



## Press Release

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For immediate release

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### **EU's External Borders Fund fosters financial solidarity, but better measurement of results is needed and EU added value ought to be enhanced – say EU Auditors**

A report published today by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) concludes that the External Borders Fund (EBF) has contributed to management of the EU's external borders and fostered financial solidarity among Member States. However, further EU added value was limited and the overall result could not be measured owing to weaknesses in monitoring by the responsible authorities and serious deficiencies in the ex-post evaluations by the Commission and the Member States.

*According to Louis Galea, the ECA Member responsible for the report, "The EBF has helped Member States in their task of managing the EU's external borders, but the Commission and Member States have to improve the Fund's operation so that EU taxpayers' money can be used more effectively in assisting the management of our external borders whilst continuing to support financial solidarity."*

The EU auditors found that Member States' programmes were not embedded in national strategies for border control and visas and lacked SMART objectives and measurable indicators. Project selection procedures did not ensure that Member States' actual needs were met, and inadequate procurement procedures in Member States put sound financial management at risk. The auditors found serious weaknesses in management of the fund in key Member States (Greece, Spain, Italy and, for the early funding years, Malta). These weaknesses could mean that border management is not adequately strengthened where it is most needed. Low implementation in some countries limited the fund's effectiveness. Furthermore the fund's links with Frontex operations need to be improved.

As the main EU financial instrument in support of external border management, the EBF delivered € 1,9 billion over the 2007–2013 period. The EBF's overall aim was to help current and prospective Schengen States ensure uniform, effective and efficient controls at their common external borders. For the 2014–2020 period, the Internal Security Fund (ISF) has been launched as the successor to the EBF.

*The purpose of this press release is to summarise the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors.  
The full report is available at [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu)*

## ECA Press

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## Notes to editors

ECA special reports are published throughout the year, presenting the findings of selected audits of specific EU budgetary areas or management topics.

Under the title “**The External Borders Fund has fostered financial solidarity but requires better measurement of results and needs to provide further EU added value**”, this special report (No 15/2014) examines the EBF’s effectiveness and EU added value and the degree to which the objectives of its co-financed projects and programmes were achieved. The auditors looked at the design, programming and implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of EBF-funded measures.

Within the Schengen area, internal controls have been abolished, with the consequence that the external border security of any one State affects all of the others. The EBF aimed to establish financial solidarity among Member States by supporting those for which the control of the EU’s external borders represents a disproportionate burden.

The audit was carried out against the background of the Commission's proposals for the 2014–2020 funding period, which have created the ISF as the successor to the EBF and provide for financial support for the management of external borders and visas. A total of € 2.76 billion is available for funding actions during the seven-year period under the ISF-Borders instrument, of which € 1.55 billion will be channelled through shared management between the Commission and Member States. As well as all EU States (except Ireland and the United Kingdom), the four Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) are participants in the implementation of ISF-Borders.

### The EU auditors recommend:

**(a) to ensure the availability of information on overall results**, Member States should set measurable targets for output, outcome and, where possible, impact indicators, and indicators should be recorded from the start of the programme using appropriate IT systems. The Commission should ensure that its evaluation report presents stakeholders with an informed and timely analysis of underlying data.

**(b) to increase the EU added value of the fund**, the Commission should provide Frontex with relevant, comprehensive and timely information regarding implementation of the EBF, the ISF and subsequent instruments. The recording of co-financed assets in Frontex's equipment pool should be made obligatory for those assets which might be useful to its needs. Furthermore, Member States and the Commission should concentrate more on establishing common application centres and other forms of consular cooperation rather than the renovation, adaptation or equipping of consulates.

**(c) to embed the EBF in a national strategy for border management**, Member States should develop comprehensive national strategies on border management based on a risk analysis following the common integrated risk analysis model, and this should be an ex-ante condition for support from the ISF or subsequent instruments.

**(d) to strengthen the implementation of the fund**, administrative capacity, including in respect of procurement, should be enhanced, particularly in key Member States.

*A short video interview with the ECA Member responsible for the report is available at:*  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/EUAuditorsECA>