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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum
Subject: Financing of the External Dimension - Discussion paper

As stated in the Presidency's Discussion Paper 13996/23 on "Asylum and Migration: external dimension", discussed at the last JHA Council on 19 October, while the total amount of EU funding for asylum, forced displacement and migration has increased, our level of resources is still insufficient to meet the challenge we face in this area. In short, more funds, greater coherence of funding and more effective and efficient implementation are needed.

The current complex migration context, marked by increasing migratory pressure, the approaching mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the need to find a sustainable scheme beyond 2024 in order to maintain our credibility vis-à-vis our partner countries of origin and transit, make it essential to further deepen discussions on the topic of the financing of the external dimension of migration.

This paper proposes to discuss two essential elements of this financing: 1) how to facilitate the strategic analysis of financing of the external dimension of Migration and 2) how to improve its effectiveness in preventing irregular migration flows, including countering migrant smuggling.

1. FACILITATING STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF FINANCING OF THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF MIGRATION:

There is a multiplicity of EU funds that can be used to finance external dimension migration projects. And a multiplicity of actors that manage them.

DG NEAR manages the IPA-III funds and the NDICI funds earmarked for our Neighbourhood. DG INTPA manages the NDICI funds for other regions. The Services on Foreign Policy Instruments manages the Rapid Response component of the NDICI funds. DG HOME manages the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF); with the majority of HOME funds implemented by EU Member States in shared management. Certain EU agencies, such as Frontex, EUAA or Europol, also have their own budget in their respective area of competence. All of these funds or budget lines can be used, at least in part, for projects with an external migration dimension. The overall monitoring by Member States of these funds also involves different departments (Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Home Affairs, Migration, Inclusion and/or Finance).

The multiplicity of funds and actors involved (often with a different sensibility to the migration phenomenon), as well as the complex and technical nature of this matter, pose a challenge for the EU and its Member States, as it makes analysis significantly more difficult. This, in turn, hampers the corresponding strategic decision-making.

Against this background, changes should be implemented to make it easier for the EU and its Member States to analyse the financing of the external dimension of migration. Three such changes have been identified as potentially useful: improvements in the Council's working methodology, improvements in the content and dissemination of information on the financing for the external dimension, and the introduction of an "External Dimension Migration Marker" in certain funds.

- **Working methodology:** With the entry into force of the NDICI regulation, the establishment by the Commission of the “Coordination Group on Migration under the NDICI - Global Europe and the Member States bilateral cooperation instruments" represented an improvement on the previous working methodology. However, more ways of facilitating the coordination and alignment of objectives between the different actors involved in the financing of the external dimension of migration should be explored.

For instance, the possibility of strengthening some of the existing Council working parties could be considered in order to enable regular, comprehensive, systematic and frequent monitoring of all the EU funds/budgets that can be used to finance external dimension migration projects (NDICI funds, HOME funds, IPA-III, EU Foreign Affairs budget, relevant Agencies, etc.). Alternatively, an Ad Hoc Council Mechanism could be set up for this purpose.

- **Content and distribution of reports:** Written information on external dimension migration funding is sometimes too general or broad (such as the Annual Reports on "Implementation of EU External Action Instruments") or too specific or technical (those describing the projects to be approved in the NDICI Coordination Group on Migration). It is not always easy to know how much migration funding a third country is receiving at any given time, because the data and figures often relate to projects with several beneficiary countries or which take place over several years. Member States often do not have up-to-date information.

Therefore, regular, frequent and systematic dissemination of written information containing relevant information on external dimension funding would be advisable. All available and quantifiable sources of funding should be included, broken down by beneficiary country, type of action, etc. The Council Working Party or Mechanism mentioned in the previous point could be in charge of identifying and analysing what information should be expanded.

In addition, the information provided through the EU's official online databases, including the Financial Transparency System (FTS) and EU Aid Explorer, could also be increased and improved.

- **External dimension migration markers:** The migration marker system built into NDICI funds, whereby indicatively 10% should be dedicated to actions on migration management and forced displacement, including root causes, is an improvement that could be also adapted in other Funds.

The three proposed improvements would make it possible to detect duplication and gaps, imbalances and best practices not only in European funds, but also in the Member States' financing of the migration external dimension. They would also make it possible to overcome technical and legal difficulties in the implementation of the various actions. And, most especially, they would facilitate a better strategic assessment of external dimension funding by the Member States.

2. IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MIGRATION EXTERNAL DIMENSION FUNDING IN PREVENTING AND COMBATING IRREGULAR MIGRATORY FLOWS:

The following four proposals could improve the effectiveness of the financing of external dimension for the prevention of irregular migratory flows.

- More executive and short-term funding mechanisms to prevent irregular migration crises or strong increases in the numbers of arrivals: A comprehensive approach to migration requires addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. This effort is crucial to help reduce irregular migratory flows in the long term.

However, funding actions that address the root causes does not effectively address the migration crises that have already erupted. Even more importantly, root causes funding also fails to prevent impending crises that are building up. For this, a complementary, more executive and short-term approach is needed. The EU and its Member States must invest more efforts in the “preventive model” by increasing the funds available for this purpose and by articulating procedures to activate them more quickly.

This is of an utmost importance if we want to progress from a « reactive model » to a « preventive model » in the fight against irregular migration, as discussed in the September JHA Council¹.

- **More operational funding:** It is also essential to invest more funds to support operational efforts in third countries, including in the area of border management (purchase of land vehicles and vessels for border surveillance and search and rescue, means for police detection, increased deployment of migration liaison officers, direct support to cover the costs of border management, etc.) and of migration management (funding for the needs of forcibly displaced persons hosted by partner countries, or measures to support the return of stranded migrants in third countries of origin or transit, etc.).

NDICI funds are a mainly a development tool, that might not always adapt to the more operational needs that the “preventive model” requires. If that is the case, the EU and its Member States should consider the possibility of strengthening other funding tools of our external dimension toolbox.

- **Reinforcement of staff specialised in migration and security issues in EU Delegations:** In order to adequately assess operational funding needs, it is necessary to have: 1) specific knowledge / training in migration and security issues, 2) in-depth knowledge of the needs of partner countries of origin and transit. In this regard, it is crucial that EU Delegations have staff specialised in the operational field of migration.

¹ Discussion paper 12990/1/23 REV 1 «The external dimension of migration. From a reactive to a preventive model».

- “**More for more**”: Finally, perhaps the most important element for our funding to be effective is the genuine involvement of partner countries of origin and transit. This is only possible if our most engaged partners feel that they are receiving strong support and fair treatment from us. To this end, it is imperative that we implement with determination the principle "more for more", so that those partners who are active in the fight against irregular migration know that they have our support, irrespective of the number of arrivals.

QUESTIONS:

- *The multiplicity of funds and actors involved in the financing of the external dimension funding makes it difficult for Member States to analyse it strategically. What improvements can be made to the Council's working methodology and the information distribution to facilitate a deeper understanding and analysis?*
- *What improvements can be made to increase the effectiveness of the financing of the external dimension as a means of preventing and combating irregular migratory flows?*
