

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Interim Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is an EU financial instrument for the period 2014 to 2020, which supports national and EU initiatives that promote the efficient management of migration flows, and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. It operates under Regulation (EU) No. 516/2014 of April 2014, and Ireland is implementing a national programme supported by the fund, as per the requirements of Article 19.

Ireland's national programme was originally adopted by the EU Commission in March 2016, however most activity only began in late or early 2017. This report presents the interim evaluation of Ireland's AMIF programme. It has been conducted by Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants, in accordance with Ireland's obligations under Article 57 of EU Regulation 514/2014 (the "Horizontal Regulation").

Context

There have been a number of relevant developments in the programme's wider policy and implementation context, which include growth in net inward migration of non-EU nationals, and legislative and policy developments including the enactment of the International Protection Act 2015, which introduces a single, three-stage application procedure for all protection applicants, and the launch of a national Migrant Integration Strategy in 2017.

Implementation Challenges

Implementation of Ireland's AMIF programme was delayed due principally to the processes involved in having the EU Funds Unit within the Department of Justice and Equality designated as the Responsible Authority, which was approved in March 2017. A range of other issues have represented normal implementation challenges across the activities being supported, however none are presenting problems likely to undermine overall programme delivery.

Deviations from Planned Implementation

Beyond scheduling deviations, there have been no substantive deviations to the content or structure of the programme as originally planned or approved.

Evaluation Questions and Conclusions

Detailed responses to the range of evaluation questions are set out in the main report. Following the programme initiation delays discussed, activity and progress has now begun in many of the core areas of action planned for AMIF support, and the Fund is playing a considerable role in refugee resettlement and in supporting the needs of persons seeking international protection or refugee status through a range of projects being delivered by voluntary and civil society organisations experienced in supporting TCNs migrating to Ireland. Very strong systems of programme management and oversight have been established, and funding is being directed towards areas of greatest needs, in the policy context and given the urgent relocation, resettlement and integration priorities, particularly given Ireland's commitments and contribution to the response to the humanitarian crisis that has been taking place in the Mediterranean. While progress is at a very early stage, there are considerable grounds to be reassured regarding the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of work supported by AMIF, of its added value in Ireland, and of it having lasting effects for the urgent needs to which it is being deployed.

The EU Funds Unit as a new structure in the Department of Justice and Equality is a new dedicated management unit for a number of EU programmes, and is functionally independent of other parts of the Department (and the wider set of organisations involved in programme delivery). It has overseen the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities, well-defined reporting arrangements, and strong control systems. It has also adopted very clear, systematic, competitive and objective models of disbursing funds to civil society organisations. These achievements will serve later programme management and monitoring positively.

While emphasis has been placed on embedding the new EU Funds Unit, establishing programme responsibilities, and monitoring, reporting and control mechanisms, as well as the design and execution of a targeted call for proposals to initiate new and important strands of core AMIF activity, these achievements now allow the scope for a switching of emphasis towards programme performance management and the planning of optimal activity in the latter stages of the programme, including the generation and utilisation of evidence to support learning and future policy optimisation.

Looking ahead, programme management would benefit from more clearly-articulated policy goals or objectives for refugee policy and for the different elements in the reception, assessment, resettlement and integration continuum, at least in relation to aspects targeted for AMIF support. The Migrant Integration Strategy has helped clarify and elaborate specific policy objectives in relation to integration, however it was published subsequent to the specification of the AMIF programme, and the extent of its overlap with the focus and targeting of the AMIF programme is also limited (with the former's scope spanning integration of legal migrants and EU nationals, for example).

Recommendations

1. A public policy framework for the reception, resettlement and integration of refugees should be articulated, which establishes a clear vision and set of policy goals for all aspects of the process, and which can inform programme delivery, service provision, and performance management. This will require a targeted commitment of additional resources. It is recommended that Ireland consider the use of AMIF as a mechanism to provide the relevant resources so as to facilitate the development of policy in the shortest timeframe.
2. A detailed monitoring and evaluation plan for the remainder of the programme should be developed.
3. Proposals for all remaining elements of programme delivery and expenditure should be developed, albeit with the flexibility to change in response to changing needs or priorities. The intended use of funds as yet uncommitted, and the steps to be taken to determine their optimal use (data and evidence gathering, consultation, etc.) should be set out and initiated.
4. Mechanisms and channels for intermediary and beneficiary feedback should be established, and such feedback considered in further programme implementation and planning.
5. The Monitoring Committee should oversee and assist implementation of these recommendations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is an EU financial instrument for the period 2014 to 2020, which supports national and EU initiatives that promote the efficient management of migration flows, and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. It operates under Regulation (EU) No. 516/2014 of April 2014, and Ireland is implementing a national programme supported by the fund, as per the requirements of Article 19.

This report presents the interim evaluation of Ireland's AMIF programme. It has been conducted by Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants, in accordance with Ireland's obligations under Article 57 of EU Regulation 514/2014 (the "Horizontal Regulation").

1.2 AMIF Programme

The AMIF has the general objective of "contributing to the efficient management of migration flows and to the implementation, strengthening and development of the common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection and the common immigration policy, while fully respecting the rights and principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union"¹, within which it has a number of specific objectives:

- to strengthen and develop all aspects of the Common European Asylum System, including its external dimension;
- to support legal migration to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs, such as labour market needs, while safeguarding the integrity of the immigration systems of Member States, and to promote the effective integration of third-country nationals;
- to enhance fair and effective return strategies in the Member States which contribute to combating illegal immigration, with an emphasis on sustainability of return and effective readmission in the countries of origin and transit;
- to enhance solidarity and responsibility-sharing between the Member States, in particular towards those most affected by migration and asylum flows, including through practical cooperation.

Ireland's national programme was originally adopted by the EU Commission in March 2016, however most activity only began in late or early 2017.

¹ Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014

The EU Funds Units within the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) operates as the Responsible Authority for the Fund in Ireland, while the Department's Internal Audit Unit operates as the Audit Authority.

1.3 Interim Evaluation

The EU Commission has provided guidance on the common monitoring and evaluation framework for AMIF. Interim evaluations must consider national programme implementation to end-June 2017, and in doing so:

- address the context, implementation challenges encountered, and any deviations in implementation from that planned at the outset;
- answer a range of common evaluation questions in relation to effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, complementarity, EU added value, sustainability and simplification and reduction of administrative burden;
- present case studies of projects considered "success stories" and "failures";
- present conclusions and recommendations.

1.4 Methodology

The interim evaluation has been carried out using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, based on a work programme that consisted of six different modules as follows.

Module 1 – Inception: This module involved an early inception meeting with the EU Funds Unit in the Department of Justice and Equality, which considered all aspects of the project approach, and each module of the proposed work programme was discussed and agreed, along with key project milestones and scheduling arrangements.

Module 2 – Literature Review: This module involved a qualitative assessment of relevant literature and documentation, including the relevant EU Regulations and other EU documents and reports, documentation and literature relevant to the national context, AMIF national programme documentation, and wider relevant reports or documents. It also included review and analysis of a range of documents relevant to AMIF-funded projects in Ireland.

Module 3 – Data Review/Analysis: This module involved a quantitative assessment of data available regarding both the AMIF National Programme itself and its wider context, including common output, result and impact indicators for the AMIF programme. Quantitative analysis of the Programme's progress against these indicators therefore complemented the more qualitative assessment of progress developed in Module 2 (Literature and Documentary Review).

Module 4 – Consultation Programme: This module involved bilateral consultations with a targeted selection of implementing agencies and key programme stakeholders. The purpose of the consultations was to provide further qualitative assessment regarding the range of questions posed by the interim evaluation and to inform

the evaluation's ultimate conclusions and recommendations. The stakeholders targeted for consultation included:

- the EU Funds Unit;
- officials from key stakeholders such as the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, the Head of Asylum Services, Integration and Equality in the Department of Justice and Equality, and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.

Module 5 – Project Examples: This module involved the qualitative assessment of project examples using both desk-based means and bilateral consultations. The purpose of the assessment was to identify the key features of the projects reviewed, their intended outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness, their contribution to the wider programme and any other learnings. Candidate projects were identified in conjunction with the EU Funds Unit.

Module 6 – Synthesis and Reporting: Finally, this module involved the synthesis of all the findings and other information arising from the previous work programme modules. In particular, it incorporated the development of the key conclusions and recommendations arising from the interim evaluation, and the submission of both draft and final evaluation reports.

1.5 Structure of Report

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 addresses the implementation context;
- Section 3 describes implementation challenges;
- Section 4 addresses deviations from planned implementation;
- Section 5 responds to the specific evaluation questions;
- Section 6 presents project case studies; and
- Section 7 presents conclusions and recommendations.

Annex 1 sets out Common Indicators in Ireland's programme that informed the evaluation, while Annex 2 presents details of financial progress to end-June 2017.

2. Implementation Context

There have been a number of relevant developments in the programme's wider policy and implementation context, which include:

- growth in net inward migration of non-EU nationals into Ireland. In the year to April 2017 net inward migration of non-Irish nationals from outside the EU reached 15,700, up from 8,800 in the year to April 2014 and 2,500 in the year to April 2011. Statistics from the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) show that there are now 115,000 citizens of non-EU countries living legally in Ireland;
- the activation of the International Protection Act 2015, commencing in December 2016, which introduced a single, three-stage application procedure for all protection applicants. These new procedures, it is hoped, will significantly accelerate the protection determination process;
- the implementation of recommendations arising from the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Protection Process, published in June 2015, which to date has seen nearly 160 out of 173 recommendations either fully or partially implemented;
- the establishment of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in 2015, which is intended to co-ordinate the admission of up to 4,000 persons, by the end of 2017, under resettlement and relocation programmes. This includes commitments to admit more than 2,600 persons through the EU relocation mechanism established by Council Decisions (EU) 2015/1523 and (EU) 2015/1601, to assist Italy and Greece, and commitment to a further 1,040 persons under the UNHCR-led refugee resettlement programme, as well as a commitment to admit up to 200 unaccompanied minors from France, who were previously resident in the migrant camp at Calais;
- the launch of the Migrant Integration Strategy in 2017. This strategy provides the framework for Government action on migrant integration for the years 2017-20, across public services, and its primary objective is to ensure that barriers to full participation in Irish society by migrants or their Irish-born children are identified and addressed, and that the basic values of Irish society are respected by all.

3. Implementation Challenges

Ireland's national AMIF programme was originally adopted by the EU Commission in March 2016. However the EU Funds Unit within the Department of Justice and Equality was only formally designated as the Responsible Authority in March 2017. A substantial delay was therefore experienced prior to implementation of numerous aspects of programme activity, and some of the main activities which the fund will support over the period to completion began only in the months immediately prior to June 2017, the end of the formal period within the scope of this Interim Evaluation. In one area – resettlement of programme and convention refugees – activities from earlier periods will come under the scope of the AMIF programme, however wider programme action in supporting asylum seekers, in supporting integration, and in respect of returns, as well as substantive further support in resettlement in keeping with Ireland's pledges, will operate most substantially after June 2017.

Beyond this delayed initiation of programme elements there have not been very significant implementation challenges experienced up to end-June 2017, although a number of issues continue to confront those implementing projects and programme elements:

- in the area of resettlement, there are nationwide housing shortages and accelerating house price inflation, shortages of rental accommodation and backlogs of people awaiting permanent public and social housing provision. Sourcing adequate and appropriate housing for resettling refugees and refugee families is an ongoing challenge in this context;
- ensuring access to education for resettling families is also challenging in some cases;
- the provision of appropriate language support, interpretation and English language tuition can be challenging;
- meeting the transportation needs of resettling refugees can be challenging in predominantly rural counties and towns without extensive public transport;
- the provision of required health and medical services is also subject to capacities and constraints within the wider public health system, and establishing historical medical information is of necessity much more challenging for health professionals involved in supporting migrant groups.

While none of these issues are presenting problems likely to undermine overall programme delivery, they will require ongoing monitoring and consideration over the remaining period of implementation.

4. Deviations from Planned Implementation

As described, substantive elements of Ireland's AMIF programme only began in the months immediately prior to June 2017, the end of the period under review for the Interim Evaluation. There have been no substantive deviations to the content or structure of the programme as originally planned or approved, although the implementation schedule has required reconsideration in the face of those initial delays.

5. Evaluation Questions

5.1 Effectiveness

5.2.1 Specific Objective 1: Asylum

Overall Evaluation Question:

How did the Fund contribute to strengthening and developing all aspects of the Common European Asylum System, including its external dimension?

Response:

The AMIF in Ireland is playing a considerable role in refugee resettlement and in supporting the needs of persons seeking international protection or refugee status through a range of projects being delivered by voluntary and civil society organisations experienced in supporting TCNs migrating to Ireland. The fund is not being used to meet the costs of accommodation of new arrivals nor in enhancing asylum procedures, rather it is being deployed in direct support and service provision whether prior to or after the granting of protection or refugee status.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The International Protection Act commenced on the 31 December 2016, introducing a single application procedure for all protection applicants, and represented a major reform of asylum procedures in Ireland. AMIF funding has not, however, been directed towards strengthening or developing asylum procedures in Ireland.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

In a process designed to bring forward projects to receive AMIF co-financing towards supporting the asylum and integration needs of persons seeking or having been granted international protection, the Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration, and Integration launched an open call for proposals on 22 September, 2016. Managed by the EU Funds Unit as Responsible Authority, the Call was designed to elicit projects that would support the following National Objectives:

- NO1 – Reception/Asylum (Strategic Objective 1);

- NO2 – Integration (Strategic Objective 2);
- NO3 – Capacity (Strategic Objective 2).

Responses were open to public, private and voluntary bodies, with applicants needing to be legally constituted. Persons at whom project supports were to be targeted included:

- third country nationals;
- refugees;
- asylum seekers;
- public authorities, civil society bodies and recipients of AMIF funding and the staff and volunteers of those entities (with respect to Capacity National Objective only).

The guidance issued to prospective project promoters clarified activities and expenditure that would be eligible, the nature of the grant agreement that would apply, assessment criteria, and the processes that would accompany application, assessment and award. Very clear requirements were communicated regarding project governance, financial procedures, and financial accounting, monitoring and reporting. Projects to be selected for funding would receive 75% of the eligible project costs, and would require 25% matching funding, with such matching funding not coming from any EU funding source. The Responsible Authority also stipulated that €150,000 would be the minimum AMIF grant (i.e., total project costs would need to amount to €200,000 at minimum).

Eight projects were awarded funding in early 2017 under the Asylum Specific Objectives of the AMIF, with the total AMIF grant allocations amounting to €2.28m. Most projects were formally approved in April/May 2017, and all will be delivered over three years, ending in 2020.

The objectives of the eight projects relate to supporting the needs of persons in the protection process through a range of means, typically around information, advice, advocacy and service referral. Different projects emphasise and focus on asylum seekers and TCNs differentiated by their specific needs or by their geographical location or concentration. Specific activities that will be delivered include:

- needs identification;
- advice and information;
- training and skills development;
- provision of and referral to health and psychological supports;
- intercultural activities;
- advocacy services;
- language programmes;
- cultural orientation;
- outreach support;
- programmes aimed at building capacity with public organisations;
- legal advice;

- integration advice and support;
- employment advice and referral;
- provision of online information and resources;
- capacity building towards self-advocacy;
- family reunification;
- capacity building within host communities;
- holistic rehabilitation of victims of torture.

Six of the eight successful projects had commenced activity by end-June 2017, and in aggregate they reported activities to that point which included:

- 1,055 individuals in receipt of support(s);
- 586 cases of delivery of information and assistance to members of the target groups;
- 224 cases of provision of advocacy services;
- 97 cases of legal assistance provision;
- 114 cases of education and training provision;
- 39 cases of capacity building; and
- 29 cases of supports in the area of housing advice and support; and
- 157 cases of support with health and psychological care.

A dedicated co-ordinator from the Responsible Authority was appointed to each successful project, who was given responsibility for overseeing its implementation, reporting and ongoing monitoring over its delivery phase.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The AMIF has had no role in respect of Ireland's application of the Qualifications Directive or its subsequent modifications.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

The framework through which initial funding has been disbursed to civil society organisations and groups to deliver services in the area of asylum and reception was consistent, formulaic, and systematic, and has provided a very strong platform from which the projects can subsequently be monitored and evaluated. In the application, assessment and award process, all projects were required to:

- very clearly articulate their objectives, in appropriate levels of detail;
- identify national objectives and EU strategic objectives which their project would serve;
- explain how needs had been identified;
- describe anticipated outcomes and results;
- establish target levels for activities and results;
- very clearly and transparently explain budgetary aspects and justifications for funding levels sought as against activities and targets;
- establish clear timelines within which all action would take place.

There are clear financial and activity reporting protocols involving quarterly reporting of both within prespecified formats, and explicit obligations on grant recipients regarding internal financial procedures, record-keeping, and the maintenance of evidence of project outputs and activity.

Each of the projects awarded funding will therefore have strong capacity for project performance monitoring and evaluation, and as such the basis for ongoing performance development and improvement. The combined work of this group of projects will also establish and develop very significant experience, knowledge and exposure to asylum policies and procedures in the country, and very direct experience of their strengths and weaknesses. The AMIF has not however had any wider direct role to date in enhancing Ireland's capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate asylum policies and procedures.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

The AMIF has supported continued delivery of Ireland's refugee resettlement programme, and in particular in progressing the relocation and resettlement of refugees from Lebanon and Greece under EU humanitarian responses to the Syrian crisis. To end-June 2017 a total of 621 persons had been transferred to Ireland under relocation commitments, while 836 persons had been resettled with AMIF support.

The AMIF programme has enabled the Irish authorities to select and resettle greater numbers than it had in the past through Special Cases funding. Direct Award funding to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme supported an expert team to travel to Lebanon to select and transfer greater numbers in a timely fashion

especially those who were not living in formal camps. It furthermore supported work at relevant Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres responding to needs of the refugees accommodated there. The programme has also supported the employment of intercultural/translator workers, and has supported the funding of local authorities receiving refugees for permanent resettlement in local communities. The Irish State covers the costs of the wages of the staff involved in selection, the costs of accommodating refugees on arrival, social welfare payments for refugees, housing in local communities, English language supports for the first year on arrival and pre-school costs under a programme designed for refugees.

5.2.2 Specific Objective 2: Integration/Legal Migration

Overall Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The AMIF has not been utilised to support legal migration in Ireland. Policy and action in this area has been articulated in “The Migrant Integration Strategy - A Blueprint for the Future”, which was published in February 2017, and there is a wider scope of strategic activity being progressed under that strategy, including with respect to legal migration.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

The AMIF in Ireland is not being directed toward supporting legal migration.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The call of proposals launched by the Irish authorities in September 2016 was designed to elicit projects that would support the following national objectives:

- NO1 – Reception/Asylum (Strategic Objective 1);
- NO2 – Integration (Strategic Objective 2);
- NO3 – Capacity (Strategic Objective 2).

As with those to be supported under Strategic Objective 1, projects aligned to integration and capacity objectives under Strategic Objective 2 were open to public, private and voluntary bodies, with applicants needing to be legally constituted, and could target support towards:

- third country nationals;
- refugees;
- asylum seekers;
- public authorities, civil society bodies and recipients of AMIF funding and the staff and volunteers of those entities (with respect to the Capacity National Objective only).

Twelve projects were subsequently awarded funding in early 2017 under the Integration Specific Objective of the AMIF, with the total AMIF grant allocations amounting to €2.23m. Most projects were formally approved in April/May 2017, and all will be delivered for three years, ending in 2020.

The objectives of the 12 projects that focus on integration generally revolve around supporting the personal capacity of TCNs and asylum seekers and grantees to establish and maintain their lives in communities across Ireland, to increase their skills and capabilities, and to widen their participation in education, training, employment and active citizenship.

A wide range of activities are being supported across the projects, including:

- orientation programmes;
- engagement with public service providers;
- language skills enhancement;
- advice on rights and obligations;
- direct information provision and advocacy services;
- family reunification support;
- community integration;
- encouragement of political and democratic participation;
- development of and participation in social, community and sporting networks;
- programmes supporting inter-culturalism and cultural expression;
- programmes combating racism and discrimination;
- supports for victims of racism;
- public awareness raising;
- development of good practice on migrant integration;
- intercultural initiatives within schools;
- supports for the transition to communities from direct accommodation provision;
- operation of drop-in and resource centres;
- referral services;
- provision of volunteering opportunities;
- actions supporting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding;

- employability skills courses;
- summer camps for young TCNs;
- after school services for TCN families and children;
- programmes targeting the most vulnerable TCNs and those at greatest risk of non-integration;
- targeted family support services;
- youth work programmes;
- supports targeting the social integration of older TCNs.

Six of the 12 projects approved had commenced activity by end-June 2017, and in aggregate they reported activities to that point which included:

- 1,274 individuals in receipt of support(s);
- 822 cases of delivery of information and assistance to members of the target groups;
- 65 cases of provision of advocacy services;
- 42 cases of education and training provision;
- 172 cases of supports in the area of housing advice and support;
- 44 cases of support with health and psychological care; and
- 6 cases of supports in the area of political and democratic participation.

Evaluation Question:

What progress was made towards supporting co-operation 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?

Response:

AMIF funding under Strategic Objective 2 has not been used to support co-operation among Member States in respect of safeguarding the integrity of immigration systems.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

Capacity building objectives and activities feature in many of the 12 projects supported under the integration Strategic Objective thus far. Many explicitly seek to develop the personal capacities of target groups of TCNs whether to avail of services, engage with agencies and supports, enhance skills and employability, develop networks, or participate in community structures and activities.

A number of projects also seek to build capacities in Irish communities in terms of intercultural awareness and engagement, awareness raising, and the promotion of mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.

In a number of cases capacity building within mainstream service providers and support organisations is also being explicitly progressed in supported projects. Activities include:

- training, shared case work, provision of resource materials and cross-referral mechanisms for frontline service providers in the statutory and voluntary sectors;
- development of innovative and flexible referral systems between public organisations supporting target groups;
- formulation, documentation and dissemination of good practice in migrant integration;
- the generation of data and evidence of the circumstances and needs of TCNs, to inform policy and improve the capacity of key stakeholders to identify the most vulnerable TCNs and target supports appropriately.

5.2.3 Specific Objective 3: Return

Overall Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

No AMIF funding has been deployed to date towards enhancing fair and effective return strategies in Ireland.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

No AMIF funding has been deployed to date towards supporting the measures accompanying return procedures.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

By end-June 2017, the AMIF has supported very limited activity in the area of returns. According to the programme indicators, 24 returnees received pre- or post-return reintegration assistance co-financed by the Fund, while 28 voluntary returnees and 34 involuntary returnees had their returns co-financed by the Fund.

In the case of voluntary return, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has been contracted to deliver a Voluntary Return support programme for those who wish to return home voluntarily but do not have the means, including the necessary documentation, to do so. Support is provided towards obtaining the necessary travel documentation, as well as to assist with the financial costs of the travel from Ireland to the country of origin. In addition, a small reintegration grant is available to all returnees to help cover the costs of an income generating activity, such as education; professional training and/or business set-up. This grant is a payment in kind rather than cash.

In the case of forced return, when a third country national becomes the subject of a Deportation Order, they then become liable for the forced return process. Flights are arranged by the Department of Justice and Equality (Repatriation Division) in conjunction with Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) and emergency travel documents are procured from the relevant Embassy, and AMIF funding supports the costs of flights and the additional travel and subsistence of members of GNIB required to escort deportees. The number of Garda escorts required in any case is decided by GNIB on the basis of risk assessment. The cost of the flights, travel and subsistence and overtime are activities supported by AMIF funding.

Evaluation Question:

What progress was made towards enhancing practical co-operation between Member States and/or with authorities of third countries on return measures, and how did the Fund contribute to achieving this progress?

Response:

AMIF has not been utilised to support practical co-operation between Member States nor authorities of third countries on return measures.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

There has been no AMIF support directed toward any significant capacity building within the return system in Ireland thus far.

5.2.4 Specific Objective 4: Solidarity

Overall Evaluation Question:

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 co-operation?

Response:

The AMIF programme in Ireland is very substantially assisting the country's contribution to enhancing solidarity and responsibility sharing between Member States. AMIF support is very directly enabling Ireland to meet its commitments regarding the selection, relocation and resettlement of refugees and persons in need of humanitarian assistance.

Evaluation Question:

How did the Fund contribute to the transfer of asylum applicants (relocation as per Council Decisions (EU) 2015/1253 and 2015/1601)?

Response:

Refugee relocation and resettlement activity in Ireland has strands that relate to selection, assessment, reception and resettlement, and the work involves selection missions to carry out interviews and conduct medical and security screening, pre-departure health assessment, medical treatment, material provision, information and support with travel.

On arrival in Ireland, persons relocated or arriving as programme refugees are admitted to Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs), and provided with post-arrival information and orientation assistance including interpretation services. Those arriving as asylum seekers from Greece make an application for asylum upon arrival in Ireland and if granted refugee status they are convention refugees under Irish law. All those with protection status are subsequently supported through a resettlement process, whereby a local authority is financially assisted by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme to directly employ resettlement support workers and intercultural workers, and to support resettling families and groups in communities throughout Ireland, supporting them in accessing housing provision, accessing health and medical services, accessing social welfare and other entitlements, gaining access to education and training, and beginning their integration process. These supports are put in place for a minimum of 12 months but increasingly for a period of up to 18 months, and the objective of the programme is to build or restore the capacity of refugees to run their own lives independently.

The AMIF programme is utilised to enable Irish authorities to select and resettle greater numbers than it had in the past through Special Cases funding. Direct Award funding to the IRPP has supported missions to Lebanon to select and transfer greater numbers in a timely fashion especially those who were not living in formal camps. The AMIF support has also provided additional activities to EROCs in respect of direct service provision for those accommodated, as well as the employment of intercultural workers and translators working with

residents, and a range of supports and services delivered under contract by Local Authorities and their partners in local settings for groups moving out of EROCs and into host communities.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

AMIF funding is meeting staff costs that support the transition of refugees from their Country of Asylum to Ireland, their time in the EROC and the costs of staff supporting them over the first 18-month period as they integrate in local communities, access entitlements, and engage with the service providers. AMIF has also allowed the programme to resettle larger numbers, by resourcing larger teams to travel to the Middle East and select higher numbers of refugees.

5.2 Efficiency

Overall Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

Early findings regarding the unit costs of actions which AMIF is supporting are varied, but in are likely to reflect the early stage of programme implementation, the limited outputs to date, and the levels of activity within which AMIF is only likely to co-finance relatively small aspects. The relationship between outputs and expenditure will be monitored closely as the implementation progresses. However there are very strong processes in place to ensure cost-effectiveness, including the competitive calls for proposals, the assessment and close determination and control of budgets, the requirements regarding expenditure accountability, and wider financial control requirements and procedures.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

An analysis of indicator and expenditure targets planned as against results achieved has been undertaken and suggests:

- the unit costs of supporting individuals via projects supported under Strategic Objectives 1 and had up until end-June 2017 exceeded the levels planned for the programme as a whole;

- AMIF expenditure reported per person supported, in the areas of relocation and resettlement (in aggregate under both Strategic Objectives 1 and 4), was, by end-June, significantly below that implicit in the programme targets and financial allocations; and
- the counterpart unit costs under the return measures had moderately exceeded those implicit in the overall programme targets.

There are likely to be reasonable factors behind these findings. In the case of projects supported in the areas of asylum/reception and integration, there is a degree to which establishment costs and processes have and are taking place before results and high levels of target group interaction take place. In the case of resettlement, AMIF funding is supporting only part of the resettlement activity, and it has come into play at a point where resettlement work is already very active. The findings in relation to returns suggests that higher proportions of the costs associated are eligible as AMIF expenditure than anticipated, although there are likely to be phases of return activity that are more cost efficient than others as volumes and economies of scale are difficult to predict.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

AMIF funding is subject to EU and national auditory control measures and spot checks. There are stringent conditions regarding financial management, control, and reporting across all activity supported by the Fund.

5.3 Relevance

Overall Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

Interventions funded by AMIF correspond strongly to actual needs. Focusing on the support needs of asylum seekers during their reception, determination of status, voluntary return, and the resettlement and integration of those granted protection, funding is directly supporting the service needs arising from Ireland's commitments to and involvement in EU-led humanitarian responses. Local and specialist projects supporting reception and integration have systematically shown their responsiveness to needs, and have been required to do so prior to funding support. The programme maintains flexibility to respond to changing needs in its latter stages.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

AMIF-supported activity within the Irish programme is all responsive to needs:

- relocation and resettlement activity and the parts of those processes supported by AMIF are all driven by pledges and commitments made by the Irish Government in response to international refugee crises and national response commitments made;
- AMIF support for return activity is in keeping with existing and anticipated levels of need for voluntary and enforced return services likely to arise in the context of anticipated levels of asylum, refugee reception, and third-country migration;
- projects delivered by voluntary and civil society organisations in the area of asylum, reception and integration have all been required to set out how the activities proposed respond to both objectives and needs, and to explain how such needs were assessed and established, with each project's responses systematically appraised prior to funding approval and project inception. Ways in which needs been evidenced include:
 - with reference to promoters' existing and historical work in their area of capability, and in respect to trends evident in that work;
 - with reference to national and local official data relevant to needs within the areas of priority of promoters;
 - by way of consultation and research processes undertaken prior to project design;
 - examining findings from evaluations of previous and projects and activities;
 - with reference to client databases and evidence regarding user demand and volumes of potential users turned away due to insufficient capacity of support organisations; and
 - via surveys of users and surveys of service providers and statutory and voluntary agencies.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

AMIF funding directed to supporting resettlement and return objectives is in respect of AMIF-eligible expenditure only and represents only a proportion of the full costs associated with those interventions. As more national expenditure takes place than available AMIF resourcing in these areas, there is a degree to which such AMIF funds are isolated and protected from moderate unanticipated changes in levels of service needed.

Contracted projects with civil society partners in supporting asylum, reception and integration objectives have scope to be modestly altered or amended in the light of changing circumstances with the prior approval of the Responsible Authority, however only where changes to needs clearly require it and could not reasonably have

been anticipated. The Responsible Authority has developed a change request policy and procedures where significant change requests are assessed by a Change Board.

At programme level a degree of programme flexibility has been ensured by the temporary nature of financial commitments typically within sub-periods of the programme's duration, to all such commitments being subject to review as good practice, and to the later funding tranches and disbursements being designed in response to evident needs at the appropriate points in time.

5.4 Coherence

Overall Evaluation Question:

Were the objectives set in the National Programme coherent with the ones set in other programmes funded by EU resources and applying to similar areas of work? Was the coherence ensured also during the implementation of the Fund?

Response:

At programming stage all due consideration of objectives and activities funded outside the AMIF programme were considered and informed its design. At subsequent implementation phases the principles of complementarity and coherence have been upheld, for example through the adoption of very specific criteria around strategic fit and complementarity in the assessment and awarding of funding to civil society organisations under Strategic Objectives 1 and 2.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

A wide consultation process was undertaken at programming stage, and explicit consideration taken of all and any interventions and sources of funding to ensure AMIF activity was consistent with its scope, scale and objectives. Unlike in the past, significant sources of philanthropic funding in the area of migrant integration and support have not been available in the current programming period in Ireland.

Evaluation Question:

Were co-ordination mechanisms between the Fund and other interventions with similar objectives established during the implementation period?

Response:

The EU Funds Unit in the Department of Justice and Equality, as well as being Responsible Authority for the AMIF programme, also has responsibility for ESF funding channelled to areas under the Department's responsibility. This has provided a very direct co-ordination mechanism.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

All actions implemented and supported by the AMIF in Ireland have been made coherent and non-contradictory to any other interventions of relevance.

5.5 Complementarity

Overall Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

Objectives, activities and projects supported by AMIF have all been designed to complement any related funding programmes or funding streams with similar or associated objectives and targets. Core elements of AMIF support such as that directed at relocation, resettlement and return have no other forms of discretionary funding that interface directly with them, and project funding has been explicitly required to demonstrate its complementarity prior to funding approval.

Some other streams of related funding have been initiated since the AMIF programming, but their complementarity has been ensured by virtue of their objectives, eligibility rules and assessment processes and criteria.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The availability and likely focus of any other interventions with complementary objectives was considered at programming stage. European Social Fund support has been made available for projects that will increase the employability of migrants who may be experiencing barriers to entering the labour market here. The European

Social Fund Managing Authority is represented on the AMIF National Monitoring Committee which also supports complementarity between the two funds.

Two national funding streams have been launched subsequent to AMIF programming and delivery, including a “Communities Integration Fund”, and “National Funding to Promote the Integration of Immigrants” (both having been launched in February 2007). Both have been made complementary to AMIF funding with no scope for duplication of activity.

Evaluation Question:

Were co-ordination mechanisms between the Fund and other interventions with similar objectives established to ensure their complementarity for the implementing period?

Response:

In the call for proposals under Strategic Objectives 1 and 2, project eligibility rules included that all actions should be specific and, where relevant, should be complementary to actions financed under other European Union funds. In the assessment of applications, explicit assessment criteria included the following:

- the extent to which project is aligned with existing national policies;
- the extent to which the project avoids duplication of efforts with other projects in the geographical area; and
- the level of linkage and partnership of the organisation’s work programme with other organisations’ programmes or actions.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

Mechanisms to avoid overlapping of financial instruments were put in place. In respect of Direct Award funding, no other financial instruments would have overlapped with AMIF. In the case of projects approved for funding under Strategic Objectives 1 and 2, matching funding was not eligible where it was sourced from any other EU fund. In addition, the annual accounts of beneficiaries are examined to ensure no duplication of EU funding is happening and it is also a feature of the grant agreements put in place.

5.6 EU Added Value

Overall Evaluation Question:

Was any added value brought about by the EU support?

Response:

Significant added value is generally considered to exist in respect of AMIF funding in Ireland, most evidently in terms of funding scale and process.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The predominant types of EU added value are in terms of scale and process.

The AMIF funding has represented additional resourcing that would not with any degree of certainty have been sourced from national funds in its absence.

In respect of processes, the EU funding objectives, eligibility rules, principles of assistance, and programming, management, control, reporting, monitoring and evaluation requirements are all considered to have ensured AMIF-supports comply with procedural best practice, and will serve to ensure transparency, objectivity and value for money is achieved.

Evaluation Question:

Would the Member State have carried out the actions required to implement the EU policies in areas supported by the Fund without its financial support?

Response:

Ireland would have met its obligations in respect of international and EU commitments, however many of the accompanying, supporting and associated actions supported by AMIF would not be occurring with certainty in its absence.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

In any areas of discretionary activity an interruption of the support would risk discontinuation or severe scaling back of activity.

5.7 Sustainability

Overall Evaluation Question:

Are the positive effects of the projects supported by the Fund likely to last when its support will be over?

Response:

Ireland's programme has been designed, programmed and implemented thus far in ways that will ensure to the greatest degree possible that activities will have long-lasting effects for target groups and support recipients. The core elements of the programme – refugee relocation and resettlement, integration, and support for those seeking or having been granted international protection or otherwise legally resident TCNs – each have sustainable outcomes intrinsic in their objectives and design. Enforced return measures are the only AMIF-supported activities that are transient by their nature.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

The selection of activities to be funded by AMIF, the objectives established and adopted for different funding strands, and the assessment processes used in approving funding disbursements, all ensured activities supported would have long-lasting impacts for recipients. Enforced return measures are the only possible exception.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

All actions being supported by AMIF in the Irish programme are intended to have long-lasting impacts for the recipients, whether in respect of support in the navigation and engagement with the asylum process, in resettlement support, in support for integration, or in respect of voluntary return. All strands of activity have been designed to ensure supported actions achieve lasting effects.

Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

All recipients of supports financed by AMIF are intended to benefit from them indefinitely. With the possible exception of enforced return measures, all activity is focused on supporting people to either effectively engage with the international protection process in which they are entitled to be assessed, and if in a position of having international protection status or having been granted the right to remain in Ireland, to establish successful and sustainable lives in the country. No action supported by the AMIF is purely transitory in this respect.

5.8 Simplification and Reduction of Administrative Burden

Overall Evaluation Question:

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

Response:

Some aspects of AMIF fund management have offered simplified rules and processes, including the use of direct award provisions, national eligibility rules, multiannual funding of projects, and flexibility on re-allocating resources, however simplified cost options have not been utilised in Ireland's programme.

It is difficult to determine if beneficiaries consider administrative burdens to have been reduced, as there are quite demanding although clear and generally accepted administrative requirements, and each beneficiary's experience with other funds and other programmes is likely to be different.

Evaluation Question:

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?

Response:

Ireland did not opt for simplified cost options in setting national rules for AMIF financing. National eligibility rules were adopted and have been communicated clearly and directly to intermediaries and beneficiaries prior to funding determinations, and this has ensured clarity and understanding. Multiannual funding options have also been utilised which has provided project promoters and beneficiaries to commit to more substantive interventions, incorporating sequential phases as appropriate. Flexibility mechanisms open to Responsible Authorities in terms of reallocation of funding have not been necessary but will be valuable in the event of changes becoming necessary at later stages.

Formal channels of feedback regarding administrative burden and administrative simplicity have not yet been established however.

6. Project Examples

6.1 Success Stories

6.2.1 *Football Association of Ireland Integration Project*

The “Grassroots Integration Through Football Scheme” (GIFS) is promoted by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), the national governing body for football in Ireland. It is a three-year project, which commenced in April 2017. Total planned project expenditure over three years is €200,000, which includes AMIF support of €150,000 and matched funding of €50,000.

The FAI was established in 1921, and it functions to promote participation in all levels of football in Ireland. The organisation is a company limited by guarantee, with over 170 employees.

It already has significant relevant experience particularly in delivering its own Intercultural Football Programme, which seeks to increase participation among people from diverse ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds, challenge racism and support the process of integration through football. This programme targets children and adults through extracurricular school/club link programmes, community/local authority facility-based programmes and education/awareness raising activities, among other things.

The overall aim of the AMIF-supported project is to foster integration in Irish society, principally by supporting alliances and collaborative actions between local football clubs, individuals, schools and community groups or other similar organisations. In this regard, the project seeks to mobilise and support clubs, leagues, schools, groups and individuals to work together to run actions that increase participation in football, but which also complement a wider process of integration and social interaction through football. In addition, the project seeks to promote volunteering and active citizenship through football, rather than just participation at the playing level. Key project tasks therefore include:

- supporting collaborations between football clubs and community stakeholders to run after-school programmes. This would initially involve FAI co-ordination of a series of after-school programmes of 6-8 weeks duration, with particular targeting of schools where more than 20% of the student population has origins or parental origins in a TCN background;
- further development of this collaboration through hosting of club open day programmes, with more than 25% of participants targeted to come from a TCN background, whereby after-school programmes provide a “bridge” between schools and clubs to promote increased participation in football;
- promoting information sessions at local clubs to encourage volunteering in football, including increased encouragement of volunteers from a diversity of backgrounds;

- developing combined football and language skills programmes, which would pair formal English language sessions with practical open football sessions, with football used as a novel means and motivation to engage TCNs to improve their proficiency in the English language; and
- developing “open futsal league programmes” for adults to promote engagement between TCNs and host communities.

Operationally, the FAI also has an existing network of full-time development officers, an extensive grassroots network of clubs and leagues, and strong connections with local authorities and non-governmental organisations, which it hopes to leverage in support of the project.

Over three years, the project seeks to deliver a series of outputs within its key TCN target group, including:

- delivery of after-school programmes and club open day programmes across 51 clubs/groups and 72 schools nationwide;
- engaging between 70 and 140 parent volunteers through involvement with the after-school and club open day programmes;
- attracting over 6,100 participants at club open day programmes, with a minimum of over 1,500 participants coming from diverse ethnic, cultural or minority backgrounds;
- attracting up to 1,600 participants to volunteering information sessions, including between up to 800 female participants;
- engaging six clubs and up to 240 participants in combined football and language skills programmes;
- engaging nearly 1,100 participants in open futsal leagues, across nine different venues, including at least 270 participants from TCN backgrounds.

In the first three months of the project’s implementation (April-June 2017), three alliances have actively commenced after-school/club open day programmes, three alliances have commenced combined football and language skills programmes, and four alliances have commenced futsal programmes, and activity is spread across many counties in Ireland.

Two other alliances have applied to host after-school/club open day programmes, a further three alliances have applied to host volunteer sessions, and another four alliances have applied to run combined football and language skills programmes, with applications similarly coming from all over the country.

6.2.2 Crosscare Migrant Project

“Promoting Integration Through Partnership and Support” is promoted by Crosscare, the social support agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. It is a three-year project which commenced in April 2017, with a total budget of approximately €330,000.

Crosscare is a registered charity, which provides a range of social care, community and youth work services across the Dublin Archdiocese. It was established in 1941, and is one of the largest charitable organisations active in Dublin.

Crosscare has considerable experience in supporting immigrants coming to Ireland as well as returning Irish emigrants, through direct work with clients, and it also produces specialist information resources published through two dedicated websites. It has previously received several rounds of funding (including €90,000 across three rounds since 2013) to carry out migrant integration projects under the European Integration Fund.

The overall aim of the project is to promote the integration and engagement of TCNs by providing them with direct support to access their rights and essential services, with a particular focus on marginalised or vulnerable TCNs. In addition, it seeks to build capacity in frontline service organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide appropriate supports to TCNs. This includes enhancing the capacity of key staff in these organisations, such as social workers, medical workers, domestic violence key workers, community groups and homeless service staff. Key project tasks therefore include:

- providing information and advocacy through a range of open access, drop-in services;
- offering these services across a range of needs. This includes supports in dealing with the immigration system (e.g. residency, family reunification, citizenship), access to statutory services (e.g. health, social protection, job seeking supports, social housing), preventing or exiting homelessness, and integration of TCNs into their local community;
- providing “peer support” training to frontline organisations, including appropriate training and resource materials and the establishment of contact points for key staff to access troubleshooting or quick guidance supports;
- potential for follow-up contact and joint work, involving Crosscare and other frontline organisations, on complex, multi-issue client cases;
- improving ongoing contact and referral mechanisms between organisations so as to develop longer-term working relationships and avoid duplication of work.

Over three years, the project seeks to help 30 different frontline organisations to improve their capacity to support TCNs, while also providing supports directly to 2,700 individuals or families. At the project appraisal stage, therefore, it was noted that the project had the potential to deliver strong outputs relative to its proposed expenditure of some €330,000.

In the first three months of the project’s implementation (April-June 2017), the project has also made a strong start in delivering these targets, and actions that have commenced have included:

- engagement with eight frontline organisations (and over 30 staff within these organisations), including the provision of training sessions for these organisations, plus ongoing development of appropriate training materials;
- provision of over 60 days of open access drop-in services for information and advocacy provision for TCNs;
- provision of information and advocacy services on immigration issues for more than 240 individuals or families, incorporating over 440 interventions;

- provision of information and advocacy services on social welfare services, job seeking, and health and education supports for nearly 50 individuals or families, incorporating over 60 interventions;
- provision of services to more than 50 individuals or families that are at risk of homelessness, incorporating nearly 90 interventions;
- provision of support to six individuals/families in transitioning from direct provision to independent living, including support to integrate into new communities.

Alongside the eight support organisations that have already been assisted, therefore, the project has so far also provided direct supports to about 350 individuals or families.

6.2.3 Galway Resettlement Project

The OPMI identified County Galway as a host county for up to 90 settlements of Syrian families admitted into Ireland from Lebanon, and a grant award of €275,862 was awarded to Galway County Council in October 2016 to deliver a local resettlement project over a period of 18 months, ending in March 2018.

The project was awarded to the County Council's Community, Enterprise and Economic Development Unit, which incorporates a Social Inclusion Unit with a remit in promoting social inclusion of all communities throughout the county and enabling them to participate fully in the social, economic and civil life of the county and its residents. The Unit established an inter-agency group to oversee and guide the activity, involving key statutory agencies likely to have a role in supporting the affected families.

The project has had the following objectives:

- assisting refugees to negotiate the early months of the resettlement by providing two resettlement support workers to assist them in settling into their respective towns and villages, to assist them in accessing services in health, education, and social protection;
- facilitating provision of after-school and out-of-school activities for refugee children and young people and their integration with existing services, as well as the identification of additional and specialist educational supports for young people that may have been deprived of appropriate education in their own country;
- supporting the integration of children with other children and young people in their communities;
- sourcing interpretation services to support and ensure appropriate communication with service providers;
- ensuring childcare services and facilities are available to families to allow full participation of both adults and teenagers in both English language tuition and other educational and training opportunities;
- promoting volunteering opportunities for refugees in their host communities and volunteering by members of the host communities to support the integration of the families;
- identifying any need for resources and training for anti-racism and diversity understanding and intercultural mediation for local service providers and local communities;

- identify resources needed for exceptional medical and/or dental treatment in conjunction with public healthcare services;
- provision of support for transport initiatives to facilitate access of refugees to essential services in their initial integration and education period, as well as longer-term strategies to access transport services and facilitate necessary mobility.

Much was achieved over the period to end-June 2017. Two resettlement support workers were recruited and in place by December 2016, whose day-to-day work has involved:

- providing briefings in host communities prior to the transfer of refugee families, in conjunction with local civil society networks;
- establishing local support networks for future linkages with families;
- transfer of families in a staggered process, with daily support that graduated to weekly meetings with each family;
- weekly assistance to families and accompaniment in accessing health, social, education, childcare, language, and other services;
- repeat processes of support for new and additional families and cohorts transferred to new towns and villages;
- ongoing liaison and engagement with IRPP personnel regarding administration, project progress and service provision.

More substantively, a range of programmatic achievements have occurred in the period, which include:

- establishment and activation of five after-school clubs in different towns in the county, involving art, swimming, soccer, youth work, outdoor activities, and scouting;
- summer, Easter and half-term programmes of activities of young people;
- day trips for teenagers and young people;
- provision of childcare services during school breaks;
- initiation of a voluntary befriending programme, and recruitment of volunteers from local communities to become active in a range of resettlement support actions;
- delivery of intercultural/anti-racism briefings;
- briefings to families from local police units on services and supports they can provide;
- facilitation of access to medical help, including ante-natal and maternity care, supports for one refugee with Down's Syndrome, and wider dental and psychological care for numerous individuals;
- a range of housing supports, direct provision of critical transport services where none were available, and support in accessing wider transport services and support; and
- English language support programmes in each town hosting resettling families.

By end-June 2017, project expenditure had reached just €66,000, or just under one quarter of its resettlement grant allocation.

6.2 Failure

Given the relatively recent initiation of project activity under the Irish programme, there have been no projects which the Responsible Authority would identify as “failures” up to mid-2017 stage.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Programme Delivery

Ireland's AMIF programme as approved by the EU Commission opts for a quite limited range of national objectives and programme measures, activities and components for financial support. Providing information, support, services and advice for those seeking or having been granted international protection, and services supporting refugees and protection grantees to resettle in the country, together represent the central thematic focus of the programme. Funding has been allocated to a small range of activities under this overall focus and in response to the strategic (Community) objectives of the Fund.

Initiating implementation of the national AMIF programme in Ireland was also quite significantly delayed. This was principally due to negotiations that took place in relation to moving the administration of EU Funding from a third-party provider to bringing the expertise in house and subsequent delays in designation.

Action in implementing the programme up to mid-2017 is therefore limited, however is now progressing well. Changes in the national context have included the coming into force of the International Protection Act 2015 and the initiation of a national strategy for migrant integration. The former has reformed and simplified the application procedure for all protection applicants, while the latter has set out a national set of strategic objectives and actions for the integration of all legal migrants. Neither the delayed implementation nor these contextual changes since adoption call into question the strategic appropriateness of the AMIF programme as designed.

Programme Management

Programme management is strong. The EU Funds Unit as a new structure in the Department of Justice and Equality is a new dedicated management unit for a number of EU programmes, and is functionally independent of other parts of the Department (and the wider set of organisations involved in programme delivery). It has overseen the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities, well-defined reporting arrangements, and strong control systems. It has also adopted very clear, systematic, competitive and objective models of disbursing funds to civil society organisations. These achievements will serve later programme management and monitoring positively.

All strands of AMIF funding have officers within the EU Funds Unit with responsibility for their oversight, management and reporting, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability have been established. This has ensured strong top-to-bottom alignment of funded activity with national and EU objectives, clarity on eligibility, and clarity from the outset regarding the responsibilities of beneficiaries and intermediaries involved in dispersing funds and delivering projects.

Information to Support Programming

While emphasis has been placed on embedding the new EU Funds Unit, establishing programme responsibilities, and monitoring, reporting and control mechanisms, as well as the design and execution of a targeted call for proposals to initiate new and important strands of core AMIF activity, these achievements now allow the scope for a switching of emphasis towards programme performance management and the planning of optimal activity in the latter stages of the programme.

Programme indicators have been established, however they have not yet become fully operational as tools for effective monitoring, and while relevant to and indicative of activity levels, they provide limited insight into the functioning and performance of the different strands of AMIF activity. A wide range of factors will influence programme effectiveness and impacts, including changing needs of target groups, the widening diversity of needs, the capacities of intermediary organisations and support structures, any gaps in current supports or service provision, local constraints, bottlenecks or challenges, and how AMIF-supported objectives and activity interface with developments and features of the wider migration system. All of these will influence the optimal future deployment and programming of AMIF resources.

There is a growing body of wider research into Ireland's asylum, resettlement and integration system, as well as deepening experience and knowledge among policymakers, implementing agencies and non-Governmental organisations in relation to the evolving needs within the system, but also many remaining information gaps. Ensuring the AMIF formally gathers, examines, explicitly responds to, and is optimally aligned with an appropriate evidence base is a challenge for the second phase of implementation.

Optimising Policy Alignment

As well as on the establishment of strong structures for programme governance, management and delivery, early programme emphasis has also been placed on meeting Government commitments in relation to refugee intake, and on ensuring the establishment and functioning of the necessary relocation, resettlement and integration channels, structures and supports. Looking ahead, programme management would benefit from more clearly-articulated policy goals or objectives for refugee policy and for the different elements in the reception, assessment, resettlement and integration continuum, at least in relation to aspects targeted for AMIF support. The Migrant Integration Strategy has helped clarify and elaborate specific policy objectives in relation to integration, however it was published subsequent to the specification of the AMIF programme, and the extent of its overlap with the focus and targeting of the AMIF programme is also limited (with the former's scope spanning integration of legal migrants and EU nationals, for example).

Optimally targeting asylum, resettlement and integration supports in the latter half of the AMIF implementation phase would be supported by such a clearer policy framework, that is needs-informed and needs-specific, that establishes clear and consistent policy goals and objectives for each phase, that had a clear allocation of responsibilities across statutory and non-statutory actors, that addressed subsidiarity, autonomy and flexibility, and that established the metrics by which performance is capable of being assessed in each part of resettlement and integration process. Such evidence and policy clarity would also inform capacity building

needs and general resource allocation (whether to be AMIF-supported or not), which may be important in the face of increasing numbers in AMIF target groups over the coming years.

Programme Planning

Greater evidence and data on programme needs, activity, performance, and policy-alignment should allow planning of further programme implementation to be initiated and specified in reasonable detail. Aspects which will benefit from early planning, consultation and deliberation include:

- the nature and focus of a second call for proposals for projects supporting asylum, reception and integration;
- any changes needed to resettlement approaches and processes, and the capacity and capabilities to resettle the numbers of persons anticipated;
- the use of technical assistance, and its role in supporting the proper management of the existing programme, in supporting innovation and new approaches, as well as in ensuring forward planning and learning;
- programme, activity and project evaluation proposals.

The programme Monitoring Committee has had a very limited role to date, but it could play a useful role in implementation planning in these respects.

7.2 Recommendations

1. A public policy framework for the reception, resettlement and integration of refugees should be articulated, which establishes a clear vision and set of policy goals for all aspects of the process, and which can inform programme delivery, service provision, and performance management. This will require a targeted commitment of additional resources. It is recommended that Ireland consider the use of AMIF as a mechanism to provide the relevant resources so as to facilitate the development of policy in the shortest timeframe.
2. A detailed monitoring and evaluation plan for the remainder of the programme should be developed.
3. Proposals for all remaining elements of programme delivery and expenditure should be developed, albeit with the flexibility to change in response to changing needs or priorities. The intended use of funds as yet uncommitted, and the steps to be taken to determine their optimal use (data and evidence gathering, consultation, etc.) should be set out and initiated.
4. Mechanisms and channels for intermediary and beneficiary feedback should be established, and such feedback considered in further programme implementation and planning.
5. The Monitoring Committee should oversee and assist implementation of these recommendations.

Annexes

Annex 1 Programme Indicators

Specific Objective		1 - Asylum									
Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Data	2014	2015	2016	End-June 2017 (est.)	Cumulative Total		
C1 - Number of target group persons provided with assistance through projects in the field of reception and asylum systems supported under this Fund	Number	0.00	8,000.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,055	1,055		
C1.a - The number of target group persons benefiting from the information and assistance throughout the asylum procedures	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
C1.b - Number of target group persons benefiting from legal assistance and representation	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
C1.c - Number of vulnerable persons and un-accompanied minors benefiting from specific assistance	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
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	Number	0.00	0.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
C2.2 - The percentage in the total reception accommodation capacity	%	0.00	0.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
C3.1 - Number of persons trained in asylum-related topics with the assistance of the Fund	Number	0.00	75.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
C3.2 - That number as a percentage of the total number of staff trained in those topics	%	0.00	40.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
C4 - Number of country of origin information products and fact-finding missions conducted with the assistance of the Fund	Number	0.00	1.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
C5 - Number of projects supported under this Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate asylum policies in Member States	Number	0.00	1.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
C6 - Number of persons resettled with support of this Fund	Number	0.00	2,074.00	Authority in charge of transferring the persons	96.00	100.00	413.00	227.00	836.00		

Specific Objective		2 - Integration/Legal Migration									
Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Data	2014	2015	2016	End-June 2017 (est.)	Cumulative Total		
C1 - Number of target group persons who participated in pre-departure measures supported under this Fund	Number	0.00	0.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00				
C2 - Number of target group persons assisted by this Fund through integration measures in the framework of national, local and regional strategies	Number	0.00	20,000.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,274.00	1,274.00		
C2.a - Number of target group persons assisted through measures focusing on education and training, including language training and preparatory actions to facilitate access to the labour market	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	42.00	42.00		
C2.b - Number of target group persons supported through the provision of advice and assistance in the area of housing, means of subsistence and administrative and legal guidance	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	172.00	172.00		
C2.c - Number of target group persons assisted through the provision of health and psychological care	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	44.00	44.00		
C2.d - Number of target group persons assisted through measures related to democratic participation	Number			Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.00	6.00		

ASYLUM, MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION FUND - INTERIM EVALUATION

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 as well as all other relevant stakeholders, as a result of the measures supported under this Fund	Number	0.00	5.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C4 - Number of cooperation projects with other Member States on integration of third-country nationals supported under this Fund	Number	0.00	1.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C5 - Number of projects supported under this Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate integration policies in Member States	Number	0.00	1.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

3 - Return									
Specific Objective	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Data	2014	2015	2016	End-June 2017 (est.)	Cumulative Total
C1 - Number of persons trained on return-related topics with the assistance of the Fund	Number	0.00	60.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
C2 - Number of returnees who received pre or post return reintegration assistance co-financed by the Fund	Number	0.00	1,100.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.00	24.00
C3 - Number of returnees whose return was co-financed by the Fund, persons who returned voluntarily	Number	0.00	1,600.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.00	28.00
C4 - Number of returnees whose return was co-financed by the Fund, persons who were removed	Number	0.00	400.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	34.00	34.00
C5 - Number of monitored removal operations co-financed by the Fund	Number	0.00	4.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C6 - Number of projects supported under the Fund to develop, monitor and evaluate return policies in Member States	Number	0.00	6.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

4 - Solidarity									
Specific Objective	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Data	2014	2015	2016	End-June 2017 (est.)	Cumulative Total
C1 - Number of applicants transferred from one Member State to another with support of this Fund	Number	0.00	2,622.00	Authority charge of relocation	0.00	0.00	69.00	552.00	621.00
C2 - Number of cooperation projects with other Member States on enhancing solidarity and responsibility sharing between the Member States supported under this Fund	Number	0.00	1.00	Project reporting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Annex 2 Programme Financial Progress

Table 1 Progress in financial implementation, by specific objectives (€)

National objective / Specific Action	A Total paid 01/01/2014- 15/10/2016	B Total paid 16/10/2016- 30/06/2017	Total paid {0} (A+B/SO) programmed (%)
SO1: 001 Asylum	0	1,163,412.45	32.95%
SO1: 002 Evaluation	0	0	
SO1: 003 Resettlement	0	22,529.43	1.50%
TOTAL NO SO1		1,185,941.88	21.48%
SO1: SA1 Transit Centre	0	0	
SO1: SA2 Access to Asylum	0	0	
TOTAL SO1		1,185,941.88	21.48%
SO2: 001 Legal Migration	0	0	
SO2: 002 Integration	0	668,449.92	13.50%
SO3: 003 Capacity	0	0	
TOTAL NO SO2		668,449.92	12.25%
SO2: SA1 Joint Initiatives	0	0	
SO2: SA2 Unaccompanied Minors	0	0	
SO2: SA3 Legal Migration	0	0	
TOTAL SO2		668,449.92	12.25%
SO3: 001 Accompanying measures	0	0	
SO3: 002 Return measures	0	202,590.81	5.48%
SO3: 003 Co-operation	0	0	
TOTAL NO SO3		202,590.81	4.08%

SO3: SA1 Joint return	0	0	
SO3: SA2 Joint reintegration	0	0	
SO3: SA3 Joint family and unaccompanied minors	0	0	
TOTAL SO3		202,590.81	4.08%
SO4: 001 Relocation		485,875.68	32.39%
TOTAL NO SO4		485,875.68	
TOTAL SO4		485,875.68	32.39%
Pledges (Union priorities)	6,090,000.00	2,270,000	405.83%
Pledges (Others)	0.00	0	
Transfers & relocations	414,000.00	2,334,000	26.75%
Admission from Turkey		0	
TOTAL Special Cases	6,504,000.00	4,604,000	59.62%
TOTAL	6,504,000.00	7,319,480.66	36.23%

