



EUROCITIES statement on the European Asylum and Migration Fund

Cities are committed to making integration work better in Europe. We consider the future fund for asylum and migration an important instrument for local actors to develop better policies in this field. Having identified the shortcomings of the current integration fund in an evaluation¹ conducted with the Centre for European Policy Studies and a coalition of civil society organisations, we welcome the efforts in the draft regulation to strengthen the local dimension of funds, both in their management and in the supported actions.

The general regulation on the Asylum and Migration Fund and the instrument for financial support of police cooperation

- **Emergency assistance (Article 9):** Add 'local and regional authorities' as new point (e)

In their responsibility for social services and social cohesion, local authorities shoulder the effects of a large and rapid inflow of migrants ('emergency situation'). They should therefore be included, alongside national governments and NGOs, in the list of bodies that are eligible for emergency assistance in responding to migratory pressure in article 9.

- **List of elements to be examined by the European Commission prior to the approval of national programmes (Article 14, 5):** Add 'implementation of the partnership principle' as new point 'g' to secure the implementation of the partnership principle (Article 12, 1-4)

We welcome the establishment of the partnership principle in the draft regulation stating that the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of national programmes should take place together with 'the competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities' (Art 12, 1-4).

We believe that it is important to provide guidelines on the implementation of the partnership principle, e.g. in the European Commission's Communication preceding the policy dialogue.

We believe that the full implementation of the partnership principle should be included in the list of elements to be examined by the Commission before approval of national programmes in article 14, 5 a-f and be discussed in the policy dialogue with member states.

¹ Centre for European Policy Studies (2011): Integration as a two-way process in the EU? Assessing the relationship between the European Integration Fund and the common basic principles on integration. Sergio Carrera and Anais Faure Atger. www.ceps.eu/ceps/download/5837.

- **Integration as priority in the national programmes**

We support merging the current integration, refugee and returns funds into one fund as this better reflects the reality that, for the most part, refugees and third country nationals follow a similar integration path and have similar needs (for example language training and introductory courses).

Merging the funds however poses the risk that one area, e.g. integration, is neglected, while another area, e.g. return, receives the bulk of the funding. We suggest that member states and the European Commission agree on making integration and inclusion a priority in the national programmes and the Union Actions. This will align the fund to the Europe 2020 strategy and its objectives on education, employment and social inclusion.

- **NGOs based in third countries as eligible partners in voluntary return measures**

Cooperation with partners from civil society in third countries is a key element of successful and fair voluntary return measures as these organisations can provide support for migrants after their return. Therefore, the eligibility of non governmental organisations to be partners in the return strand of the fund should be made explicit in the horizontal regulation.

The regulation establishing the Asylum and Migration fund

- **Resettlement (Article 7): Add 'local and regional programmes' in point 'a'**

Although admission of refugees is the responsibility of member states, cities can be important drivers of resettlement through local schemes (as, for instance, the role of the city of Munich in the 'save me' campaign has shown). We therefore propose listing local and regional resettlement initiatives as eligible actions under Article 7.

- **Specific actions (Annex 2): Add 'initiatives for improving multi-level coordination of integration policies between member states, regions and municipalities' as new point '3a'**

We believe that the list of additional actions for member states according to article 16 (Annex 2) for which a separate budget is reserved should not only support mutual learning among member states but also between member states, regions and municipalities. This would help to improve the multi-level coordination of integration policies, which is currently a major challenge for advancing integration policies in Europe. We believe that the EU represents a suitable arena for fostering multi-level cooperation and should support such actions.