the Programme's resources on housing and other assistance. These complex projects could even include this component – promoting intercultural dialogue (e.g. the community event implemented by Strázsa Farm - HU/2020/PR/0013).

The above projects have contributed to raising awareness of migration among Hungarian citizens, which was a specific objective of SO2 NO2 ("Programmes promoting intercultural dialogue; supporting the development of inclusive attitudes through, for example, conferences, documentaries, films, social events, publications").

The promotion of integration of third-country nationals is supported by the following indicators:

- The number of local, regional and national policy frameworks/measures/instruments (involving civil society, migrant communities and all stakeholders) put in place for the integration of third-country nationals as a result of actions supported by the Fund was 117 over the period under review, almost double the initial target (167%) – data source: indicator SO2 C3.

- The number of people targeted by the Fund through integration measures under national, local and regional strategies was 6 609, representing a 132% completion rate (data source: SO2 R2 indicator).
- There is a gap in employment rates between the majority society and host country nationals. The previous values (2014-2015) have reversed from 2017 and the indicator demonstrates a positive trend. In other words, employment rates are higher among third-country nationals, thanks to a significant decrease in the number of host country national job-seekers (data source: SO2 indicator I2).
- Activity rate: the indicator of the gap between third-country nationals and host country nationals is also showing a positive trend from 2017 onwards (higher rate among third-country nationals). This trend may be mostly independent of the impact of projects supported by the Programme (data source: indicator SO2 I4).
- Unemployment rate gap: no data on the gap between third country nationals and host country nationals are recorded in Hungary for the calculation of the unemployment rate gap. However, if we assume that the employment rate is higher, the unemployment rate should be lower for third-country nationals, taking into account the reasons for immigration (indicator SO2 I3).
- To calculate the indicator of the gap between the share of early school leavers and the share of early school leavers, no data on third-country nationals are kept in Hungary (indicator SO2 I5).
- Data are also not publicly available for the calculation of the indicator demonstrating the difference in the share of 30–34-year-olds with tertiary education for third country nationals (indicator SO2 I6).
- No difference in the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion can be shown, as there are no collected data for third country nationals in Hungary on this dimension (SO2 I7 indicator).

The conclusion would be that the figures show progress in this area.

4.1.2.3. What progress was made towards supporting cooperation among the Member States, with a view to safeguarding the integrity of the immigration systems of Member States, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

The collaborations originally planned in this area were removed from the objectives of the Programme (SO2 NO3 FP1-FP4) during the last revision of the National Programme. These were:

- Developing databases, statistical systems and IT systems for migration-related activities of the authorities concerned.
- Development of curricula in line with EU and national legislation; development and implementation of methodological guidelines; development of professional procedures for the staff of the competent authorities dealing with return.
- Improving return procedures through study visits, sharing good practices, exchanging experiences, etc.
- Research activities to develop return policies and practices – for example, exploring alternatives to detention.

There were no specific projects funded by the Programme that focused on cooperation between Member States. This conclusion is supported by the following indicators:

- The total number of local, regional and national policy frameworks/measures/instruments for the integration of third-country nationals put in place as a result of actions supported by the Fund was 117 in the period under review; of the 117, only two were completed after 2018. The components of this indicator do not include international cooperation, indicating a lack of international cooperation between Hungary and other Member States (data source: indicator SO2 C3).
- The number of cooperation projects on the integration of third-country nationals with other Member States supported by the Programme is zero, as no such project is planned (data source: indicator SO2 C4).

4.1.2.4. What progress was made towards building capacity on integration and legal migration within the Member States, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

Capacity building on integration and legal migration was a priority area of the National Programme. The National Programme details its objectives below:

- Ensure efficient and smooth administration of application procedures;
- Improving the statistical systems and data collection processes of the various government institutions that handle data on third-country nationals in order to better serve third-country nationals;
- Migrant-specific and intercultural training for civil servants in public administrations and staff of NGOs working with third-country nationals;
- The participation of third-country nationals as officials or volunteers in the field of integration.

The funding priorities related to the above objectives were:

- Development of statistical systems on third country nationals living in Hungary, development of IT systems for statistical data collection on third country nationals, development of related governmental organizational processes.
- Capacity building at central, regional and local level – e.g. setting up and running a migration helpdesk, developing and implementing partnerships with NGOs focusing on third country nationals, facilitating the implementation of the integration strategy.
- Capacity building, training, including intercultural training on third-country nationals for staff of authorities dealing with third-country nationals (migration authorities, social authorities, municipalities, etc.).

Of the projects funded during the budget period, a total of 4 projects directly addressed these funding priorities

- HU/2017/PR/0012 - Migrants in the city: developing local integration services in Budapest (SO2-NO3)
- EN/2016/PR/0020 - Migrant-specific and intercultural training for professionals (SO2-NO3)
- EN/2017/PR/0014 - Intercultural training for administrators in the Office's regional directorates (SO2-NO3)
- EN/2017/PR/0010 - Knowledge - Skills - Attitude (SO2-NO3)

Projects in this area covered two of the three priorities. Firstly, the creation and operation of a metropolitan migration helpdesk focused on third-country nationals and set up in partnership with NGOs. On the other hand, projects in this area have contributed to migrant-

specific and intercultural training for professionals, including authorities dealing with third-country nationals.

An indicator demonstrates the changes in the area:

- Number of people trained on integration issues with the help of the Fund indicator. The original target for this indicator was 1 100 persons, of which 36% – 401 persons – were reached (data source: indicator SO2 S21). This means that a significant shortfall has been realized in this area.

4.1.3. Return

How did the Fund contribute to enhancing fair and effective return strategies in the MS which contribute to combating illegal immigration, with an emphasis on sustainability of return and effective readmission in the countries of origin and transit?

Changes in the legislative environment have not only affected the number of asylum seekers, but also the number of third-country nationals subject to return. The continuous decrease in the number of the target group affected not only the planned measures whose services were directly used, but also projects that had an indirect impact on the target group. For example, it has led to the purchase of fewer emergency vehicles and to the cancellation of cooperation with third countries

The number of returns has been steadily decreasing over the period, with 5 885 in 2014, 11 750 in 2015, 10 765 in 2016, 8 700-8 700 in 2017 and 2018, 3 235 in 2019, 4 500-4 500 in 2020 and 2021, 2 500 in 2022 and 6 680 in 2023 (source: Eurostat). The trend in the number of third-country nationals who actually left the country followed a similar trend: 3 440 in 2014, 5 775 in 2015; from 2016 to 2020 the number remained below 1 000 (780 - 685 - 875 - 810 - 995); 1 495 in 2021, 965 in 2022 and 1 140 in 2023 (source: Eurostat).

Despite the Programme's support, no cooperation with other countries, Member States and (international) organizations in the field of return has been implemented as planned.

The Programme has effectively contributed to the measures accompanying the return process by supporting voluntary return programmes, in particular with regard to the sustainability of return (HU/2016/PR/0015, HU/2017/PR/0013, HU/2018/PR/0003, HU/2020/PR/0003 - Hungary Supported Voluntary Return, Reintegration and Information Programmes).

4.1.3.1. What progress was made towards supporting the measures accompanying return procedures, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

A humane and effective return and readmission policy is a focus area for the European Commission. The funding priorities for the measures accompanying the National Programme have also been designed to achieve this objective:

- Providing services in detention centers and community shelters for returnees – such as psychological, social and legal assistance, counseling, information dissemination and pre-departure reintegration support.
- Upgrading existing facilities (e.g. renovation, modernization, installation of security systems and necessary equipment); paying particular attention to the special needs of vulnerable people. A new multi-purpose detention facility (flexible to the needs of the target group and providing short-term accommodation for returnees) was originally planned, but given the changing migration trends, its implementation was no longer a realistic need and was removed from the Programme in the last Programme revision.
- Purchase of vehicles for the transport of persons subject to aliens' proceedings.
- Capacity building and language training for professionals involved in return procedures and for staff working in detention centers or community shelters.
- Monitoring and evaluation of removal operations.

The following projects can be considered as accompanying measures to the return procedures, also after 2018, actions supported by the Fund took place in SO3:

- EN/2016/PR/0001 - Support services for persons in immigration proceedings (SO3-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0006 - Professionalism and competence (SO3-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0027 - Improving the efficiency of judicial procedures in immigration detention (SO3-NO1)
- EN/2016/PR/0028 - Safe transport of persons under aliens' proceedings (SO3-NO1)
- EN/2020/PR/0002 - Renovation of the Nyírbátor immigration detention centre (SO3-NO1)

All these projects were designed to achieve the following objectives, which are set out in the National Programme: "Special emphasis will be placed on training of officials of the authorities dealing with return procedures in order to facilitate smooth and humane returns. Hungary aims to maintain a staff with specialized expertise, which it will provide through training and further training. Hungary also aims to develop the passenger transport capacities of the authorities in order to transport irregular migrants to detention centers and places of return."

The five projects implemented have only partially contributed to the objectives set in this area, as the following indicators show:

- Regarding return-related issues, the number of persons trained with the help of the Fund was 681, representing a 136% completion rate (data source: SO3 C1 indicator).
- The number of monitored removals co-financed by the Fund reached zero (target 150), but no applications were launched for this purpose (data source: SO3 C5 indicator).

4.1.3.2. What progress was made towards effective implementation of return measures (voluntary and forced), and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

In this context, the National Programme has set the following objective: to implement voluntary return programmes supported by IOM in cooperation with other organizations involved in similar activities, such as assistance in obtaining travel documents; purchase of air tickets; assistance in departure, transit and arrival.

Voluntary return, reintegration and information projects, as well as projects in detention, helped 1 841 returnees during the Programme. In Hungary, the total number of voluntary returnees during the funding period was 649. During the period evaluated, 17 050 third-country nationals returned on the basis of a removal order and 3.8% of these (649 persons) were assisted in their voluntary return under an IOM project.

The following indicators demonstrate the effective implementation of return measures (voluntary and forced) supported by the Fund:

- Number of people returning voluntarily. Thus, the total number of voluntary returnees co-financed by the Fund during the grant period was 649, representing 130% of the target (the original target was 2 000, but policy changes resulted in a reduction of the target group, which led to a change of the target to 500).
- No projects supporting forced returns have been implemented under the Programme. The increasing number of connections to Frontex flights has made it unjustified for the Programme to continue to support forced returns (data source: SO3 R3 indicator).
- The number of voluntary returns supported by the Fund was 3.8% of the total number of returns following a removal order (data source: SO3 R5 indicator).
- Compared to the number of returns ordered by the authorities, the number of third-country nationals who actually left the country was 25% for the whole assistance period (ranging from 8% to 54% for each year). However, it can be argued that this indicator is not a good proxy for the effectiveness of the Fund, as those who were not detained left the country without being officially recorded (data source: SO3 indicator I1).
- Return decisions issued to rejected asylum seekers: Hungary did not keep records of these data, so no conclusions can be drawn (data source: SO3 I2 indicator).

- Effective return of rejected asylum seekers: Hungary did not manage such data, so no conclusions can be drawn (data source: SO3 I3 indicator).

The Programme contributed exclusively to the effective implementation of voluntary return programmes.

4.1.3.3. What progress was made towards enhancing practical cooperation between Member States and/or with authorities of third countries on return measures, and

The submitted National Programme includes four funding priorities:

- Develop migration databases, statistical systems and IT systems for the authorities concerned.
- Development of curricula in line with EU and national legislation; formulation and implementation of methodological guidelines; development of professional procedures for the staff of the competent authorities dealing with return cases.
- Improving return procedures, including by organizing study visits, sharing good practices, exchanging experiences, etc.
- Research activities to improve return policies and practices – for example, exploring alternatives to detention.

The Responsible Authority originally wanted to promote and have a product (SO3 C6 indicator) in this area. However, no relevant action was taken in this area at practical level during the period under review. The Fund has not supported any project aimed at achieving the objective mentioned in the question.

In principle, Member States could have organized joint charters financed by the Fund, but in Hungary (as in other Member States) Frontex is playing an increasing role in this area.

4.1.3.4. What progress was made towards building capacity on return, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

The Fund supported one project in the field of return capacity building during the period under review, the project HU/2016/PR/0028 - Safe transport of persons under aliens' proceedings. It involved the purchase of 6 specialized police vehicles specifically for the safe transport of third country nationals subject to return procedures. In detail, this involved the purchase of 4 vehicles capable of transporting 6 detainees and 2 vehicles capable of transporting 36 persons, thus contributing to increasing the vehicle capacity for the safe and humane transport of the target group. This represents only 33% of the original target (data source: SO3 C7).

An example of progress in this area is the increase in the number of people trained on return-related topics with the help of the Fund. The number of such professionals during the period of support was 668, representing 136% of the initial target (data source: SO3 indicator R1).

4.1.4. Solidarity

How did the Fund contribute to enhancing solidarity and responsibility-sharing between the Member States, in particular towards those most affected by migration and asylum flows, including through practical cooperation?

As one of the countries most affected by the migration and refugee flows in 2015 and 2022-23, Hungary was interested in developing effective solutions to deal with the high number of asylum and temporary protection applications and to provide adequate services to the target group. The Programme has contributed to strengthening solidarity with one resettlement project (HU/2016/RP/0001 - National Resettlement Programme).

4.1.4.1. How did the Fund contribute to the transfer of asylum applicants (relocation as per Council Decisions (EU) 2015/1523 (1) and (EU) 2015/1601 (2))?

Hungary did not participate in the implementation of the relocation quota system

4.1.4.2. How did the Fund contribute to the transfer between Member States of beneficiaries of international protection?

Hungary did not participate in the implementation of the relocation quota system.

4.2. Efficiency

Were the general objectives of the Fund achieved at reasonable cost?

The overall objectives of the Programme were achieved at a reasonable cost on the basis of the information available and the management procedures examined. The evaluation supports this finding along the following lines: strict rules for the financial assessment of proposals ensured that eligible costs were reasonable. This element ensured that projects were not overspent. Cost-effectiveness was ensured, for example, by the elimination of overestimated costs (compulsory public procurement procedures for activities over 1 million forints), the adjustment of salaries to market prices, the flat rate for indirect costs (a flat rate of 7 % required) and the introduction in the second half of the period of unit costing for a number of costs (e.g. housing and subsistence, language lessons, salary costs). The latter is based on a sound methodology verified by the Audit Authority. The results of the Programme in terms of financial and human resources used have been facilitated by several mechanisms: in addition to the strict application requirements, the role of the Evaluation Committee in the evaluation and rationalization of proposals should be highlighted. In addition to analyzing the cost-effectiveness of costs, the Evaluation Committee was also empowered to reduce over-budgeted costs in order to ensure reasonable costs. At project level, the already mentioned flat rate of 7 per cent (indirect costs for beneficiaries) and the possibility to spend less than 8 per cent on project management were used to ensure efficient allocation of financial resources. At the Programme level, the maximum cost of 2.68% of the total budget for technical assistance ensured an efficient allocation of financial resources.

The relevant experience of our fieldwork is that the majority of beneficiaries interviewed consider that the projects financed by the Fund have been implemented to a high professional standard. However, the effectiveness of some projects may have been reduced, for example, by procurement procedures to ensure cost-effectiveness (in the case of lengthy procedures) and, for some projects, by inflexible cost accounting.¹¹

¹¹ This difficulty arose specifically in relation to the return projects in the SO3 area of the Fund, due to the unfavorable financial developments of the period (inflation, exchange rate fluctuations).

4.2.1.1. To what extent were the results of the Fund achieved at reasonable cost in terms of deployed financial and human resources?

The results of the Programme have been facilitated by the mechanisms detailed above in terms of the reasonable cost of the financial and human resources used. The question of the extent to which the results of the Fund have been achieved at a reasonable cost of the financial and human resources used is addressed by following the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014.¹² The relevant regulation foresees the analysis of the relationship between several indicators to assess the effectiveness of the National Programme.

Indicator 1: The number of full-time staff (FTE) working in the Responsible Authority, the Designated Authority and the Control Authority implementing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is a key indicator for assessing administrative efficiency. This number is compared with the number of projects implemented and the amounts requested for the financial year (see Table 1 in the Annex).

The above indicator therefore looks at administrative efficiency in the light of resource efficiency and financial efficiency. Administrative capacity (FTE) increased steadily from 2014 (1.08) to 2019 (13.61) and then remained at a stable high level (around 13) from 2020 to 2023 before declining in 2024 (6.18). The increase of FTE reflects the increasing tasks of the administration. The number of projects peaked in 2017 (51 projects), but declined steadily after 2019, with only 5 projects reported in 2024. It should be noted that the second half of the period saw a shift towards projects implementing complex measures, as opposed to the previous focus on a single measure, which may explain the high level of administrative capacity (around 13). The amounts of funding requested fluctuated significantly, rising in 2016 (€1.68 million) and peaking in 2022 and 2023 (€6.18 million) before falling back in 2024 (€0.93 million). The low funding request for 2024 does not reflect the actual administrative burden, as closure tasks may have generated significant costs.

To define the ideal years, we look at the periods when the relationship between the number of FTE staff, the number of projects and the amount of funding requested was most balanced. The years 2017 and 2022 appear to be the most balanced in terms of time: while in 2017 the administrative burden was adequate with a high number of projects,¹³ in 2022 there were fewer but more complex (or larger) projects with high financial efficiency.¹⁴

¹² Article 55(3) of Horizontal Regulation 514/2014.

¹³ The data for 2017 can be described as follows: FTE = 8.66; number of projects = 51; grant requested = €2 001 569.35. Based on these figures, the ratio of FTE per project is 0.17 (8.66/51), which is low and therefore indicates an efficient administration. As well as the grant requested per FTE: €231 141 (€2 001 569.35 / 8.66), which is a moderate value.

¹⁴ The data for 2022 can be described as follows: FTE = 13.22; number of projects = 9; requested funding = €6 186 781.71. The ratio of FTE per project is 1.47 (13.22 / 9), which is higher but understandable due to the complexity of the projects. Grant requested per FTE: €467 956 (€6 186 781.71 / 13.22), which is a high figure, indicating financial efficiency.

Indicator 2: Technical assistance (TA) plus administrative (indirect) costs of projects in relation to the amount of funds requested for the financial year (see Table 2 in the Annex)

This indicator helps to assess whether the Fund is managed efficiently and whether the administrative costs are proportionate to the impact of the projects supported. The variation between years in the ratios available for the period 16-24 shows how administrative costs have varied according to the use of the Programme's resources. Lower percentages over the years reflect better efficiency and a lower administrative burden. The outliers include extremely low (0%) and extremely high (99.08%; 73.86%) rates.

The 0% administrative cost for 2016-17 and 2022 may seem like a cost-effective solution at first, but the total deficit raises questions. It may suggest that the administration relied heavily on national resources in these years, or reporting specificities¹⁵ are behind the disproportionality. In particular, the years 16-17 and 22 deserve attention in the light of the relatively high amount of aid¹⁶ claimed but no administrative costs reported.

The proportion of administrative costs is particularly high in years 18 (99.08%) and 24 (73.86%). In 2018, administrative and technical costs were almost equal to the amount of aid requested. It can be assumed that the two previous years (16-17), when no administrative costs were reported despite a relatively high amount of aid being requested, may have played a role in the exceptional nature of the case.¹⁷ A more nuanced explanation can be found if we also take into account that the amount of aid claimed this year is very low (€155 969.40) compared to other years. While a relatively large number of projects (43) were implemented, they were low budgeted and the administrative side of the workflow required significant resources (high FTE: 10.02).

The disproportion of administrative and technical costs in year 24 (73.86%) may have been due to the significantly reduced need for funding (€930 545.83), as in year 18. The number of projects implemented decreased significantly (5),¹⁸ and the number of full-time staff decreased, but not in proportion to the funding requested. The main reason is probably related to the reduced demand for funding, mainly due to the closure of projects in the first quarter of year 24 (31 March). Accordingly, it can be assumed that this distorted the ratio between FTE and funds requested. Furthermore, given the complexity of the projects implemented, it is likely that fewer projects did not necessarily mean less administrative workload, especially as the cost-effectiveness of administration is more difficult to assess in

¹⁵ For example, where the Fund's rules may have allowed the deferral of the accounting of administrative costs in certain years to other periods

¹⁶ Year 22 is particularly noteworthy as it is one of the highest amounts of aid over the years (excluding reported administrative costs).

¹⁷ Where the Fund's rules allowed, the administrative costs for years 16-17 were charged in 2018.

¹⁸ However, 13 projects were closed in year 24.

the short term.¹⁹ And finally, for year 24, it is also suggested that the high proportion of administrative costs in the last year of the period was largely due to the additional administrative burden associated with the closure of the Programme.

Indicator 3: Fund absorption rate, i.e. the amount of accounts submitted by the Member State in relation to the total amount of funds allocated to the National Programme (see Table 3 in the Annex).

The Fund's utilization rate shows the extent to which the Member State has used the available resources to implement the National Programme. A high utilization rate indicates that the Member State has made efficient use of the available resources. A low rate of utilization indicates the opposite that the Member State has made less effective use of the available resources.

The ideal objective for the use of the Fund is to achieve the highest possible rate of use, while meeting the requirements of regularity, efficiency and effectiveness.²⁰ By the end of the period under review, this rate reached 84.5% for Hungary, which seems to be a relatively good absorption rate, especially taking into account the significant changes in the Fund's environment. However, if we follow the evolution of the rate on an annual basis, the Fund's utilization rate seems less ideal. The events (e.g. changes in asylum legislation, institutional changes) that have had an impact on the functioning of the Fund are explained in the intervention logic chapter. Thus, we would simply point out here that the reason for the disparities in the use of the Fund is mainly due to the failure of projects. It can be seen that the lowest point in the Fund's utilization rate is in years 18 and 19, which coincides with the withdrawal of some calls for proposals in the SO1 area and the pause in calls for proposals in SO2. The changed policy environment has led to a large reduction in the achievement of the indicators of the National Programme, also contributing to a lower than planned utilization rate of the Fund. In addition to the main reasons for project failures, delays in projects should also be mentioned. This was the main reason for the low absorption rate at the beginning of the period. As described earlier, the contracting and implementation of projects did not start on time due to the delay in IT developments. This is reflected in the fact that the first two-year programming of the Fund actually started only in 2016. Given the events and impact of the period, careful monitoring of the Fund's absorption rate could not have resulted in more balanced rates.

In terms of the Fund's absorption rate, it is worth mentioning the spending in 2022-23, which represented almost 40% of the total amount used over the whole period. These two years, which were the main priorities for the Fund's absorption rate, were determined by the reception and care of temporary protected people fleeing Ukraine.

¹⁹ The average duration of the four complex projects in period 23-24 was less than one year (9.5 months).

²⁰ Projects are well planned and implemented, and resources are allocated in line with objectives.

4.2.1.2. What measures were put in place to prevent, detect, report and follow up on cases of fraud and other irregularities, and how did they perform?

In order to prevent, detect, report and follow up fraud and irregularities, the Responsible Authority has put in place the following measures: training and information on fraud detection and prevention for its staff and beneficiaries as part of the preventive measures. It also ensured compliance with public procurement rules and carried out risk-based audits (to identify the highest risk projects). It responded to the detection of fraud and irregularities by analyzing project progress reports (to detect data discrepancies or irregularities) and by carrying out on-the-spot checks. A staff member was assigned to deal with irregularities. On the one hand, corrective measures were implemented to follow up fraud and irregularities: in the case of minor documentation deficiencies, proposals were made to correct them and their implementation was monitored. On the other hand, in the case of serious irregularities (for example, when the objectives of a project were compromised), sanctions were applied (for example, refusal to pay unauthorized costs). And finally, the Responsible Authority was obliged to initiate criminal proceedings in cases of suspected fraud under Government Decree 135/2015 (2.6.2015).

The project supervisors, who were in direct contact with the beneficiaries, played a key role in preventing and effectively dealing with fraud and other irregularities. Their responsibilities included the financial and technical supervision and control of projects. They examined the implementation of the projects in terms of compliance with Hungarian and EU legislation and the agreements with the beneficiaries. They also checked and analyzed the interim project implementation reports and final reports submitted by the beneficiaries. If necessary, they could request additional supporting documents or carry out on-the-spot monitoring visits. Although the monitoring visit was not an audit exercise, but rather focused on solving problems as they arose, it undoubtedly had a major role to play in preventing irregularities. In the last years of the period, the monitoring visit was added an additional control function, due to the introduction of a simplified unit cost. As part of this, the project manager interviewed beneficiaries of the housing subsistence allowance charged on the basis of the simplified cost.²¹ These interviews verified that the service had indeed reached the target group and provided an insight into the professionalism with which it was delivered.

The on-the-spot checks were carried out in accordance with the general control principles of the European Commission's Implementing Regulation and the Audit Strategy of the Responsible Authority. These audits were carried out on the basis of the Responsible Authority's annual audit plan, based on risk analysis and compliance with representativeness

²¹ Based on the relevant methodology, interviews with at least 2 randomly selected respondents every six months.

criteria. During the on-the-spot checks, particular attention was paid to monitoring the implementation of the project, checking invoices and other certified accounting documents, and monitoring compliance with national and EU rules.²²

The experience of the 2016-2023 audit period shows that the control system proved effective in detecting and correcting irregularities. For some types of projects, the audits detected fewer irregularities during the period analyzed: these included smaller-scale, administratively simpler projects (e.g. community and cultural programmes, mental health and psycho-social grants). For larger-scale, administratively more complex projects, the audits generally detected more irregularities. The most problematic types of projects include infrastructure development projects and training and education programmes. While the former often had problems with the regularity of procurement procedures, the latter had a high incidence of costing errors and inadequate documentation. For the programming period, 2019 and 2021 were the most problematic years in terms of irregularities detected. As the years progressed, there were improvements in several areas, mainly in documentation and record-keeping and financial accounting. While challenges remained in procurement procedures, the number of irregularities has also decreased over the years. The improving trends reflect both the improved effectiveness of the control system and preventive measures and the increased experience of beneficiaries.

²² In particular: accountability of expenditure, public procurement rules, state aid, equal opportunities, information and publicity, prevention, detection and correction of irregularities.

4.3. Relevance

Did the objectives of the interventions funded by the Fund correspond to the actual needs?

There is no single answer to this question for the period as a whole. On the one hand, the government's response to the 2015 migration crisis brought about changes to asylum legislation and institutional system that diverged from the objectives of the interventions set out in the National Programme in 2013-14. The impact of the government's measures on SO1 (Reception – Asylum) has already led to changes from 2016 onwards that have led to a radical reduction in the number of the target group. The Fund-funded interventions have sought to respond to the changed circumstances by responding to the real needs (e.g. development of services in Transit Zones - HU/2017/PR/0019, HU/2018/PR/0002, HU/2018/PR/0007). During the period, the number of target groups has been steadily decreasing, which has affected interventions funded under SO3 (Return) in addition to SO1. While the interventions concerned responded to real needs, they do so for a limited group.

On the other hand, the response to the 2015 migration crisis in the first years of the period had less impact on the SO2 area of the National Programme (legal migration – integration), i.e. it can be said that the objectives of the interventions funded in the first half of the period (between 2015-18) corresponded to the actual integration needs of third-country nationals (e.g. language training, housing and labour market support). However, in the second half of the period, the Programme only responded to the real needs of a specific and limited group (e.g. Afghanistan evacuees - EN/2020/PR/0005 - Integration programme for third-country nationals in social need). In addition, no applications responding to the integration needs of third-country nationals were launched until the very end of the period. The passivity of the integration strand of the Fund coincides with the end of the short-lived integration support scheme.²³

The only change was the period up to 31 March 2022-2024, when calls for proposals were opened for interventions responding to the real needs of the large number temporary protected (TP) people fleeing Ukraine. The crisis in Ukraine activated all three areas of the Fund (SO1-SO2-SO3), supported interventions in the areas of asylum, integration and return, in response to real needs.

Overall, therefore, for the whole period, the changed situation has meant that the interventions financed by the Fund have only been able to respond partially to actual needs.

²³ From 2014, a new unified integration support system was introduced in Hungary, allowing beneficiaries of international protection to receive financial support under an integration contract. However, as of 2016, new integration grants were no longer available to those concerned.

4.3.1.1. Did the objectives set by the Member State in the National Programme respond to the identified needs?

The National Programme, written in 2013-14, has undergone a number of changes over the period. The most fundamental change came in the wake of the 2015 migration crisis (NP 2016), and was first felt in the area of asylum. This later had an impact on return measures and also affected the area of integration. The objectives of the National Programme have only broadly followed the direction of change in the relevant policies and have sought to respond to the needs identified within a narrower margin of manoeuvre.

For example, as regards Asylum – Reception (SO1), it is clear that the capacity increase foreseen in the original National Programme was designed to ensure adequate reception conditions for asylum seekers arriving in Hungary. Following the policy shift, the placement of asylum seekers in transit zones has created a new situation, which has focused on objectives to meet the needs in transit zones rather than on the development of the existing institutional system. The objectives set out in the National Programme corresponded to the needs identified in the transit zones (e.g. provision of interpreters, psycho-social services)

As regards legal migration – integration (SO2), one of the objectives of the National Programme is to create a more inclusive society, enabling newcomers to live their own culture, practice their own language and traditions in line with the legal order and values of Hungary and the European Union. This objective was still included in the 2016 amendment, and the specific measures to achieve it correspond to the integration needs of third-country nationals (e.g. language training, housing support, psycho-social and labour market support, intercultural community programmes). Although they are still present as a general objective in the subsequent amendments to the National Programme, their implementation is less visible, which reflects the discontinuation of integration measures in the SO2 area.

As regards return (SO3), the National Programme aims to ensure a humane and sustainable framework for return schemes, i.e. in addition to the effective implementation of forced returns, it has placed a strong emphasis on supporting voluntary return programmes (including reintegration grants). The response to the 2015 migration crisis has also resulted in a decrease in the number of return staff. As a consequence, the planned capacity increase of the detention centers did not take place, but one detention centre (Nyírbátor detention centre) was renovated and rebuilt in connection with the Scheval audit. Voluntary return projects were operational throughout the period and responded to the need for a more humane and efficient return of a reduced target population.

As touched upon above, the arrival of Ukrainian TP's in Hungary has created an opportunity for Hungary to mobilize the resources for the objectives set out in the National Programme on a large scale again. The objectives of the National Programme for Ukrainian TP's have met the needs identified.

4.3.1.2. Which measures did the Member State put in place to address changing needs?

Over time, the needs in the area have changed, mainly as a result of migration policy. For example, the institutional restructuring (e.g. closure of reception centers, transit zone system) following the change of legislation in the field of reception – asylum (SO1) rendered the planned increase of accommodation capacity in the National Programme for the construction of new reception centers and closed facilities irrelevant and the relevant call for proposals was therefore withdrawn. Accordingly, the provision of reception conditions had to be met in the call for proposals for transit zones launched by the Responsible Authority by June 2020.²⁴

The Programme has not been able to fully track the impact of asylum and migration policy changes. At the level of project implementation, this has in many cases affected the length of projects and resulted in indicator reductions/loss of resources for SO1 and SO3.

For SO2, the main difficulty was that the Responsible Authority had not issued an integration measure for a long period of time. After 2018 (EN/2020/PR/0001 - Open Paks; EN/2020/PR/0005 - Integration programme for third-country nationals in social need), only two integration applications were launched, and then, at the end of the period, the war in Ukraine created a situation where the Authority launched applications for support for first reception and integration measures in response to changing needs.

In terms of the period, the response to the mass influx of refugees from Ukraine stands out in terms of the measures taken to meet changing needs. The Responsible Authority's actions across all three areas of the Fund have been effective in supporting the target group of Ukrainian TPs. For example, under SO1, the following measures were implemented: support for the operation of helping points, temporary accommodation, administrative support; under SO2, housing and livelihood support for asylum seekers; and under SO3, support for the voluntary return of non-Ukrainian third-country nationals from Ukraine.

²⁴ Following the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union, the location of projects has changed from transit zones to reception centers.

4.4. Coherence

4.4.1. Coherence with other EU-funded programmes

Were the objectives set in the national programme Fund coherent with the ones set in other programmes funded by EU resources and applying to similar areas of work?

The findings of the mid-term evaluation are valid in terms of coherence, i.e. there were no other EU-funded programmes in Hungary in a similar field of expertise during the whole period evaluated. Accordingly, coherence is not a relevant issue for the Fund and the projects it supports. There is no information on individual conflicts of interest or parallel funding between the Fund and other EU funded programmes. The AMIF National Programme has specific objectives which are independent of the objectives set out in other planning documents. However, there are common areas which are also included in the objectives of the AMIF and ESB Funds (e.g. ERDF, ESF). For example, support for the social inclusion of disadvantaged people, which includes beneficiaries of international or temporary protection (support for training and employment, local capacity building), but these programmes are not accessible to the AMIF target group, mainly due to language barriers.

4.4.1.1. Was an assessment of other interventions with similar objectives carried out and taken into account during the programming stage?

As explained above, there were no other EU-funded interventions for similar purposes during the programming period. As regards interventions with a similar objective to the measures in the Programme, it is worth mentioning those carried out at the end of the period. In response to the wave of refugees from Ukraine, in addition to interventions by the State (e.g. through the Charity Council) and AMIF, several interventions with similar objectives were carried out with the support of international organizations (e.g. UNHCR, IOM, International Red Cross, United Way Hungary). The lack of a centralized mechanism to effectively integrate all actors involved in the management of the refugee wave has also prevented a full understanding and evaluation of these interventions. Based on what was said in the expert interviews, a significant additional workload for the Responsible Authority in 2022, immediately after the mass arrival of refugees, was to gather the real needs for refugees fleeing from Ukraine, in order to identify areas of need and to launch calls for proposals.

4.4.2. Coherence in the implementation of the Fund

4.4.2.1. Were coordination mechanisms between the Fund and other interventions with similar objectives established for the implementing period?

Following the emergency declared in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Charity Council continued its activities under the name of the National Humanitarian Coordination Council (NHKT), and was joined by representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the National Directorate General for Disaster Management and the State Secretariat for Social Affairs of the Ministry of Human Resources. This reorganization has been made to enable the organization to coordinate more effectively the humanitarian assistance needed in emergencies and to support those in need. The members of the Charity Council cover the largest domestic charitable organizations, a number of other NGOs, international organizations and churches were also involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees.

Meanwhile, in the context of the UNHCR response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, the UNHCR has established a Consultative Forum which, in principle, has ensured the participation of a wide range of relevant organizations and institutions (including governmental bodies, NGOs and churches, in addition to international organizations). Participation in the various working groups focusing on refugee support and integration (housing, education, labour market, health, etc.) was useful.

4.4.2.2. Were the actions implemented through the Fund coherent with and non-contradictory to other interventions with similar objectives?

As we have written before, there were no other similar interventions for most of the period, so this question is not relevant for measures prior to 24 February 2022. In the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, actions implemented through the Fund covered all three areas of the Fund. It can be said that these actions were consistent with other interventions with a similar purpose. In addition to this consistency, some of the Fund's interventions have also provided complementary services (e.g. EN/2020/PR/0013 - Strázsza Farm - For the integration of people with disabilities who fled from Ukraine).

4.5. *Complementarity*

4.5.1.1. Were the objectives set in the national programme and the corresponding implemented actions complementary to those set in the framework of other policies, in particular those pursued by the Member State

Hungary's National Programme (a seven-year strategy document) is based on the Migration Strategy adopted by the government in 2013, which was prepared with the involvement of the relevant sectors. Accordingly, cohesion between the objectives and measures of the National Programme and the government's migration vision was ensured in 2013-2014. Projects implemented in the first years of the funding period were in line with the development orientations set out in these documents. For example, the development of asylum procedures and reception capacity-building were among the objectives of the original programme. In the changed policy environment, the number of third country nationals has decreased significantly and quite different priorities have been set in the field of asylum. Therefore, without the great ingenuity and perseverance of the Responsible Authority, the original objectives and actions of the Fund, with the exception of return measures (SO3), would have been impossible. Effectiveness was also helped by the fact that the National Programme did not contain detailed guidelines to the extent that would have severely limited the calls for proposals. This allowed calls for proposals and implementations published by the Responsible Authority to respond to unexpected, current situations.

4.5.1.2. Was an assessment of other interventions with complementary objectives carried out and taken into account during the programming stage?

The National Programme is a programme based solely on AMIF. While there may be elements of EU operational programmes (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund) that support the integration of the AMIF target group, there are no calls for proposals specifically aimed at the integration of third-country nationals. This does not preclude the inclusion of third-country nationals in vocational training courses supported by the European Social Fund or the Human Operational Programme, but this requires an adequate level of Hungarian language skills, so it is more of a theoretical possibility.

Worth mentioning is the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which is a financial instrument for police cooperation, which also covers victims of trafficking in human beings, who can also be targeted by the AMIF.

The Ministry of the Interior participates in cooperation with complementary objectives, for example, it was represented in the European Structural and Investment Fund Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes Preparation Working Group during the period under review, and participates in the Operational Programmes Monitoring Committee and the Development Coordination Committee during the implementation phase. Furthermore, the Responsible Authority has worked closely with the Ministry of Human Resources in the preparation of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HOP) 2014-2020 funded by the ESF, in particular in the field of social inclusion.

Overall, the fact that the Ministry of the Interior has been designated as a voting member of the operational programmes is a guarantee of complementarity.

4.5.1.3. Were coordination mechanisms between the Fund and other interventions with similar objectives established to ensure their complementarity for the implementing period?

As explained above, high-level consultations during the programming phase was help to coordinate the cooperation between the AMIF National Programme and national resources.

The coordination mechanisms between AMIF and ISF ensure that the two Funds work together effectively. Reconciliation is regulated at both EU and national level and close cooperation between Responsible Authorities and monitoring bodies ensures that double funding is avoided.

4.5.1.4. Were mechanisms aimed to prevent overlapping of financial instruments put in place?

As indicated, in the case of AMIF, avoiding overlapping of financial instruments in Hungary has only been a real risk in exceptional cases, as programmes for the integration and support of third country nationals operate exclusively under AMIF. While the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) may contain elements that may also target the AMIF (for example, the integration of disadvantaged groups), these are programmes with a general social objective and not specifically aimed at the integration of third-country nationals. The potential for overlap is therefore minimal and the use of resources can be clearly delimited.

The issue of overlapping financial instruments can only arise in relation to the ISF. The objectives of the ISF include supporting victims of trafficking and addressing security challenges, which in some cases may overlap with the objectives of the AMIF, for example in the area of assistance to third country national victims. To avoid overlaps, there is close coordination between the two Funds to ensure that the activities supported are clearly separated and those resources are used efficiently.

4.6. *EU added value*

4.6.1.1. Was any value added brought about by the EU support

EU support has brought significant added value in the period evaluated. The projects implemented by the Fund have been of great importance, contributing to the strengthening of the following values and mechanisms: cultural diversity, cooperation between civil society and governmental organizations, stability of the civil society, promotion of social inclusion and the core values of human dignity, and last but not least, strengthening the sense of belonging to the Union.

4.6.1.2. What are the main types of added value resulting from the Fund support (volume, scope, role, process)?

The main types of added value generated by Fund support in Hungary during the period under review can be interpreted along several dimensions: quantitative, scope, role and process. The results detailed below could not have been achieved, or would have been achieved to a lesser extent, without the Fund's support.

In terms of quantitative added value, for example:

- The more than 23 000 people who have benefited from additional support through inclusion schemes projects;
- The more than 7 000 third-country nationals who have received assistance through integration measures;
- The more than 1 000 vulnerable people and unaccompanied minors who received special assistance;
- The more than 500 voluntary returnees whose humane return was funded.

In terms of added value in terms of volume, for example:

- Supporting the operation of aid centers that did not exist before in the management of the Ukraine crisis;

In terms of added value in the role, for example:

- Intercultural training for asylum professionals; interpreter training.
- Implementing strategic priorities such as responding effectively to refugee crises (Ukraine crisis).

In terms of process value added, for example:

- It has fostered cooperation between public, municipal and civil society organizations, strengthening better coordination and synergy between the organizations involved.
- Increased efficiency through the development of the national border registration system, which allowed for the issuance of temporary residence certificates to beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine, and the registration of undocumented arrivals at the border in order to grant them protection as soon as possible (applicable anywhere in case of large influxes).
- The flexibility of crisis management (allocation).

4.6.1.3. Would the Member State have carried out the actions required to implement the EU policies in the Fund areas without the financial support of the Fund?

It is assumed that Hungary would not have implemented all the measures necessary to implement EU policies in the areas covered by the Fund if the AMIF resource had not been available.

4.6.1.4. What would be the most likely consequences of an interruption of the support provided by the Fund?

Based on the fact that the project implementation has already been delayed, caused funding difficulties in maintaining the services provided by the NGOs to the target group. Furthermore, for two years during the period, the Responsible Authority did not launch any calls for proposals for SO2.

For the period 2021-2027, for measures under SO1 and SO3, the Commission Decision approving the Programme found that Hungary did not meet the eligibility criteria of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the areas of Asylum and Return, and that the national legislation in this field was not in line with EU law, which, until corrected, would not allow the expenditure incurred under these two specific objectives to be charged to the Commission. Thus, for the 2021-27 AMIF, no Objective SO3 call for proposals has been launched by the Managing Authority, which also means, for example, that Hungary does not have a voluntary return programme run by IOM.²⁵

The experience of our fieldwork shows that if the Fund's support were to be interrupted, the beneficiary organizations would not be able to operate their complementary services. It is possible that some NGOs, whose financial insecurity during the period under evaluation has led them to seek new financial resources, could continue to provide some of their complementary services. However, it should be stressed that this is not the case for the majority of beneficiaries and the fragile situation of those organizations that, as new actors, provide niche complementary services to the target group of the Fund should be highlighted.²⁶ In their case, gaps between proposals also jeopardize the sustainability of their services.

²⁵ Although the Court decision was made in 2020, the fine was imposed in June 2024.

²⁶ One such new player is Strázsa Farm, which provides a niche service for disabled refugees from Ukraine.

4.6.1.5. To which extent have actions supported by the Fund resulted in a benefit at the Union level?

The period under review did not necessarily favor the further development of the Common European Asylum System. The steps taken to promote the CEAS are symbolic. This includes the resettlement programme and its evaluation at the beginning of the evaluation period, as well as training or exchanges of experience that provided new knowledge for asylum caseworkers (e.g. HU/2016/PR/0022 - Training on EASO Training Curriculum modules, training of asylum staff against burnout). Despite the policy changes, the Fund has contributed to the implementation of projects in Hungary during the period under review is committed to integration efforts. This has also helped to safeguard the values enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

During the refugee wave at the end of the period under review, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine opened up again the possibility to make extensive use of AMIF resources. A number of projects supported by the Fund have brought EU-level benefits by hosting and caring for TPs and supporting their integration efforts. In addition, the Programme has contributed to the voluntary return of third-country nationals living in Ukraine before the war.

4.7. Sustainability

4.7.1.1. Are the positive effects of the projects supported by the Fund likely to last when the support from AMIF will be over?

It is difficult to give a precise answer to this question because there is no data available based on follow-up or effectiveness studies of the projects implemented. The long-term positive effects of projects can be assessed in terms of direct and indirect target groups, but also in terms of the beneficiary organizations or even society as a whole (wider or narrower). Our fieldwork suggests that the positive effects on the direct target group of projects can also help those affected in the longer term. In particular in the case of training (e.g. language or labour market training), psycho-social support, which has a longer-term pay-off, and helps individuals to progress in the integration process. In terms of long-term benefits, financial support for a certain period cannot be overlooked. For, as we have seen, rent subsidies at a critical time could be a key factor, and their longer-term benefits could be particularly evident if they were complemented by a holistic approach to social work. It is the hallmark, and indeed the responsibility, of a well-designed, professionally sound housing – livelihoods project that its positive impact extends beyond the project implementation period, if only because housing as a basic need cannot be ignored in the future. Based on the information gathered during our fieldwork, there may have been significant differences between projects in this respect. There was a consensus that the amount spent on housing and livelihoods did not correlate with the sustainability of the livelihoods provided beyond the project period. In fact, experience shows that the longer-term sustainability of the positive impact is ensured if the target group member receives complex assistance that enables him/her to become more capable of living independently. This approach often involves the target group members making a financial contribution to their housing costs during the project period. Feedback shows that in the latter case, where the project involves a lot of dedicated work on empowerment, the majority of participants managed to keep their rent after the end of the project. While the positive effects of projects that generously covered all housing – living costs during the project period proved to be much less sustainable.

Furthermore, experience has shown that the sustainability of results is greatly enhanced if the beneficiary organization remains in contact with the clients concerned after the project has ended. For example, by making its customer service office accessible to the target group independently of the project: creating the possibility to continue to provide support through social work tools.

In addition to the NGOs, one public actor should be mentioned (Nyírbátor immigration detention centre), where a project supported by the Fund also provided psycho-social

support. At the end of the project, the institution started to employ a social worker from its own budget, which can be seen as a positive impact of the Fund-supported project.

It is important to highlight a niche service provided by a new beneficiary that helps people with disabilities. In the case of this target group, for example, the severity of the disability (which is closely linked to the issue of employability) is a decisive factor in determining the extent to which the services provided by the project can equip the persons concerned for independent living.

The sustainability of a project's positive impact could be influenced by a number of other independent factors. In the housing sector, for example, rising rent prices had a negative impact during the period. In this context, it is worth mentioning the activities aimed at raising public awareness, the positive impact of which could have been limited in the long term during the period under evaluation.²⁷ Among these activities, sensitization sessions in schools could be an exception due to the receptive age of the participants and the effectiveness of participatory methods, and it is assumed that even in adverse circumstances their positive effects could be sustained in the longer term.

When analyzing the persistence of positive effects, it is also worth considering the potential multiplier effects. For example, the experience of the period's school sessions has shown that the teachers present at the sensitization sessions typically became more open and, as a result, the receptiveness of the schools and teachers concerned to the large number of Ukrainian children in public education at the end of the period increased.

As regards training/education for professionals, there have been a number of examples of niche skills and capacity building during the period, the long-term usefulness of which need not be underlined. However, there are also obstacles to sustainability in this area, e.g. when trained professionals leave the organization. It is an obstacle to sustainability in a general sense and points to a weakness in the Hungarian civil society sector, which is short of resources. That is, the inability of organizations to retain project staff after the end of the funding period of a specific project.²⁸

The above-mentioned multiplier effect can serve to sustain the positive effects of projects that deliver training, professional events, other training or community events in the long term: participants stay in touch over the longer term, providing informal or professional support to each other. While for professionals we would emphasize the strength of professional links and

²⁷ No such projects were implemented in the second half of the period, firstly because no such calls for proposals had been launched in the field of integration for years, and secondly because the arrival of Ukrainian refugees justified the priority given to complex housing - livelihood projects.

²⁸ It is worth noting here that this phenomenon can affect not only ordinary Hungarian NGOs, but also intergovernmental organizations (such as IOM) that operate on a project basis. At present, due to its infringement procedure, AMIF funds cannot be charged (until the national legal environment is harmonized with EU law) to the Commission for return actions, so IOM suspends its voluntary return programme due to lack of funds.

the knowledge-sharing function, for third-country nationals we would emphasize the strength of the community, the potential to connect along their specific needs.

The long-term positive impact will certainly remain for tangible project products (e.g. online and paper publications, IT developments).²⁹ It is worth noting that the sustainability of online publications can be better ensured than that of printed products, especially if the beneficiary organization undertakes to update them.

The sustainability of the positive effects of voluntary return projects in the field of return can be assessed in a narrower context, among the beneficiaries of reintegration assistance. For this segment, IOM carried out a follow-up of the project in the previous period, which confirmed the long-term sustainability of the positive impact of the reintegration service.

The lack of continuity in the availability of Fund resources over the period has placed even greater emphasis on the sustainability of the services provided by the organizations concerned. The fieldwork experience suggests that the delay in the start of the current funding period caused difficulties for some organizations and led some to seek alternative options to what they had previously thought to be secure funding. Thus, some organizations were less unprepared for the fact that the Responsible Authority did not launch a call for proposals for integration areas for 2 years in the second half of the period. The unexpected refugee event of the period, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, also had an impact on the sustainability of the services of the organizations concerned, with the arrival of several donors entering the field.

²⁹ For example, in the framework of SO1, National Police Headquarters developed an entry system that ensured the rapid issuance of temporary residence certificates for undocumented arrivals from Ukraine. This system is sustainable, it can be re-installed anywhere in case of a large influx.

4.7.1.2. What were the main measures adopted by the Member State to ensure the sustainability of the results of the projects implemented with the Fund support (both at programming and implementation stage)?

Sustainability was included by the Responsible Authority as one of the selection criteria for projects. In this way, the Authority encouraged beneficiaries to design the services from the outset in such a way that they could be maintained after the end of the contract in order to meet the needs that would remain after the grant period.

4.7.1.3. Were mechanisms put in place to ensure a sustainability check at programming and implementation stage?

The legal framework ensures sustainability during the programming and implementation phase of the National Programme. It should also be mentioned that beneficiaries subject to the maintenance obligation are required to complete and submit an annual maintenance report after the completion of their projects.

4.7.1.4. To what extent are the outcomes/benefits of the actions sustained by the Fund expected to continue thereafter?

The factors detailed in the answer to the overarching question can have a significant impact on the sustainability of the results of actions supported by the Fund. Among these, it is worth taking into account factors related to the availability of the Fund (e.g. funding gaps, AMIF resources not being accounted for due to non-compliance procedures).

4.8. Simplification and Reduction of Administrative Burden

4.8.1.1. Were the Fund management procedures simplified and the administrative burden reduced for its beneficiaries?)

The innovative procedures put in place by the Fund have brought limited simplification for the beneficiaries of the Fund. In particular, multiannual programming has brought simplification for those beneficiaries of the Fund whose projects was not affected by the legal changes and related institutional restructuring. In their case (SO2), however, there was a time constraint due to the suspension of the application possibilities. The organizations affected by the legal changes encountered difficulties in meeting the objectives of their projects and this imposed a significant administrative burden in the form of contract amendments. Simplified cost options were more widely used in the second half of the period under review, which has considerably eased the administrative burden for the organizations concerned.

4.8.1.2. Did the innovative procedures introduced by the Fund (simplified cost option, multiannual programming, national eligibility rules, more comprehensive national programmes allowing for flexibility) bring about simplification for the beneficiaries of the Fund?

Multi-annual programming and the more comprehensive National Programme have created the possibility for longer-term project implementation, with an average duration of 19 months for the period 14-20, and 77% of projects longer than 12 months. However, the obvious advantages of longer-term projects – ensuring sustainability, stability and predictability – were limited due to the legalization changes and related institutional restructuring of the period. Of the Fund's target areas, projects under SO2 (Integration – legal migration) were the least affected by these changes, meaning that the beneficiaries of these projects were the ones who benefited most from the innovative procedures introduced by the Fund. However, as this area was closed to applications from 30 June 2018 to 1 January 2020, the benefits of SO2 cannot be applied to the whole period. In summary, while organizations in the SO2 area had less need to implement project-level change management in order to deliver projects; projects and organizations in the other two areas (SO1 and SO3) were more affected.

Recognizing that flat-rate financing, standard scales of unit costs and lump sums reduce the likelihood of errors and the administrative burden on beneficiaries, the Responsible Authority has made significant progress in the definition of simplified cost options for the 14-20 budget period, following the guidance of the European Commission. The use of simplified costs, including in the area of housing and livelihood support, was introduced in the second half of

the period and was particularly effective in contributing to a simplified administrative management at project level of the new mass claims arising from the crisis in Ukraine at the end of the period.

Based on the experience of the organizations concerned, the unit costing of services provided to clients (in addition to housing and livelihood support, such as language training, civic education) was a major relief in the second half of the period. However, the production of the supporting document for the unit costing, the staff report was a problem for many. Some found the system not flexible enough, citing the vulnerability of the target group, while others criticized in particular the lack of possibility to detect in advance whether double financing existed in a given case. The possibility to retrieve the required information from the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing database via the staff report interface was examined by the Responsible Authority, but this method of checking the target group was rejected due to IT difficulties and data protection rules. In the experience of the Responsible Authority, the majority of beneficiary organizations did not have problems explaining to their clients that they had to check/photocopy their documents. A fraction of the organizations were newcomers in the field and the Authority sought to introduce them after consulting the Data Protection Supervisor.³⁰

The use of unit costs for wages has also typically led to simplification for the beneficiaries of the Fund. Only one organization indicated that the documentation that could be used to support the unit costs did not include what determined the wages of the staff in the organization (the scale of wages in Hungary for UN member organizations), so this did not make it easier for them.

For the selection phase, the Responsible Authority used the common IT system developed by the Prime Minister's Office (European Union Programmes Framework – EUPR), but due to the inadequacy of the IT system, the contracts with the beneficiaries were no longer concluded on this interface. To address this situation, the Responsible Authority has upgraded its IT system (SOLID) for 2007-13, which has been renamed the Monitoring and Information System for the Internal Funds (BAMIR). It was also used for the submission of project progress reports following the conclusion of the grant agreements. However, due to the experimental period of BAMIR, initially project implementation documentation was done on paper. Based on feedback from beneficiaries, BAMIR underwent a number of improvements during the first years of project implementation, which created IT-rooted administrative difficulties for beneficiaries. The IT system became truly operational in the second half of the period.

For the reasons detailed above, the innovative procedures introduced by the Fund have brought limited simplification for the beneficiaries. However, it is worth highlighting the improving trend towards greater simplification for the organizations concerned in the second

³⁰ The solution was to ask customers to give their consent to photocopying their documents. An important condition was that if, for whatever reason, the customer did not agree, the service could not be refused.

half of the period (thanks to longer, more complex project implementations with simplified cost options) than at the start. However, it should also be stressed that the benefits were mostly accrued during the implementation of projects with an integration objective, and in terms of time, mostly for projects after the reactivation of the SO2 area on 1 January 2020. Furthermore, it is also worth highlighting the clearly positive feedback concerning the Responsible Authority, which emphasized its professional and conscientious support to the work of the beneficiaries.

5. Conclusions and proposals

5.1. *Conclusions*

The effectiveness of AMIF in the 2014-2020 periods has been mixed. While the Programme has played a key role in the integration of third-country nationals and the implementation of voluntary return programmes, changes in asylum and migration policies have created significant obstacles to effectiveness. The positive impact of the Programme was mainly felt in target area SO2, while in SO1 and SO3 the legislative environment had a significant impact on the results achieved.

The following conclusions are drawn for the period under review:

Autonomy of the Fund

Unforeseen events during the period under review, such as the refugee crisis and the responses to it, have had a significant impact on the feasibility of the original objectives of the National Programme. In this ever-changing environment, the Programme's ability to respond relatively flexibly and quickly to changing conditions and needs has proved vital. The fact that the Fund had its own regulation (Regulation (EU) 516/2014) enabled the creation of a less territorially specific and less constrained 7-year National Programme, and also gave it the chance to respond adequately to a changed situation during implementation. This flexibility has been the key to the absorption of a large part of the Fund's resources allocated to the financial period (84.5%), which have been able to meet the needs of the Fund's direct and indirect target groups, including the extension of the period evaluated twice, thus creating the opportunity to welcome and support Ukrainian TPs.

Simplification of administration

Progress was made in terms of administrative simplification during the period under review. In particular, multiannual programming has brought simplification for those beneficiaries of the Fund whose projects were not affected by the legal changes and related institutional restructuring. Simplified cost options were more widely used in the second half of the period under evaluation, which has led to a significant reduction in the administrative burden for the organizations concerned. The benefits were mainly generated in the implementation of integration projects. The professional support of the Responsible Authority has contributed significantly to the increase in the administrative capacity of the beneficiary organizations.

Multiannual projects

The multiannual project implementation opportunities during the grant period had a positive impact on the target group, as they benefited from the continuous availability of services. From the perspective of the beneficiary organizations, however, multi-annual project implementation during the period under review can be seen as counterproductive, on the one hand, the administrative burden was reduced due to the predictability and long-term implementation. On the other hand, they became more vulnerable due to legislative changes and related institutional changes during the period under review. This has required frequent change management on their part, significantly increasing their administrative burden and often with financial consequences.

Segmentation and complexity

In the first two-year of the period under review, projects in the integration target area were implemented in a segmented way (responding to only one element of integration). In the second half of the period, so-called complex projects were introduced. The latter meant that as many integration services as possible should be available within a given project. Experience showed that, while projects responding to only one element of integration resulted in an overly fragmented service structure, complex projects discouraged a significant number of organizations from participating in the proposals. For complex projects, the minimum budget was too high, due to the fact that the applicant organizations were obliged to deliver too many services at the same time. The segmented service structure had a number of drawbacks, for example it was difficult to combine with a holistic social work based support, which resulted in barriers to effective client support and often led to cross-care of those involved. On the other hand, the exclusivity of complex implementations created unequal conditions.

Support from the Fund

In the period under review, it became particularly clear that for the vast majority of Hungarian NGOs in need of resources, there is no other source of funding than the AMIF to cover the services they provide to the Fund's target group. Based on the experience of our fieldwork, it appears that in the event of a discontinuation of the Fund's support, the beneficiary organizations would not be able to operate their complementary services. It is possible that some NGOs, whose financial insecurity during the period under evaluation has led them to seek new financial resources, could continue to provide some of their complementary services. However, it should be stressed that this is not the case for the majority of beneficiaries and the fragile situation of those organizations that, as new actors, provide niche complementary services to the target group of the Fund should be highlighted. In their case, gaps between calls for proposals also jeopardize their services. In addition, in the period under review, it should be highlighted that a number of new donors have been involved in supporting services for refugees fleeing Ukraine. The experience of our fieldwork confirms that, while

these funds have provided significant support to the organizations concerned, the needs of donors have changed, creating an unpredictable working environment. In contrast, the Fund, based on feedback from beneficiaries, provides predictability, certainty, autonomy and professionalism when grants are available.

5.2. Proposals

The following proposals are made for the period under review:

Efficiency study

The ex-post evaluation of the 72 projects of the period, as well as some elements of the evaluation matrix (e.g. sustainability); highlight the need for follow-up of the projects, and for efficiency analysis of projects. Currently, the only relevant project-level indicator for projects involving the Fund's target population is client satisfaction. This is not a valid measure, even if only because of the specificities of the target group, as cultural differences, for example, are not likely to lead to a negative evaluation of an opportunity offered to them. It is recommended that, where possible and appropriate, these effectiveness evaluations and follow-up evaluations should be carried out by independent experts of the project implementers, using a standardized methodology and measurement tool adapted to the specificities of the projects. The results of these studies would contribute to the work of the Responsible Authority (programme design, announcement for proposals) and would also provide a true picture of the sustainability of the projects and provide adequate data in the relevant dimensions of the evaluation.

Beneficiaries' professional forum

Our fieldwork has revealed the need for the creation of a professional forum for beneficiaries, coordinated by the Responsible Authority, which would serve as a real networking and professional networking tool. In the first half of the period under review, the difficulties encountered in the implementation of segmented projects could only be overcome through old acquaintances and informal channels. On the one hand, this professional forum would provide an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the beneficiaries of the Fund, supporting their possible joint participation in complex projects. On the other hand, the cooperation-focused linkages created by the Forum would serve to help organizations to recognize that the “indicator battle” is not the way to their success. Thirdly, they would provide an opportunity to avoid the cross-care of clients that has been a particular difficulty

in social work in recent times. It is proposed that these professional forums should not be organized along formalities but on the basis of practical solutions to real professional issues.

Complexity

In relation to the above proposal, we recommend programming the implementation of complex projects applied in the second half of the evaluated period. As already indicated in the conclusions, complex projects offer a number of advantages, such as reduced administrative burden (for both the Responsible Authority and the beneficiaries), a project environment that is adapted to holistic social work, and, ideally, the cooperation of several beneficiaries with competence in different fields.

6. Good practices

In the context of EU programmes, good practice is an initiative, project or method that has been proven to work successfully and create value, so that it can be adapted to other situations or contexts. Below we identify three good practices for the 2014-20 period that meets the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and adaptability. Some of the selected projects also include innovative solutions.

1. Good practice

As a result of the changes in asylum policy over the period, the scope of SO1 (Further Development of the Common European Asylum System) in particular has been narrowed, limiting the number of projects that can be classified as good practice. A change of perspective was the arrival of refugees as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The following project responded effectively to the urgent and concrete challenge of managing refugees:

Project name: EN/2020/PR/0009 - Migration Mass Action Management and Coordination System.

Beneficiary: National Police Headquarters

Beneficiary type: public authority

Project duration: 24.02.2022 - 31.12.2023.

Total budget: 869 991 355 HUF

The aim of the project is to develop and effectively operate a coordination system for the management of migration crises and mass actions in line with priorities SO1 (Further development of the Common European Asylum System and NO1).

The relevance of the project and its recognition as a good practice are supported by the following factors: on the one hand, it is relevant and strategically aligned with the legislative and policy context (Regulation (EU) No 516/2014, Article 5.2 (b); objectives set by the AMIF 2014-2020; National Programme National Objective 1); on the other hand, the project is aligned with national needs: the management of refugees from the Russian-Ukrainian war was an urgent and concrete task for the Hungarian authorities, which was effectively supported by the project. Furthermore, the project has provided innovative solutions and technological developments. The development of a new coordination and registration system, the NOVA2REGISTER system, has enabled fast and efficient registration of refugees at the border, data management and the digitalization of administrative processes. The system has several distinct functionalities (mass registration, crowd management, identification, biometric repository) which can be customized according to professional needs. The technological development has enabled the rapid and accurate creation of the Temporary Residence Permits, facilitating the legal and administrative management of the stay of refugees. In addition, the technological development has also contributed to the immediate sharing of

data with the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, facilitating efficient coordination.

One of the practical impacts and results of the project was the rapid response: the rapid response to the masses arriving at the border in the early days of the war. It also supported the placement of refugees in helping points and temporary accommodations. In terms of results, administrative efficiency should also be highlighted, thanks to digital data management and the facilitation of registration processes. The latter resulted in time and cost efficiencies. The sustainability of the results will necessarily be achieved for a period of 3 years, during which time the beneficiary will have to operate the IT tools to ensure the continued functioning of the system.

Factors supporting the recognition of the project as good practice include: policy fit as explained above, innovation and flexibility (the modern and flexible approach of the new IT system), which can serve as an example for other EU Member States in managing migration crises, and adaptability (the modular design of the system allows for its use in other types of crises).

2. Good practice

In the AMIF action area Supporting legal migration and integration (SO2), there were a number of projects in the period evaluated that can be considered as good practices. We have tried to narrow down the projects defined as good practice by focusing on projects implemented in the first half of the period 2014-20. This allowed us to look at the concrete results and impacts of the projects over time. While this does not correspond to a follow-up study, it is still relevant feedback from the beneficiaries' side.

Project name: EN/2016/PR/0016 - Inclusive nurseries and schools

Beneficiary: Menedék - Association for Migrants

Type of beneficiary: non-governmental organization

Project duration: 01.07.2016 - 30.06.2018.

Total budget: 34 273 921 HUF

The project aims to promote the integration of children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds into educational institutions, reduce the risk of early school leaving and increase the intercultural competence of teachers and institutions.

The relevance of the project and its recognition as a good practice are supported by the following factors: on the one hand, it is closely aligned with the objectives of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which support actions focusing on education and training. On the other hand, the project is in line with the objectives of the National Programme and the eligible actions identified in the call for

proposals.³¹ Along these objectives, the project has taken an integrated approach to the inclusion of migrant children in the education system, taking into account linguistic, cultural and structural barriers. In doing so, it has contributed to an inclusive educational environment that has led to positive change not only for the children concerned but also for the educational community as a whole.

The complex activities and methods implemented (mentoring to help migrant children catch up in school and provide tutoring adapted to their needs; community programmes with migrant and Hungarian children; professional forums to support teachers; and support for parents with multilingual brochures on the education system and intercultural mediators to help them communicate effectively with the educational institution) effectively supported the project objectives.

In addition to meeting or exceeding the indicators committed to in the project's grant contract,³² has had a number of longer-term positive impacts that we were able to see more than 6 years after the project's completion, at the time of our fieldwork. The shared experience also showed that the longer-term sustainability of the results was enhanced by the multiplier effect, and that they had an impact on other institutions, professionals and communities in the following ways:

- Sustainable methods: the volunteer mentoring programme, the parent information leaflet and the reflection sessions are tools that can be used in other situations beyond the original project. *"In this project we developed a parent information leaflet, which is related to the education system, school, kindergarten, and we translated it into 7 languages, and it became such a sacred document, for example, which we then revised and transformed here in the Ukrainian situation."*
- Institutional capacity building: the increase in intercultural competence in schools and kindergartens has led to sustainable development in the longer term, which can be self-sustaining after the project is completed. *"By taking something [reflection sessions, training] there, which is an experience, by which the toolbox is expanded. So the effect is that we don't need an outside expert to tell us how to deal with foreign children, but that we bring a possible tool there that they can then use, reflect on."*
- Migrant Children in Education Network (MOHA): a grassroots initiative of the educational institutions involved in the project, born in the early 2020s, facilitated by

³¹ Design, prequalification and implementation of pre-school, in-school and out-of-school pedagogical programmes; Design and implementation of skills development programmes; Creation and operation of thematic expert working groups that supported the sharing of experiences and methodological development; Information activities for parents of children and young people from third countries to facilitate the integration of their children in pre-school and school.

³² Number of people satisfied with the services provided by the project (175), Number of studies/reports completed (3), Number of third-country nationals using translation and interpretation services (50), Number of third-country nationals or children from a migrant background participating in a school catch-up programme (111), Number of third-country or migrant children receiving training (41).

the Association in a project funded by UNHCR. *"The schools that came to MOHA were those that knew each other about the larger migrant presence and they were in such a position of expertise. It's had a long-term impact in that there's been a prestige in having someone who knows how to do this."*

- Adapting lessons learned in a crisis situation: schools involved in training/networking have increased their receptiveness to Ukrainian refugee children and better support their integration. *"This has been activated by the arrival of a large number of Ukrainian children, because a lot of these educational management issues have arisen. And the people in MOHA, even if they were frightened when 40-60 Ukrainian children appeared in a school, they did not create a situation where the children did not have to be admitted. And they seemed to be reassured that what they were doing was good."*

It is important to note that the fact that the project is hosted by a migrant-specific organization with decades of professional experience in the field is a key factor in its recognition as good practice. Its professional embeddedness and network of contacts ensure the continuous organic development and sharing of the relevant methodology.

3. Good practice

Project name: EN/2017/PR/0002 - Evangelicals for Refugees

Beneficiary: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

Beneficiary type: church

Project duration: 01.05.2017 - 30.06.2018.

Total budget: 13 719 481 HUF

The aim of the project is to promote the integration of beneficiaries of international protection by supporting their housing. The objective of the project is complemented by the provision of support through social work tools and interpretation services.

The relevance of the project and its recognition as a good practice are supported by the following factors: on the one hand, it is closely aligned with the objectives of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which, inter alia, support and advice in the field of housing. On the other hand, the project is in line with the objectives of the National Programme and the eligible activities identified in the call for proposals.³³ Along these objectives, the project has taken an integrated approach to supporting the housing and thus the integration of beneficiaries of international protection,

³³ Such as: assessing the individual housing needs of beneficiaries of international protection; developing, promoting and operating out-of-home housing programmes; providing financial support for regular housing-related expenses; providing social work and mental health support services to help them maintain and support independent living.

contributing to the experience of the target group in achieving dignified and independent housing.

The activities and methods implemented (selection of needy and motivated candidates – families or single parents; contribution to participants' rent for 6 months; individual assessment of the financial situation and the willingness of families to cooperate, instead of a single grant; holistic approach to social work – full support to clients through a cooperation agreement; provision of interpretation; volunteer-led conversation clubs and community programmes) effectively supported the project objectives.

In addition to meeting or exceeding the indicators committed to in the project's grant contract,³⁴ has had a number of longer-term positive impacts that we were able to see more than 6 years after the project's completion, at the time of our fieldwork. Based on the experiences shared, the housing support model used in the project has proven to be effective, as evidenced by its longer-term sustainability and its adaptation by other organizations.

The sustainability of the housing support model was guaranteed by the fact that the Office of the Evangelical Diaconate for Refugee Counseling is maintained by the Church, providing continuous support to beneficiaries of international protection. On the other hand, international church funds were allocated to support refugees in Ukraine after the outbreak of the war, which created an opportunity to adapt the rental assistance programme to the needs of refugees in Ukraine. The support system remained individualized, with a team-based decision-making process that assessed clients' needs and progress on a monthly basis. *"It's quite laborious and we always make decisions only 1 month in advance. The support is conditional on the family being cooperative and active, not just passively accepting housing. If nothing happens, then we haven't done anything, we've just spent the money, because in 6 months they'll be in the same place they were."* The amount of rent subsidy has increased,³⁵ but the subsidy period still does not exceed two periods of 3 months. Complementary services from the social work toolbox (e.g. case management assistance, status management, enrolling children in the education system, job search counseling) remained emphasized. Furthermore, the Evangelical Diaconate's housing programme was able to respond to housing and social challenges, including the detection of trafficking or unfit accommodation, through on-site visits by the housing coordinator.

Based on the experience shared, the sustainability of the results in the longer term was reinforced by the multiplier effect. As the focus shifted from short-term shelter for refugees fleeing war to longer-term housing, the Diaconate's sub-lease support programme became a model for several church-related organizations. In addition, the cooperation of the church

³⁴ Number of persons satisfied with the services provided by the project (40 persons), Number of studies/reports produced (1), Number of third-country nationals receiving translation and interpretation services (20 persons), Number of policy proposals (1), Number of third-country nationals receiving social assistance (53 persons), Number of third-country nationals receiving supported housing (53 persons).

³⁵ In line with previous project experience, and in line with inflation and rising rent prices, a monthly allowance of around 100 000 HUF per family was provided in 2022, supplemented by a living allowance and a medication allowance.

organizations involved has ensured and continues to ensure that hundreds of affected families remain in independent housing.³⁶

The housing benefit model is therefore effective in helping a well-defined group of people who have a regular income but can only partially cover the cost of their rent. Experience has shown that the strength of the model is that, in addition to financial support tailored to individual needs; it provides complex support to help the client to create and maintain an independent life, with the active participation of the client. *"We have found that initiatives that provide rental assistance in a timely manner, rather than covering 100% of housing costs, are more effective. We see this scheme as helping to increase the proportion of people who are able to keep their previously subsidized rented accommodation after the subsidy period. Currently, about half of clients are able to keep it and about a quarter moves to another apartment when the subsidy ends. The last 25% either left the country or could not stay in their housing and were placed in institutional care."*

³⁶ The resources available in each organization have typically allowed for a support period of 3-6 months. As a result of effective cooperation between organizations, once the support period has expired, organizations refer clients who are unable to maintain their housing independently to each other, thus ensuring continuity.

7. Annexes

7.1. *Additional information on policy changes*

7.1.1. Relevant legislative changes

The following is a list of relevant legal changes in the asylum procedures:

- To 2014
 - Act LXXX of 2007 on the Asylum: This Act sets out, among other things, the basic framework of the asylum procedure in Hungary. It harmonizes with relevant EU directives, such as the Asylum Procedures Directive and the Qualification Directive.
 - EU harmonization: Hungary participated in the establishment of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which aimed to harmonize asylum procedures and minimum reception guarantees in the Member States.
- In 2015:
 - Creating transit zones. The purpose of the transit zones established at the southern border (Röszke, Tompa) was to prevent asylum seekers from entering Hungary until their application has been processed.
 - Accelerated asylum procedures. Time limits for processing applications have been significantly reduced. Applications in transit zones had to be processed within 8 days.
 - A "mass immigration crisis" has been declared by the government of Hungary. This crisis situation, which has been maintained since 2015, does not help to improve the asylum procedure (after 2020, the measure was not directly related to asylum, but remained in place).
 - Safe third country principle. The Hungarian legislation has established that Serbia is a safe third country, so asylum seekers from there can have their applications rejected without any substantive examination.
 - A physical border barrier (fence) was built on the southern border, supplemented by strict legislation (illegal border crossing was criminalized; people caught at the border were deported after a fast-track court procedure).
 - The most relevant legislation:
 - Act CXL of 2015 - Amendment of Act LXXX of 2007 on the Asylum.
 - Act XXXIX of 2015 - Establishing the legal framework for the crisis situation caused by mass immigration.

- 41/2015 (IX. 8.) Ministry of the Interior decree - Regulation on the operation of transit zones and the conduct of procedures.
 - 301/2015 (X. 30.) Government decree- Implementing rules on the acceleration of asylum procedures.
 - Act XL of 2015 - Introduction and detailed application of the safe third country concept.
- In 2016:
 - The focus remained on strengthening border protection and speeding up asylum procedures, while Hungary maintained the "crisis situation caused by mass immigration". The legislation aimed to curb illegal migration and further regulate the operation of transit zones.
- In 2017:
 - Detention in transit zones. All asylum seekers are automatically detained in transit zones during the procedure.
 - A crisis caused by mass immigration. The crisis situation was extended indefinitely, allowing for the introduction of exceptional measures.
 - The main relevant legislation:
 - Act XLII of 2017 - Extension of the legal regulation of the crisis situation caused by mass immigration.
 - Act CL of 2017 - Clarification of the rules on detention in transit zones and tightening of procedures.
 - 113/2017 (IV. 10.) Government decree- Regulation for the acceleration and simplification of the asylum procedure.
- For the period 2018-2020:
 - Hungary has introduced or amended several important pieces of legislation in the area of asylum procedures, mainly to combat illegal migration and further tighten border protection.
 - Transit zones were evacuated, which had an impact on asylum procedures.
 - The main relevant legislation:
 - Act XLI of 2018 (part of the "Stop Soros" package of laws) – Regulated the operation of immigration support organizations and sanctions for such activities; Narrowed the conditions for applying for asylum, for example excluding those who arrived via a safe third country.
 - Act LIV of 2019 - Amendment of the Fundamental Law, which stated that Hungary does not undertake to implement "collective immigration quotas".

- Act LVIII of 2020 - Reorganization of the place of lodging asylum applications. It has been introduced that the declaration of intent to apply can only be submitted at the Hungarian embassies in Belgrade and Kiev.
- Act XLII of 2020 - Ending the operation of transit zones, in line with the European Court of Justice ruling. Procedures are organized in a new framework, with a particular focus on application processes outside the border.
- For the period 2021-2024:
 - In the period 2021-2022, asylum regulations in Hungary were further tightened, while existing border protection measures were strengthened.
 - Due to the war in Ukraine, special measures were adopted to protect refugees from Ukraine, including the issuance of temporary residence and work permits. In 2022, the Government Decree 456/2022 (12.11.2022) on the management of the humanitarian crisis, which provided temporary protection for refugees arriving from Ukraine due to the war in Ukraine, with a special emphasis on humanitarian assistance, should be highlighted.
 - Support for voluntary return programmes and further expansion of return measures were among the legislation brought in line with EU expectations.
- For the period 2023-2024:
 - Hungary has made significant legislative changes in the field of asylum procedures with the aim of speeding up the processing of asylum applications and reducing abuse. Among others:
 - Amendment of Government Decree No 301/2007 (9.XI.) - Regulation of the implementation of the Act on Asylum (regulation of the accommodation and care of asylum seekers; clarification of the provisions on persons requiring special treatment).

7.1.2. Reception centers, detention centers

In April 2014, there was one reception centre and one refugee detention centre, in five and four sites respectively, and two homes for unaccompanied children in Hungary.

The sites of the reception centers were as follows:

1. Bicske Reception Centre
 - For a long time it was one of the largest reception centers in Hungary.
 - The center was closed in 2016.
2. Debrecen Reception Centre
 - It was one of the most important and largest capacity reception centers, and played a key role during the 2015 crisis.
 - In 2015, it was closed due to reduced migratory pressure and political decisions.
3. Vámoszabadi Reception Centre
 - A small capacity station in the West-Hungary region.
 - This reception centre operates in principle and with reduced capacity.
4. Nagyfa temporary reception centre
 - It functioned as a temporary camp during the migration crisis. It was set up specifically to accommodate asylum seekers from Serbia.
 - It was closed as the crisis eased.
5. Kiskunhalas asylum facility (community accommodation)
 - Centre with a smaller capacity. It provided alternative accommodation for asylum seekers.
 - Not closed, but vacant
6. Fót Children's Home
 - It is intended for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. It continues to operate within the child protection system, but not exclusively for asylum seekers.
7. Hódmezővásárhely-Szikáncs Children's Home
 - It was exclusively used to accommodate unaccompanied children who applied for asylum in Hungary.
 - As the number of asylum applications decreased and the Hungarian asylum regulations became stricter, the operation of the Home gradually declined and then ceased.

Places of refugee detention:

- Békéscsaba asylum detention facility (South-East of Hungary, near the Romanian border - closed.
- Debrecen asylum detention facility (in Eastern Hungary, near Romania) - closed.

- Nyírbátor asylum detention facility (North-East of Hungary, near the Ukrainian border) – operational.

Places of detention for returnees:

- Nyírbátor
- Győr
- Airport Police Directorate

7.2. Tables

Table 1 Number of full-time equivalent staff (FTE) in relation to the projects implemented and the amounts requested for the financial year

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
FTE ³⁷ Number of staff financed from technical assistance or national budgets	1.08	3.45	4.49	8.66	10.02	13.61	13.61	13.61	13.22	13.13	6.18
(a) the number of projects implemented	1	3	32	51	43	6	7	6	9	11	5
(b) the amount of aid requested for the financial year in question (EUR)	0	0	1 687 098	2 001 569	155 969	829 225	5 062 843	3 761 182	6 186 782	6 186 782	

³⁷ Full-time equivalent working for the Responsible Authority, the Designated Authority and the Audit Authority, working on the implementation of the Fund.

Table 2 Technical assistance and administrative (indirect) costs of projects in relation to the grants requested for the financial year in question

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Technical assistance and administrative (indirect) costs of projects compared with the amounts of aid requested for the financial year in question	0%	0%	99.08%	11.05%	1.39%	3.48%	0%	10.07%	73.86%

Table 3 Amount of accounts submitted by Hungary in relation to the total amount of funds allocated to the National Programme

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Amount of annual expenditure submitted by the Member State (EUR)		1 687 098	2 001 569	155 969	829 225	5 062 843	3 761 182	6 186 782	6 186 782	930 546	26 801 995
Total amount allocated to the National Programme (EUR)	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225	31 731 225
Fund utilization rate in a given year	0.00%	5.32%	6.31%	0.49%	2.61%	15.96%	11.85%	19.50%	19.50%	2.93%	84.47%
Cumulative value of the Fund's utilization rate in a given year		5.32%	11.62%	12.12%	14.73%	30.68%	42.54%	62.04%	81.53%	84.47%	

7.3. Methodology

The methodology set out in the Evaluation Plan was followed during the evaluation. That is, we conducted semi-structured interviews, documentary and data secondary analyses.

Semi-structured interviews

The research method we used allowed for an in-depth and longitudinal analysis of specific project/projects implemented. This provided the opportunity to systematically examine selected projects, collect data and analyze the information.

A total of N=11 interviews were conducted with representatives of the Responsible Authority (2), members of the Monitoring Committee (2), representatives of the beneficiary organizations of the period (7).

The selected beneficiaries have implemented a total of 36 projects in the 2014-2020 financial period. As previously planned, we would have conducted our qualitative measurement for one selected project per beneficiary. However, the complexity of the programming period justified taking advantage of the fact that beneficiaries typically implemented 3-5 projects. This allowed us to obtain more nuanced information that better detects changes, i.e. we were able to carry out a depth and a longitudinal analysis.

The selected beneficiaries were:

- Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd.
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
- Menedék – Association for the Support of Migrants
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing – formerly the Immigration and Asylum Office
- Strázsa Farm Public Social Cooperative

The projects of the selected beneficiaries were representative of the activities and measures under the priority objective areas SO1-SO2-SO3.

A specific interview guide was prepared for each organization, tailored to their background and the projects they have implemented. Each of the guides fitted into the following structure (main questions):

- Background to the projects
- What did the 2014-20 budget periods mean for AMIF projects for the organization (activity, number of projects, purpose, fit)
- What difficulties have been encountered in the period 2014-20 (implementation, administration, funding, and other external factors such as migration policy changes)

- Facilitators, positive factors affecting the implementation of AMIF projects (e.g. simplified cost accounting, helpfulness of the Responsible Authority)
- Effectiveness in general and in the light of specific projects; lessons learned
- Sustainability

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with one exception (one interview was conducted online). The audio recordings of the interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analyzed in detail.

Document and secondary data analysis

The documentary and secondary data analyses were based on the following sources and data: documents generated during the design and implementation of projects financed by the Fund, such as data on the beneficiaries of projects financed by the Fund, relevant data and reports generated during the procedures, documents related to technical and financial performance, final evaluations of the projects implemented, indicators achieved, relevant legislation, relevant background documents (Migration Strategy of Hungary, National Programme). Furthermore, relevant macro data provided by Eurostat and the Central Statistical Office were used.

7.4. Programme level indicators

Table 4 Programme level indicators

Code	Name of indicator	Achievement against target
SO1		
C1	Number of target group persons provided with assistance through projects in the field of reception and asylum systems supported under this Fund	97%
C1a	Number of target group persons benefiting from information and assistance throughout the asylum procedures	no target value has been set
C1b	Number of target group persons benefiting from legal assistance and representation	no target value has been set
C1c	Number of vulnerable persons and unaccompanied minors benefiting from specific assistance	no target value has been set
C2.1	Capacity (i.e. number of places) of new reception accommodation Infrastructure set up in line with the minimum requirements for reception conditions set out in the EU acquis and of existing reception accommodation infrastructure improved in line with the same requirements as a result of the projects supported under this Fund	Deleted from the National Programme
C2.2	The percentage in the total reception accommodation capacity	Deleted from the National Programme
C3.1	Number of persons trained in asylum related topics with the assistance of the Fund	89%
C3.2	That number as a percentage of the total number of staff trained in those topics	80%
C4	Number of country of origin information products and fact-finding missions conducted with the assistance of the Fund	1265%
C5	Number of projects supported under this Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate asylum policies in Member States	100%
C6	Number of persons resettled with support of this Fund	55%
S1	Contingency planning by the reconstruction of community spaces to enlarge the capacity of new reception centre	Deleted from the National Programme
S2	Number of implemented projects in third countries	-
SO2		
C1	Number of target group persons who participated in pre-departure measures supported under this Fund	12%
C2	Number of target group persons assisted by this Fund through integration measures in the framework of national, local and regional strategies	132%
C3	Number of local, regional and national policy frameworks/measures/tools in place for the integration of third country nationals and involving civil society, migrant communities	167%

Code	Name of indicator	Achievement against target
	as well as all other relevant stakeholders, as a result of the measures supported under this Fund	
C4	Number of cooperation projects with other Member States on integration of third-country nationals supported under this Fund	Deleted from the National Programme
C5	Number of projects supported under this Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate integration policies in Member States	10%
S21	Number of persons trained in integration-related topics with the assistance of the Fund	36%
SO3		
C1	Number of persons trained on return related topics with the assistance of the Fund	136%
C2	Number of returnees who received pre or post return reintegration assistance co financed by the Fund	119%
C3	Number of returnees whose return was co-financed by the Fund, persons who returned voluntarily	130%
C4	Number of returnees whose return was co-financed by the Fund, persons who were removed	0%
C5	Number of monitored removal operations co-financed by the Fund	-
C6	Number of projects supported under the Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate return policies in Member States	0%
C7	Capacity (i.e. number of seats) of forced transportation vehicles	33%
S31	Capacity of the new detention facility for returnees (number of places)	Deleted from the National Programme