

European
Commission

Annual Activity Report 2023

DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

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Acronyms and other short forms

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AAR	Annual Activity Report
BMVI	Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa policy
CEPOL	EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training
DGs	Directorates General
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget
DG CNECT	Directorate-General Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG EMPL	Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG MARE	Directorate-General Maritime affairs and Fisheries
DG MOVE	Directorate-General Mobility and Transport
DG REGIO	Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMAS	Emergency Assistance
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
EPPO	European Public Prosecutor 's Office
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum (successor of EASO as of 19/1/2022)
EURES	European Employment Services
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
Europol	EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FY	Financial Year
FP7	7 th Framework Programme
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ISF	Internal Security Fund
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MSC	Management and Control System
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
RER	Residual Error Rate
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

DG HOME IN BRIEF

The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) is responsible for EU policy, legislation, and operational action in the fields of security, borders and migration. Commissioner Ylva Johansson gives political guidance for its activities.

DG HOME policies are **shared competences** of the European Union ⁽¹⁾, based on European core values and principles: human dignity, freedom, democracy as well as the rule of law, equality, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

DG HOME's **vision** is an open and secure Europe, where people can enjoy their rights and freedoms.

DG HOME's **mission** is to help ensure that the European Union protects and makes a real positive difference in the areas of migration and security.

579° officials, temporary and contractual agents and officials seconded by the Member States worked in DG HOME in 2023. 35% of DG HOME staff is on short-term contracts. Additional staff was assigned to DG HOME in 2023 for a limited 2-year period.

Working for a comprehensive approach on migration and security, the Schengen area and borders, DG HOME prepares **legislative proposals** to establish EU rules and develops common policies in these areas; monitors and enforces Member States' correct **implementation** of applicable rules; and provides **financing** to support policies.

DG HOME hosts the **EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator**, the Commission **Counter-Terrorism Coordinator** and the **EU Return Coordinator** and the **Schengen Coordinator**. One DG HOME colleague is posted at the EU Delegation in Washington DC.

DG HOME accommodates the **Taskforce for Migration Management**, which coordinates the Union's work on all strategic, operational, legal, and financial issues related to migration management including by long term deployment of staff to Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Malta. Following the war of aggression against Ukraine, one staff member deployed to Poland, and enhanced support is given via regular short-term missions to Czechia, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary.

The EU has established **six decentralised Agencies** ⁽²⁾ in the area of Migration and Home Affairs, which have a key role in the effective implementation of Home Affairs policies. DG HOME supervises along with partner DGs (RTD, EAC, CNECT, AGRI, EMPL, ENV) the Research Executive Agency for the 'Civil Security for Society' part of the Horizon Europe programme.

In 2023, DG HOME managed a budget of EUR 4.3 billion ⁽³⁾, mainly through three Funds: the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**, the **Border Management and**

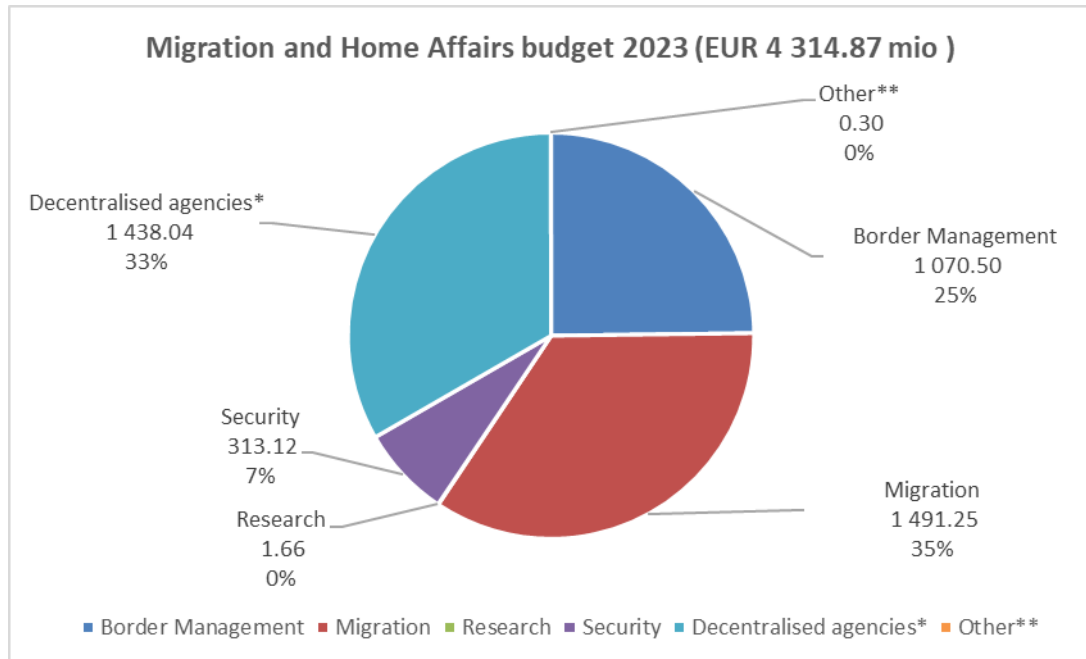
⁽¹⁾ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU – Title V of Part three).

⁽²⁾ The EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol); the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL); the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA); the EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA); the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex); <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/home/whatwedo/Pages/EU-JHA-Agencies.aspx>.

⁽³⁾ In terms of commitment appropriations expiring in 2023 as per underlying data for Annex 4 to the present annual activity report.

Visa Policy Instrument (BMVI) and the **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**. This represents almost 2.3% of EU's 2023 budget ⁽⁴⁾. Overall, HOME funds account with EUR 18.2 billion ⁽⁵⁾ for 1.5% of the MFF period 2021-2027 ⁽⁶⁾. For the implementation of the allocated budget, DG HOME uses different implementation modes ⁽⁷⁾:

- A. **Shared management** of AMIF/BMVI/ISF (2021-2027), AMIF/ISF funds (2014-2020).
- B. **Direct management** of grants and procurement.
- C. **Indirect management** of decentralised agencies and entrusted entities.



* HOME agencies: EBCGA (Frontex), EUAA, eu-LISA, Europol, Cefpol, EMCDDA
 ** Other: Global envelope, Co-delegation from DG JUST (support expenditure)

⁽⁴⁾ The total EU Budget 2023 amounted to EUR 186.62 billion, OJ L 58/32 of 23.2.2023.
⁽⁵⁾ EUR 18.2 billion does not include reinforcements/transfers from other shared management funds, but it includes fines under the BMVI.
⁽⁶⁾ The Next Generation EU or fines are not taken into account when calculating the total of the MFF 2021-2027.
⁽⁷⁾ See Part 2 for more information and reporting on the commitments that have been made in 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of DG HOME to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties ⁽⁸⁾.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and department's specific objectives

DG HOME continued to contribute mainly to the Commission's General Objective 5, *Promoting our European way of life*, in a context of the continuing Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the consequences of Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. Both crises continue to impact most home affairs priorities.

In 2023, DG HOME contributed to...

... strengthened internal security and stronger engagement with partner countries:

Fighting organised crime: Organised crime and terrorism are some of the biggest threats facing our society today. In line with the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan ⁽⁹⁾ and the **EU Security Union Strategy** ⁽¹⁰⁾, instruments to fight organised crime from different angles were presented in 2023 and linked to the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), such as the **EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime** ⁽¹¹⁾ and the **Anticorruption proposals** ⁽¹²⁾. DG HOME granted expert advice throughout the **interinstitutional negotiations** on a **number of proposals** for which it held the pen, relating to: preventing and combating trafficking in human beings ⁽¹³⁾; firearms ⁽¹⁴⁾; asset recovery and confiscation ⁽¹⁵⁾; access to interconnected bank account registries ⁽¹⁶⁾; automated search and exchange of data for Police cooperation (PRUM II) ⁽¹⁷⁾; and the mandate of the new European Union Drugs Agency ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Fighting terrorism and radicalisation: DG HOME stepped up efforts to implement the 2020 **Counter-Terrorism Agenda** ⁽¹⁹⁾, among others by presenting a **Communication on**

⁽⁸⁾ Article 17(1) Treaty on European Union.

⁽⁹⁾ [Strategic plan 2020–2024 – Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽¹⁰⁾ COM(2020) 605 final of 24.7.2020.

⁽¹¹⁾ COM(2023) 641 final of 18.10.2023.

⁽¹²⁾ COM(2023) 134 final of 3.5.2023.

⁽¹³⁾ COM(2022) 732 final of 19.12.2022.

⁽¹⁴⁾ COM(2022) 480 final of 27.10.2022.

⁽¹⁵⁾ COM(2022) 245 final of 25.5.2022.

⁽¹⁶⁾ COM(2021) 429 final of 20.7.2021.

⁽¹⁷⁾ COM(202) 748 final of 8.12.2021.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 of 27 June 2023.

⁽¹⁹⁾ COM(2020) 795 final of 9.12.2020.

countering potential threats posed by drones ⁽²⁰⁾. To prevent and counter violent extremism also in the coming years, DG HOME initiated steps for the **succession of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)** and for a report on the implementation of the Terrorist Content Online Regulation ⁽²¹⁾ as well as for its evaluation ⁽²²⁾. The attacks on wires and pipes in the Baltic Sea showed the importance of a swift implementation of the Directive on the resilience of critical entities ⁽²³⁾. DG HOME worked with the Member States on its transposition and implementation, as well as on the adoption of the Council Recommendation to strengthen the resilience of the EU critical infrastructure ⁽²⁴⁾.

Fighting crimes in a digital age: Child sexual abuse is a heinous crime. The threat of abuse is real and continued to increase over the past years, particularly online. Therefore, it was a priority to propose effective instruments against this crime. First, DG HOME delivered on an initiative announced in the 2023 Commission Work Programme and proposed the revision of the **Directive on combatting child sexual abuse** ⁽²⁵⁾ updating the criminal law rules, introducing higher penalties and more specific requirements for prevention and assistance to victims. Second, the gap in the legal basis for internet providers' voluntary detection of child sexual abuse online was closed through the proposal to **extend the Interim Regulation's duration** ⁽²⁶⁾.

Engaging partner countries on security: With Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continuing, the high-level **EU-Ukraine Security Dialogue** initiated in 2022 proved an indispensable forum to set up a list of actions to counter firearms diversion. Dialogues on security intensified with partners in Latin America, Asia and Africa, including the negotiation of **international agreements on the exchange of personal data with Europol**. Relating to Western Balkans, DG HOME monitored the Joint Action Plan on Counter Terrorism and revised the bilateral arrangement with Montenegro.

... an effective asylum and migration management policy both inside the EU and in cooperation with partner countries:

Migration is a European challenge that requires a European solution. Building on the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan with the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** ⁽²⁷⁾ as a main deliverable, DG HOME continuously granted advice and technical support to the European Parliament and the Council during negotiations. The efforts were rewarded through the long-awaited political agreement on the Pact that was reached at the very end of 2023 ⁽²⁸⁾.

⁽²⁰⁾ COM(2023) 659 final of 18.10.2023.

⁽²¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of 29 April 2021.

⁽²²⁾ [Terrorist Content Online Regulation – evaluation \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²³⁾ Directive COM(2020) 829 final of 16.12.2020.

⁽²⁴⁾ ST/15623/2022/INIT, OJ C 20, 20.1.2023.

⁽²⁵⁾ COM(2024) 60 final of 6.2.2024.

⁽²⁶⁾ COM(2023) 777 final of 30.11.2023.

⁽²⁷⁾ [New Pact on Migration and Asylum – European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²⁸⁾ Statement von der Leyen of 20.12.2023, STATEMENT/23/6781. Commission Press Release: [New Pact on Migration and Asylum \(europa.eu\)](#).

Providing help to people in need: With Russian troops still on Ukrainian territory, DG HOME tabled a **proposal to further extend temporary protection** ⁽²⁹⁾ until March 2025. DG HOME continued to coordinate the **Solidarity Platform** ⁽³⁰⁾, bringing together stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive. The **EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint** ⁽³¹⁾ collected information to properly stir the migration management response.

Preventing smuggling and returning migrants with no right to stay: Delivering on the announcement of President von der Leyen in her 2023 State of the Union address, DG HOME organised an international **Conference on countering migrant smuggling** ⁽³²⁾ and presented revamped **proposals** ⁽³³⁾ to address this global challenge, implementing the renewed EU Action plan against migrant smuggling (2020-2025) ⁽³⁴⁾. Establishing an **effective and common EU system for returns** is a central pillar of well-functioning and credible migration and asylum systems, and of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum**. DG HOME presented the **Operational strategy for more effective returns** ⁽³⁵⁾ and a **recommendation on mutual recognition of return decisions and expediting returns** ⁽³⁶⁾.

Strengthening the external dimension of migration policy: DG HOME continued to support Member States to strengthen migration management along the main migration routes, preventing irregular departures and saving lives, while working closely with key partner countries. The Action plans for the **Western Mediterranean and Atlantic** ⁽³⁷⁾, and for the **Eastern Mediterranean** ⁽³⁸⁾ routes, for which DG HOME held the pen, including the one on the Central Mediterranean of 2022 ⁽³⁹⁾, **and the 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa** ⁽⁴⁰⁾, will strengthen not only the engagement with partner countries but also the operational measures on search and rescue, the return procedures and ensure smoother and faster voluntary solidarity.

To reduce irregular migration and attract skills and talents, **legal pathways** to the EU need to be available. Following a call from the Commission in May 2023, 14 Member States pledged collectively around 61°000 places for resettlement and humanitarian admission, to be implemented in 2024-2025. With the proposal on an **EU Talent pool** ⁽⁴¹⁾, DG HOME delivered further on the Skills and Talent Mobility Package ⁽⁴²⁾. Focus was put on intensified

⁽²⁹⁾ COM(2023) 546 final of 19.9.2023.

⁽³⁰⁾ [Migration management: Welcoming refugees from Ukraine - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽³¹⁾ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1366 of 23 September 2020 on an EU mechanism for preparedness and management of crises related to migration, OJ L 317, 1.10.2020.

⁽³²⁾ [International Conference on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽³³⁾ COM(2023) 754 final of 28.11.2023; COM(2023) 755 final of 28.11.2023.

⁽³⁴⁾ COM(2021) 591 final of 29.9.2021.

⁽³⁵⁾ COM(2023) 45 final of 24.1.2023.

⁽³⁶⁾ C(2023) 1763 final of 16.3.2023.

⁽³⁷⁾ [Action Plan for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽³⁸⁾ [EU Action Plan for Eastern Mediterranean migration - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽³⁹⁾ [EU action plan for the Central Mediterranean - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁴⁰⁾ [10-Point Plan for Lampedusa \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁴¹⁾ COM(2023) 716 final of 15.11.2023.

⁽⁴²⁾ COM(2023) 715 final of 15.11.2023.

cooperation with key partner countries of origin/transit to develop **Talent partnerships**. Progress made in the negotiations on the proposals on the **Single Permit Directive** ⁽⁴³⁾ and the **Long-Term Residents Directive** ⁽⁴⁴⁾, gives impetus for making the Union's migration policy balanced and predictable. These initiatives are crucial for Europe to attract skilled migrants to address challenges relating to the EU's ageing working population.

... a fully functioning Schengen area of free movement:

As set out in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, free movement across internal borders is intrinsic to the headline ambition of a *European Way of Life*.

Ensuring the correct and full application of the Schengen acquis: The **2023 State of Schengen report** ⁽⁴⁵⁾ shows that the EU – despite specific challenges – has a robust and well-functioning Schengen area. With the **Council decision** ⁽⁴⁶⁾ to lift the air and maritime internal border controls with Romania and Bulgaria as of 31 March 2024, an essential step was taken towards the completion of the Schengen area.

Protecting the external borders: The negotiations of the **Schengen Borders Code** ⁽⁴⁷⁾ have been successfully concluded. They will ensure the functioning of Schengen without internal border controls and with a uniform set of rules for the management of the external border. DG HOME tabled a Communication establishing the **multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management** ⁽⁴⁸⁾ which paves the way for the next 5 years for the cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and Frontex (EBCGA). With the **upgraded Schengen Information System (SIS)** ⁽⁴⁹⁾ having entered into operation in March 2023, EU police officers and border guards can rely on new tools for enhanced security and border management.

Guarantee an effective and efficient visa policy: The common visa policy is a key component of the Schengen area, bringing significant benefits to EU Member States and third countries. To assess the current situation, including countering migration and security challenges, DG HOME was in the lead on the **Communication on the monitoring of the EU's visa-free travel and the suspension mechanism** ⁽⁵⁰⁾. Based on the findings of the **6th Visa suspension mechanism report** ⁽⁵¹⁾, DG HOME tabled a **proposal to strengthen the visa suspension mechanism** ⁽⁵²⁾ by expanding the grounds for suspension, revising the suspension procedure and reinforcing the monitoring of visa-free countries.

⁽⁴³⁾ COM(2022) 655 final of 27.4.2022.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ COM(2022) 650 final of 27.4.2022.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ COM(2023) 274 of 16.5.2023.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ 17132/23 of 30.12.2023.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ COM(2021) 891 final of 14.12.2021.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ COM(2023) 146 final of 14.3.2023.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/201 of 30.1.2023, OJ L 27, 31.1.2023.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ COM(2023) 297 final of 30.5.2023.

⁽⁵¹⁾ COM(2023) 730 of 18.10.2023.

⁽⁵²⁾ COM(2023) 642 final of 18.10.2023.

B. Key performance indicators

Key performance indicator 1: *Enhanced cooperation and information exchange between law enforcement authorities, measured using EU and decentralised information exchange databases and mechanisms by law enforcement authorities (result indicator 1.3).* This indicator shows the growing importance of cross border information exchange; overall it is developing as planned, as indicated in the table:

	2019 (baseline)	2020	2021 (milestone)	2022	2023	2024 (target)
SIS^A	Ratio: 0.31	Ratio: 0.22	Ratio: 0.25	Ratio: 0.21	N/A ⁽⁵³⁾	Increase of ratio
Prüm^B: total matches	3 500 000	4 753 373	6 201 192	N/A ⁽⁵⁴⁾	N/A ⁽⁵⁵⁾	increase
SIENA^C: messages exchanged	1 244 000 ⁽⁵⁶⁾	1 266 233	1 542 658	1°636°115	N/A ⁽⁵⁷⁾	increase
ARO^D: messages exchanged via SIENA	6 966	7 964	18 603	21°599	26 780	increase
EIS^E: searches performed	7 489 400 ⁽⁵⁸⁾	10 231 322	12 256 546	13°374°862	14 238 667	increase
PNR^F:						increase
i) total number of spontaneous transfers	91	88	142	262	200	
ii) total number of emergency requests	61	9	0	2	35	
iii) total number of case-by-case requests	1 827	4 404	7 507	13 095	18 983	

- A) Schengen Information System (SIS). Measuring the ratio between the number of hits on discreet or specific check alerts and the total number of such alerts issued. Data source: eu-LISA.
- B) Data source: Council/Member States.
- C) Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). Data source: Europol.
- D) Asset Recovery Offices (ARO). Data source: Europol.
- E) Europol Information System (EIS). Data source: Europol.
- F) Passenger Name Record (PNR). Data source: Council/Member States.

Key performance indicator 2: *An effective asylum policy, measured by number of asylum applications pending for more than 6 months in first instance (result indicator 2.1).*

At the end of 2023, 427°314 applications ⁽⁵⁹⁾ had been pending for more than 6 months, which is 161°920 more than at the end of 2022. There was a considerable increase in asylum applications in 2023 compared to 2022: 1°144°000 compared to 966°000. Efforts will continue to reach the objective of reducing the number of pending cases until 2024 ⁽⁶⁰⁾. It is expected that the Pact on Migration and Asylum ⁽⁶¹⁾ will decrease the pressure on competent authorities. The introduction of a permanent, legally binding, solidarity mechanism under the Pact from mid-2026 onwards will ensure support to Member States which are under migratory pressure and hence help those Member States which face

⁽⁵³⁾ Data not available before May 2024.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ No data published yet by the Council Secretariat General due to data lacking for Germany. Possible date for release of data end of April 2023.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Data not available before June 2024.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ The baseline in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan of 1 100 000 has been updated to 1 244 000.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Data not available on day of finalisation of the Report.

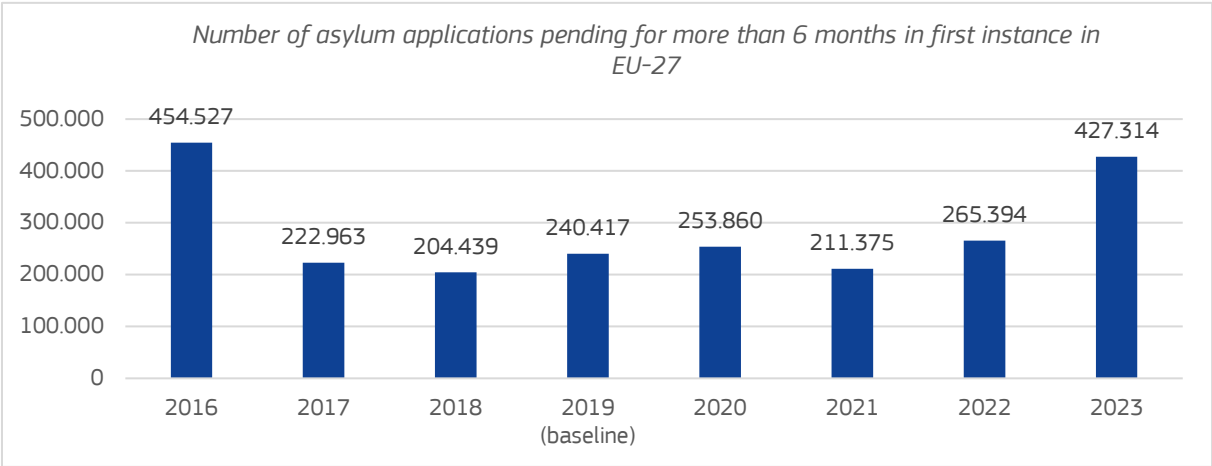
⁽⁵⁸⁾ The baseline in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan of 4 000 000 has been updated to 7 489 400 as 2019 was the first year when Europol reported QUEST searches together with the searches performed directly in EIS. For the duration of the Strategic Plan this way of reporting will remain unchanged.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ The complete data for Lithuania and Slovakia not available on the day of finalisation of the Report.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Data source for KPI 2: EU Asylum Agency. The baseline in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan referred to EU-27+ (including Norway and Switzerland). This has been updated, and only the EU Member States are included in this chart.

⁽⁶¹⁾ A political agreement was reached between the EP and the Council on 20.12.2023. On 14.4.2024 the EP voted in favour. It is expected that the Council will formally adopt the Pact in spring 2024.

disproportionate obligations to deal with among others a backlog of pending cases.

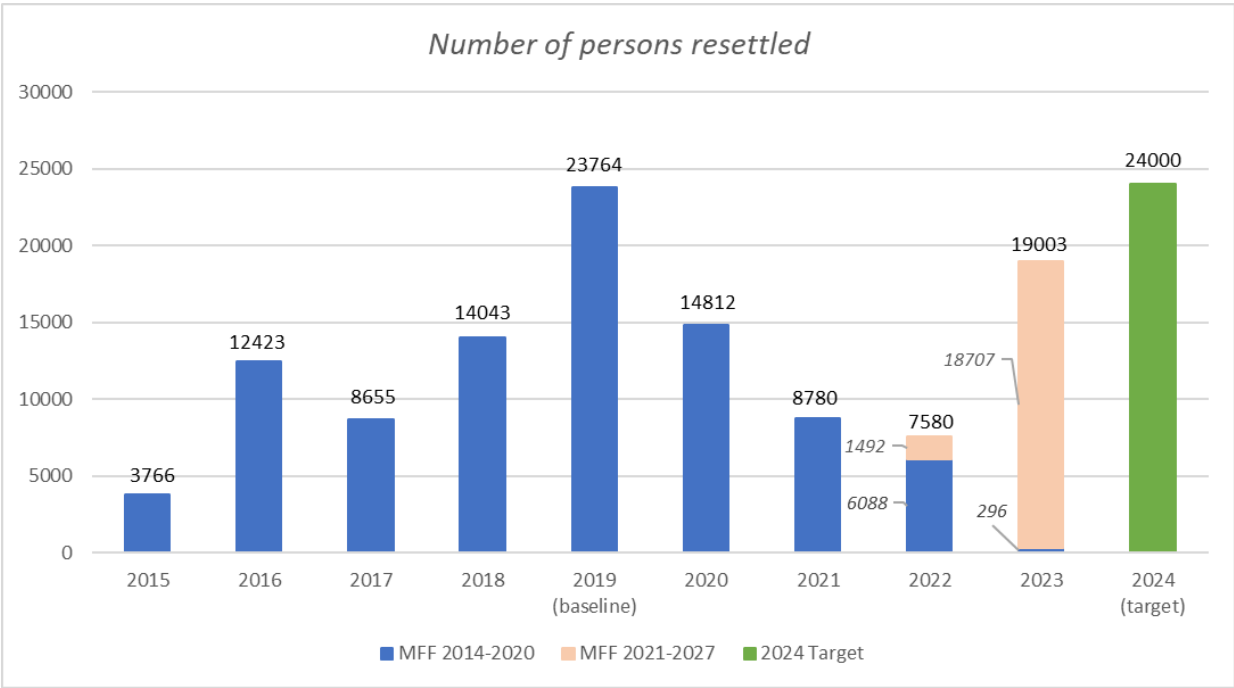


Key performance indicator 3: *Genuine legal pathways available, measured by number of persons resettled (result indicator 2.3).*

This indicator shows the number of persons who arrive yearly in the Member States via resettlement under EU schemes. Following a call from the Commission in May, 14 Member States pledged collectively around 61°000 places for resettlement and humanitarian admission combined, to be implemented in 2024-2025 ⁽⁶²⁾. The number of resettled persons was 19°003 in 2023, compared to 7°580 in 2022 ⁽⁶³⁾.

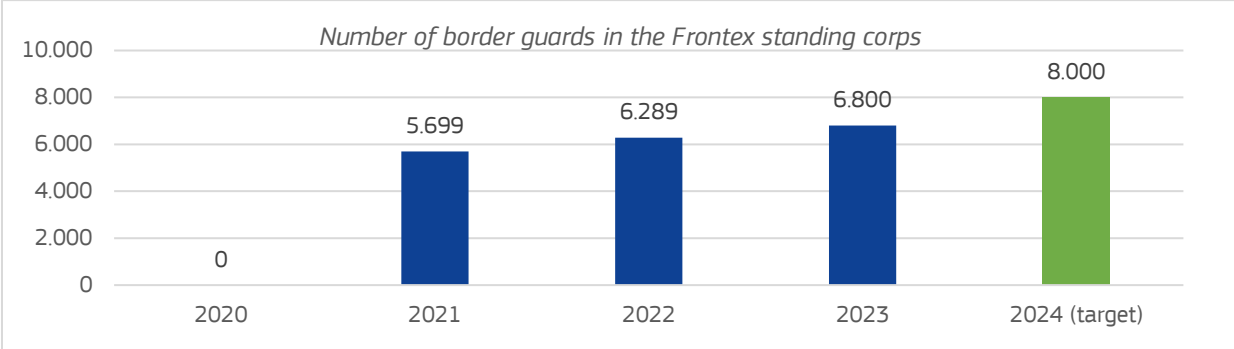
⁽⁶²⁾ Commission Press Release of 15.12.2023, IP 23/6633.

⁽⁶³⁾ The resettlements carried out in 2023 cover 18 707 persons resettled under AMIF linked to MFF 2021-2027, as reported by Member States via Transmission of Data reports for the period ended 31.12.2023 (Table 11 'Common result indicators for the AMIF, the ISF and the BMVI (point (a) of Article 42(2))' of Annex VII 'Template for the transmission of data' of the Common Provisions Regulation (Reg (EU) 2021/1060)), and 296 persons resettled under AMIF linked to MFF 2014-2020, as reported in the Member States' Annual Accounts for AMIF the 2023 financial year (16.10.2022-15.10.2023).



Key performance indicator 4: A well-protected external border, measured by the gradual establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps (result indicator 3.1).

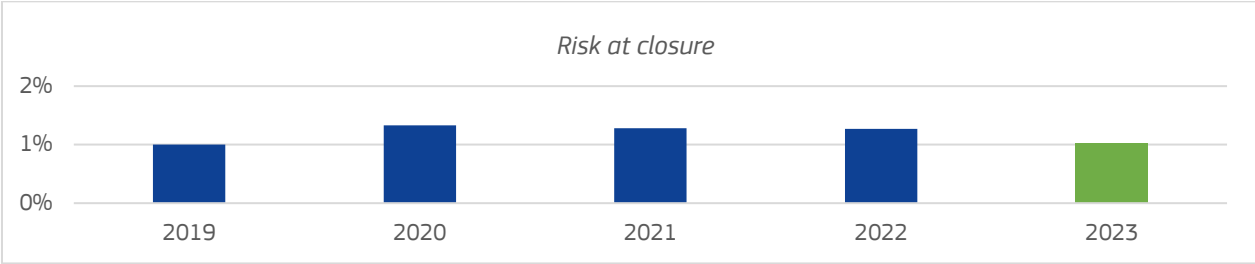
This indicator measures the establishment of a standing corps by Frontex and the Member States ⁽⁶⁴⁾. In only 4 years, the number of deployable border guards for the standing corps went from 0 in 2020 to approximately 6 800 at the end of 2023 ⁽⁶⁵⁾. The initial challenges for recruitment have been overcome, and the recruitment proceeds steadily towards the target of 10 000 in 2027.



Key performance indicator 5: Overall risk at closure (indicator 1 for ‘sound financial management’). This indicator illustrates that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that cost-effective controls are in place that give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions. The estimated risk at closure for 2023 was 1.02%, which is well below the target for 2023 of under 2%.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Required by Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Data from the Quarterly Report on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency’s Capabilities (Q4 2023).



C. Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, DG HOME has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that they are effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified. Please refer to annual activity report section 2.3 for further details.

In addition, DG HOME has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, [including those from supervised entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks] as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. In its contribution to the 2023 Annual Activity Report process, the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

The assessment of reliability of performance information is based on internal controls applied by data providers at all data transmission levels. DG HOME is currently considering how to further improve data governance in this respect keeping in mind economy and cost-efficiency of applied data controls. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to section 2 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. Improvements are necessary to address audit recommendations and internal control weaknesses. The following actions will be taken in this respect: timely implementation of the open audit recommendations issued by the ECA and the IAS; internal seminars and trainings to improve the staff's awareness on dedicated topics connected to communication and monitoring activities and a possible update of the DG's HR strategy or other strategic actions. The Acting Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by two reservations concerning:

- 1) Shared management – Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States**
- 2) Shared management – Reservation concerning BMVI 2021-2027 in one Member State**

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the Director-General and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, including the reservations envisaged, have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Johansson, responsible for Migration and Home affairs.



1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT

In 2023, DG HOME continued to work towards its vision of an open and secure Europe, by developing EU-level rules, monitoring their implementation and giving support on the ground. This Activity Report provides an overview of DG HOME's main achievements.

A number of initiatives were put forward by DG HOME in line with its 2023 Management Plan. These initiatives form the basis for achieving the objectives as set in the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan. DG HOME's activities contribute mainly to the Commission's General Objective 5, *Promoting our European way of life*, divided on four Specific Objectives:

Promoting our European Way of Life			
Strengthened Internal Security	An effective asylum and migration management policy	A fully functioning area of free movement	Stronger cooperation with partner countries

The list of deliverables relating to the Specific Objectives are detailed in Annex 2. Indicators that come from the Programme Statements for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund ⁽⁶⁶⁾ are drawn from the Annual Implementation Reports submitted by the Member States.

General Objective: Promoting our European way of life

Specific objective 1: Strengthened Internal Security

In 2023, DG HOME contributed further to establishing a **Security Union** which aims to increase the resilience of our societies against organised crime; terrorism and radicalisation; and crimes in the digital age.

The threat of terrorism increased in several Member States in 2023, among others due to the 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel and the conflict in Gaza, which rendered the implementation of the **Counter-Terrorism Agenda** ⁽⁶⁷⁾ even more important. It includes the further development of the Protective Security Advisors initiative, the continued work on voluntary EU performance requirements and the roll-out of the network of financial investigators. DG HOME also adopted a **Communication on countering potential threats posed by drones** ⁽⁶⁸⁾, to draw up a fully-fledged EU counter-drone policy that aims to counter the potential threats posed by non-cooperative drones considering their rapidly advancing capabilities and easy access to this technology. DG HOME also hosted a two-day **international conference on countering terrorism**

⁽⁶⁶⁾ The programmes statements for AMIF and ISF are included in the Working Document Part I *Programme Statements of operational expenditure* annexed to the Draft General Budget of the European Union.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Communication COM(2020) 795 final of 9.12.2020.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ COM(2023) 659 final of 18.10.2023.

financing in October 2023 as part of the works of the EU Network of Counter-terrorism financial investigators' network (CTFI-net) launched in 2022.

To improve our preparedness to face terrorist threats, DG HOME created and chaired a dedicated **Law Enforcement Network Working Group** that will foster joint operational activities, training, exercises, and exchange of best practises among the Networks directly funded by the Commission.

Through the **EU Internet Forum (EUIF)**, DG HOME continued strengthening cooperation between tech industry, Member States, civil society, and academia to reduce the availability of illegal content online. The Commission's swiftly mobilised the EUIF to address the online dimension of the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, which led to a sharp increase of illegal and harmful content online linked to the attack. The Commission convened an extraordinary meeting of the EUIF on 13 October followed by several operational contacts to facilitate a coordinated response.

Furthermore, DG HOME prepared a report on the implementation of the Terrorist Content Online Regulation ⁽⁶⁹⁾ and a programme for monitoring the outputs, results and impacts of the Regulation ⁽⁷⁰⁾ which were presented in February 2024. The two strands of the **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)** - Practitioners and Policy Support - continued to support actors in their efforts to prevent or counter violent extremism in all forms. With the framework contracts ending in 2024, DG HOME continued the preparations for establishing the **EU Knowledge Hub on Prevention of Radicalisation**, which will build on the achievements of RAN by consolidating, creating, and disseminating knowledge with the objective to streamline EU policies, initiatives, and funds.

To limit the space in which terrorists can operate and prevent the misuse of **high-risk chemicals** for malicious purposes, DG HOME published a public consultation for a proposal regulating the marketing and use of high-risk chemicals ⁽⁷¹⁾ and finalised the impact assessment ⁽⁷²⁾ supporting the proposal.

Focus of DG HOME funding in security in 2023

EUR 16.9 million ⁽⁷³⁾	Exchange of security related information
EUR 15.2 million ⁽⁷⁴⁾	Combatting and preventing serious and organised crime, including terrorism

Recent attacks on wires and pipes in the Baltic Sea clearly show the importance of a swift **implementation of the Directive on the resilience of critical entities ⁽⁷⁵⁾**. DG HOME

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of 29 April 2021.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ COM(2024) 64 of 14.2.2024.

⁽⁷¹⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/public-consultations/preventing-terrorism-new-rules-marketing-and-use-high-risk-chemicals_en

⁽⁷²⁾ Not yet published (to be expected in parallel to the adoption of the proposal).

⁽⁷³⁾ Member States' Annual Accounts for ISF for the 2023 financial year (16.10.2022–15.10.2023). Related to National Objective "Exchange of information".

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Member States' Annual Accounts for ISF Police for the 2023 financial year (16.10.2022–15.10.2023). Related to National Objective "Preventing and Combating".

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Directive COM(2020) 829 final of 16.12.2020.

worked with the Member States on its transposition and implementation. Key elements were the adoption of a Delegated Act to establish a list of essential services ⁽⁷⁶⁾, based on which Member States will conduct national risk assessments and then identify critical entities. The proposal for a Critical Infrastructure Blueprint ⁽⁷⁷⁾ aims at improving coordination as regards response to critical infrastructure incidents with significant cross-border relevance. With the help of the new **Critical Entities Resilience Group**, DG HOME coordinated wider efforts of Member States and other Commission services related to the resilience of critical infrastructure and critical entities.

The **Schengen Information System** was renewed in 2023 ⁽⁷⁸⁾ with new categories of alerts, biometrics and additional tools to combat crime and terrorism. The upgrade will also allow for preventive alerts to protect vulnerable persons and deter irregular migration. The upgrades aim to provide national authorities with more complete and reliable information.

DG HOME helped conclude the interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on **Automated Search and Exchange of Data for Police Cooperation (Prüm II)** ⁽⁷⁹⁾, updating the framework for automated searches of DNA profiles, dactyloscopic data, vehicle registration data, facial images and police records across EU borders. This will facilitate law enforcement in the EU and boost the fight against crime.

Organised crime is one of the greatest threats to the EU today. An important tool in the fight against it, is depriving criminals of their financial means to operate. DG HOME worked intensively with co-legislators to reach the agreement on the proposed Directive on **asset recovery and confiscation** ⁽⁸⁰⁾ as well as on the proposal to **access interconnected bank account registries** ⁽⁸¹⁾. In parallel, DG HOME strengthened efforts to support Member States in disrupting organised crime groups through **criminal and financial investigations**, and the use of **preventive measures**; and through increased involvement in international initiatives on money laundering investigations and asset recovery. DG HOME also worked on implementing the EU Action Plan against Cultural Goods Trafficking ⁽⁸²⁾ and strengthened EU efforts in the European Network on Crime Prevention ⁽⁸³⁾.

Within the framework of the **'Freeze and Seize' Task Force**, DG HOME led the subgroup on criminal investigations and confiscation to support Member States in investigating and confiscating assets in relation to crimes committed by persons and entities under EU restrictive measures, particularly their evasion and circumvention.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ C(2023) 4878 final of 25.7.2023.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ COM(2023) 526 final of 6.9.2023.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/201 of 30.1.2023, OJ L 27, 31.1.2023.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ COM(2021) 784 final of 8.12.2021.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ COM(2022) 245 final of 25.5.2022.

⁽⁸¹⁾ COM(2021) 429 final of 20.7.2021.

⁽⁸²⁾ COM(2022) 800 final of 13.12.2022.

⁽⁸³⁾ SWD(2023) 202 final of 2.6.2023.

Drugs trafficking in the EU has evolved in scale, sophistication, and violent consequences. DG HOME presented a Communication on the **EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime** ⁽⁸⁴⁾ to enhance the resilience of logistic hubs, dismantle criminal networks, increase crime prevention efforts and strengthen cooperation with international partners. The roadmap builds on the input provided by Member States and EU Agencies at the meetings held by DG HOME on the **implementation of the Organised Crime Strategy** ⁽⁸⁵⁾ in 2023 as well as on the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 ⁽⁸⁶⁾.



Ylva Johansson @YlvaJohansson · Feb 7

Visiting Antwerp Port today with Belgian Minister of the Interior @AnneliesVI to see the joint fight by authorities against organised crime and drug-trafficking.

To dismantle a network you need a network.

Press conference
audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/1-236...

#SecurityEU



DG HOME worked intensively with co-legislators to reach a political agreement on the mandate of the new **European Union Drugs Agency** ⁽⁸⁷⁾, that builds on the existing European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions and develops further several work strands, such as threat assessment and the work on forensic. This allows the Agency to start its operations on 2 July 2024.

To deny terrorists' and other criminals' access to weapons, the Commission proposed to update rules on **import, export and transit for firearms** ⁽⁸⁸⁾ aiming to improve the traceability, reduce the administrative burden and ultimately enhance security. Interinstitutional negotiations on this proposal began in 2023. DG HOME also continued the implementation of the **EU Action Plan on firearms** ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

In response to the increased threat scenario due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, a **high-level EU-Ukraine Security Dialogue** was established in close cooperation with the EU counter-terrorism coordinator. In 2023, DG HOME jointly with the European External Action Service (EEAS) proposed an EU list of actions to counter firearms and other small arms and light weapons diversion as a main initiative to enhance and align the efforts of the EU and its Member States, EU Agencies, Ukraine and Moldova. The implementation of the actions started in February and in April 2023 Ukraine agreed to work with the EU on this list of actions. Throughout 2023, extensive exchange took place with Ukraine to intensify joint efforts.

In parallel, DG HOME supported the co-legislators to conclude the negotiations on the

⁽⁸⁴⁾ COM(2023) 641 final of 18.10.2023.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ COM/2021/170 final of 14.4.2021.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ OJ C 272 of 8.7.2021.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 of 27 June 2023.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ COM(2022) 480 final of 27.10.2022.

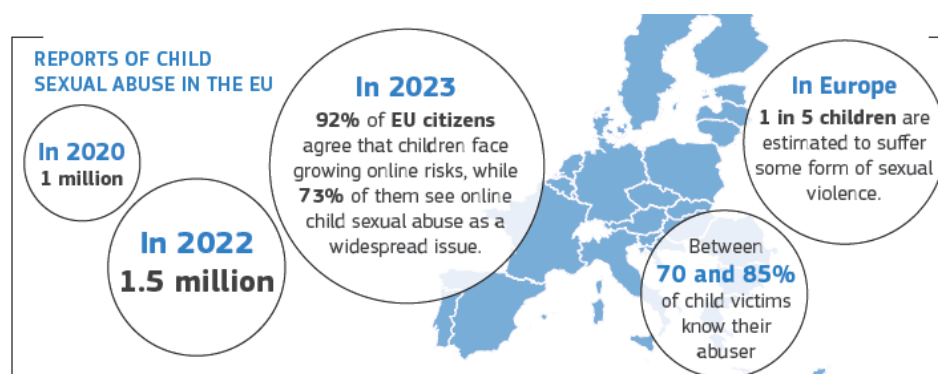
⁽⁸⁹⁾ COM(2020) 608 final of 24.7.2020.

legislative proposal amending the **Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims** ⁽⁹⁰⁾. DG HOME also continued to implement the **EU Strategy on combating trafficking in human beings 2021–2025** ⁽⁹¹⁾, as well as the **Common Anti-Trafficking Plan** ⁽⁹²⁾ to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

In 2023, the Commission continued to support and enforce the full implementation of the **Passenger Name Records Directive** ⁽⁹³⁾ in line with the recent judgment of the Court of Justice ⁽⁹⁴⁾ which confirmed the validity of this Directive, but also clarified that several provisions must be interpreted restrictively to remain compliant with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

The past few years have seen a dramatic and worrying increase in reports of child sexual abuse online in the EU. The proposal for revision of the **Directive on combatting child sexual abuse** ⁽⁹⁵⁾, announced in the **2023 Commission Work Programme**, was adopted in 2024 to ensure that the legislative work on the proposal for a Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat online child sexual abuse ⁽⁹⁶⁾ of May 2022 can be concluded without delay. To avoid a legislative gap in the detection and reporting of child sexual abuse online, the

Commission proposed an **extension of the Interim Regulation's duration** ⁽⁹⁷⁾ until the long-term legislation to tackle child sexual abuse online is approved.



In 2023 DG HOME launched and chaired, together with the rotating Presidency of the Council, the **High-Level Group on Lawful Access to Data**, focussing on challenges that law enforcement authorities encounter in their investigations when it comes to accessing data on seized devices, in providers' possession and data in motion.

To ensure access to criminal evidence located abroad, DG HOME, in cooperation with DG JUST, began the implementation of the **e-evidence Regulation** ⁽⁹⁸⁾ and **e-evidence**

⁽⁹⁰⁾ COM(2022) 732 final of 19.12.2022.

⁽⁹¹⁾ COM(2021) 171 final of 14.4.2021.

⁽⁹²⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/Anti-Trafficking%20Plan_en.pdf

⁽⁹³⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/681 of 27.4.2016.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ Case C-817/19, Ligue des droits humains, Judgment delivered on 21.6.2022.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ COM(2024) 60 of 6.2.2024. Visual is taken from the Commission's factsheet of 6.2.2024: [Commission proposes to strengthen criminal law rules to fight child sexual abuse - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://commission.europa.eu/press-room/news/commission-proposes-to-strengthen-criminal-law-rules-to-fight-child-sexual-abuse-2024-02-06)

⁽⁹⁶⁾ COM(2022) 209 final of 11.5.2022.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ COM(2023) 777 final of 30.11.2023.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/1543 of 12 July 2023 on European Production Orders and European Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal proceedings and for the execution of custodial sentences following criminal proceedings, OJ L 191 of 28.7.2023.

Directive (99), which entered into force on 17 August 2023.

In 2023, DG HOME ensured that the Home affairs dimension is well taken into account during the inter-institutional discussions on the proposal for a **Regulation on Artificial Intelligence (100)**.

Security research and innovation allows to keep up with the rapidly changing threats to security and societal resilience. To make the results achieved under the **Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS)** visible and measurable, DG HOME prepared the **first annual report on CERIS** to be adopted in early 2024. The **2023 Security Research Event (101)**, organised by DG HOME, gathered industry, policy makers and knowledge institutions to discuss the state of play and current challenges for security research (including border management) in Europe.

Decentralised agencies continued playing a pivotal role in research and innovation. Following the positive experience with Frontex (102) and eu-LISA (103), DG HOME integrated Europol further into the current security research landscape. To this end, a research task was included in the renewed mandate of the Agency.

The Commission pledged its commitment to support the implementation of the resolution *Security through encryption, security despite encryption (104)* by identifying technical, operational, and legal solutions to ensure lawful and targeted access to **encrypted information**, while protecting privacy and security of communications. DG HOME shared a set of concrete actions that respond to the gaps and challenges identified in the context of encryption in criminal investigations with the EU Member States in February 2023. The proposed measures started to be implemented late 2023, focusing on upgrading EU and Member States' capacities in the area and enhancing relevant standardisation activities.

As announced in the **2023 Commission Work Programme**, DG HOME put forward a proposal for a **Directive on fighting corruption (105)** and a **Joint Communication** of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **on the fight against corruption (106)**. The new rules update and harmonise definitions and penalties for corruption offences to ensure that high standard criminal law tools are in place to fight the full range of corruption offences, to better prevent corruption and to improve enforcement. DG HOME continued participating and contributing as a **core DG on anti-corruption** to the **annual Rule of law report**, the **European Semester**

(99) Directive (EU) 2023/1544 of the Council of 12 July 2023 laying down harmonised rules on the designation of designated establishments and the appointment of legal representatives for the purpose of gathering electronic evidence in criminal proceedings, OJ L 191, 28.7.2023.

(100) COM(2021) 206 final of 21.4.2021.

(101) https://security-research-event.ec.europa.eu/index_en

(102) [European research & innovation to support secure and efficient EU external borders \(europa.eu\)](https://european-research-innovation-to-support-secure-and-efficient-eu-external-borders.europa.eu)

(103) [Security and research: the Commission improves collaboration with eu-LISA for secure and efficient IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice \(europa.eu\)](https://security-and-research-the-commission-improves-collaboration-with-eu-lisa-for-secure-and-efficient-it-systems-in-the-area-of-freedom-security-and-justice.europa.eu)

(104) Council Resolution 13084/1/20 REV 1 of 24 November 2020.

(105) COM(2023) 234 final of 3.5.2023.

(106) JOIN(2023) 12 final of 3.5.2023.

recommendations on anti-corruption and the **Recovery and Resilience Plans** through the design of anti-corruption indicators and the monitoring of newly created milestones.

External communication promoted the policy narrative on internal security via different communication channels (e.g. website, press, and social media). The communication supported and promoted the legislative and non-legislative adoptions, new initiatives, raised awareness on the relevant international days (e.g. EU Anti-Trafficking Day, European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, EU Remembrance Day for the Victims of Terrorism) and contributed to promote the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).

The **infringement strategy** of DG HOME generally prioritises the pursuit of cases in accordance with their likely impact, as well as cases which risk to seriously undermine key EU policy objectives, or which have a direct impact on the security and fundamental rights of individuals. Key priorities for 2023 included infringements for ongoing cases on incomplete transposition in the policy areas of combating fraud, money laundering, firearms and access to financial information, and on incorrect transposition in the area of child sexual abuse, cyberattacks and combating terrorism.



The activities under the Specific Objective of *Strengthened Internal Security* contribute to the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goal 16** ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾, aiming to tackle terrorism and prevent radicalisation, disrupt organised crime, fight cybercrime, and fight corruption, financial crime, counterfeiting crime and trafficking in human beings and firearms.

Specific objective 2: An effective asylum and migration management policy

“Migration is a European challenge that requires European solutions” is what President von der Leyen said in her statement ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ on the political agreement on the Pact on Migration and Asylum which the European Parliament ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ and the Council ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ reached after three years of negotiations on 20 December 2023. This agreement is a historic breakthrough towards a common system for managing migration in the EU, to which the President committed at the beginning of her mandate. DG HOME contributed to



⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Statement von der Leyen of 20.12.2023, STATEMENT/23/6781. Commission Press Release: [New Pact on Migration and Asylum \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/pressroom/articles/20231220_IPR230013_en.htm)

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ EP Press Release: [Asylum and migration: deal for more solidarity and responsibility sharing | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/press-room/en/press-releases/20231220_IPR230013)

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Council Press Release: [The Council and the European Parliament reach breakthrough in reform of EU asylum and migration system - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press-leases/2023/12/20-migration-pact/)

this major achievement through continuous tireless efforts and specialist technical advice to the co-legislators under the strong guidance and management of Commissioner Johansson. The agreement covers **five key Commission proposals** of the Pact of September 2020: the proposal for a **Regulation introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders** ⁽¹¹¹⁾, the amended proposal for a **Regulation on the establishment of 'Eurodac'** ⁽¹¹²⁾, the amended proposal for a **Regulation on establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union** ⁽¹¹³⁾, the proposal for a **Regulation on asylum and migration management** ⁽¹¹⁴⁾, and the proposal for a **Regulation addressing situations of crisis and force majeure** ⁽¹¹⁵⁾, which from now on **will also address situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum taken over from the initial dedicated Commission proposal** ⁽¹¹⁶⁾. In parallel, negotiations remained blocked in the Parliament on the recast of the **Return Directive** ⁽¹¹⁷⁾. Political agreements have already been reached on the **Union Resettlement Framework Regulation** ⁽¹¹⁸⁾, the recast of the **Reception Conditions Directive** ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ as well as on the proposal for a **Qualification Regulation** ⁽¹²⁰⁾. These political agreements pave the way for the adoption of all the files of the Pact on Migration and Asylum before the end of the legislative mandate in spring 2024 ⁽¹²¹⁾.

Migrant smuggling is a global and common challenge that requires common solutions:

Migrant smuggling is a criminal activity that disrespects human life and impacts EU internal security in the pursuit of profit.

- More than **90% of the irregular migrants** who reach the EU **came through the smugglers**.
- In 2022, around **331 000 irregular entries** were detected at the EU external borders.
- Over **15 000 migrant smugglers** were identified in 2022, as reported by Frontex.
- In 2023, until end of September approximately **281 000 irregular border crossings** were detected at the external borders of the EU.
- Migrant smuggling generated over **€200 million for criminals** in 2019 in the maritime routes leading to the EU, with the average cost close to **€3 000 per smuggled person**.

In her State of the Union speech in September 2023 ⁽¹²²⁾, President von der Leyen announced an **international Conference on countering migrant smuggling and the adoption of revamped legislation**. Within only two months, DG HOME organised the international Conference, launching a **Call to Action on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling** ⁽¹²³⁾, uniting Member States and third countries to address the global and common challenge of smuggling. As announced in the **2023 Commission Work Programme**, implementing the renewed EU action plan

⁽¹¹¹⁾ Proposal COM(2020) 612 final of 23.9.2020.

⁽¹¹²⁾ Proposal COM(2020) 614 final of 23.9.2020.

⁽¹¹³⁾ Proposal COM(2020) 611 final of 23.9.2020.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Proposal COM (2020) 610 final of 23.9.2020.

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Proposal COM(2020) 613 final of 23.9.2020.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Proposal COM(2021) 890 final of 14 July 2021

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Proposal COM (2018) 634 final of 12.9.2018.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Proposal COM/2016/0468 final of 13.7.2016.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Proposal COM/2016/0465 final of 13.7.2016.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ Proposal COM/2016/0466 final of 13.7.2016.

⁽¹²¹⁾ see footnote 61.

⁽¹²²⁾ [State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infobox/assetdetail/external/15547)

⁽¹²³⁾ [Call to action copy \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infobox/assetdetail/external/15547)

against migrant smuggling (2021-2025) ⁽¹²⁴⁾, DG HOME also tabled two major initiatives to effectively counter migrant smuggling: a proposal for a **Regulation** ⁽¹²⁵⁾ to reinforce Europol's role, inter-agency cooperation and the European governance in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and a proposal for a **Directive** ⁽¹²⁶⁾ laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the EU. Furthermore, in 2023, DG HOME presented the **EU Toolbox addressing the use of commercial means of transport to facilitate irregular migration to the EU** ⁽¹²⁷⁾.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum also sets the path for establishing a **common EU system for returns**, which combines stronger structures in the EU with more effective cooperation with third countries. DG HOME provided support to **increase the return rate** by holding the pen on the **recommendation on the mutual recognition of return decisions and expediting returns** ⁽¹²⁸⁾ thereby ensuring further coordination of national approaches to returns and ensuring consistency across the EU. In 2023, return measures were funded with EUR 29.8 million from the AMIF⁽¹²⁹⁾.

Based on the work of the **EU Return Coordinator** and the **High-Level Network for Return**, DG HOME held the pen for the Policy Document “Towards an **operational strategy for more effective returns**” ⁽¹³⁰⁾. The Return Coordinator worked with Member States on a series of ‘joint targeted actions’ within the framework of a roadmap to step up returns to key priority third countries as well as to step up the returns of third country nationals posing a security risk.

DG HOME continued working with the Member States, the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) and Frontex on the implementation of the **EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration** ⁽¹³¹⁾ to increase further the share of voluntary returns. DG HOME continued to closely steer Frontex’ work to ensure the full operationalisation of its mandate on return and reintegration. In 2023, the Frontex Joint Reintegration services were widely implemented in the EU and over 6 000 reintegration cases were supported. Furthermore, DG HOME and Frontex worked together with the Member States to increase the availability and quality of return counselling.

To address illegal employment as one of the drivers for irregular migration, DG HOME continued to work closely with the Member States, the European Labour Authority and the relevant stakeholders on the implementation of **the Communication on the Employers**

⁽¹²⁴⁾ OJ C 323, 1.10.2020

⁽¹²⁵⁾ COM(2023) 754 final of 28.11.2023.

⁽¹²⁶⁾ COM(2023) 755 final of 28.11.2023.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ Toolbox addressing the use of commercial means of transport to facilitate irregular migration to the EU - European Commission (europa.eu).

⁽¹²⁸⁾ C(2023) 1763 final of 16.3.2023; OJ L 86 of 24.3.2023.

⁽¹²⁹⁾ Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Data source: Member States’ 2023 Accounts for the financial year 16.10.2022–15.10.2023. It refers to NO2 “Return measures”.

⁽¹³⁰⁾ COM(2023) 45 final of 24.1.2023.

⁽¹³¹⁾ Communication COM(2021) 120 final and SWD(2021) 121 final of 27.4.2021.

Sanctions Directive ⁽¹³²⁾ focusing on the three main strands of action: sanctions against employers, measures to protect the rights of irregular migrants and inspections.

DG HOME advanced on the implementation of the **Action Plan on integration and inclusion** ⁽¹³³⁾. Building on the **'Safe Homes guidance'** ⁽¹³⁴⁾, DG HOME monitored the implementation of the EUR 5.5 million **"Safe Homes" project managed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**. The project assesses the accommodation needs for those who are fleeing Russian aggression against Ukraine, matches them with private offers and provides guidance to potential hosts. In 2023, EUR 111.3 million ⁽¹³⁵⁾ were spent on integration and legal migration measures through Home funds.

As part of a **call for proposals for transnational projects under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund** published in 2023, DG HOME is supporting at least 28 projects on access to education, employment, promoting integration efforts of local and regional authorities and community sponsorship schemes and developing complementarity between the reception capacities of Member States and the housing offer provided through private hosting schemes.

As part of the European Year of Skills, DG HOME delivered on the announcement made in the **2022 Skills and Talent package** ⁽¹³⁶⁾ and tabled the proposal on establishing an **EU Talent Pool** ⁽¹³⁷⁾ as part of the **Skills and Talent Mobility Package** ⁽¹³⁸⁾. It aims at making the EU more attractive to talent from outside, and at facilitating mobility within it. The Talent Pool will match employers in the EU with jobseekers from non-EU countries, thus helping to address the skills shortages.

DG HOME facilitated reaching a political agreement on the recast proposal on the **Single Permit Directive** ⁽¹³⁹⁾ on 18 December 2023. Equally, DG HOME supported the inter-institutional negotiations on the **Long-Term Residents Directive** ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ in view of achieving the same goal.

Resettlements and humanitarian admissions for the most vulnerable will continue to be an important part of the EU's migration policy. DG HOME supported Member States in the implementation of their 2023 pledges and continued promoting complementary pathways for refugees linked to higher education and work. Building on the lessons learnt

⁽¹³²⁾ Communication COM(2021)592 final of 29.9.2021.

⁽¹³³⁾ Communication COM (2020) 758 final of 24.11.2020.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ [Safe Homes guidance - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-commission.europa.eu)

⁽¹³⁵⁾ Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Data source: 1) Member States' 2023 Accounts for the financial year 16.10.2022–15.10.2023 (MFF 2014–2020). Refers to SO2 "Integration/Legal migration". 2) Member States' 2023 Accounts for the financial year 01.07.2022–30.06.2023. Refers to SO2 "Legal migration and integration".

⁽¹³⁶⁾ Communication COM/2022/657 final of 27.4.2022.

⁽¹³⁷⁾ COM(2023) 716 final of 15.11.2023.

⁽¹³⁸⁾ COM(2023) 715 final 15.11.2023.

⁽¹³⁹⁾ COM(2022) 655 final of 27.4.2022.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ COM(2022) 650 final of 27.4.2022.

from the response to the war in Ukraine, the work on promoting an EU approach to community sponsorship schemes continued. In 2023, EUR 241.9 ⁽¹⁴¹⁾ were spent on resettlement and humanitarian admission through Home Funds.

In 2023, the Commission under the lead of DG HOME continued supporting the **relocation** transfers for the pledges, matching projects with financial contributions, in the context of the temporary **Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism** ⁽¹⁴²⁾, thereby granting support to five Member States of first entry (Italy, Malta, Greece, Cyprus and Spain).

Relocations in 2023 with DG HOME funding

- **National Programmes** ⁽¹⁴³⁾

208 persons were relocated in total in 2023 (6 persons from Malta to Portugal, 124 from Greece to Portugal, 38 from Greece to Ireland and 40 persons from Cyprus to Bulgaria).

- **Emergency Assistance** ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

1 921 persons were relocated from Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta to the pledging states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal and Romania) under three Emergency Assistance projects in 2023 ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾.

- **Union Actions** ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

1 744 persons were relocated from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain to the pledging states (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal and Romania ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾) under one Union Action project in 2023.

The number of irregular border crossings increased in 2023 to 380 000 compared to 330 000 in 2022 ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾. To support Member States most affected, prevent irregular departures and save lives, DG HOME prepared and coordinates the implementation of **action plans** for the main migratory routes ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ The figure of EUR 241.9 million consists of EUR 2.96 million of expenditure reported under Member States' 2023 Annual Accounts for the 2023 financial year (16.10.2022–15.10.2023, MFF 2014–2020) and EUR 238.91 million of expenditure reported under Member States' Annual Accounts for the 2023 financial year (01.07.2022–30.06.2023, MFF 2021–2027).

⁽¹⁴²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_3970.

⁽¹⁴³⁾ EUR 1.25 million of eligible expenditure reported in the Member States' 2023 Annual Accounts for the 2023 financial year (16.10.2022–15.10.2023).

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism - Weekly Statistics, Ares(2024)2545905 of 08.04.2024.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ Relocation from Italy (RELITA) - HOME/2019/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0128 - EUR 2.2 million – running from 1 September 2020 to 31 October 2023; Voluntary Relocation from Greece – HOME/2019/AMIF/CA/EMAS/0124 - EUR 35.2 million - running from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2023; Relocation from Malta (REMA) - HOME/2019/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0100 - EUR 1 million – running from 1 August 2019 to 31 October 2023.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism - Weekly Statistics, Ares(2024)2545905 of 08.04.2024.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ "Support and Preparatory Activities to Facilitate Voluntary Transfer of either Applicants for or Beneficiaries of International Protection" – HOME-2022-AMIF-TF1-CA-REMEDI5-IBA – EUR 10 million – running from 1 November 2022 and still ongoing.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Source: Frontex: [Significant rise in irregular border crossings in 2023, highest since 2016 \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ See Specific Objective 4.

The volatile situation in the world, from the start of 2023 led DG HOME to continue monitoring migratory movements at the EU's external borders intensely, providing comprehensive and up-to-date situational pictures and stepping up early warning and forecasting to build more solid preparedness. The **Blueprint Network** ⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ which DG HOME coordinates, provided the EU with information on the **evolution of the migration trends** along the migratory routes. Following the EUCO conclusions of February 2023, the Blueprint Network **stepped up its monitoring function**, to develop a joint up-to-date situational picture and allow for early warnings and anticipation of crisis. It monitored closely and analysed **secondary movements** within the EU and the main developments in third countries with a potential impact on migration into the EU, notably in Tunisia and Sudan and, more recently, the crisis in the Middle East.

DG HOME chaired the **European Contact Group on Search and Rescue** ⁽¹⁵¹⁾ after its relaunch in January 2023, which was requested by Member States at the extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2022. Participants shared best practice, agreed on closer coordination among flag and coastal states and information exchange.

The operational dimension continued to focus on the management of the consequences of the war against Ukraine, through the work of the **Solidarity Platform 'Ukraine'** ⁽¹⁵²⁾. It serves as the main discussion forum and operational hub with EU Member States, EU Agencies and Ukrainian authorities and supports the implementation of the **Temporary Protection Directive** ¹⁵³ and the delivery of the **'10-Point Plan** on stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war against Ukraine ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾. In 2023, DG HOME continued coordinating the transfers of vulnerable people fleeing Ukraine and eligible for temporary protection from Moldova to pledging EU Member States and Schengen associated countries. A **Communication**, for which DG HOME was in the lead, **took stock of the Directive's implementation since its application** ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾, drew the lessons learned and identified priority areas needing continued efforts. DG HOME held the pen for the proposal for a **Council Implementing Decision** which extended the duration of temporary protection until March 2025 ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ The Blueprint Network includes the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council, EU Member States, the European External Action Service, and relevant EU Agencies: the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, Frontex, Europol, eu-LISA and ECAA. Schengen Associated Countries, IOM and UNHCR also participate in the Network with observer status.

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1365 of 23 September 2020, OJ L 317, 1.10.2020.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ Migration management: Welcoming refugees from Ukraine - European Commission (europa.eu)

⁽¹⁵³⁾ Proposal COM/2022/91 final of 2.3.2022; Council Directive 2001/55/EC.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_22_2152/IP_22_2152_EN.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ COM(2023) 140 final of 8.3.2023.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ COM(2023) 546 final of 19.9.2023; Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 of 19 October 2023 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, OJ L 2023/2409 of 24.10.2023.

Example of DG HOME funding for Ukraine in 2023

EUR 65°million ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ Call to support Member States with many beneficiaries of temporary protection, to encourage them to move from collective accommodation/ welfare systems to private housing and economic self-reliance.

To support Member States under particular migratory pressure, DG HOME helped develop and implement effective **migration management**. This work strand was pursued under the overall umbrella of the **Task Force Migration Management** through close cooperation with national authorities, EU agencies, civil society and international organisations. DG HOME experts deployed in a few Member States remained valuable assets in contributing to migration governance and management.

The Task Force Migration Management continued overseeing the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ **with the Greek government** on a joint pilot for the establishment of a new Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centre in Lesvos. The new Centre was expected to be completed in spring 2023. Pending legal proceedings have led to delays with finalisation now scheduled for 2024.

DG HOME supported the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with **Cyprus ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾** encompassing a comprehensive Action Plan on migration management composed of measures ranging from the reception of newly arrived migrants to asylum procedures, integration and return.

In 2023, DG HOME also launched an evaluation of the European Migration Network, which will be presented in 2024. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the Network in 2018-2021.

DG HOME's **infringement strategy** in the field of migration management focused on the incorrect transposition of asylum-related Directives (i.e. Reception Conditions Directive and Qualification Directive).

External and internal communication actions (social media, audio-visual and press material) promoted a balanced policy narrative on asylum and migration management, supporting the ongoing negotiations and political agreement on the **Pact and overall migration policy**. Outreach was stepped up by further engaging with various stakeholders. DG HOME's role in the further evolvement of the Anti-smuggling policy including through the **launch of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling** was promoted. Lunchtime seminars, internal news items and newsletter kept colleagues updated on progress of the Pact negotiations and other policy developments.

For activities relating to the external dimension of migration management, see Specific

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ AMIF Specific Action Support for Ukraine – Ares(2023) 8812057.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/03122020_memorandum_of_understanding_en.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ [Commission Decision on the implementation of the EU-Cyprus Action Plan for Migration Management-Annex 1 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Objective 4.

Specific objective 3: A fully functioning area of free movement

In the current challenging geopolitical and economic context, a fully functioning Schengen area is instrumental to stability, resilience and recovery. Throughout 2023, the Commission fully supported **Bulgaria and Romania** in the process of joining the Schengen area. On 30 December 2023, the Council took a unanimous decision to welcome them into the area, starting with lifting controls at air and sea borders as of March 2024 ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾. On 1 January 2023, **Croatia** joined Schengen as its 27th member, leading to the eighth enlargement of the Schengen area and the first in 11 years. The Schengen area now allows 420 million people to travel between member countries without going through border controls. Discussions on a further decision to lift controls at land borders continue in 2024.

Smart borders require modern, effective and efficient **management of the external borders**, which strikes a balance between facilitation for travellers and internal security. In 2023, DG HOME finalised the legislation for the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) ⁽¹⁶¹⁾. DG HOME also further progressed with the legislation to implement the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) ⁽¹⁶²⁾ and the revised Visa Information System (VIS) ⁽¹⁶³⁾. The systems will enhance management and control of our external borders and thus improve internal security. The **Entry/Exit System** (EES) ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ will register non-EU nationals travelling for a short stay, each time they cross the external borders of European countries using the system. The **European Travel Information and Authorisation System** (ETIAS) ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ will record prior information on travellers from visa-exempt countries. The upgrade of the **Visa Information System** will make it interoperable and widen its scope to long stay visas and residence permits.

Interoperability will ensure that national authorities having access to European systems for borders, migration and security will be provided with complete and accurate information on the situation at the border to fight identity fraud. A first major milestone will be reached in autumn 2024 when the Entry/Exit System and the shared Biometric Matching Service will be ready to enter into operation, according to the new roadmap endorsed by Justice and Home Affairs Council in October 2023 ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾. A second major milestone will be reached when the European Travel Information and Authorisation System becomes operational in mid-

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of 30.11.2017.

⁽¹⁶²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of 12.10.2018.

⁽¹⁶³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1134 of 07.07.2021.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of 30.11.2017.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of 12.10.2018.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2023/10/19-20/>

2025, along with the entry into operation of the European Search Portal ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾, the Common Identity Repository ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ and the Common Repository for Reporting and Statistics.

Large-scale IT systems for border management

EUR 0.6 billion in 2021–2027 ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ To increase the interoperability between IT systems

In 2023, the Commission adopted a **Communication establishing the multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management** ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾, which presents the strategic framework for European integrated border management for the next 5 years. The Communication forms the basis for the technical and operational strategy that was developed by Frontex in close cooperation with the Member States and the Commission, and of the national strategies of the Member States that are currently under development.

In 2023, DG HOME also carried out an evaluation of the **Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard** ⁽¹⁷¹⁾ and a review of the Standing Corps, which was presented in 2024 ⁽¹⁷²⁾. The evaluation focuses *inter alia* on the results achieved by Frontex and on the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's performance. The review covers the overall number, composition, training and professionalism of the Standing Corps, as well as the size of the Member States' contributions. As the deadline for the evaluation and the review was in December 2023, the two processes were conducted together, in accordance with the Commission's Better Regulation guidelines.

The gradual establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps continued as planned and had by November 2023 reached 6 800 staff.

DG HOME also began to evaluate the performance of the eu-LISA Agency in relation to its objectives, mandate and tasks. The evaluation report will be presented in 2024.

The Commission helped reach an agreement in the interinstitutional negotiations on the proposed amendment of the **Schengen Borders Code** ⁽¹⁷³⁾ and **Screening Regulation** ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾, which are of great relevance in preserving the proper functioning of the Schengen area, including by ensuring that **internal border controls** are reintroduced only as a last resort and for a limited period of time. The number of Member States with temporary internal border controls in place continued to decrease and reached 11 in 2023.

In 2023, DG HOME continued working closely with the Member States to ensure a high level of security within the Schengen area, without the need of reintroducing internal border

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ The European search portal will enable authorised users to carry out a single search and receive results from all the systems they are authorised to access.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ The common identity repository will enable easy access to biographical information about non-EU citizens, so that they can be more reliably identified.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Adopted Member States programmes 2021-2027 for BMVI, SO1.025 "Large-scale IT systems".

⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ COM(2023) 146 final of 14.3.2023.

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13.11.2019.

⁽¹⁷²⁾ COM(2024) 75 final of 2.2.2024.

⁽¹⁷³⁾ COM(2021) 891 final of 14.12.2021.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ COM(2020) 612 final of 23.9.2020.

controls. These efforts were continued in the context of the Schengen governance cycle and the Schengen Council, with the help of the **Schengen Coordinator**, leading to the adoption of a Commission Recommendation on increased cooperation between Member States in the Schengen area ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾.

DG HOME initiated the **second Schengen cycle** with the adoption of the **State of Schengen Report** ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ in 2023. This comprehensive assessment evaluated progress achieved and challenges observed within the annual governance cycle and emphasised emerging priority areas that demand focus in the forthcoming cycle. To enhance the effectiveness of the **Schengen Barometer+**, collaboration with Justice and Home Affairs agencies was strengthened, creating a more robust framework for identifying vulnerabilities, risks, and significant trends affecting the entire Schengen area. Consequently, this integration has elevated the EU's situational awareness, preparedness, and the fact-based policymaking.

Simultaneously, DG HOME in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) launched the implementation of the third generation of **Schengen evaluations**, switching from a policy-area to a country-focused evaluation approach. Schengen evaluations took place with on-site visits in 15 Member States. To this end, DG HOME also revised the **Schengen Evaluation Guide** ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ and **Standard Questionnaire** ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ to guide future evaluation activities. DG HOME also coordinated and conducted the first **thematic evaluation** under the new **Schengen evaluation and monitoring regulation** ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾, focusing on Member States' capabilities to combat drug trafficking.

The legislative proposal on the **Digitalisation of travel documents**, announced in the Schengen Strategy ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ of June 2021 and in the **2023 Commission Work Programme**, will be presented in 2024 when its impact assessment has been finalised. The objective is to establish a uniform format for digital travel documents and a legal framework for facilitating cross-border travel. While the original plan was to adopt the proposal in 2023, it had to be postponed due to delays in the execution of the pilot projects that supported the impact assessment.

At the end of 2023, the **two amending regulations digitising the visa procedures** ⁽¹⁸¹⁾ were adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. When implemented, visa applicants will use a single EU visa application platform to apply for a Schengen visa and will be issued a digital visa instead of the current visa sticker.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ C(2023) 8139 final of 23.11.2023.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ COM(2023) 274 final of 16.5.2023.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ C(2023) 6790 final of 16.10.2023.

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ C(2023) 3000 final of 7.7.2023.

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/922 of 9 June 2022.

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ COM(2021) 277 final of 2.6.2021.

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ OJ L, 2023/2667, 07.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2667/oj>, OJ L, 2023/2685, 07.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2685/oj>.

The Commission also prepared a **report on the evaluation of the Visa Code**, which will be adopted in 2024. The Visa Code handbook ⁽¹⁸²⁾ will be updated, in particular to reflect changes triggered by the EU-UK withdrawal agreement and specific guidance relating to human rights defenders. Work on the harmonisation of lists of supporting documents and rules on multiple entry visas continued in local Schengen cooperation and through Commission implementing decisions.

Following the full suspension of the visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Russia, in 2022 the Commission adopted guidelines ⁽¹⁸³⁾ on general **visa issuance in relation to Russian applicants** and on controls of Russian citizens at the external borders. DG HOME kept the implementation of these decisions under constant review, to support rapid and coordinated actions at EU level in addressing all emerging challenges.

In terms of enforcement, in line with the Schengen Strategy, priority was given to **infringements** in cases where important ‘non-compliant’ findings were identified through the Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism that could have a substantial and immediate impact on the proper functioning of Schengen; where a Member State does not systematically follow recommendations to remedy ‘non-compliant’ deficiencies; or there are ‘persistent deficiencies’ because the mechanism has not succeeded in ensuring the Member State’s compliance by the end of the evaluation cycle.

External communication actions of DG HOME promoted the policy work to reach a fully functioning area of free movement. Targeted external actions (e.g. web, social media, audio-visual and press material) highlighted the major milestones of the policy work in the field of borders and Schengen, including Schengen enlargement to include Croatia and in 2024 Bulgaria and Romania by air and sea borders. DG HOME continued preparing the EES and ETIAS information campaigns with an external contractor. Both campaigns will raise awareness and acceptance among non-EU nationals, who will be affected by the changed way to enter EU as well as among EU citizens. The two communication campaigns will be implemented upon the entry into operation of both systems, together with the Member States, EU agencies, the European External Action Service and stakeholders from the travel industry, as well as media. In addition, DG HOME ran an information campaign on the renewed Schengen Information System.

Specific objective 4: Stronger cooperation with partner countries

In 2023, DG HOME continued to **cooperate with international partners** in the field of migration and security, both bilaterally and in multilateral formats contributing to the Commission’s ambition for ‘A stronger Europe in the world’ (for cooperation linked to the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, see Specific objectives 1, 2 and 3). The Pact on Migration and Asylum recognises that a stronger cooperation with key partner countries in migration is essential, whether they be origin, transit or destination countries.

⁽¹⁸²⁾ C(2020) 395 final of 28.1.2020.

⁽¹⁸³⁾ Communication of the Commission C(2022)6596 of 9 September 2022 updated with Commission Communication C(2022)7112 of 30 September 2022.

The toolbox for cooperation includes inter alia the following instruments:

The **9 Action Plans** developed for strengthening comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and transit (Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Iraq, Nigeria, Niger, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt and Pakistan) continued to be the focus of DG HOME to deliver on the operationalisation and implementing the follow-up of the priorities. In relation to Türkiye, work continued with a view to a full implementation of the **EU-Turkey statement** ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾, as the main framework of cooperation. An EU-Türkiye High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security took place on 23 November 2023 in Brussels, led by Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya.

DG HOME pursued further the implementation of the **2022 EU action plan for Western Balkans** ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ and **Central Mediterranean** ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ and presented the **2023 EU action plan for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic** ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ migration routes and for the **Eastern Mediterranean** ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ to support Member States in the migration management along these routes, preventing irregular departures and saving lives. Following the unprecedented migratory pressure experienced by Lampedusa this year, the Commission President presented the **10-Point Plan for Lampedusa** ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ during her visit to the Italian island on 17 September 2023 and for which DG HOME coordinates the implementation.

Dialogues on migration and security were intensified and expanded to a comprehensive approach with key partners in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Western Balkans. In 2023, comprehensive formal, informal and technical dialogues on migration and/or security (or similar high-level engagements) continued, non-exhaustively, with Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania, Türkiye, Colombia, Ukraine, Moldova, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Western Balkans partners, USA, Canada, Latin American security partners and in international fora. DG HOME made it a principle aiming for migration to feature in all relevant dialogues of the EU. High-level visits to the **six Western Balkan partners** have been organised in the first Semester 2023 to ensure implementation of the EU Action Plan on Western Balkans. These visits have taken place in a **Team Europe approach**. Good progress has been made overall, while further efforts are expected, especially on visa policy alignment and on Frontex Status Agreements with Serbia and with Bosnia and Herzegovina. For **Western Africa**, following above-mentioned 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa, VP Schinas visited Senegal, Mauritania (focus on enhancement of capacities in border management), The Gambia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, which were followed up by technical meetings on readmission and prevention of irregular migration. With **North African countries**, DG HOME addressed the challenges of forced displacement and increased irregular arrivals

⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/Western%20Balkans_en.pdf

⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/EU%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Central%20Mediterranean_en.pdf)

[11/EU%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Central%20Mediterranean_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/EU%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Central%20Mediterranean_en.pdf)

⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ [EU Action Plan for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#), 6.6.2023.

⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ [EU Action Plan for the Eastern Mediterranean route - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#), 18.10.2023.

⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ [10-Point Plan for Lampedusa \(europa.eu\)](#),

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/ip_23_4503

since 2021, and seized the benefits of legal migration, in line with the Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ and the Pact on Migration and Asylum. DG HOME continued engaging third countries in North Africa and the Sahel via specific fora to discuss migration and border management, including in the **Memorandum of Understanding signed with Tunisia** ⁽¹⁹¹⁾⁽¹⁹²⁾, *Cadre de Consultation Migration* in Niger and the revamped *Trilateral Task Force* between the European Union, the African Union and the United Nations on the situation of stranded migrants in Libya.

To review and reaffirm the strong **transatlantic ties** on Justice and Home Affairs at a time of major geopolitical challenges, DG HOME co-organised two ministerial and two senior officials' meetings with the **United States**. In 2023 an agreement on a closer exchange on the challenges of irregular migration was reached. With **Canada**, the Joint Consultations on Migration and Asylum (JCMA), a platform created in 2016 between DG HOME and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) resumed its work in 2023.

On a **regional and inter-regional level**, DG HOME continued engaging in major migration dialogues. This includes the **Rabat Process** in West Africa; the **Khartoum Process** in the Horn of Africa; the **Prague Process** among the countries of the European Union, Schengen Area, Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, Central Asia, Russia and Turkey; and the **Budapest Process** stretching from Europe to the Silk Routes region. These dialogues ensure exchanges, trainings and thematic meetings of experts, ensuring better understanding of migration management in the respective regions as well as possibilities of cooperation with the EU and the Member States. On the **Global level**, DG HOME contributed to various multilateral processes on migration, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, as well the Inter-governmental Conference on Migration, Asylum and Refugees. It contributed to UN resolutions and UNSC discussion on migration and forced displacement. **A key achievement in 2023** was the contribution to the successful representation of the EU and contribution to the EU pledges at the **second Global Refugee Forum (GRF)**. Significant effort went into the organisation of a high-level event on Ukraine at the GRF with Commissioner Johansson as a key speaker. The EU delegation included for the first-time migrants from the Expert group on the views of migrants. DG HOME also continued the multi-faceted cooperation with UN agencies, in particular IOM and UNHCR, in migration management and refugee response in EU Member States as well as non-EU countries.

Tailor-made projects between EU Member States and key partner countries continued to be supported by **HOME Funds**, for example in the context of the **Regional Development and Protection Programme** (protection pillar) and the **Migration Partnership Facility**. DG HOME furthermore continued its very close cooperation, coordination, and dialogue with the external Directorates General (DG NEAR and DG INTPA) to ensure that migration priorities

⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ JOIN(2021) 2 final of 9.2.2021.

⁽¹⁹¹⁾ Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic and global partnership between the EU and Tunisia (IP/23/3887 of 16.7.2023), [Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and Tunisia \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁽¹⁹²⁾ Statement: The EU and Tunisia: political agreement on a comprehensive partnership package 23/3881 of 16.7.2023).

[The European Union and Tunisia political agreement on a comprehensive partnership package.pdf](#).

are addressed adequately, in particular by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (NDICI) and its 10% migration spending target, including in the context of its mid-term review launched in 2023.

HOME funding for cooperation with partner countries

EUR 76.5 million ⁽¹⁹³⁾ relating to migration

EUR 33.2 million ⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ relating to security and borders

DG HOME continued to steer the development of **Talent Partnerships** (see Strategic Objective 2) to ensure they are prepared in a tailor-made and flexible way and address the labour market and skills needs of Member States and partner countries.

To enhance effective **return** and make **readmission** an indispensable element of international partnerships, policies and tools, DG HOME continued to work with Member States, EU Agencies and partner countries. DG HOME continued the ongoing negotiations of **Readmission Agreements** and considered the most appropriate way forward where mandates exist, but negotiations have either stalled or not started, and assessed the possibility of new negotiations. DG HOME continued to closely monitor the implementation of the 24 readmission instruments in place with third countries.

In July 2023, DG HOME tabled the **fourth assessment report on third countries' cooperation on readmission in the year 2022** ⁽¹⁹⁵⁾. Following the assessment report, DG HOME submitted proposals for Council Implementing Decisions to introduce visa measures in relation to **Ethiopia** ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ and to withdraw the existing increase of the visa fee in relation to **The Gambia** ⁽¹⁹⁷⁾.

DG HOME continued to monitor developments under the Visa suspension mechanism with a focus on visa policy regimes in the Western Balkan countries and adopted the **6th Visa Suspension Mechanism report** ⁽¹⁹⁸⁾. There was no progress on the Commission's proposal for **visa exemption for Qatar and Kuwait** nationals of 2022 in the European Parliament due to the ongoing corruption investigation. The Commission proposal to grant visa free regime to **Kosovo passport holders** was adopted by the co-legislators in April 2023 and entered into force on 1 January 2024 ⁽¹⁹⁹⁾. DG HOME tabled a **proposal aiming at granting visa-free travel to Kosovo Serbs** ⁽²⁰⁰⁾ holders of passports issued by the

⁽¹⁹³⁾ For AMIF: HOME-2022-AMIF-ISF-BMVI-TF1-CA-ICMPD-MPF-IV ; HOME-AMIF-TF2-CA-IOM-EURCAP-RCBF-IV ; AMIF-2022-TF1-AG-RDPP-NA-IBA ; AMIF-2022-TF1-AG-INFOMIGRANTS-IBA ; AMIF-2022-TF1-AG-INFO -- 7 projects.

⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ For ISF and BMVI: ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP --5 projects ; BMVI-2022-TF1-AG-ENILO-IV-IBA -- 3 projects ; For both ISF and BMVI: HOME-2022-AMIF-ISF-BMVI-TF1-CA-ICMPD-MPF-IV.

⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ Not published.

⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ COM(2023) 568 final of 27.9.2023.

⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ COM(2023) 569 final of 27.9.2023.

⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ COM(2023) 730 of 18.10.2023.

⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/850 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 April 2023 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (Kosovo, OJ L 110 of 25.4.2023).

⁽²⁰⁰⁾ COM(2023) 733 final of 16.11.2023.

Serbian Coordination Directorate which would allow – once adopted by EU co-legislators – all Western Balkan citizens to travel visa-free to the EU.

In May 2023, DG HOME held the pen for a **Communication on the monitoring of the EU's visa free regimes** ⁽²⁰¹⁾, highlighting the migration and security challenges that can result from visa-free travel. Following that communication, DG HOME tabled a **legislative proposal to strengthen the visa suspension mechanism** ⁽²⁰²⁾ expanding the grounds for suspension, increasing the duration of the current procedure to allow more time for remedial actions and reinforcing the monitoring of visa-free countries.

In the field of **visa reciprocity** with the US, following the European Parliament's referral against the Commission for failure to act, the **Court of Justice ruled** ⁽²⁰³⁾ that the Commission was not required to suspend the exemption from the visa requirement for US nationals due to a lack of reciprocity in this matter.

Other external dimension activities envisaged by the Pact include the implementation of the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025), which foresees the development of **Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships** with partner countries along migratory routes towards the EU such as Tunisia, strengthening legal, policy, operational and strategic frameworks in partner countries. As mentioned under Specific Objective 2, DG HOME organised an **international Conference on countering migrant smuggling** ⁽²⁰⁴⁾ and launched the **Call to Action on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling** ⁽²⁰⁵⁾, uniting Member States and third countries to address the global and common challenge of smuggling in 2023.

Attached to DG HOME and deployed in EU Delegations, the **European Migration Liaison Officers** remained valuable assets in operationalising the external dimension of the Pact, contributing to migration governance and management, including the prevention and countering of irregular migration and ensuring more effective return and readmission. Third country cooperation between EU Member States is strengthened through the **European network of Immigration Liaison Officers**. In 2023, the network carried out several EU funded projects for the promotion of legal pathways to the EU, on prevention of irregular migration by deploying common airport liaison officers, on improving the capacities of third country nationals' authorities in the area of civil registration and on support to return related activities. The **European Migration Network** continued engagement with non-EU Countries within the EU enlargement, neighbourhood and Eastern partnership policies, sharing information and improving mutual understanding on asylum and migration issues to increase capacity and contribute to improved migration management.

⁽²⁰¹⁾ COM(2023) 297 final of 30.5.2023.

⁽²⁰²⁾ COM(2023) 642 final of 18.10.2023.

⁽²⁰³⁾ CJEU C-137/21, European Parliament v European Commission, 5.9.2023.

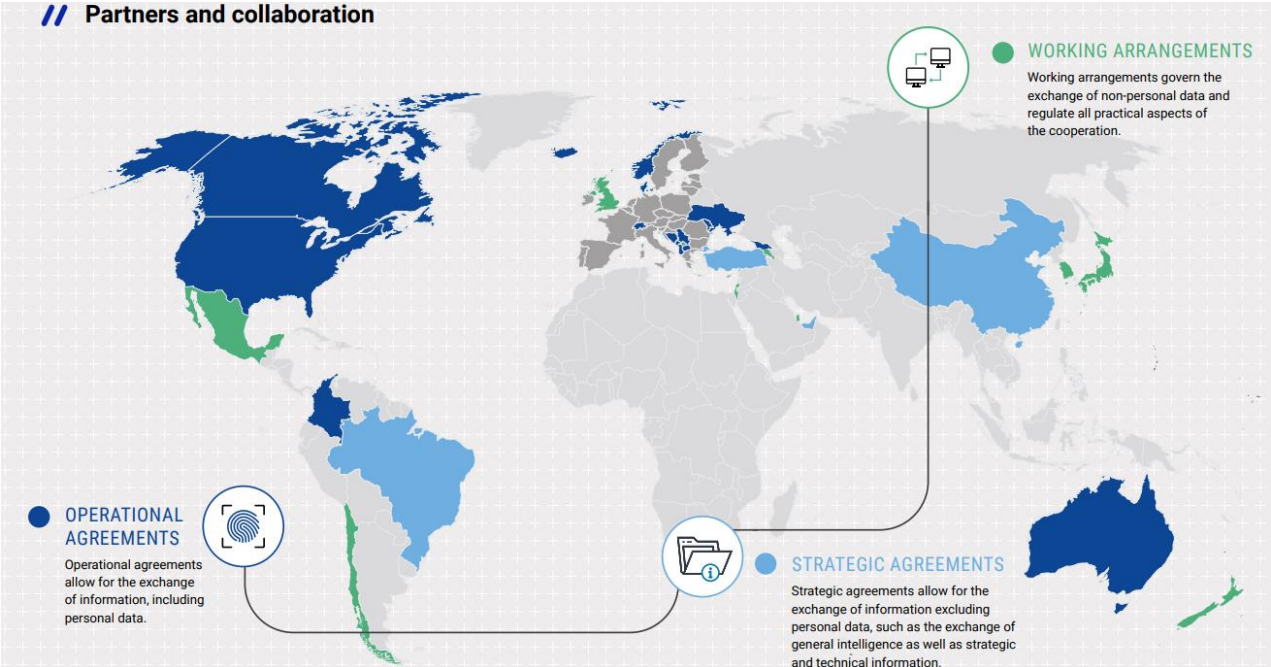
⁽²⁰⁴⁾ [Commission is launching a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling at a High-level International Conference - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²⁰⁵⁾ [Call to action copy \(europa.eu\)](#)

DG HOME further developed **Talent Partnerships** with key partner countries, based on their effective engagement and cooperation on all aspects of migration management. In 2023, **Talent Partnership Roundtables** for discussion of key objectives were organised for each partnership - Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Concrete funding programmes were launched or finalised.

After having performed a call for evidence for an impact assessment for a proposal of a **Regulation on a framework for reciprocal access to security related information for front-line officers between the EU and key third countries** to better counter shared security threats in 2022, DG HOME carried out a public consultation ⁽²⁰⁶⁾. Stakeholders shared their views on how the initiative i) contributes to security, and the protection of the EU’s external borders, and ii) safeguards the protection of data subjects’ rights and fundamental rights. The initiative is being reconsidered due to the lack of support of the stakeholders and political sensitivity. Meanwhile, DG HOME continues advocating for operationalisation of information sharing with third countries for border management purposes, e.g. in the context of the discussion on the US Enhanced Border Security Partnership (EBSP).

DG HOME continued to engage with third countries to negotiate **international agreements** for the exchange of personal data between **Europol** and the law enforcement authorities of Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru – following the recent authorisation of the Council in 2023 – as well as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Türkiye. The long-awaited Europol Joint National Contact Point in Bosnia and Herzegovina was put into operation by the authorities in June 2023.



Source: Europol in Brief, [Europol in Brief.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽²⁰⁶⁾ [Security-related information sharing – reciprocal access for frontline officers in the EU and key partner countries \(europa.eu\)](#)

DG HOME continued to negotiate an **international agreement between the EU and INTERPOL** aiming also to enhance the operational cooperation with the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies (Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, eu-LISA), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO).

In addition, DG HOME continued to ensure the smooth functioning of the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in **Moldova** and intensified exchanges between the EU Delegation and Moldovan partner authorities on tackling criminal threats.

To support **demining activities in Ukraine** in the context of the ongoing Russian war of aggression against that country, DG Home (together with FPI) launched a project for the training in the EU of 50 demining and explosives detection dogs for deployment in Ukraine and handed over the first 17 completely trained dogs to the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Southern Poland.

In the area of counter-terrorism, DG HOME continued to monitor the implementation of the **Joint Action Plan on Counter Terrorism for the Western Balkans** and in this framework concluded the revision of the bilateral arrangement with Montenegro. DG HOME continued the negotiations or pursued the negotiations of **Frontex Status Agreements** with third countries for the deployment of border management teams from the standing corps to perform joint operations with local authorities. Of strong focus in 2023 were the Western Balkans and new agreements signed with Montenegro ⁽²⁰⁷⁾ and Albania ⁽²⁰⁸⁾ replacing the current agreements. Negotiations with Serbia progressed significantly, while no progress was achieved with Bosnia and Herzegovina and with Western African partner countries (e.g. Mauritania, Senegal). Frontex launched negotiations on working arrangements with Morocco and agreed on the deployment of a Frontex Liaison Officer in 2024.

To prevent that terrorists and other criminals obtain access to weapons, DG HOME, together with the EEAS, hosted on 16 May 2023, a **ministerial conference with the Western Balkan partners** to discuss the implementation of the 2018-2024 Roadmap on comprehensive **small arms and light weapons control** ⁽²⁰⁹⁾. During the conference, an agreement was reached to continue with a second phase of the roadmap after 2024.

DG HOME continued to promote the **EU drug policy** model working on the follow-up at operational level of the first ever **EU-Colombia dialogue** on Drugs held in 2022, upgraded the second dialogue with Colombia at Ministerial level and prepared the one with China taking place in 2024. It contributed to the dialogues with the US, Western Balkans and Central and Latin American countries.

⁽²⁰⁷⁾ COM(2023) 260 final of 5.4.2023 (signature); COM(2023) 261 final 5.4.2023 (conclusion).

⁽²⁰⁸⁾ COM(2023) 399 final of 7.7.2023 (signature); COM(2023) 397 final of 7.7.2023 (conclusion); OJ L, °2023/2105, 5.10.2023.

⁽²⁰⁹⁾ <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>

DG HOME also continued to engage with third countries to negotiate international agreements for the transfer of **Passenger Name Record (PNR)** data. In particular, the EU negotiators and their Canadian counterparts marked the finalisation of the PNR negotiations by initialling the text of the agreement ⁽²¹⁰⁾ on the basis of which the Commission will propose the Council to sign and conclude the agreement. The Commission has also recommended to the Council to launch negotiations with Switzerland ⁽²¹¹⁾, Norway ⁽²¹²⁾ and Iceland ⁽²¹³⁾.

Targeted external communication actions supported the cooperation with third countries (e.g. web, social media, audio-visual and press material) highlighting the major milestones and achievements and promoting DG HOME's role in the evolving policy. This included promotion of the international engagement of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, Return Coordinator and Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

Examples of EU added value:

1. In terms of EU funding, despite the late adoption of the 2021-2027 programmes, some Member States made significant progress in the implementation, committing a large part of the national allocations through projects awarded in key areas, e.g. strengthening border protection capacity of Croatia, establishing long term accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors and supporting the implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration measures in Greece. Thus, by the end of 2023 the Croatian authorities have made a significant progress under the BMVI programme, selecting 28 projects, amounting for 57% of the actual allocation, in particular for purchase of border surveillance equipment (including equipment for Frontex missions), development of large IT systems and operating support. In the case of the AMIF programme of Greece, by end of 2023, 81 operations were selected, amounting to more than 90% of the allocation.

Many Member States have started actual activities under the Home Affairs programmes; for example: Sweden, in cooperation with Poland, Spain, Czechia and Germany, developed common EU visa training courses and material to help countries interpret and apply the EU visa acquis in a uniform way while Lithuania reinforced its external border surveillance and improved the security of the Kaliningrad Special Transit Scheme; Germany has admitted more than 16 000 third country nationals on humanitarian grounds, Finland has fulfilled its relocation pledge; and France has created new accommodation for Ukrainian refugees.

In the context of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area, both Member States have been channelling a significant part of their BMVI allocations to the development of border surveillance capabilities for the effective application of the Schengen acquis, at the external land borders with Türkiye and Serbia. In the case of Bulgaria, 21 projects are already selected, amounting to EUR 70 million (36% of the BMVI total allocation) including several border surveillance equipment and the respective maintenance.

2. To support the implementation of the Home Affairs policies, in 2023 the Member States

⁽²¹⁰⁾ The initialled agreement is not public.

⁽²¹¹⁾ COM(2023) 509 of 6.9.2023.

⁽²¹²⁾ COM(2023) 507 of 6.9.2023.

⁽²¹³⁾ COM(2023) 508 of 6.9.2023.

received substantial additional allocations to their programmes due to the specific actions selected in the calls carried out by DG HOME under the 2021-2027 Thematic Facility.

Thus, under BMVI 16 Member States have been allocated a total amount of EUR 447.8°million, to purchase equipment to be put at Frontex' disposal, support for the Special Transit Scheme, pilot projects and developments aimed at border protection in the key countries on transit routes to the EU, facilitation and automation of border crossing or electronic border surveillance systems.

A total amount of EUR 189°million from AMIF was allocated to 13 Member States to enhance capacities of reception, care, guardianship and child protection systems for unaccompanied minors, develop language assessment methodology for determination of origin of applicants for international protection, and assist persons displaced from Ukraine.

A total amount of EUR 7.6°million from ISF was also allocated to 13 Member States to implement the Council's recommendations on operational law enforcement cooperation.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Assurance is provided on the basis of information on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems and governance processes. The management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective examination with internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports / documentation have been considered:

- the reports by Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation in the DG;
- the reports from Authorising Officers in other DGs managing budget appropriations in cross-sub-delegation;
- the reports on control results from management/ audit authorities in Member States in shared management, as well as the result of the Commission supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the reports of the external auditors on the results of control on decentralised agencies in indirect management, as well as the result of the Commission's supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the reports received from entrusted entities (indirect management) in the framework of the contribution agreements;
- the assessment of the Deputy Director-General in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the DG level;
- the results of the ex-post supervision and audit;
- the exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Article 92.3 FR);
- the limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service;
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors.

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG HOME.

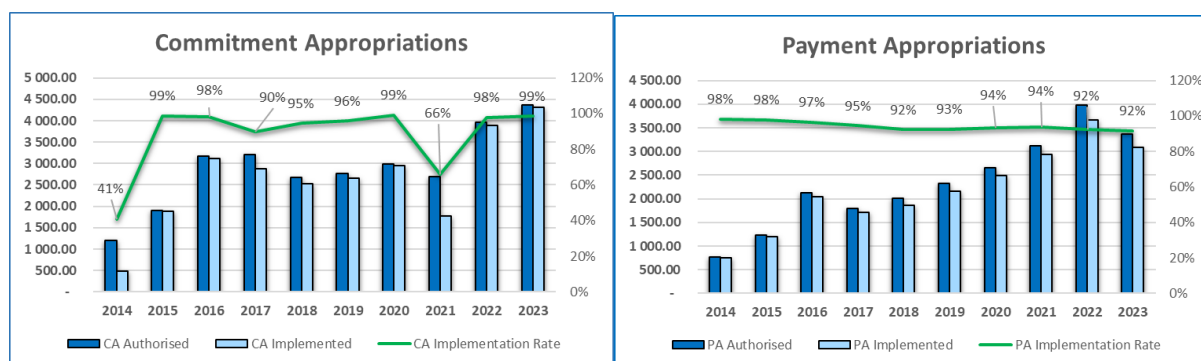
This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1 Control results, 2.2 Audit observations and recommendations, 2.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems, 2.4 Conclusions on the assurance and 2.5 Declaration of Assurance and reservations.

2.1. Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ⁽²¹⁴⁾. The DG's assurance building, and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The annual activity report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

In 2023, the implementation of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 was still continuing, while the implementation phase of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 started after the adoption of all Member States' programmes by the end of 2022. The Member States were particularly affected by the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and could fund under their programmes actions and projects to support their border management system and their asylum and reception systems. The implementation of the Work Programmes 2021-2022 of the Thematic Facility was in the final phase in 2023 and new Work Programmes 2023-2025 were started. DG HOME policies are part of Heading 4 *Migration and Border Management* ⁽²¹⁵⁾, Heading 5 *Security and Defence* and to a smaller extent Heading 1 *Single Market, Innovation and Digital* (Title 1 *Research and Innovation*) in the financial period 2021-2027.

In 2023, DG HOME policies were supported by EUR 4.37 billion of commitment appropriations ⁽²¹⁶⁾ representing approximately 2.34% of the EU budget ⁽²¹⁷⁾ ⁽²¹⁸⁾, and a corresponding amount of payments appropriations equal to EUR 3.37 billion.



⁽²¹⁴⁾ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

⁽²¹⁵⁾ This heading also includes the Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment, which is under responsibility of DG TAXUD.

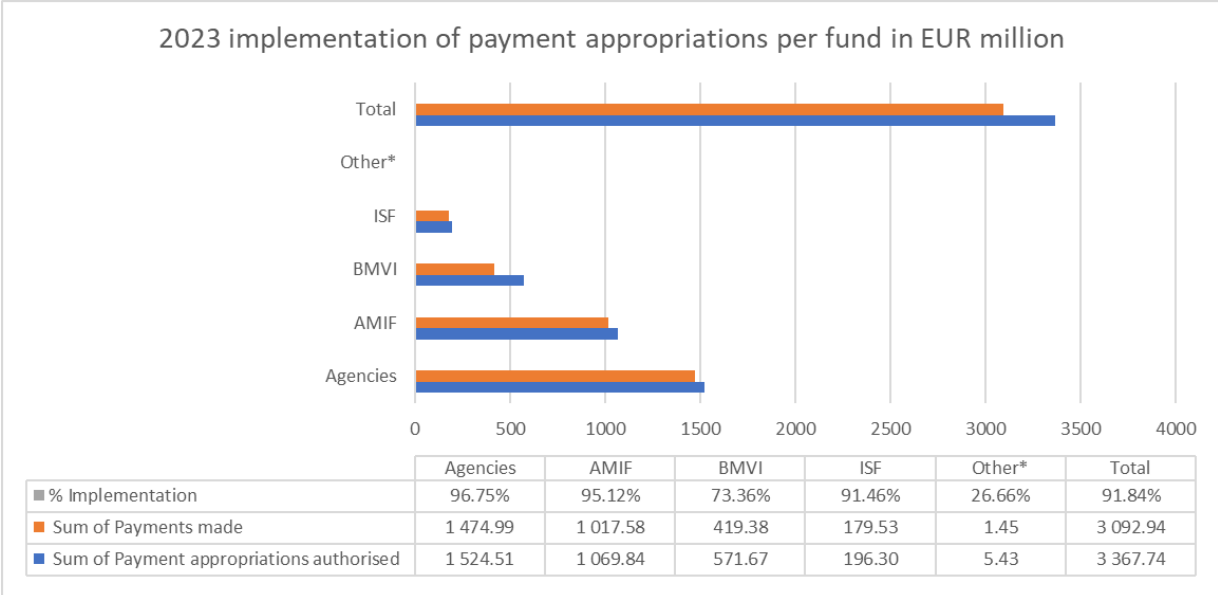
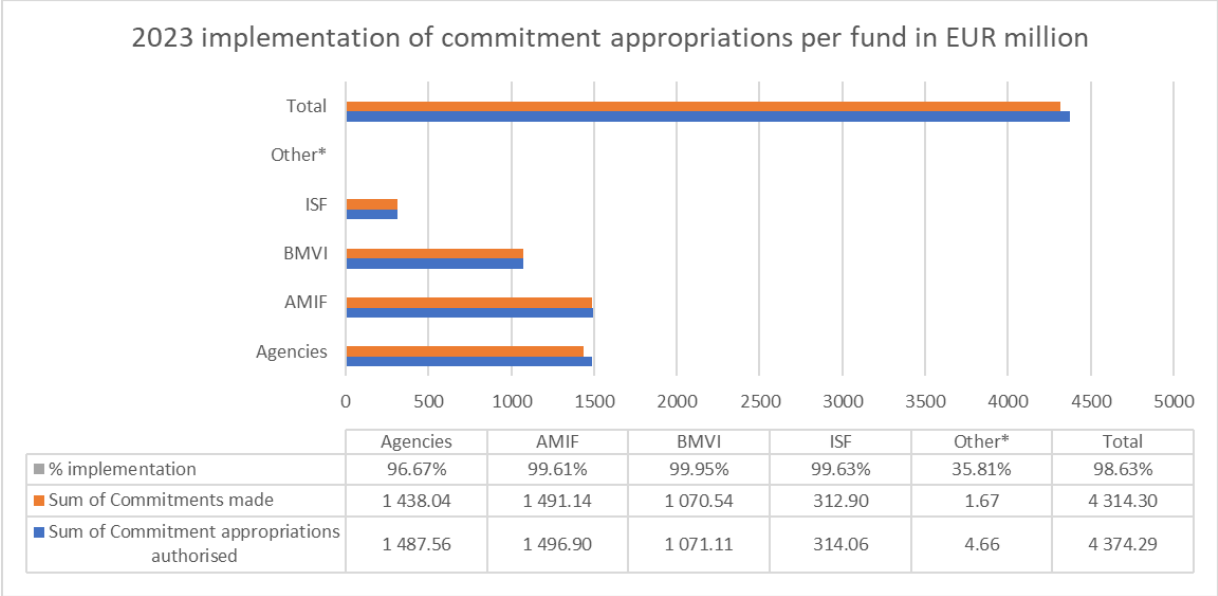
⁽²¹⁶⁾ As per the underlying figures in Annex 3 to the present annual activity report.

⁽²¹⁷⁾ The total EU Budget 2023 amounted to EUR 186.62 billion, OJ L 58/32 of 23.2.2023.

⁽²¹⁸⁾ In addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, authorised commitment appropriations include appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, budget amendments, and miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

Source: Annex 3 of annual activity reports - Outturn on commitment and payment appropriations in 2023

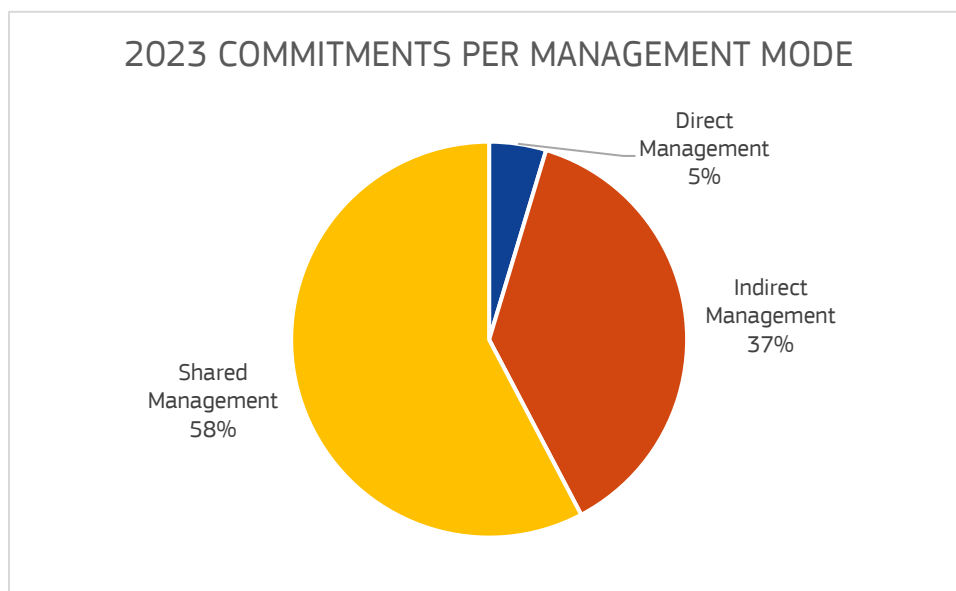
In 2023, DG HOME maintained good implementation rates as regards total available commitment and payment appropriations, achieving consumption rates of 99% for commitments and 92% for payments. The graphs below represent the implementation of total available commitment and payment appropriations in 2023 per fund. The highest share is represented by AMIF, followed by Agencies, BMVI and ISF. The relatively low implementation of payments for BMVI can be explained by external assigned revenues that are carried over every year and are expected to be used at the very end of the implementation of ISF-Borders and Visa.



- Category “Other” covers expenditure linked to the research programmes, pilot projects, preparatory actions, other staff and expenditure relating to persons and co-delegated amounts from DG JUST for ex-post audits. When taking into account only appropriations expiring in 2023, the implementation of DG HOME’s budget reaches 100% in commitments and 97% in payments.

The open amount of commitments (RAL) increased to EUR 5.5 billion at the end of 2023 (compared to EUR 4.3 billion at the end of 2022), which can be partially explained by an overall increase in commitments by EUR 0.4 billion as compared to the last year, DG HOME keeps the open commitments under regular observation in order to decrease RAL.

The graph below presents the distribution of individual commitments signed in 2023 per management mode:



The highest share of commitments is for shared management amounts to EUR 2.37 billion and covers the Member States' National Programmes and the Specific Actions under the Thematic Facility.

The second highest share of the 2023 commitments is for the indirect management amounting to EUR 1.54 billion and is mainly covered by budgetary commitments dedicated to six decentralised HOME agencies, in particular Frontex, which received in the past few years new resources for tasks relating to the external border management. The remaining budgetary commitments under indirect management covered delegation and contribution agreements signed under emergency assistance and Union actions (under Thematic Facilities).

The share for direct management amounts to EUR 0.19 billion and covers mainly Union actions and emergency assistance (under Thematic Facilities).

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG HOME's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- **Cases of "confirmation of instructions" (FR art 92.3)**
- **Cases of financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3)**
- **Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (FR art 130.4)**
- **Cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (FR art 181.6)**
- **Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity pursuant to Article 193 of the Financial Regulation.**

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG HOME's assessment for this reporting requirement is as follows:

- A. Cases of "Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Article 193 FR" (new FR Article 193.2): 4 grants awarded to actions that had already begun ⁽²¹⁹⁾.
- B. Cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR Article 125.3): None.

None of these cases below was applicable in 2023:

- C. Cases of "confirmation of instructions" (new FR Article 92.3)
- D. Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (new FR Article 130.4)
- E. Cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (new FR Article 181.6)

With respect to DG HOME's assurance building, the activities carried out to control the execution of appropriations are presented in this section per relevant control system:

- Control system 1: Shared management
- Control system 2: Direct management of grants
- Control system 3: Direct management of procurement
- Control system 4: Indirect management (decentralised agencies and delegation/contribution agreements)

For each relevant control system, the reporting is structured in two parts (ex- ante control and ex post controls) and a conclusion on the assessment of the functioning of the management and control system.

Annex 6 presents the identified risks, the mitigating controls, the coverage and depth of these controls, their costs and benefits, as well as indicators to measure effectiveness, efficiency and economy. Annex 7 presents the set of management and financial indicators used to measure performance.

2.1.1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG HOME uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

Tables summarising the payments made by DG HOME in 2023, in terms of activities per control system, as well as the key indicators available for each layer can be found in Annex 7.

⁽²¹⁹⁾ Please see annex 7. Includes direct and indirect management.

a.1. Control objectives and assessment of the control results

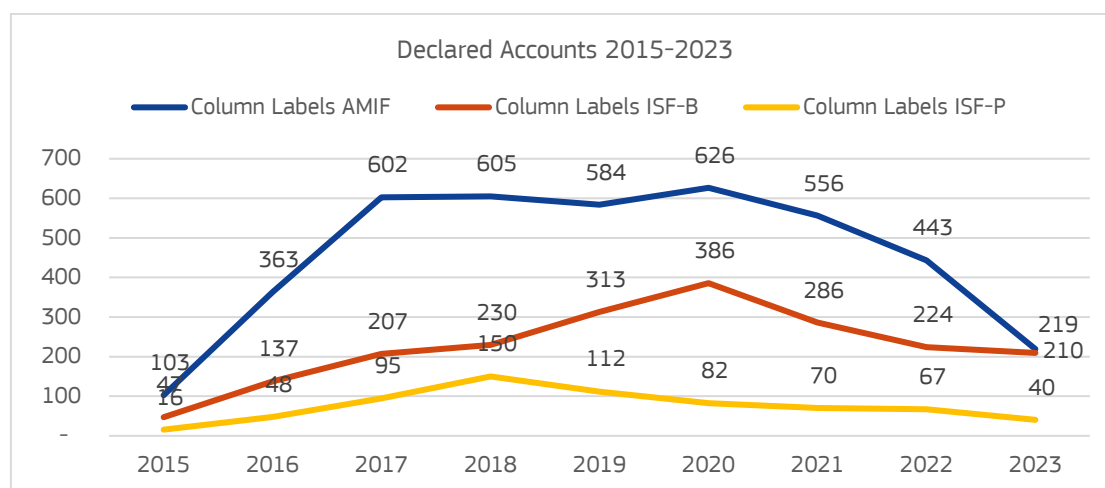
Control system 1: Shared management

1.1 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and Internal Security Fund (2014-2020)

In 2023, commitments were not made for the programming period 2014-2020.

At the end of 2023, the **cumulative absorption rate** of AMIF and ISF under shared management is equal to **87.8%**, up from 82.06% by the end of 2022. This figure reflects the consumption from 2014 to 2023 financial years whose cumulative value is equal to EUR 6.8 billion out of a total allocation to the national programmes of EUR 7.75 billion.

The graph below reflects the evolution of AMIF and ISF accounts from 2014 to 2023 ⁽²²⁰⁾.



Implementation of the 58 multiannual AMIF and ISF national programmes continues, and figures confirm a **decreasing trend in annual absorption**, which is expected considering that we are approaching the end of the implementation period.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

DG HOME has negotiated a change in the Horizontal Regulation (EU) 514/2014, which, *inter alia*, mitigated the risk of de-commitment by allowing a further implementation year of accounts until 30 June 2024.

Whereas the national programmes of AMIF/ISF are multiannual, the Member States submit annually a request for payment (supported by an annual 'assurance package') which results in an annual clearance decision by the Commission (by 31/05/N+1). In 2023, the accounts submitted for clearance by the Member States for the 2022 financial year concerned 58 cost claims. The clearance decisions adopted in 2023, covering both 2022 accounts as well as any outstanding accounts from previous years, led to payments for a value of

⁽²²⁰⁾ The Members States' 2023 Accounts for period ended 15.10.2023.

EUR 338.66 million accepted for clearance ⁽²²¹⁾ (compared to the corresponding amount of EUR 545.74 million accepted in the clearance decisions adopted in 2022).

In 8 cases a partial clearance could be made, due to the need for a Member State to carry out additional controls or audits, or an eligibility question arose. 11 cases of amounts corresponding to partial clearances of prior years were also cleared in 2023. In line with DG HOME's assurance process (Annex 7), the audit opinions and detailed annual control reports, in which the national audit authorities document the audit work to underpin the audit opinions issued as part of the annual payment is assessed as part of the ex- ante controls.

During the reporting period, **40 monitoring visits** were carried out by DG HOME in Member States. Beyond field visits, constructive dialogue with Member States competent authorities proved to be crucial to support the implementation, management and control of AMIF and ISF at national level, thus Member States are on a regular basis provided with guidance. This takes place in various forms to suit best the needs of Member States: meetings of the AMIF/ISF Committee, documents clarifying specific topics (e.g. performance framework), and workshops, which are organised on specific issues, e.g. on performance measurement.

The internal structure of DG HOME, having funding Units composed of country desks in a financial Directorate with weekly discussions on FAQs, facilitates the delivery of consistent and sound guidance and support to Member States in the implementation of AMIF and ISF.

Step 2 – ex post controls

In addition to the annual clearance procedure, conformity clearance ⁽²²²⁾ and financial corrections by the Commission are possible up to 3 years after the expenditure has been reported in the annual accounts by the Responsible Authority. Conformity clearance procedures are also launched following ECA audits in the context of the Statement of the annual assurance (DAS), where irregularities are confirmed. As a result of the conformity clearance procedures, the Commission imposes net financial corrections on the Member States by which they reimburse to the EU budget the amounts corresponding to those corrections. During 2023, DG HOME opened 6 conformity clearance procedures.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

In 2023, DG HOME carried out audit work in line with the approved annual work programme and completed the audit process for the ISF/AMIF compliance system audits for Finland.

In addition, DG HOME auditors accompanied the Court of Auditors on the audits for the 2023 Statement of Assurance in several Member States.

⁽²²¹⁾ Commission Decision C(2023) 3644 of 30 May 2023 and Commission Decision C(2023) 8905 of 11 December 2023.

⁽²²²⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/378, Article 2.

When the Commission considers that expenditure was not in compliance with Union and national rules, it launches a **conformity clearance** procedure. During this procedure, should expenditure and/or system deficiencies be confirmed, the findings are notified to the MS specifying the corrective measures needed in order to ensure future compliance, and indicating the level of financial correction the purpose to exclude from Union financing any expenditure affected by the non-compliance with Union rules.

The methodology to determine reservations and to estimate the net amount at risk is provided in Annex 5. The cumulative outcome of the assessment is presented below (more detailed information per Member State is provided in Annex 7):

Activity/Fund	Cumulative amount at risk (EUR) (31 Dec 2023) in Mio. EUR	Cumulative EU payments (EUR) (31 Dec 2023) in Mio. EUR	Cumulative residual error rate
AMIF	37,59	3.770,67	1,00%
ISF	24,13	2.390,16	1,01%
Total	61,72	6.160,82	1,00%

The **average residual error rate across AMIF and ISF is 1.00%, well below 2%**. At Member States level, 7 Member States present a cumulative residual error rate higher than 2%. In these cases, reservations have been issued as presented in annex 9.

IMPACT on Declaration of Assurance			AMIF			ISF		
				% of MCS	% of EU payment		% of MCS	% of EU payment
1	Reasonable assurance	Number of MCS ⁽²²³⁾	1	4%	2,4%	1	3%	5,62%
		Cumulative EU payments	91.255.343,59			134.196.537,90		
2	Reasonable assurance with low risk	Number of MCS	23	85%	84,4%	24	77%	81,62%
		Cumulative EU payments	3.181.882.992,93			1.950.812.146,28		
3	Limited assurance with medium risk	Number of MCS	3	11%	13,2%	6	19%	12,77%
		Cumulative EU payments	497.531.024,07			305.146.816,94		
4	Limited assurance with high risk	Number of MCS	0	0%	0,0%	0	0%	0,00%
		Cumulative EU payments	0			0		

1.2 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, Border Management and Visa Instrument and Internal Security Fund (2021-2027)

A specific feature of the 2021-2027 period is the need for Member States to comply with a set of **horizontal enabling conditions** as laid down in annex III of the CPR to ensure that an appropriate and sound strategic and legal framework, including the required policy reforms, are in place at the start of the period and during implementation, to allow for the effective implementation of the Funds during the period. The possibility to reimburse expenditure to the Member States in each specific area is conditioned to the continued compliance with enabling conditions.

Enabling conditions that are applicable to the Home Affairs Funds include the horizontal enabling conditions on the effective monitoring mechanisms of the public procurement market, the effective application and implementation of the Charter on Fundamental Rights of the European Union, a cornerstone of the EU acquis, and the implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

⁽²²³⁾ MCS = Management and control system

(UNCRPD). Member States had to self-assess in their programmes whether the enabling conditions linked to the selected specific objectives are fulfilled. With the input of other competent Commission services, DG HOME, DG EMPL and DG REGIO reviewed and the Commission decided whether they agreed with the Member State's own assessment on the fulfilment of enabling conditions. When necessary, DG HOME provided recommendations to Member States to improve the situation.

All Member States fulfilled the applicable **horizontal enabling conditions** in 2023 except Cyprus, Hungary and Poland concerning the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ('Charter HEC').

At the time of the approval by the Commission of the initial programmes supported by the AMIF and the BMVI, **Cyprus** considered that the Charter HEC was not yet met. In January 2024, Cyprus submitted their revised self-assessment considering that the country now fulfils the Charter HEC. In April 2024, the Commission adopted a decision considering that the country now fulfils this enabling condition, which means that the Commission may now reimburse payment applications for all specific objectives for the AMIF and the BMVI programmes.

Poland submitted their revised self-assessment of the Charter HEC in January 2024. In March 2024, the Commission adopted a decision considering that the country now fulfils this enabling condition, which means that the Commission may now reimburse payment applications for all specific objectives for all Home Affairs Funds. As regards **Hungary** the Commission in December 2023 concluded that the country now fulfilled the Charter as concerns judicial independence and 10.2 billion were as a result unblocked. Hungary therefore started to send in payment applications. The enabling condition remains unfulfilled regarding the provisions of Hungary's law prohibiting access to content that portrays homosexuality or sex change for persons under the age of 18, serious risks to academic freedom and the right to asylum, contributing (with other thematic enabling conditions not fulfilled) to another EUR 11 billion of funds that cannot be reimbursed to Hungary. As regards specific measures to protect the EU budget against breaches of the principle of **rule of law** (general regime of conditionality), the Commission considers in its Decision in December 2023 that Hungary did not address the breaches, and therefore **EUR 6.3 billion** remain suspended.

Overall, during the accounting year 2022-2023 ⁽²²⁴⁾ a total of 7 interim payments were accepted by DG HOME, resulting in a total payment of EUR°343.83 million made to the 2021-2027 programmes. The respective 6 accounts were submitted by the relevant deadlines (15.02/01.03.2024), and they are currently being treated.

In 2023, the monitoring and control systems were starting to kick-off following the adoption of the Member States' programmes in the last quarter of 2022. Since the intervention logic and management systems remain to a large extent similar as in the 2014-2020 period, DG HOME does not see any significant changes in the management and control systems.

⁽²²⁴⁾ Related to period ended 30 June 2023.

Step 2 – ex post controls

The programming period of 2021-2027, for which DG HOME funds are governed by the Common Provisions regulation, introduces several key changes aimed at enhancing the management and control systems of EU funding. These changes include:

- a twelve-month accounting period from 1 July year N to 30 June of the year N+1;
- the introduction of interim payment applications throughout the accounting year; and
- the retention of 5% from each EU interim payment made by the Commission.

Programs authorities are required to submit by the 15th of February (or 1st of March) of the year N+2 an "assurance package", i.e. the accounts, the management declaration, the audit opinion and the annual control report. The acceptance of accounts is a separate process from the assessment of legality and regularity, as foreseen in the regulation. However, the block of expenditure certified in the accounts should not contain any remaining material level of irregularities.

Net financial corrections are applied for irregularities detected in expenditure included in accepted accounts and not detected by the Member States.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

The methodology to determine reservations and to estimate the net amount at risk is provided in Annex 5. The cumulative outcome of the assessment is presented below (more detailed information per Member State is provided in Annex 7):

Activity/Fund	Cumulative amount at risk (EUR) (31 Dec 2023) in Mio. EUR	Relevant expenditure 2023 (31 Dec 2023) in Mio. EUR (EUR)	Cumulative residual error rate
AMIF	0,54	318,40 EUR	0,17%
BMVI	0,75	117,86 EUR	0,64%
ISF	0,03	1,42 EUR	2,00%
Total	1,32	437,68 EUR	0,30%

The average residual error rate across AMIF, BMVI and ISF is 0.30%, well below 2%. At Member States level, one Member State presents a cumulative residual error rate higher than 2%. In this case, a reservation has been issued as presented in annex 9.

2.1.1.2 Control system 2. Direct management – Grants

In 2023, DG HOME committed a total amount of EUR 141.56 million (direct management only):

- EUR 134.54 million for Union actions grants
- EUR 7,02 million for emergency assistance grants.

Step 1 – ex ante controls of Union actions and emergency assistance grants

Union actions and emergency assistance grants under direct management represented 5% (EUR 162.11 million) of total value of DG HOME payments in 2023.

'Union actions' are transnational actions or actions of particular interest to the Union covering the objectives under AMIF, BMVI and ISF. These elaborated and often long-term projects support EU-wide networks, new ways of working, testing of tools or methods throughout the Union and cooperation activities between Member States and third countries. In addition, emergency assistance under AMIF and BMVI supported Member States facing urgent needs on the ground in the areas of migration and border management.

Control activities include preparation and adoption of the multi-annual work programmes, the calls for proposals, subsequent evaluation and diligent preparation of grant agreements.

After activity in 2022 related to the late adoption of the 2021-2022 work programmes and hence delayed, compared to previous years' calendar, the activity has visibly intensified in 2023. In 2023, the number of signed grants for **Union actions** reached 88 (compared to – 42 in 2022) (compared to 111 in 2021 and 73 in 2020,) for a total awarded budget equal to EUR 134.54 million (EUR 45.75 million in 2022). In addition, for further 29 selected proposals grants were in preparation in the end of the year.

As concerns **emergency assistance**, DG HOME awarded only 2 grants ⁽²²⁵⁾ (vs. 18 grants in 2022), to address urgent and specific needs in the Member States in the fields of migration and border management. These 2 grants, under AMIF, were awarded during the year, for a total value of EUR 7.02 million.

The number of payments made in 2023 was comparable to previous year: 184 (compared to 171 in 2022) and included 89 final and 95 prefinancing payments. Total value of payments decreased significantly compared to previous years - EUR 162,11 million compared to EUR 549.92 in 2022 and EUR 414.94 million in 2021. The payments in 2023 represented mostly Union Actions (almost 80%), whereas in 2022 it was only 10% of the entire amount. The 2022 payment level was marked by EMAS support to the Member States most affected by the influx of people fleeing Ukraine. In 2023, within the EMAS, payments of EUR°29.92 million were mostly the final payments related to grant agreements signed between 2018-2021. **The percentage of ineligible amounts found by the ex-ante controls performed over these claims represented 0.48% of their value (1.06% in 2022).**

Step 2 – ex post controls of Union actions and emergency assistance grants

In addition to the main control objective, the ex-post controls serve other purposes:

- ✓ Detection and correction of any errors remaining undetected after the implementation of ex ante controls;
- ✓ Report to OLAF on any suspicions of fraud observed during the ex-post control;
- ✓ Measuring the effectiveness of ex ante controls;
- ✓ Addressing systematic weaknesses in the ex-ante controls based on the analysis of

⁽²²⁵⁾ 1 grant was awarded to Cyprus to provide support due to the influx of persons from Ukraine. A 2nd grant was awarded to Latvia in the form of a top-up to an already existing grant agreement. 2 contribution agreements were also awarded as emergency assistance, one to IOM concerning Lampedusa and one to the IFRC for the Safe Homes programme.

the findings (sound financial management); ensuring appropriate accounting of the recoveries to be made (reliability of reporting, safeguarding of assets and information).

In 2023, DG HOME launched 37 Direct Management (DM) ex post controls ⁽²²⁶⁾, ex post controls for DG HOME. All are part of the annual audit work programme 2023. Taking into account the audits launched in previous annual audit work programmes, DG HOME's auditors finalised 17 ⁽²²⁷⁾ DM audit reports in 2023 (15, 1 and 1 from the respective Annual Work programmes of 2022, 2021 and 2020). The cumulated DM audit coverage ⁽²²⁸⁾ for 2014-2020 programming period was 25,07% as of 31.12.2023.

For audits closed in 2023, the majority of the findings relate to deductible VAT included in the cost claimed, exchange rate errors and insufficient supporting documentation. The table below presents an overview of the typology of the errors detected during the audit work.

Financial findings covering: subcontracting, ineligible VAT, lack of audit trail, budget overruns, incorrect exchange rate	1.503.346,95
Missing/inadequate documentation	1.324.696,15
Indirect costs impact of ineligible direct costs	100.318,63
Other findings for staff costs	72.953,92
Total Main Findings	3.001.315,65
Grand Total	3.077.541,57

For the programming period 2014-2020, the table below presents a cumulative overview of the primary types of errors detected up to 31 December 2023:

Financial findings covering: subcontracting, ineligible VAT, lack of audit trail, budget overruns, incorrect exchange rate	36,62%
Incorrect procurement procedure	20,70%
Missing/inadequate documentation	19,16%
Other findings for staff costs	15,67%
Indirect costs impact of ineligible direct costs	2,27%
Cost not budgeted or not for project purposes	2,08%
Total Main Findings	96%
Grand Total	100%

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

Based on additional audits closed by end 2023, corporate guidance on the treatment applicable to procedural procurement errors (more details in Annex 5) and the assessment of the functioning of the management and control system for direct management grants (Union actions and emergency assistance), **the financial reservation reported in the 2022 annual activity report is lifted in the 2023 AAR.**

⁽²²⁶⁾ Out of the 37 DM ex post controls, 19 were on grants implemented by DG JUST and 18 implemented by DG HOME. In addition, DG HOME sampled 4 grants relating to International Organisations for ex post controls, 1 in Direct management and 3 indirect management grants.

⁽²²⁷⁾ Finalised meaning that the final audit reports were signed and sent to the Authorising Officer by Sub-Delegation by end-2023.

⁽²²⁸⁾ Based on the finalised DM audits on 31 December 2023. In addition to DM audits, one IM audit for AWP2023 was also closed.

The Residual Error Rate of 1,29% has significantly dropped in comparison to 2022 (2,99%). This improvement compared to the 2022 AAR is due to an audit concluded in 2022, for which information was provided which justified a subsequent audit review. As a consequence of that review, the total errors identified in this audit dropped from 2,705 Mio EUR (37% of the cumulative detected errors in AAR 2022, excluding formal errors on procurement) to 17,5 thousand EUR.

Audit coverage and error rate for direct management 2014-2020 funds (multiannual)	2023	2022
<i>Cumulative Auditable Population (in EUR million)</i>	1204,97	997,81
<i>Cumulative Audited Population (in EUR million)</i>	302,14	216,42
<i>Cumulative Audit coverage (%)</i>	25,07%	21,69%
<i>Cumulative detected error rate (%)</i>	4,04%	6,76%
<i>Cumulative residual error rate (%)</i>	1,29%	2,99%

The assessment of the Residual Error Rate and amount at risk not detected by the supervisory and ex ante elements of the internal control is carried out through analysis of the results of ex post audits. The table above summarises the results of this analysis done according to the four steps detailed in Annex 5. It gives the cumulative coverage rates for grants under direct management (research excluded) and the related Residual Error Rates.

2.1.1.3 Control system 3. Direct management - Procurement

The control system for direct management – procurement builds on three main processes: procurement procedures, financial operations and supervisory measures.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

In 2023, 31 tenders (open tenders + reopening of competitions under framework contracts) were published. In total, 224 contracts for a total value of **EUR 46.86 million** were signed in 2023. For 5 open procedures (of which 2 for framework contracts) the evaluations were not yet concluded in 2023. They will lead to signature of contracts of up to EUR 92.5 million in the course of 2024.

As compared to 2022, these indicators indicate a significant rise in the activity in terms of the number of contracts signed and their financial value (respectively 20 and 27% more than in 2022). Number of tenders increased by 40% and included 7 open tenders, characterised with a much higher level of complexity than reopening of competition under the framework contracts. Globally, the number of commitments and payments remained high and echo the intensive political framework of DG HOME where procurement and contract activities reinforce policy development in the field of migration, borders and internal security.

The contract management includes payments and monitoring of the delivery of the expected results while complying with regulatory and contractual provisions. To this end, DG HOME carries out ex ante checks of cost claims before processing transactions.

The amount of payments made in 2023 was equal to EUR 31.60 million ⁽²²⁹⁾, also noticeably higher than in 2022 (EUR 24.30 million). What was also remarkable was the number of executed payments, which was 591, which compared to 339 in 2022 marked an increase of 75%.

Step 2 – ex post controls

This control system is limited to Step 1, as DG HOME does not carry out ex post audit on its own procurement, this being done by external auditors (IAS, ECA) as appropriate.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

Based on the methodology described in Annex 6, no ex-post controls were performed for contracts. The audit findings signalled by the other internal or external auditors are taken into account for the assessment of assurance and the residual error is estimated at 0.50%, as per error rate computed by the European Court of Auditors on administrative expenditure, below the 2% materiality threshold.

2.1.1.4 Control system 4. Indirect management - Entrusted Entities and Decentralised Agencies

Entrusted Entities

Contribution agreements

In 2023, DG HOME made 8 new commitments in relation to contribution agreements under the Union Actions for a total amount of EUR°87.82 million and 2 for EUR°19.83 million under EMAS. Payments made in 2023 in relation to contribution agreements were equal to EUR 96.47 million (3% of the total payments made) compared to EUR 132.48 million in 2022.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

Delegation and contribution agreements were monitored during the year through progress reports, regular meetings (including participation of DG HOME in Steering committees), online monitoring missions and on the spot visits, including the monitoring done with local staff.

Step 2 – ex post controls

Contribution agreements are subject to ex post verifications carried out by DG HOME. In 2023 one verification was carried out on contribution agreement that was signed under the EU-UN Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) and for which final payments were made in the reporting period. Taking into account the limited population not allowing for the calculation of an error rate, the limitation of scope on verifications under pillar assessed international organizations and the small ineligible amounts detected under the verification mentioned above (0,03% of the checked amount), we assessed the risk at payment as 0,5%. This is a prudential approach for the amounts considered as low risk.

⁽²²⁹⁾ Comprising 1.04 million in the field of research and 30.56 million non-research.

a.2. Supervision/ Coordination of Decentralised Agencies

DG HOME pays annual EU contributions to the decentralised agencies as authorised by the Budgetary Authority. In 2023, the total commitment appropriations were slightly higher than the previous year and amounted to EUR 1.438 billion, all of which was implemented. The budgeted payment appropriations were EUR 1.475 billion, out of which 100% was consumed. Total payments made to the six agencies in 2023 represented 48% of all payments made by DG HOME. A table summarising the amounts of commitment and payments appropriations budgeted and implemented in 2023 can be found in Annex 13.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

The overall objective is to ensure that HOME is duly and timely informed of any governance-related issues in agencies that could have an impact on the assurance of the agencies and/or represent a reputational risk for DG HOME. Decentralised agencies have full responsibility for the implementation of their budget, while HOME is responsible for regular payment of annual contributions established by the Budgetary Authority.

DG HOME closely monitors Agencies' activities in policy implementation, budget planning and implementation and internal control, including follow up on recommendations issued by the Internal Audit Service and the European Court of Auditors. DG HOME exercises its oversight role directly through membership (with voting rights) in the Agencies' Management Boards, where the Commission is represented by HOME Director-General and Deputy Director-General in most cases. In addition, DG HOME actively participates in preparatory meetings usually organised before Management Board meetings. Four agencies – eu-LISA, Frontex, EMCDDA and Ceuol – have specialised working groups on resources and audit-related matters. In EUAA, the preparatory working group features a sub-formation dedicated to these matters, while in Europol these topics are discussed by a broader group dedicated to governance and operations. In 2024 the preparatory group in EUAA will be replaced by an Executive Board with a similar role and set-up, but with slightly higher authority in decision making.

Step 2 – ex post control

The centralised IAS of the Commission acts as the internal auditor for the agencies ⁽²³⁰⁾, while the European Court of Auditors gives a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the annual accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. Based on these, the European Parliament grants discharge directly to the agencies. DG HOME, therefore, does not carry out ex post audits of its decentralised agencies' expenditure, but monitors closely IAS and ECA audit recommendations, as well as of the discharge.

For the 2022 financial year, ECA issued unqualified ('clean') audit opinions on the accounts of all HOME agencies. Regarding the legality and regularity of the payments underlying the annual accounts, ECA issued unqualified ('clean') audit opinions for 4 of HOME agencies, while for CEPOL and eu-LISA ECA issued qualified opinions. In the case of eu-LISA, the total amount of affected expenditure was EUR°17.8 million, representing 4.8 % of the total payment appropriations available in 2022. For CEPOL, the total amount of non-compliant expenditure was EUR°4.2 million, representing 13.5 % of the total payment appropriations available in 2022. These findings will be addressed in the Agencies' own Annual Activity

⁽²³⁰⁾ Some Agencies (e.g. Frontex & eu-LISA) have their own internal audit capability.

Reports and discharge procedure.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control system

From the six decentralised agencies, only eu-LISA notified shortcomings stemming from internal and external audits with possible impact on DG HOME's assurance for 2023. The provisional assessment identifies control weaknesses in the context of operational programmes and projects affecting the regularity of procurement and contract management activities performed in financial year 2023. According to the preliminary assessment of eu-LISA's Authorising Officer, these elements could eventually have an impact on DG HOME's annual activity report. However, a preliminary assessment of these shortcomings does not prejudge the outcome of the full assessment by eu-LISA's Authorising Officer of all elements supporting assurance. This will be done in the eu-LISA's annual activity report. Based on DG HOME's assessment, the above does not currently result in a reputational impact thus no reservation on reputational grounds has been issued. DG HOME will monitor results of the assessment by eu-LISA's Authorising Officer and follow-up measures. DG HOME monitors the work of eu-LISA either directly or under the umbrella of the Management Board and the Audit, Compliance and Finance Committee of eu-LISA. At the initiative of DG HOME, the Management Board has already reinforced the monitoring of budget management and internal control of the Agency. DG HOME has undertaken regular discussions with eu-LISA following the ECA preliminary findings on the eu-LISA 2022 accounts and also further to the outcome of the ECA report in October 2023.

The relevant information provided by the agencies in relation to the issues identified as a result of the Commission's involvement in the agencies' Management Board and the results of DG HOME's supervision arrangements are deemed reliable and assessed as sufficient to draw reasonable assurance conclusion. Details on IAS audits will be given by the agencies directly in their annual activity reports, in the framework of their separate discharge procedure. Therefore, the actual payments made by DG HOME to the decentralized agencies related to the subsidies voted by the budgetary authority, are considered error-free type of expenditure (0% risk at payment).

As regards Frontex, many actions and developments took place during 2023.

Progress has been made in the implementation of the Agency's new mandate and the assessment of the reputational impact of the weaknesses previously identified has been re-performed in the framework of the 2022 AAR:

- The Agency's new administrative structure was adopted by the Management Board in November 2023.
- The new Executive Director was appointed in the Management Board meeting of 20 December 2022 and took up his office in March 2023.
- The Agency also made progress in the establishment of the Fundamental rights monitoring framework. In 2023, the Fundamental Rights Officer finalised the recruitment of 46 Fundamental Rights Monitors.
- By the end of 2023, the Agency has recruited 951 deployable staff members, almost reaching the number of planned officers for the Standing Corps category 1

and it has launched the third recruitment campaign for approximately 450 statutory staff members deployable as members of the EBCG Standing Corps ⁽²³¹⁾.

As concerns **contribution agreements with entrusted entities**, DG HOME also considers that the level of information received as well as the supervision arrangements are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance.

Tables summarising the payments made by DG HOME in 2023, in terms of activities per control system, as well as the key indicators available for each layer can be found in Annex 7.

The analysis of the results of the control activities implemented by DG HOME in 2023 which are described under each Control Systems in sections 2.1.1.1 to 2.1.1.4 allows DG HOME to state that overall reliable and complete control results are available for each Control System.

The second part of section 2.1.1 aims at concluding on the cost-effectiveness of these controls and is structured in four sub-sections:

1. Effectiveness of the controls through the analysis of legality and regularity of transactions; fraud prevention, detection and prevention
2. Efficiency of controls
3. Economy of controls
4. Conclusion on cost-effectiveness of controls

a.3. Overview of DG HOME risk profile

DG HOME's portfolio consists of segments with an overall risk at payment of 1,13%. For five out of six segments, the risk at payment is below 2%, while for one segment (grants under direct management) the risk at payment is 4,04% (down from 6,76% in 2022).

The low error rates for almost all segments are due to the design of the control system for the amounts spent under shared management (2014-2020). The Audit Authorities carry out their audit work prior to the submission of the annual accounts to the Commission by 15 February. In case of ineligible amounts or material errors reported by the Member States in the annual accounts and annual control reports the accounts are partially cleared, reducing considerably the residual error rate. Nevertheless, for a few Member States system deficiencies were detected during system audits, leading to a residual error rate above 2% (Member States included under reservation).

Also the actual payments made by DG HOME to the decentralized agencies related to the subsidies voted by the budgetary authority, are considered error-free type of expenditure (0% risk at payment).

⁽²³¹⁾ Data from the Agency's report to the Management Board on recruitment and staffing data, 31/12/2023.

For the segment of grants/emergency assistance and Union actions, the causes of the errors identified are mainly associated to procurement procedures. Other minor causes were found under the area of VAT. Management actions taken to address these weaknesses are: the issuance of better targeted guidelines and monitoring the actions during the period of implementation. In line with the ECA recommendations, better targeted checks will be also implemented for the final payments. On a multiannual approach, the residual error rate dropped below 2% (1,29% compared to 2,99% in 2022) which led to the lifting of the reservation.

a.4. Table (X): Estimated risk at payment and at closure

Based on all the above, DG HOME presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

Table (X): Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in EUR million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in annex 9.

DG HOME	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
shared management MFF 2014-20	338.66	653.22	6.53	1.00%	1.27	0.19%	5.26	0.81%
shared management MFF 2021-27	959.11	437.68	1.32	0.30%	0.85	0.19%	0.47	0.11%
Direct Management – Union actions and EMAS grants	162.11	647.71	26.17	4.04%	1.26	0.19%	24.91	3.85%
Direct Management – Procurement	31.60	30.09	0.15	0.50%	0.00	0.00%	0.15	0.50%
Indirect Management – Contribution/Delegation agreements	96.47	45.63	0.23	0.50%	0.09	0.19%	0.14	0.31%
Indirect Management – Decentralised agencies	1 474.99	1 231.59	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00%
DG total	3 062.94	3 045.92	34.40	1.13%	3.47	0.11%	30.94	1.02%
In addition, EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa	30.00 ⁽²³²⁾							

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2023 expenditure, 1.13%, is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and

⁽²³²⁾ The amount represents DG HOME’s payments in 2023 to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The payment is executed based on a debit note issued by the lead DG INTPA. Relevant underlying control systems, including the governance, are presented in the AAR of the lead DGs (INTPA and NEAR).

corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2023 expenditure, 0.11%.

The difference between those two, results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽²³³⁾, 1.02%. This is a decrease compared to 2022 (1.27%) mainly due to a decrease in the overall error rates for shared management and direct management (below 2%).

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

a.5. Preventive and corrective measures

As regards the corrections carried out in 2023, DG HOME has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, amounting to EUR 1,24 million and EUR 1,13 million respectively. (EUR 5,47 million and EUR 2,83 million respectively for 2022). This represents a decrease compared to 2022, with EUR 4,23 million and EUR 1,59 million respectively which is mostly explained by the fact that the results of the conformity clearances for 2014-2020 period will be implemented in the closure procedures and thus visible at a later stage. Member States contributed slightly in this corrective mechanism and part of the benefit stems from their actions.

Please see table below for details:

	Preventive Measures (m EUR)	Corrective measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Member States		
of which from Member States controls	0,09	
of which from EU controls ⁽²³⁴⁾		
Implemented by the Commission		
of which from Member States controls		
of which from EU controls	1,24	1,13
DG HOME total	1,33	1,13

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG HOME has developed and implemented its own anti-fraud strategy since 2013, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated every three years and was last updated in October 2021. Its implementation is currently being

⁽²³³⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

⁽²³⁴⁾ As a result of Commission controls and audits (including additional corrections to ensure a risk at closure below 2% in case of EMPL, REGIO and MARE), OLAF investigations or ECA audits.

monitored as the end of implementation is approaching and all necessary actions are expected to be completed in the course of 2024. A new strategy will be adopted by the end of year 2024.

In the past year, DG HOME contributed to the revised Commission anti-fraud strategy Action Plan of July 2023, notably to actions: 24 addressing risks connected to spending in emergency situations, and 38, 39 focusing on synergies between policies against organised crime, fraud and corruption. DG HOME followed up OLAF's financial recommendations issued between 2019 and 2023, with the following results: 44.5% have been fully implemented, 11% have been partially implemented, 22.25% have not been implemented ⁽²³⁵⁾, while 22.25% are under analysis/implementation ⁽²³⁶⁾.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows:

- DG HOME continued its fraud awareness-raising efforts for its staff by organising two lunchtime seminars on: ethics outreach and whistleblowing. A note on reporting obligations on the Irregularity Management System was also disseminated to Member States in Q1 2024.
- DG HOME also continued its close collaboration with OLAF -providing information and administrative support and collaborating with selectors and investigators upon their request-, and the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network of the Commission.

On the basis of the available information, DG HOME has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective overall.

2.1.2. Efficiency of controls

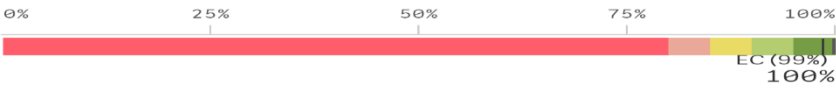
DG HOME assessed the efficiency of controls on the basis of "time to" indicators, which measure the time needed to complete specific procedures. The statistics based on all payments covering all management modes made by DG HOME in 2023 show **timely payments at 100%**, which is in line with the 2022 level and slightly better than the Commission average (99%). Initiatives undertaken to improve control efficiency in financial management include regular monitoring of open invoices via enhanced reporting, making invoice suspensions if necessary as well as monitoring of final dates for implementation. The timely payments indicator is monitored on a monthly basis through the monthly reporting on the budget and financial management.

Moreover, the audit of the Internal Audit Service "on the preparedness for closing actions and programmes funded under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Asylum, Migration

⁽²³⁵⁾ In one case the amounts recommended were irrecoverable following the liquidation of economic operator concerned, while in the second case the recommendation was not implemented due to legal obstacles.

⁽²³⁶⁾ DG HOME received two recommendations in December 2023. The analysis of the recommendations is finalised and their implementation is ongoing.

and Integration Fund (AMIF) through direct and shared management” presented some recommendations. The implementation of the resulting action plans will be reported in the AAR 2024.

Timely Payments	HOME Score	EC Score
	100%	99%

The total amount of payments made by DG HOME in 2023 were around 16% lower than in 2022 (EUR°3.09 billion vs EUR°3.67billion) while the efficiency indicators show positive results as presented in this section, which proves that in general DG HOME managed its resources and processes efficiently. A closer look at the control systems shows the areas where major improvements were achieved, and where additional efforts will be needed.

In 2023, five non-compliance events occurred in direct management, including procurement. In addition, there were six exception events recorded in direct management, including procurement. The number of these events increased compared to 2022, although they remain rather **minor compared to the number of transactions** and correspond **mostly to small-scale inaccuracies in the contract management. Efforts are ongoing and will continue in 2024 to improve the general procurement knowledge inside the DG.** As concerns shared management, one non-compliance event occurred which concerned the late adoption of one of the Commission Decisions on the clearance of the 2021 accounts. In addition, one exception event was recorded which concerned the non-application of the Conformity Clearance procedure.

During 2023, 2 259 ex ante verifications (FVA verifications) took place (2 093 in 2022), of which 10% were sent back for correction (13% in 2022).

Control system 1 – shared management

The indicators on efficiency remained steady in 2023: all payments were made on time. Other efficiency indicators are not relevant in shared management.

Control system 2 – direct management grants

The individual efficiency indicators as regards "timely payment" remained stable for Union Actions (99% compared to 100% in 2022) and slightly less so for EMAS (91% in 2023 compared to 100% in 2022). Still there is a high proportion of pre-financing payments, which due to their automatic nature do not bear any risk of delay. As concerns the time-to-grant and time-to-inform indicators, these were significantly longer than in 2022. In the case of Union actions, both indicators increased by some 35-40 days, albeit remaining within the limits of the legislative deadlines. To be noted, that the new eGrants configuration continued to pose problems in 2023, the system presented some downtime stalling the processes. Moreover, changing political priorities often impacted the calendars of the open procedures as the resources engaged in the evaluation were redirected to

policy development tasks. In the case of EMAS, results remained good: time-to-inform remained stable at 27 days and time-to-grant improved by 12 days.

Control system 3 – Procurement

As regards procurement, the timely payment indicator, remained stable at 91% which was a remarkable achievement when looking at the overall increase in activity (75% increase in payments, 20% in number of contracts and 7 open procedures ran throughout the year) against no real increase in the personnel and some long-term absences.

Control system 4 – Indirect management

The timely payment indicator remained at 100% in 2023 as in 2022 for delegation and contribution agreements under indirect management.

Overall, the evolution over time has been positive in all management modes. The time-to indicators have shown similar results in 2023 as in 2022. Based on the above information, DG HOME could reach a positive conclusion with regard to the efficiency of its entire control system. DG HOME did not have any cases that should have been reported under article 93.2 of the Financial Regulation in 2022. For further details on payment indicators with details on (time-to) indicators per control system is available in Annex 4.

2.1.3. Economy of controls

The cost of controls has been estimated at DG HOME level and, separately, at the level of Member States and entrusted entities, for shared and indirect management respectively. The costs at DG HOME level are reported in absolute values and as a percentage of the payments made, globally and broken down by relevant control system and step (as described in Annex 6).

The assessment of the economy of the cost of controls has been carried out through analysis of the evolution over time and in relation to the volume of resources managed.

Cost of controls at DG HOME level

DG HOME has analysed the estimation of the cost of control in relation with the value of the payments made in 2023 per control system (Annex 6) and over the last 3 reporting years, to draw conclusions also on the trend. As a basis for the calculation, DG HOME has quantified the Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) allocated to the control activities, whilst “other direct costs” are mainly represented by externalised audit work.

As a result, the **total estimated cost of the controls** performed in 2023 by DG HOME has been estimated at **EUR 20 009 507.22, which is 0.65% of the total payments.**

This confirms a stable trend in terms of cost of controls per payments (below table see ratio). The slight increase in the cost of controls comes with an updated annual average Full Time Equivalent cost. In addition, the beginning of the implementation of the 2021-2027 programmes increased the amount of ex-ante and ex-post controls.

The performance of cost of the controls slightly decreased (from 0.52% in 2022 to 0.65% in 2023). This is explained by lower level of payments compared to year 2022, while costs of control systems remained stable. The efforts continued to provide appropriate guidance on control requirements to Member States, to decentralised agencies and implementing partners.

The below table provides exhaustive information on the data analysed by DG HOME to draw this conclusion.

Control system	2023			2022			2021		
	Costs (M EUR)	Payments (MEUR)	Costs/ payments (%)	Costs (MEUR)	Payments (MEUR)	Costs/ payments (%)	Costs (MEUR)	Payments (MEUR)	Costs/ payments (%)
Shared management	8.23	1 297.77	0.63%	7.36	1 653.00	0.45%	5.20	1 050.66	0.49%
Direct management-grants	4.52	162.11	2.79%	4.55	549.91	0.83%	5.16	415.63	1.24%
Direct management - public procurement	2.31	31.60	7.32%	2.06	25.58	8.05%	1.84	22.44	8.20%
Indirect management - Entrusted Entities and Decentralised Agencies	1.29	1 571.46	0.08%	1.77	1 463.16	0.12%	1.13	1 392.55	0.08%
Other	3.66	0	NA	3.42	0	N/A	3.79	0	N/A
Total	20.01	3 062.94	0.65%	19.16	3 673.65	0.52%	17.12	2 881.28	0.59%

Costs of controls at Member State level

DG HOME collected the cost of the controls incurred for the implementation of AMIF, BMVI and ISF for the 2023 financial year by responsible/managing and audit authorities (and delegated authorities when applicable) based on the following types of expenditure:

- Supervision to ensure compliance with the designation criteria (Body referred to in Article 26 Regulation 514/2014)
- Audit Authority staff costs and other costs (such as overheads, training courses, travel)
- Responsible/Managing Authority (and Delegated Authority) staff costs and other costs (such as overheads, training courses, travel)

The cumulative cost of control estimated by the Member States is equal to EUR 62.27 million (EUR 33.72 million in 2022) ⁽²³⁷⁾. The total amount of the payments requested by the Member States for the financial year 2023 was equal to EUR 818 million ⁽²³⁸⁾ (EUR 740 million in 2022). The ratio of estimated cost of control over the amount of funds Member States managed is equal to 7.61% (4.56% in 2022).

⁽²³⁷⁾ Approximately 25 million of 29 million increase is explained by significant increases in two Member States: one Member State signed a framework contract for closure of the 2014-2020 period and support of 2021-2027 period (3.5 million increase), and one big Member State reported the cost of controls for the first time for the 2021-2027 period (21 million increase).

⁽²³⁸⁾ The total amount of the payments requested by the Member States consists of EUR 449 million as reported in the Member States' Annual Accounts for period 16.10.2022-15.10.2023 (MFF 2014-2020) and of EUR 369 million as reported in the Member States' Annual Accounts for period 01.07.2022-30.06.2023 (MFF 2021-2027).

The cumulative amount of the cost of control estimated by the Member States has significantly increased between 2022 and 2023, which explained by the fact that the implementation of the 2021-2027 started in 2023, affecting the related cost of control.

Cost of controls at the level of Entrusted Entities

DG HOME signed 10 new contribution agreements in 2023. DG HOME reports on the cost of control borne by the entrusted entities at the start of each contribution agreement.

2.1.4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG HOME has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

The positive conclusion was reached on the basis of an estimation of costs of control over the value of the related funds, in the form of indicators and their evolution over time for each distinct control system (Annex 6) using the management indicators reported in detail in Annex 7.

DG HOME has managed to ensure an adequate balance of the following components:

☒ low error rates (overall risk at closure: 1.02%)

☒ payments made within applicable time limits (95% of payments made on time in terms of number and 100% of payments made on time in terms of value)

☒ low costs of controls (cost-efficiency indicator of 0.65% in 2023, in 2022: 0.52%)

Moreover, as reported under 'economy', the implementation pace and amounts paid increased over the last years, but this did not correspond to any significant increase in the cost of controls at DG HOME level, and in general in the cost of controls in Member States. However, in few Member States increase in the cost of controls has been noted due to two overlapping programming periods 2014-2020 and 2021-2027.

DG HOME's control environment and control strategy remained stable during the reporting year and the conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls remains unchanged.

As we are approaching the end of the 2014-2020 programming period, DG HOME as well as the Member States and implementing partners are well equipped to manage and control the funds received from DG HOME.

Based on the results of its control activities carried out in 2023 DG HOME has decided to issue some reservations, which are described in section 2.1.4.

2.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance.

Audits on DG HOME by the Internal Audit Service in 2023

Three audits relevant to DG HOME were concluded by the Internal Audit Service in 2023: IT governance and management in DG JUST and DG HOME; Multi-entity audit on coordination between DG HOME and EU decentralised agencies: the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the European Union Agency for Asylum, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training and the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice; and Preparedness for closing actions and programmes funded under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) through direct and shared management. No critical nor very important recommendations were issued under the three audits.

In its contribution to the 2023 Annual Activity Report process, **the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.**

Audits on DG HOME by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in 2023

Annual discharge

Regarding the results of the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) reports, the 2022 Statement of Assurance (DAS) report did not identify any major problems with the implementation of HOME funds, nor with the progress of national Audit Authorities in their preparation for the 2021-2027 period. The report includes one recommendation addressed to DG HOME, which focuses on better targeted ex-ante checks on the eligibility of the expenditure for Union actions, with a specific focus on the potential risks related to, for example, the type of expenditure or the type of beneficiary.

DG HOME accepted the recommendation, which is already being implemented. The implementation will be completed by the deadline agreed with the ECA (in the course of 2024).

In conclusion, the above findings do not have any impact on the assurance provided in this annual activity report.

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

DG HOME uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The assessment of the effectiveness of DG HOME's internal control system has been carried out based on the methodology established in the 'Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission'. It relies on a number of monitoring tools and sources of information including:

- an evaluation of the internal control monitoring criteria for the reference year developed in the context of the Annual Management Plan for 2023 and consisting of quantitative and qualitative indicators in conjunction with pre-set targets and existing baseline values;
- the reported exceptions and non-compliance events;
- the results of the internal control self-assessment (iCAT-survey), which referred to the Internal Control Principles, targeted all DG HOME statutory staff and for which the participation was judged sufficient to be representative;
- the results of the Commission HR staff survey 2023, with a focus on replies from DG HOME staff;
- the results of the audits performed or followed up by the Internal Audit Service, which concluded that the audited internal control systems are effective;
- the European Court of Auditors' findings, which do not undermine the effectiveness of the internal control system in place (more information is provided in section 2.1.2.);
- the annual risk management exercise;
- the reservations issued in the context of the 2023 AAR;
- the reports of the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation submitted by each Directorate to the Director-General.

DG HOME has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to control activities, the competence framework, staff professional development and communication.

The improvements and/or remedial measures envisaged are connected, among other areas, to: implementing strategic actions -including a possible update of

the DG's HR strategy- to address weaknesses identified related to the competence framework and staff professional development; organising internal seminars and trainings to improve the staff's awareness on dedicated topics connected to communication and monitoring activities; and implementing timely the open audit recommendations issued by the ECA.

As regards the weaknesses identified in 2022, DG HOME took steps towards addressing them, especially when it comes to the staff awareness about whistleblowing procedures. A dedicated seminar was organised during the year, resulting in an increase in the awareness levels in the DG.

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in section 2.1 stems from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG HOME.

Regarding the effectiveness of controls, DG HOME's portfolio consists of segments with an overall risk at payment of 1,13% and an overall risk at closure of 1,02% (down from 1,39% and 1,27% respectively for 2022).

Based on a multiannual approach, the average residual error rate across AMIF and ISF (2014-2020 MFF) is 1.00%, while for AMIF, BMVI and ISF (2021-2027 MFF) the average residual error rate is 0.30%, both well below 2%. At member states level, reservations have been issued in relation to member states presenting a cumulative residual error rate higher than 2% (seven member states under 2014-2020 MFF and one member state under 2021-2027 MFF). For grants under direct management, the Residual Error Rate of 1,29% has significantly dropped in comparison to 2022 (2,99%) which allowed to lift the reservation issued in the previous years.

DG HOME could reach a positive conclusion with regard to the efficiency of its entire control system as overall, the evolution over time has been positive in all management modes. The time-to indicators have shown similar results in 2023 as in 2022.

On the economy of controls, the total estimated cost of the controls performed in 2023 by DG HOME has been 0.65% of the total payments.

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG HOME reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

In its contribution to the 2023 Annual Activity Report process, the Internal Audit Service concluded that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective. Regarding the results of the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) reports, the 2022 Statement of Assurance (DAS) report did not identify any major problems having an impact on the assurance provided in this annual activity report.

DG HOME has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor

deficiencies were identified related to control activities, the competence framework, staff professional development and communication.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The acting Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance albeit qualified by two reservations:

Shared management – Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States

Shared management – Reservation concerning BMVI 2021-2027 in one Member State

Reservation Title	Financial Impact (in m EUR)		Residual error rate 2023	Evolution
	2022	2023		
Shared management – Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States	2.46	0.19	See annex 9	Maintained
Shared management – Reservation concerning BMVI 2021-2027 in one Member State	-	0.63	See annex 9	New
Centralised Direct Management - Union actions and emergency assistance grants	7.01	-	N/A	Lifted

2.5. Declaration of Assurance and Reservations

Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Acting Director-General of DG Migration and Home Affairs

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽²³⁹⁾.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

However, the following reservations should be noted:

Shared management – Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States

Shared management – Reservation concerning BMVI 2021-2027 in one Member State

More details are provided in annex 9.

Brussels, 25 April 2024

Beate Gminder

(signed)

⁽²³⁹⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

In 2023, DG HOME continued with efforts to **modernise the administration**, with a view of achieving a more balanced and sustainable working environment. Through sound financial management, DG HOME made sure that **resources are used with maximum benefit to the organisation**, taking care of the risks by using preventive and corrective mechanisms. DG HOME continued to maintain and develop its IT systems for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes, ensuring internal and external communication that is fit for purpose, while at the same time keeping an eye on its environmental footprint.

The **internal control framework** ⁽²⁴⁰⁾ supports sound management and decision-making. It notably ensures that risks to the achievement of objectives are taken into account and reduced to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls.

DG HOME has established an internal control system tailored to its particular characteristics and circumstances. The effective functioning of the service's internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

3.1. Human resource management

Objective: DG HOME employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business

In 2023, DG HOME continued its work in line with its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

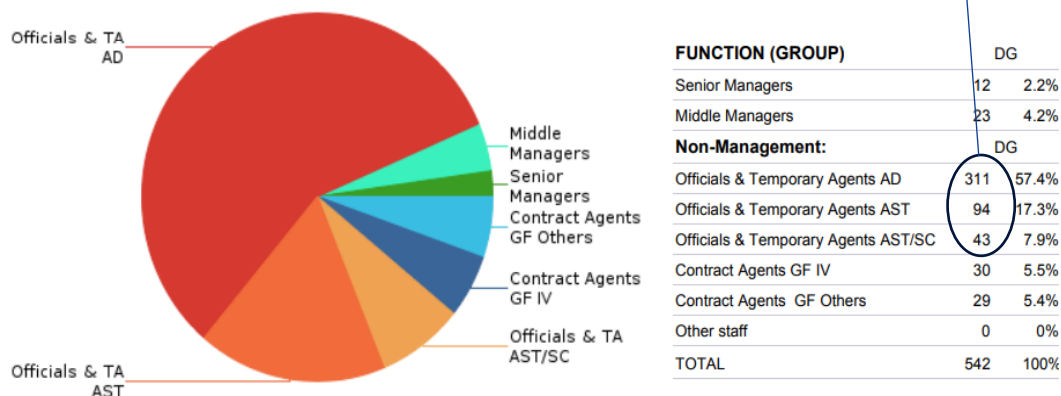
At the end of 2023 DG HOME had 579 ⁽²⁴¹⁾ staff members. The workforce was composed of: 386 officials, 97 temporary agents, 59 contract agents and 37 seconded national experts. It should be noted that 35% of DG HOME staff are on short-term contracts, which has an impact on the stability of the services.

⁽²⁴⁰⁾ Communication C(2017)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework.

⁽²⁴¹⁾ The figure of 579 staff does not include 17 cost-free seconded national experts, 35 blue book trainees and national experts in professional training and 16 Service providers.

Staff by Function Group (situation 01/12/2023)

Employment Type	AD	AST	AST/SC
Officials	84%	76%	42%
Temporary Agents	16%	24%	58%



Staff by Age Range (situation 01/12/2023)

AGES	DG	EC
>=60	22 4.1%	8.6%
50-59	160 29.5%	33.6%
40-49	181 33.4%	36.2%
30-39	130 24.0%	17.1%
20-29	49 9.0%	4.5%
TOTAL	542 100%	100%

With reference to the middle management appointments, DG HOME exceeded by six the target of first female appointments by the end of 2022. For the period 2023-2024 the new gender target set by the College is one first female appointment and it was achieved in 2023. In terms of gender balance, the percentage of female managers at middle management level reaches 57% in DG HOME. DG HOME continued supporting female colleagues for middle management careers through the corporate development programmes as well as through an internal DG HOME mentoring programme for all young talented colleagues. So far, 13 female colleagues have been appointed deputy Head of Unit in DG HOME (with 26 units in total), which represents 50% of female representation at deputy Head of Unit level. DG HOME continued to focus on identifying additional actions related to equality, diversity and inclusion also in broader terms.

DG HOME implemented the following priority actions with a focus on helping the organisation, management and staff to evolve from crisis-working mode into a more balanced, structured and sustainable approach:

An inclusive reflexion group on preparing DG HOME to be fit for future was set up comprising a group of Senior Managers/middle Managers/and young promising colleagues from each Directorate. Each group reflected on the challenges for the DG

and a possible organisation for the DG to meet these challenges. They exchanged their views summarised in a proposal for consideration for the new Commission.

Active support for young talents through two networks: young professionals and young women under 35 and coaching packages.

Ensuring a seamless and effective onboarding experience for newcomers, which includes newcomers' sessions, dedicated newcomers' intranet page, welcome coffees and welcome messages (see annex for details)

Continuous encouragement of female staff to apply for management positions and to participate in all organised development programmes such as Female Talent Development Programmes, dedicated trainings offered by HR centrally and coaching opportunities.

In 2023, continued priority was given to Unit and Directorate team events given the strong need to bring colleagues back together and encourage networking and getting to know each other after the long pandemic period (13 events). Due to budget constraints, it was not possible to organise a DG HOME away-day for all staff. Nonetheless, two all staff gatherings were organised, in January and in July, giving the DG the opportunity to address and interact with staff. It was also an opportunity for colleagues who do not regularly work together to network and connect.

All relevant HR matters were timely and properly communicated to staff through a variety of means, such as regular HR news on DG HOME intranet, DG HOME internal newsletters and emails.

On staff engagement, besides the actions mentioned above, DG HOME continued its efforts to address the areas that were identified in the Staff Survey 2021 and implemented follow-up actions. The first headline results of the 2023 Staff survey were made public early February 2024. Indicating a drop in the staff engagement index of DG HOME from 70% in 2021 to 65% in 2023. This can be partially explained by the huge workload and crisis mode of the DG. All results will be thoroughly analysed and discussed in focus groups which will identify concrete actions to address the concerns of staff and improve their well-being throughout 2024.

Internal communication actions continued to foster collaboration, transparency, and staff engagement within the DG and beyond. The internal communication and HR Correspondent teams implemented actions and developed new initiatives to support and promote new ways of working and contribute to a healthy work-life balance.

New initiatives, such as Inside HOME (short video episodes about teamwork and the life inside DG HOME) and the weekly live debriefs of Management Meetings by DG, or DDGs/Directors were launched to boost dialogue, interaction, and bridge silos at all levels. Digital transformation and information management.

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

Objective: DG HOME is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission

DG HOME continued working towards reaching the above objective set in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan in 2023.

Digital transformation

The degree of implementation of the digital strategy principles by the most important IT solution is one of the indicators for digital transformation set in the Strategic Plan. Following the adoption of the new **Corporate Digital Strategy**, DG HOME aimed at addressing digital transformation opportunities. In this context, a continuous process is dedicated to improve the capacity and maturity of the staff in a digital-first mind-set and digital fluency, following corporate trends and by means of corporate learning material. Policy staff was encouraged to improve their awareness and proficiency on digital-ready policy development, applying tool #28 ⁽²⁴²⁾ of Better Regulation and using the specialised Hub made available within the Secretariat General.

In 2023, existing systems and new planned ones continued to contribute to the achievement of the Corporate Digital Strategy principles, in particular on Digital by default, Once Only, User-centric, Cross-border, Data-driven and Security, as they aim at reducing the burden on citizens, increasing efficiency of national and European institutions and bodies, and in their closer cooperation and collaboration in the domain of Home Affairs. Events in Ukraine triggered the creation in June 2022 of the Temporary Protection Information Sharing Platform to allow Member States competent authorities to exchange cross-border information on people enjoying temporary protection under Temporary Protection Directive or equivalent adequate protection under national law.

The work on the platform continued in 2023 based on feedback received directly from Member States competent authorities to improve its user centricity and further facilitate cross-border collaboration between Member States in this policy area.

The European Migration Network system was improved from the security point of view in 2022 by enforcing security standards and multifactor authentication. This in turn had a positive effect on the cross-border availability of the system and created the baseline for the migration of the system to Drupal 9 in 2023, contributing this way to the attainment of the strategic objective of Green secure and resilient infrastructure, on the cloud offering brokered by DIGIT.

User centricity improvement is also at the origin of the ongoing migration of contents from the Anti-trafficking in human beings website to the DG HOME integrated website, which was finalised early 2023.

⁽²⁴²⁾ TOOL #28. Digital-ready policymaking.

In areas like Once Only, Cross border cooperation and Interoperability ⁽²⁴³⁾, the European Migration Network system will be enriched with a set of interfaces for connecting to Members States national systems and possibly to the International Organisation for Migration. This was be done in the spirit of the Interoperable Europa Act proposal for a regulation and was referenced in the *Joinup* portal. In particular, the Transfer Tool was implemented to facilitate transfers of refugees to pledging Member States/regions. The new (sub) systems' design conforms now to the principles and goals of the new EC Digital Strategy like Dual Pillar Approach, and sound architecture principles, using the new architectural canvas of the Commission.

Information and IT security rules

On cybersecurity, staff continued to be encouraged to attend corporate cybersecurity awareness initiatives, while IT security knowledge and expertise will be maintained and further improved by embedding cybersecurity elements into the IT specific working methods. New releases of IT systems benefit from improved EC central security services and compliance benchmarks.

As confirmed at the end of the Internal Audit Service (DG IAS) audit on DG HOME IT Governance, IT Project Management and IT Software development, DG HOME adequately designed and effectively and efficiently implemented governance and management arrangements for Communication and Information Systems under its responsibility. In this context, a continuous process throughout 2023 was dedicated to improve the capacity and maturity of the staff to managing IT security, risk, compliance and cybersecurity in accordance with the requirements indicated by corporate guidelines.

In addition, DG HOME has been piloting the deployment of Governance Risk and Compliance (GRC) system and will attest all its systems' security controls within the deadline. The review of **Security Plans** for updates was carried out.

In 2023, DG HOME improved its website in terms of layout and content. DG HOME continued working on the accessibility of the website (for people with disabilities) with DG COMM and Publications Office of the EU, as well as on achieving an improved level of rationalisation of contents.

Data, information and knowledge management

DG HOME continued providing the services of the Secure Zone to other DGs, including the support for the organisation of classified meetings and briefings.

DG HOME continued working on the implementation of the corporate rules for data governance and data policies at local level, putting in place data governance structures and roles. In addition, DG HOME considered how to make use of the support to be offered by central services in data, information and knowledge management, including the Data

⁽²⁴³⁾ The term Interoperability used here is not linked to DG HOME's interoperability of large-scale IT systems.

Advisory service, the EC Data Platform, the country knowledge portal, the future service for better regulation evidence transparency and relevant trainings.

Six key data assets held by DG HOME have been identified and are now included in the Commission's corporate data catalogue. After the launch of the new EC Data Catalogue (replacing the interim solution) in October, DG HOME reviewed and, if needed, updated the metadata in the catalogue related to its data assets. Occasionally, DG HOME also consulted the data catalogue to identify potentially useful datasets held by other services.

Relating to knowledge sharing, DG HOME started in 2023, a rollout of the digital knowledge sharing and collaboration platform KnowHOME. This platform brings together information from across DG HOME organised thematically. All staff have access and can upload information considered useful for sharing with colleagues.

Data protection

As regards data protection compliance, DG HOME continued to monitor and update the information regarding its processing operations in records in the *Data Protection Management System* throughout 2023. DG HOME continued to maintain a full inventory of its external data processing agreements, which includes the standard contractual clauses developed by DG BUDG. Regarding data subjects' rights, DG HOME continued to apply established administrative practices in particular on identification of data subjects and the responsible operational controller. DG HOME is sharing Data protection Coordinator and Data Protection deputy with DG JUST. In terms of awareness raising, an interview with the Data Protection Coordinator was published on My IntraComm. It introduced data protection principles and at the same time invited all units to express an interest to the Data Protection Crash Course, prepared and organised by the DPC. Staff is also being encouraged to participate in the data protection trainings organised by the office of the Data Protection Officer and from the corporate offer on eu-Learn.

3.3. Sound environmental management

Objective: DG HOME takes account of its environmental impact in their actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work, with the support their respective EMAS Correspondents/EMAS Site Coordinators.

The European Green Deal is one of the headline ambitions of the Von der Leyen Commission. In its Communication, the Commission committed itself to lead by example also in this field. Through EMAS - The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme - the Commission wishes to "lead by example" through the reduction of the direct environmental impact of its own activities. DG HOME aimed to contribute to that objective through the following actions in 2023:

Inform staff about the need for everyone to contribute to reducing energy consumption in the context of the current energy crisis.

Regarding missions, assess in each case whether physical presence is really needed, or whether an online meeting could be possible instead.

Encourage staff to use their digital devices rather than print documents for meetings, thereby reducing waste.

Encourage staff to turn off their computers at the end of the working day and to take the stairs, in order to reduce electricity consumption.

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

There are currently **six decentralised Union Agencies** in charge of implementing different Union policies in the area of migration and home affairs (HOME Agencies). The Agencies concerned are CEPOL, EUAA, eu-LISA, EMCDDA, Europol and Frontex.

By virtue of the underlying legal and policy framework, DG HOME plays an increasing role in addressing the multi-faceted challenges related to migration (including asylum, management of the external borders and return) and to internal security, as well as in the provision of coordinated support to Member States and to third countries (with emphasis on cooperation with third countries neighbouring the EU). Most of the HOME Agencies are directly or indirectly contribute to those EU-level efforts within their respective mandates.

Due to the diversity of their respective mandates and functioning, *de facto* every Directorate of DG HOME has either specific policy-related or horizontal (e.g. budget planning and implementation, internal and external audits, international relations) interest in the functioning of one or more HOME Agencies.

In 2023, DG HOME has **enhanced horizontal coordination**, cooperation with and strategic oversight of the HOME Agencies to establish and implement synergies through regular meetings and sharing of information among all policy and horizontal units concerned and facilitated by the **HOME Agencies Coordinator**; more frequent contacts with the HOME Agencies at strategic/senior management as well as at technical level.; proactive follow-up of inter-agency cooperation among themselves and in the framework of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network. DG HOME has strived for **strategic partnership** with and **more assertive oversight** by the Management Boards of the HOME Agencies. Finally, DG HOME issued corresponding guidelines for the HOME Agencies in respect of the relevant Union law provisions applicable to the governance of all decentralised Union Agencies and in view of gaining efficiency and limiting the environmental impact of meetings organised by the Agencies, as well as of missions of the Agencies' staff. Further guidance documents are being prepared with to ensure efficient coordination and control.