

Statement on the Partnership Principle in the EU Asylum and Migration Fund

May 2013

In November 2011, the European Commission published a set of legislative proposals on EU funding in the area of Home Affairs for the period 2014-2020, which are currently being discussed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. As part of these proposals, an Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) will be created, which will play an important role in financing activities addressing the needs of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants across Europe.

The proposals establish in each EU Member State a “partnership” with key stakeholders for the development and implementation of national programmes for the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Internal Security Fund.¹

We very much welcome the fact that the European Commission fully acknowledges the importance of a partnership between Member States and all stakeholders. Migration issues are by their very nature complex and are addressed by a large number of actors, such as governments, civil society and international organisations. In most Member States, non-governmental actors provide much needed assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees and other categories of migrants. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and international organisations have extensive experience in delivering services on the ground and can respond in a flexible manner to specific situations, profiles and needs. This rich experience and knowledge should be included in the programming of the AMF by means of a partnership principle, which implies an on-going structured dialogue with these actors. Such a partnership would ensure that funding priorities match identified needs, but also that, at a time of austerity, EU funding can be used for actions that focus on persons and families that are most in need, and that offer highest cost-benefit outcomes and the largest impact possible.

Austerity means that difficult choices are being made that directly affect the living conditions of populations in many Member States. Such choices are often made without consulting those most affected. The AMF partnership principle is thus a valuable instrument to ensure that, in our democratic societies, an open debate takes place on how to make the best use of public funds in a way that benefits the persons most in need. This is especially important for the AMF, whose priorities will be set for the next seven years, and whose resources will need to be allocated between broad and diverse policy areas, such as asylum, integration and return.

While we welcome the inclusion of a partnership principle in the AMF, we are concerned that the proposals do not include an obligation for Member States to consult with CSO experts and international organisations, but only with national public authorities. Over the past seven years, we have observed diverging levels of national engagement with stakeholders within Member States, despite the existence of a partnership principle in the SOLID-Funds (2007-2013). Only a few Member States have engaged in permanent and meaningful dialogue with civil society organisations for the development and implementation of their national programmes.

¹ See Art. 12 of the [Proposal for a Regulation laying down general provisions on the Asylum and Migration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management](#) (COM(2011) 752 final), 11 November 2011.

As a result, in March 2012, over 40 European organisations called for the establishment of a *mandatory* partnership principle with CSOs and international organisations within the AMF². In its comments to the AMF³, UNHCR also recognised the need to establish, as a matter of principle, a national partnership that would allow for an open consultation process, inclusive of all stakeholders. Furthermore, this partnership should not be restricted to the provision of inputs to the programming process of the AMF, but should also provide that CSOs and international organisations have a role with regard to the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation.

The importance of such a principle was recognised by the European Commission, which made it mandatory in its proposals on the EU Common Strategic Framework funds 2014-2020⁴ and in its document preparing the ground for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership⁵. Furthermore, both the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have called for a stronger partnership principle with civil society and international organisations in future Home Affairs funding instruments⁶. Finally, the European Parliament's current position on the AMF supports the inclusion of a mandatory partnership principle with international organisations and bodies representing civil society, such as non-governmental organisations and social partners⁷.

While the negotiations on the Asylum and Migration fund are still on-going, and despite the current dissenting position of the European Parliament, the programming process of the fund has already started, with the first "Policy Dialogues" between Member States and the European Commission due to take place in June 2013. We welcome that some Member States, ahead of these discussions, have already taken steps to consult with CSOs and international organisations. However, we also note with concern that this has not been the case for many Member States. The added value of the partnership principle could be seriously reduced by not consulting with CSOs and international organisations before the policy dialogues take place. It would also be a missed opportunity to ensure that the AMF fully addresses key issues and challenges identified on the ground.

Therefore, we would like to urge the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure that the partnership principle with international and civil society organisations is made mandatory for the Asylum and Migration Fund.

² [Civil Society Statement and Recommendations on the future EU funding in the area of migration and asylum 2014-2020](#), March 2012.

³ See UNHCR comments "[Funding for international protection in Europe](#)", August 2012, p. 14.

⁴ See Art. 5 of the Proposal for a Regulation on Common provisions on the ERDF, the ESF, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

⁵ [Commission staff working document on the partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds](#), SWD (2012) 106 final, 24.04.2012.

⁶ See [Opinion of the EESC SOC/456 on the Asylum and Migration Fund and Internal Security Fund](#), 11 July 2012, OJ 2012 C 299, P. 110, § 2.9, and [Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'EU financial instruments in home affairs' funds](#), OJ 2012 C 277, p. 25 and 26.

⁷ See Art. 4(a) of the [Draft Mandate for interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund](#) (COM(2011)0751 – C7-0443/2011 – 2011/0366(COD)), LIBE Committee, 12.12.2012.



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churches' commission for migrants in europe



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European Council
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European Network Against Racism

Réseau européen contre le racisme



International Catholic
Migration Commission



International
Rehabilitation
Council for
Torture Victims

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PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON
UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS



Save the Children



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés