

## European Funds Directorate Ministry of Interior

Mid-term evaluation of the Home Affairs Funds for the  
Programming Period 2021-2027

NO. DIAG. HR/DA/TE/03.2024

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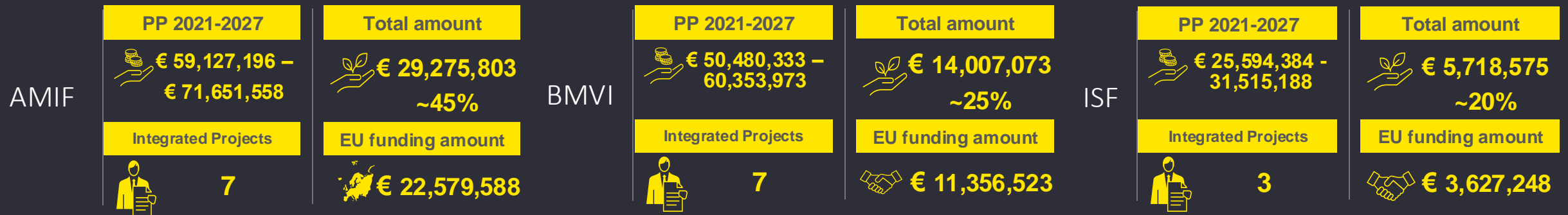
# 01 | Introduction









# Executive Summary

## Overview

The Mid-term Evaluation Report for the 2021-2027 Home Affairs Funds Programmes is mandated by Article 44 of the CPR. Cyprus received an extension until 30 April 2024, to fulfil this requirement, which is also specified in Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1147 of the Programmes. The report has been prepared by external experts per Cyprus's Public Procurement Law N. 73(I)/2016. DG REFORM-funded project TSI-22111 on "Capacity building and improving the overall performance of the Home Affairs Funds in Cyprus" is expected to improve the performance of the HAFs while strengthening existing capacities and providing suggestions for the rationalisation and management of the Funds. HAFs are gradually being implemented and the specified needs make the full implementation of the Program important.



## Observations

-  The Programmes preparatory procedures did not comply with the CPR.
-  Given the adoption delay, the risk of a gap in project funding would be increased.
-  Low/controlled risk projects with high priority have been initiated prior approval - leading to accelerated absorption of resources and reduced risk of loss
-  CPR adoption hampers the smooth implementation process of the Funds, creating additional administrative costs
-  FTEs cannot be assigned to horizontal tasks, increasing the demand for permanent employees.
-  The completion of the PP 2014-2020, increases the administrative burden for EFD.

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# 02 | Evaluation Scope and Methodology

# Midterm Evaluation Scope and Objectives



## Value and Benefits



Provide insights on the extent to which the approved Home Affairs Funds Programs **achieve their objectives according to the regulatory framework**, are **cost-effective**, provide appropriate support to **address** evolving needs, **add European value**, and **complement** other funding sources.



## Purpose

- Focuses on identifying issues that may affect the HAF Programmes.
- Explores ways to address the identified issues.
- Ensures that HAF Programmes have been conducted in accordance with Article 44 of the CPR Regulation.
- Aims to improve the quality of program design and implementation.



## Objectives

To present documented information and recommendations and to draw conclusions that:

- stem from data analysis during the implementation of the methodological approach,
- are realistic and consider external parameters as much as possible,
- identify the stakeholders who need to be involved in their implementation,
- ensure compliance with the Financial framework.

# Midterm Evaluation Criteria



## Effectiveness

To what extent have the **objectives of the Funds** have been achieved as defined in Regulation (EU) 516/2014?



## Relevance

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



## Efficiency

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



## Coherence

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?

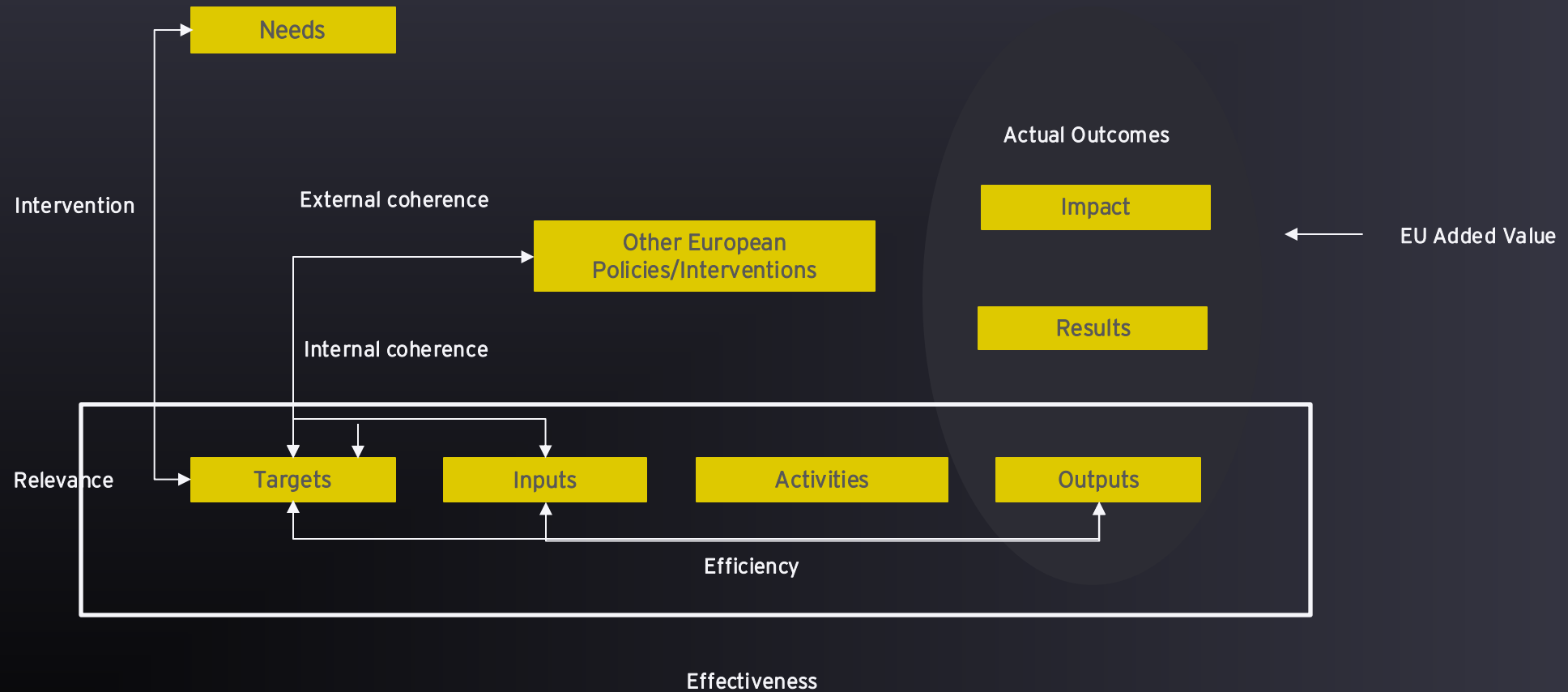


## EU added value

Was any added value brought about by the **EU support**?



# Intervention logic





# Data Sources

## Regulatory Framework and Guidance

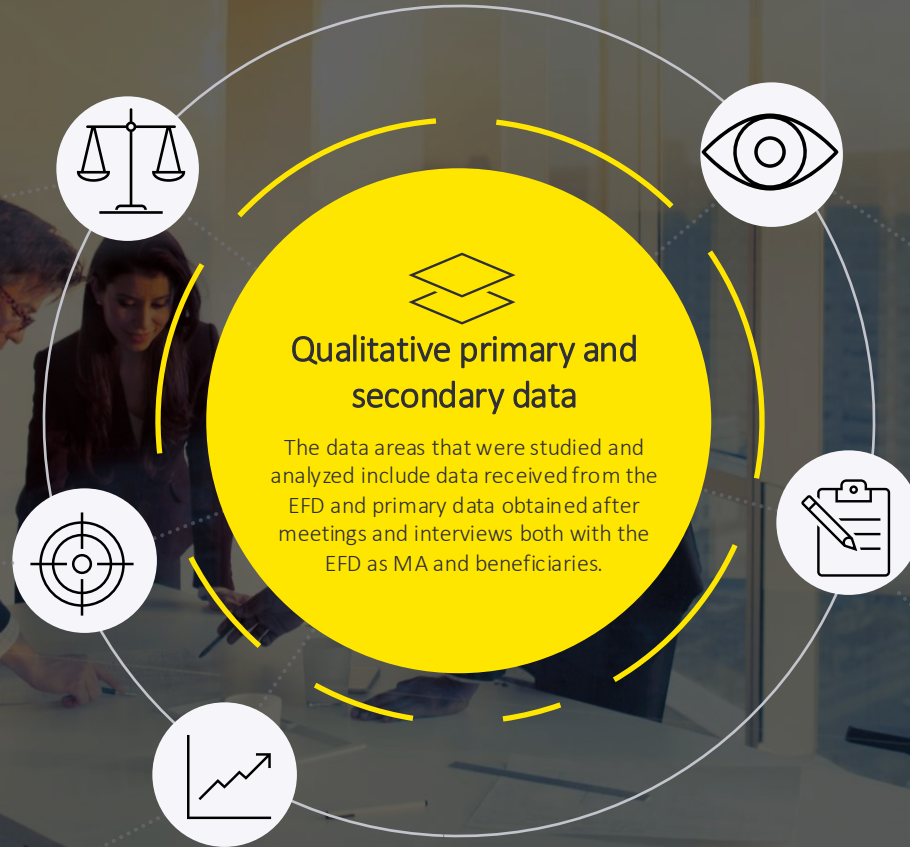
This includes **program-specific** and **common regulations**, the 1046/2018 Financial Regulation, enabling conditions, and guidance notes for the efficiency framework for 2021-2027.

## HAF Programmes

This encompasses the Home Affairs Funs Program structure, **output indicators**, **fund objectives**, and the **role** of management and control systems.

## Program Implementation and Monitoring Framework

This includes templates, contracts, indicator guidance, **performance frameworks**, **monitoring indicators**, evaluation plans, and **management and control systems** for project integration.



## Reporting and Oversight Documentation

This includes ministerial decisions, **committee reports** and minutes, **annual performance reports**, **interim reports**, diagnostic hazard reports, and forecasts of payment schedules, ensuring transparency and accountability in program execution.

## Procurement and Project Selection Information

This involves the **processes** and **documents** related to the **call for tenders** for the performance framework and the selection of projects to be tendered.



Approach indicators per  
evaluation criteria



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# Approach Indicators

## Effectiveness

- Monitoring mechanisms and mitigation strategies
- Compliance with legislation and communication strategy
- Monitoring Committee involvement and understanding
- Implementation delays and target coverage
- Resource absorption and control efficiency
- Data accuracy and impact measurement
- Implementation of best practises
- **Administrative burden and communication actions**

## Efficiency

- **Administrative** tax and system implementation impact
- **Information** systems and digitalisation level
- Economic indicators and benchmarking
- **Procedural** simplification & actor coordination
- **Technical** assistance extent and SCO use
- Programme progress and **needs alignment**

## Relevance

- **Needs-Focused Strategy**
- Evolving **Needs** Responsiveness
- **Legislation Harmonization**
- Consultation Methods and Frequency
- **Monitoring Committees Participation**
- Early/Late Stakeholder Engagement

## Coherence

- Number of **additional interventions**
- Degree of potential for **complementarity**
- Managing Authorities' **coordination level/strategy overlap**

## EU Added Value

- **Additional benefits** on exceeding targets
- **Degree of dependence** on Community funding
- Degree of **improvement** of **stakeholders' knowledge** of project implementation

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# 03 | Programme Analysis



# AMIF Programme

Output Indicators and Results



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# AMIF Intervention Logic



## General Objective



The effective management of migration flows



- Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East region and difficult living conditions create continuous migratory flows towards Cyprus
- The existing structures and limited staff compared to the increasing migratory flows increase the risk of inability to respond



## Current State



## Specific Objectives

- Common European Asylum System
- Legal migration and integration
- Irregular migration and integration
- Irregular migration and return/readmission
- Solidarity among Member States

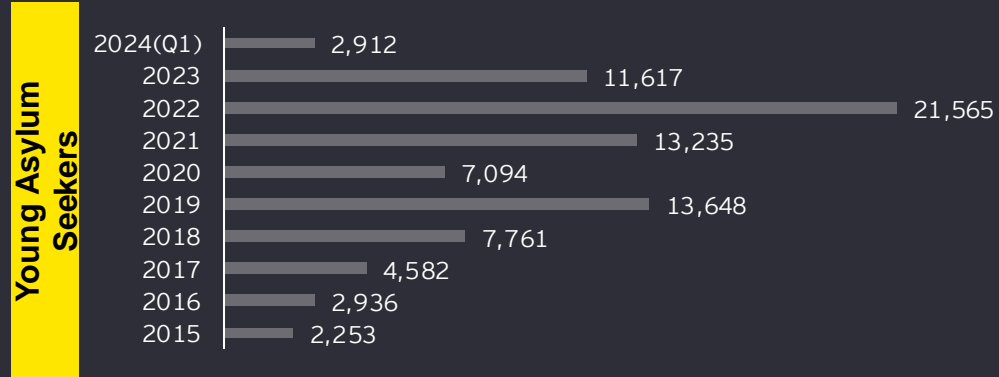


## Project Indicators

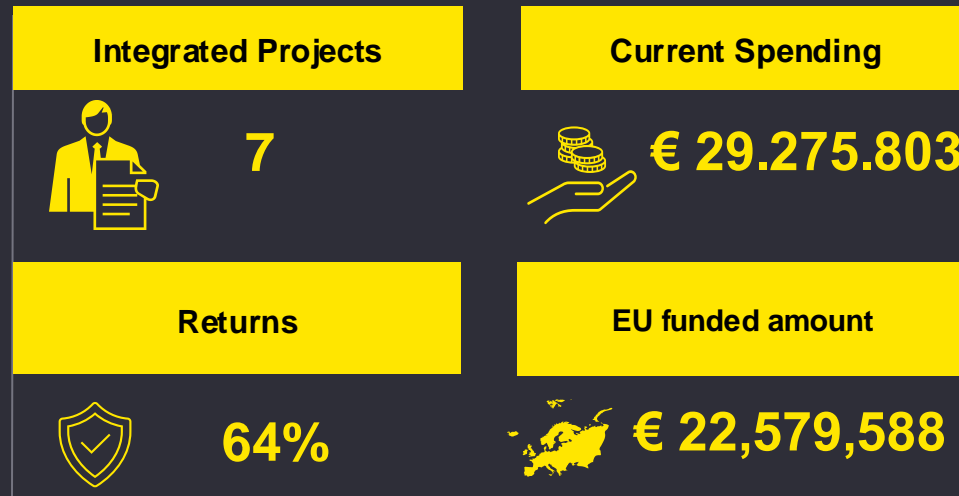


- Migrants supported
- Renovated reception facilities
- Participants in pre-departure measures
- Local authorities supported
- Information packages for legal migration
- Migrants applying for family reunification
- Migrants using mobility measures
- Integration projects where local authorities are beneficiaries
- Participants in training
- New and updated equipment
- Returnees receiving reintegration and pre-departure support
- Detention centres created and renovated
- Personnel trained

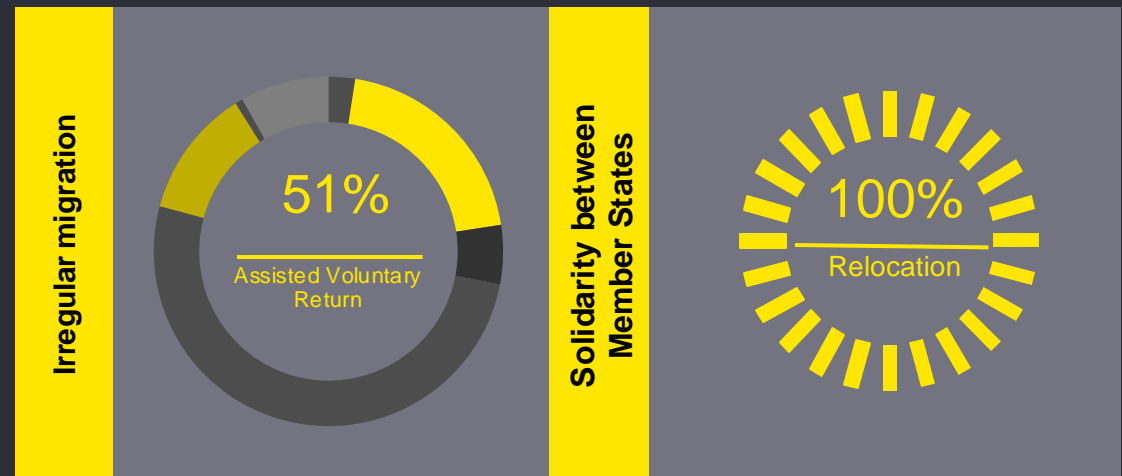
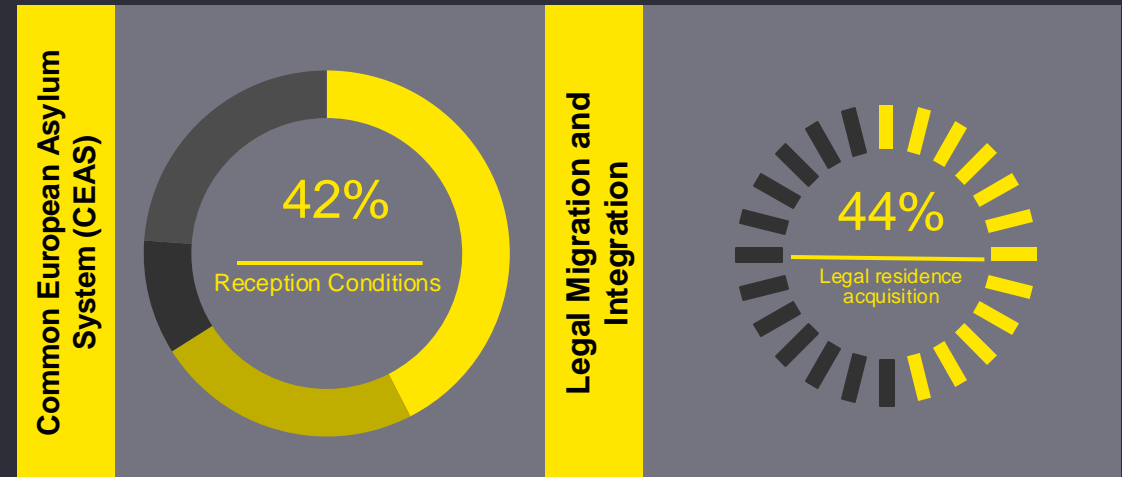
## Current State



## Integrated Projects

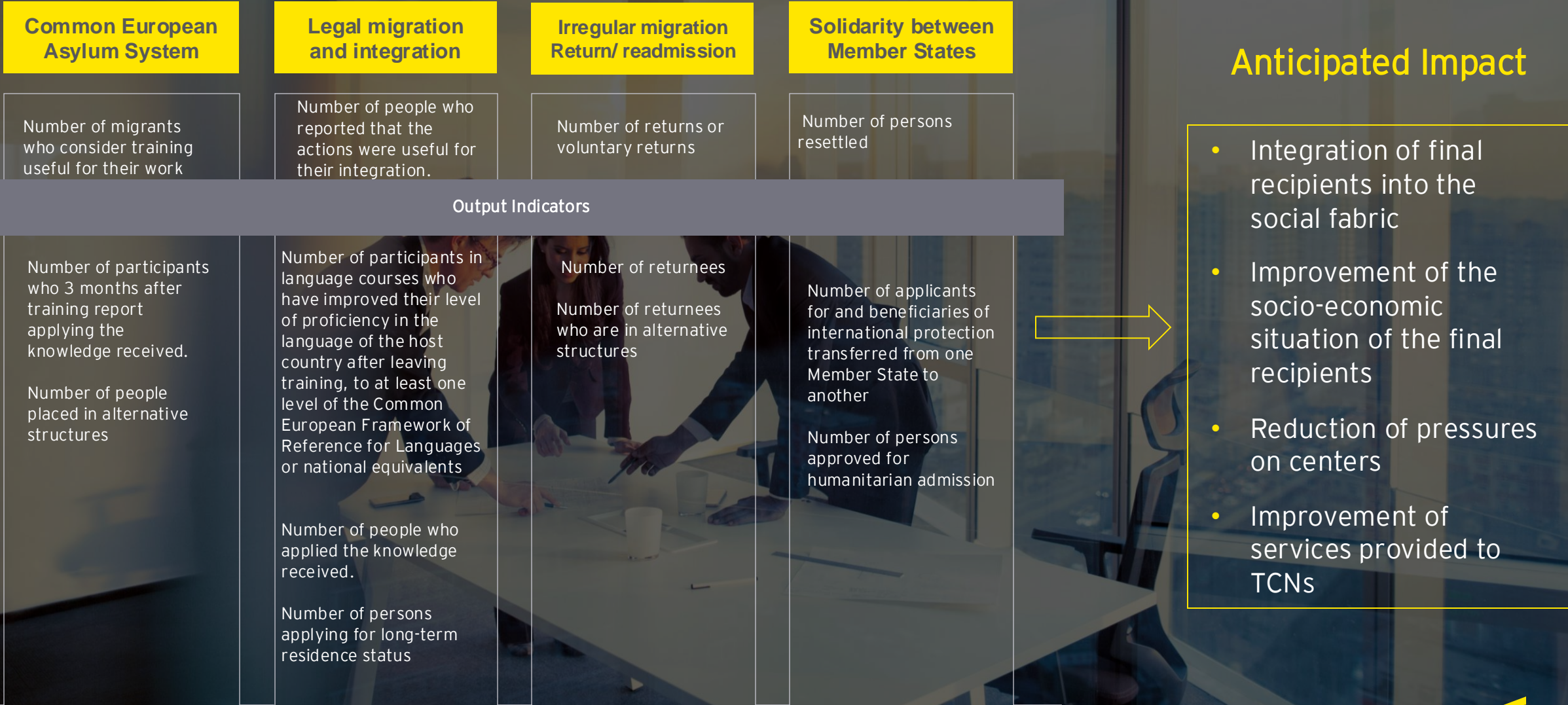


## Allocated Resources by Specific Objective





# AMIF Programme Output Indicators and Anticipated Impact





# BMVI Programme

Output Indicators and Results



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# BMVI Intervention Logic



## General Objective



Strong and effective European integrated border management of the external borders, while ensuring the free movement of persons



- Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East region and difficult living conditions create continuous migratory flows towards Cyprus
- The existing structures and limited staff compared to the increasing migratory flows increase the risk of inability to respond



## Current State



## Specific Objectives

- European integrated border management
- Support for a common visa policy



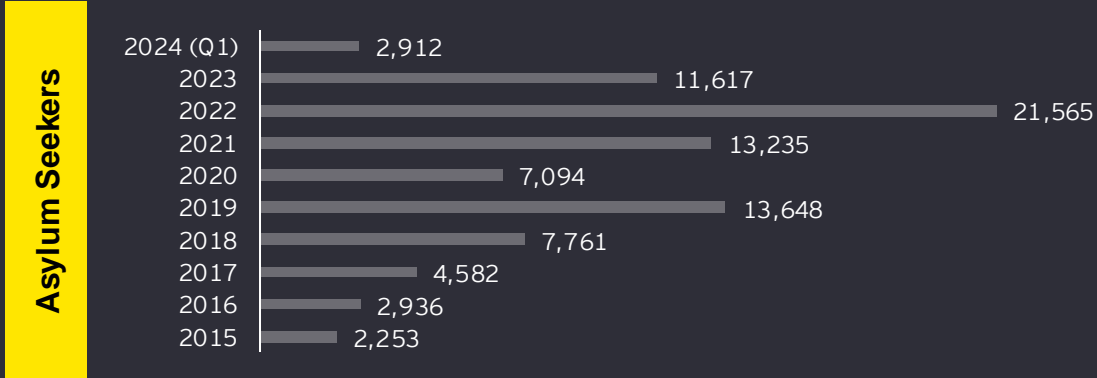
## Project Indicators



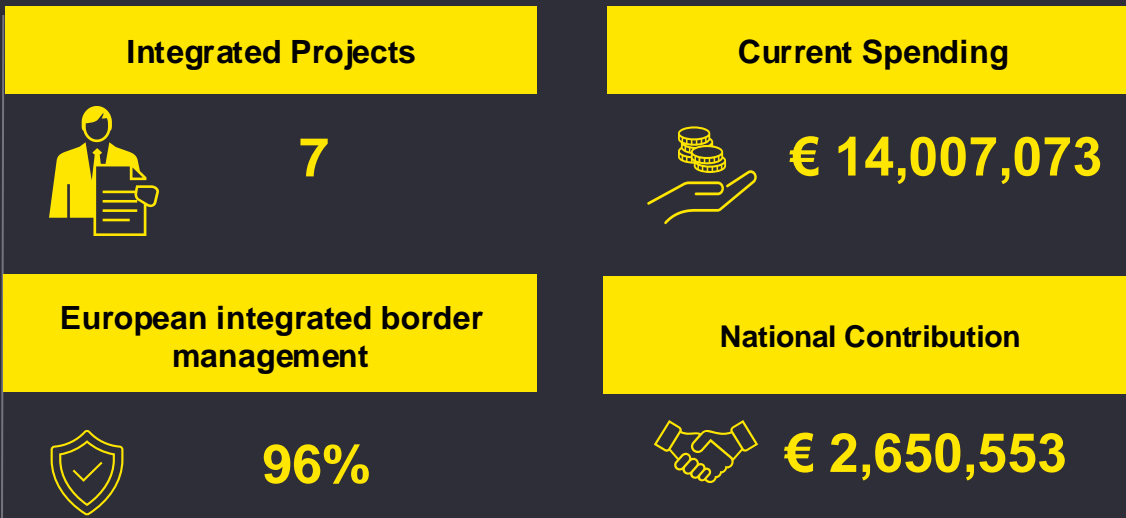
- Types of equipment purchased for border crossing points
- Infrastructures maintained/repaired
- Reference points (hotspots) supported
- Facilities for border crossing points constructed/upgraded
- Aerial, maritime and land means acquired
- Participants supported
- Officers/liaison officers placed in third countries
- Information functions and large-scale IS developed/maintained/upgraded
- Cooperation projects with third countries
- People who have applied for international protection at border crossing points
- Projects supporting the digitization of visa processing
- Staff placed in consulates in third countries
- Properties rented/depreciated



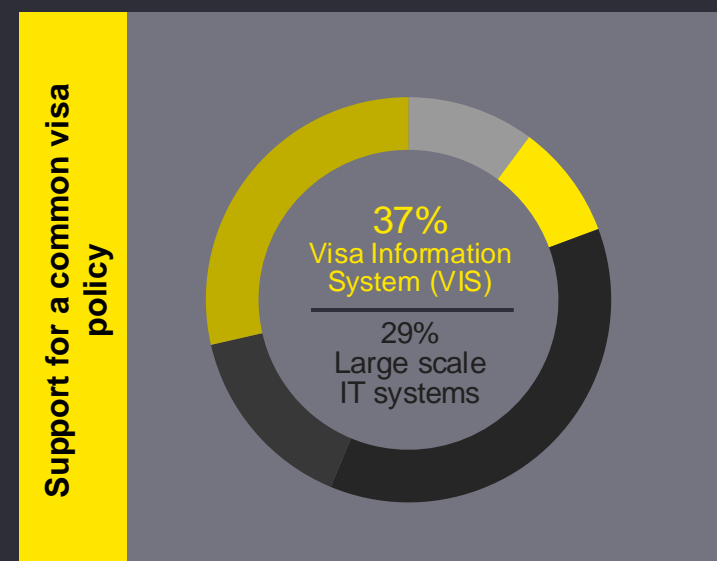
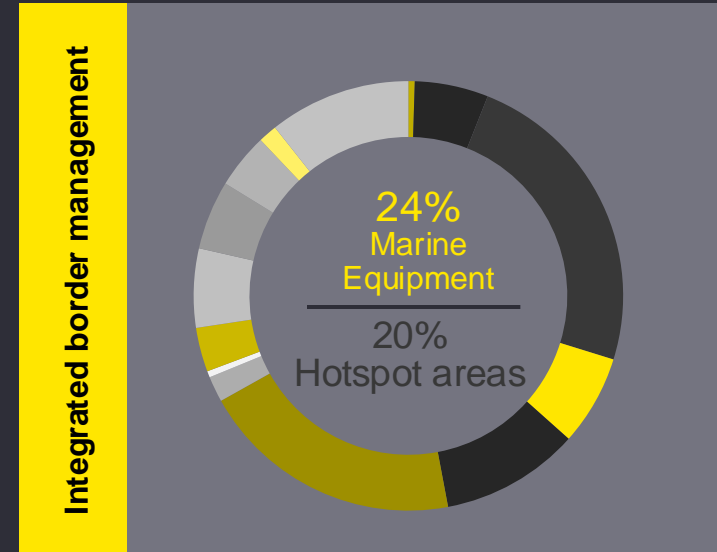
## Current State



## Integrated Projects



## Allocated Resources by Specific Objective



# BMVI Programme Output Indicators and Anticipated Impact

## European integrated border management

Number of equipment registered in the technical equipment group of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

### Output Indicators

Number of equipment made available to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

Number of initial/improved forms of cooperation between national authorities and the Eurosur National Coordination Centre(NCC)

Number of border crossings through automated border control and electronic gates

Number of recommendations addressed by Schengen evaluations and vulnerability assessments in the field of border management

## Support for common visa policy

Number of new/upgraded consulates outside the Schengen area.

Number of recommendations addressed by Schengen evaluations in the area of the common visa policy.

Number of visa applications using digital means.

Number of forms of cooperation initiated/improved between Member States on visa processing.

Number of participants reporting three months after the training activity that they are using the skills and competences acquired during the training.

## Anticipated Impact

- Controlled entry into the territory of the Republic of Cyprus
- Monitoring of the maritime area with land, air, and sea means
- Improvement of infrastructure
- Effective visa procedure



# ISF Programme

Output Indicators and Results



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# ISF Intervention Logic



## General Objective



Ensuring cybersecurity, assistance and protection, security through combating terrorism, radicalization, serious and organized crime, victims of criminal acts, and crisis response readiness



- Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East region and difficult living conditions create continuous migratory flows towards Cyprus
- The existing structures and limited staff compared to the increasing migratory flows increase the risk of inability to respond



## Current State



## Specific Objectives

- Exchange of information
- Strengthening cross-border cooperation
- Strengthening Member States' capacities with regard to the objectives of the Fund



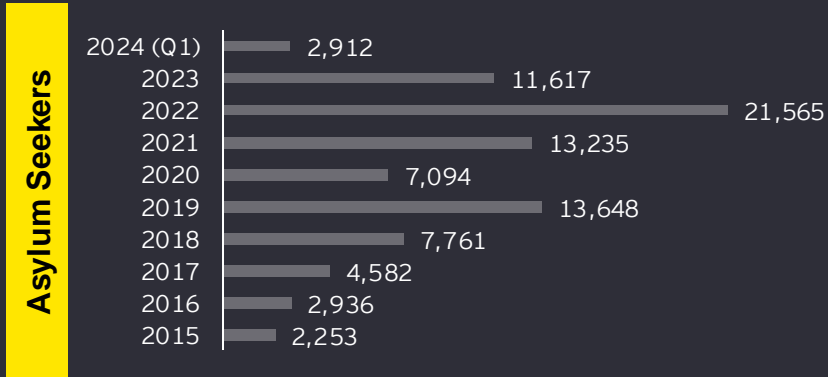
## Project Indicators



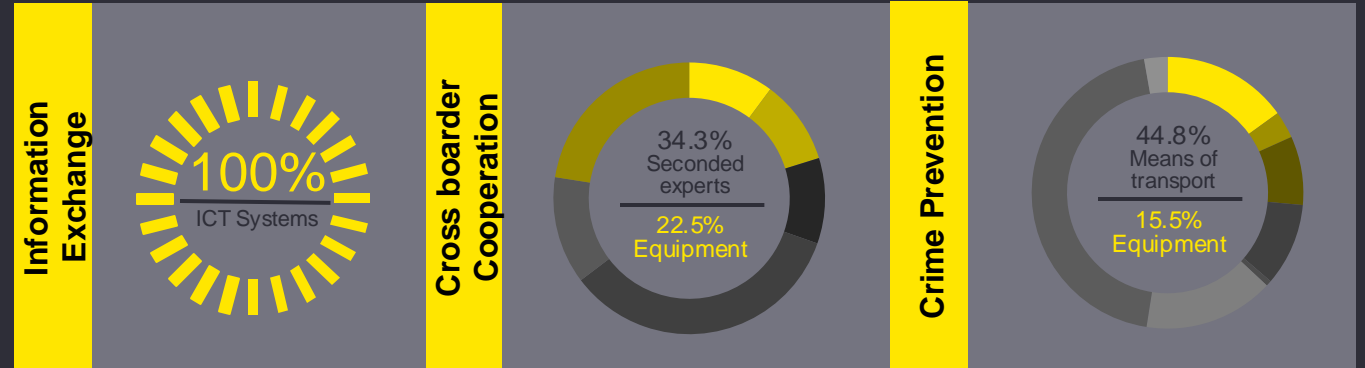
- Participants in educational activities
- Expert meetings/workshops/study visits/joint exercises
- IT systems created/adapted/maintained
- Types of equipment purchased
- Cross-border operations
- Transport means purchased for cross-border activities
- Exchange programs/workshops/study visits
- Transport means purchased
- Infrastructure items/security installations/tools/mechanisms constructed/purchased/updated
- Projects for crime prevention
- Projects for providing assistance to victims of criminal acts
- Crime victims assisted

# ISF Current State and Integrated Projects

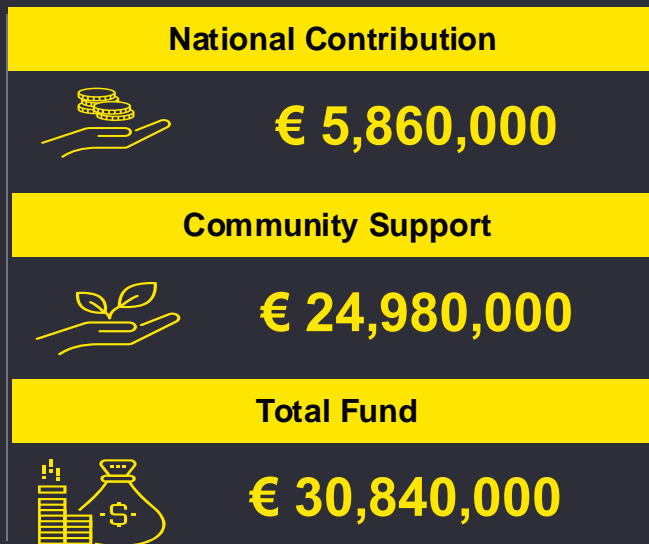
## Current State



## Allocated Resources by Specific Objective



## Internal Security Fund



## Integrated Projects



# ISF Programme Output Indicators and Anticipated Impact

## Improving and facilitating the exchange of information

Number of participants who consider training useful for their work

## Improving and strengthening cross-border cooperation

The estimated value of assets frozen in cross-border operations.

## Strengthening capacities to prevent and combat crime, terrorism and radicalism

Number of initiatives developed/extended to prevent radicalisation

### Output Indicators

Number of ICT systems made interoperable in Member States on EU security and decentralised information systems/with international databases.

Number of administrative units that have installed new or adapted mechanisms/procedures/guidance for information exchange with other MS/EU organisations/international organisations/third countries.

Number of participants reporting three months after leaving training that they are using the skills and competences acquired during the training.

Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations.  
 Quantity of weapons seized in the context of cross-border operations.  
 Number of administrative units that have developed/adapted, existing mechanisms/procedures/tools/guidance for cooperation with other Member States/EU organisations/international organisations/third countries

Number of personnel involved in cross-border operations  
 Number of recommendations taken into account by Schengen assessment

Number of initiatives developed/extended for witness protection/whistleblower support  
 Number of critical infrastructure/common areas with new/adapted facilities protecting against safety-related risks  
 Number of participants who find training useful for their job.  
 Number of participants reporting three months after leaving training that they are using the skills and competences acquired during the training.

## Anticipated Impact

- Improvement of the sense of security, reduction of incidents of serious crime and terrorism
- Effective crisis management
- Effective cooperation between Member States
- Control of criminal acts through information exchange



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# 04 | Evaluation Findings

## Effectiveness

### General

- **Difficulties** in effective management of projects implemented through a **call for public contracts**.
- **The EFD** started some projects that were **low risk**, to extend the implementation window and ensure financial resources are not lost.
- Even though there were **no Grant Agreements**, the checks are carried out as they would be done if they existed.
- All projects concerning **local government** have **not yet been announced** given that Local Government is also undergoing a radical reform.
- **Beneficiaries** are obliged to submit to the MA interim reports on their projects and this has been done for one project so far.
- The **Monitoring Committees** have been extended to include more actors, however the difficulty in selecting actors remains significant.
- Regarding the **Proposal Submission Form**, it is requested to describe how the Project contributes to horizontal principles.
- **The EFD** has created the **European Funds Portal** which presents the European Policies and European Funds that support Cyprus for funding.
- There is a link for PP 2021-2027 on EFD's website which includes **HAFs' description**, their **role** and **objectives**, the logos etc.

### ISF

- Projects such as **Training of the Cyprus Police Emergency Response Unit (M.M.A.Δ)** have started **unofficial** implementation and once documents/ procedures required for their official inclusion are finalized, the Grant Agreement will be signed with **retrospective effect**.
- For **ISF projects**, the EFD faces difficulties in coordinating with the relevant bodies, mainly due to their prioritization of activities.

## Efficiency

**General**

- Based on the practices so far, the **cost per unit** is not monitored.
- Regarding the **SCOs**, the EFD follows the principle of 7% as the maximum exemption amount for indirect costs.
- The **MA procedures** are fully in line with applicable CPR and programme regulations.
- The **accounting department** follows the applicable eligibility rules for the Funds and cash flows are monitored on a **process-based basis**.
- **The EFD** is responsible for monitoring and compliance with horizontal principles.
- Through the **MIS**, procedures that are delayed will be simplified.
- There is a challenge due to lack of knowledge in the rational implementation of projects for which officers do not have relevant knowledge.

**BMVI**

- Regarding, the **BMVI** there seems to be additional knowledge in the implementation compared to the other Funds due to the relevance observed with the functions of the previous Programming Periods.

**AMIF**

- **Regarding AMIF**, there is additional knowledge in the implementation compared to other Funds due to the relevance observed with the functions of the Ministry of Interior.



## Relevance

### AMIF/ISF

- The **difficulties** in starting the project on time, justify non-relevance to the framework.
- No changes have emerged to the projects justifying non-relevance to the framework.
- **No savings** have yet become apparent mainly because the implementation of the Programme is in the early stages.
- **The new needs** that arise, contribute to delay and smooth implementation of the Program as it was designed.
- **Delays** are increased by considering other parameters such as significant administrative burden, staffing etc.
- **New needs** may arise from requests from beneficiaries which are assessed as to whether they will be approved.

### BMVI

- Regarding, the **BMVI** the EFD cooperates with various bodies such as Cyprus Police which absorb a large part of the financial resources.
- Due to the nature of the MoF's work there is high interchangeability in the staff responsible for implementation of projects which result in internal knowledge not being built in the beneficiary.

## Coherence

### General

- An effort was made by the EFD to guide stakeholder in defining **Specific Objectives** based on the needs it is expected to cover.
- MA ensured that **double funding** of actions for same policy areas was avoided.
- Funding allocated through shared management, including resettlement and humanitarian admission etc.
- As the **EFD is MA for all three HAFs**, there is connection between them as they are designed and monitored by the same team of Officers.
- To ensure **complementarity and synergies** with other EU Funds as regards to operations, the MA is in close cooperation with the competent unit of the Treasury of the RoC.
- There are **no synergies with other EU funds** although there is potential for complementarity.

### BMVI/AMIF

- Based on the **BMVI Programme Document**, the various MAs are intensifying their efforts to achieve the objective of complementarity.
- On a practical level however **each funding initiative** is implemented in order to implement the individual strategic programme and serve the policy area concerned and as a result there is lack of interconnection of programmes.
- **A joint forum** has been set up to discuss the Action Plan on Migration, where all stakeholders participate and discuss the general policy areas and is a means of monitoring the implementation of interventions.



## EU Added Value

### BMVI/AMIF

- **Large scale projects** such as Kofinou Centre where the State makes significant contribution show added value to EU.
- The projects aim at the **wider social impact** on other target groups.
- **High dependency on social financing** due to Cyprus being the largest recipient of migratory flows in the EU.

### ISF

- The EU through the ISF seeks to **enhance the security** of the Member States and strengthen the capacity of national governments to address and manage security-related challenges.
- The projects implemented by the HAFs aim to create **added value at EU level**.
- At the same time, the projects aim at the **wider social impact** on other target groups.
- **High dependency on social financing** due to Cyprus being the largest recipient of migratory flows in the EU.

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05 |

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suggestions



# Conclusions



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# Conclusions (1/2)

## 1 Timely planning of the Program

- Program was designed based on the set timetables, adhering to all procedures, including drafting, stakeholder consultation, resource allocation, and objective structuring.

## 2 Implementation challenges/Staffing

- Low number of permanent MA officers compared to the volume of work and the existing delays in their implementation.
- Based on their contracts, FTEs must be exclusively engaged in the monitoring/control of projects rather than addressing the increasing number of tasks related to horizontal subjects due to CPR
- Financial tasks are handled by FTEs of the Treasury officers, while beneficiaries like the Asylum Service rely on rotating fixed-term staff.

## 3 Implementation Challenges/ Adoption of CPR

- CPR adoption increases administrative burden and delays Programme implementation.
- CPR was adopted on 1/1/2021 during Programme preparation finalization.
- Familiarizing the Home Affairs Funds ecosystem with CPR is challenging.
- Actions began in 2021, but grant agreements were signed late in 2023 for legal grounding.
- Delays also stem from insufficient knowledge and resources to apply new CPR practices/procedures.

## 4 Funding strain from ongoing migration

- Continuous migration flows lead to increasing needs.
- Addressing these needs requires more investment in migration management.
- Frequent programme/project adjustments to meet challenges.
- Emerging needs contribute to delays and disrupt the Programme's smooth execution.
- Compliance with the Programme's framework despite changes/delays

## 5 Implementation challenges/ Lack of technical expertise

- Diverse needs lead to varied project subjects.
- Knowledge gaps in project implementation due to untrained officers.
- Recruitment from state services doesn't ensure project approval expertise.
- Officers without relevant backgrounds risk approving lower quality or non-compliant projects.

## 6 Administrative burden due to reduced digitization

- Frequent large data submissions to MA and EC, mostly printed, consuming time and prone to errors.
- Officers often return documents for completion, causing delays.
- The process adds psychological stress to overburdened staff, risking conflicts.
- Non-operational MIS further delays procedures outside the system.

# Conclusions (2/2)

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## Funding schedules affected by government procedures

- Projects **must** adhere to **national law**, risking approval delays.
- Compliance requires **extra procedural control**.
- Public procurement projects have size-dependent specific procedures.
- Mandatory completion of procedures **may extend beyond set timeframes**.
- Extended procedures heighten the risk of losing funding.

8

## Complementarity between HAFs and other co-financing funds

- **Limited complementarity** in actions between different Funds.
- Complementarity among Funds with other political priorities is not evident.

9

## High staff turnover and knowledge loss

- Programme managed by **potentially rotated staff** at MA and Beneficiary levels.
- Staff changes increase risk of **knowledge loss** and **process delays**.
- New **staff learning** curves further **delay** Programme implementation.





# Suggestions



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# Proposals for action (1/2)

## 1 Timely planning of the Program

Adherence to the **timetables** as agreed.

## 2 Implementation challenges/Staffing

- **Assess** administrative burden.
- Document other Member States' **best practices** for employee **workload ratios**.
- Analyze **gaps** between **needs** and **capacity** and take necessary **actions**.

## 3 Implementation Challenges/ Adoption of CPR

- **Align** with the **TSI - 22111** project for capacity building funded by DG REFORM.
- Offer **ongoing support** to Beneficiaries on Regulation provisions via **workshops** and **presentations throughout** project execution.
- Seek an **extension** of the Programme's duration to **minimize the risk** of losing EU funding, pending approval from EU authorities.

## 4 Funding strain from ongoing migration

- **Allocate funds** more efficiently to **urgent needs**.
- Request **increased total funding** to meet challenges from ongoing migration.
- **Showcase results** and raise **awareness** to foster stronger political resolve for comprehensive solutions.

## 5 Implementation challenges/ Lack of technical expertise

- **Boost technical assistance funding** for expertise in knowledge-deficient project areas.
- Assign more tasks to state departments with **necessary technical knowledge**, like civil engineering.

## 6 Administrative burden due to reduced digitization

- **Promptly** implement and utilize the **Integrated Information System**.
- **Simplify procedures** and leverage state technologies for Home Affairs Funds.
- **Decrease** the **number of approval stages** for expenses and projects.

# Proposals for action (2/2)

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7

## Funding schedules affected by government procedures

- Conduct **diagnostic checks** on **high-risk contracts** for delays and implement special measures like prioritization and thorough preparation.
- Establish more **realistic timelines** for executing these contracts.

8

## Complementarity between HAFs and other co-financing funds

- **Increase meetings** with other Managing Authorities to explore potential **bridging actions** between Funds.
- Record **projects** that could offer **complementarity**.

9

## High staff turnover and knowledge loss

- Extend the tenure of Officers managing Home Affairs Funds.
- Enhance the training on procedures for Officers.
- Coordinate with the TSI - 22111 project for "Capacity building and improving the overall performance of the Home Affairs Funds in Cyprus" funded by DG REFORM.





# Q&A Session

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