

A photograph of a person walking, wearing blue jeans and a green and white striped shirt. They are carrying a colorful bag with red, yellow, and green patterns. The background is blurred, showing other people and an outdoor setting.

TEENMAGZ

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ASSISTANCE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS IN
ROMANIA

LIFE STORIES

ROMANIAN MIGRATIONS'
DIARY

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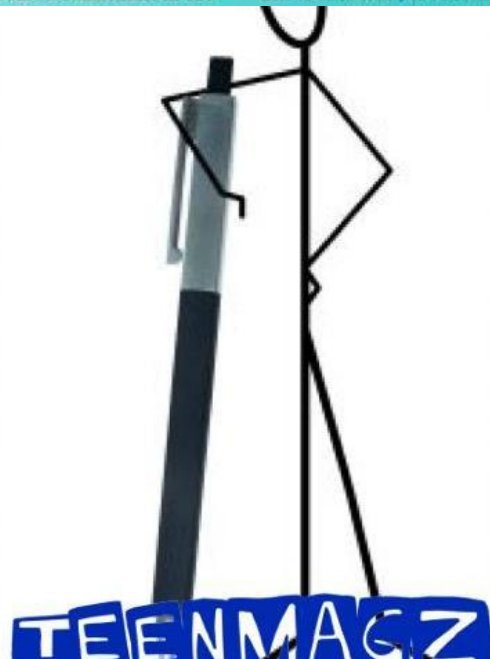
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Migration

Migration is a complex phenomenon consisting in moving person from a geographical area to other one with the changing of the residence and/or having any form of labor arrangement in the destination area. Geographical mobility refers to the spatial dimension, moving of individuals is made in order to find a job in other country.

According to the period of the absence of person from its residence, the dimension of migration comprises the short migration (6-12 months) and long-term migration (12 months and over).

In the European Union, according to the REGULATION (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 July 2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 311/76 on the compilation of statistics on foreign workers, international migration has the following important definitions:

- (a) 'usual residence' means the place at which a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage or, in default, the place of legal or registered residence;
- (b) 'immigration' means the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country;
- (c) 'emigration' means the action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his or her usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months.

Assistance to asylum seekers in Romania

According to Law no. 122/2006 on asylum in Romania, as amended and supplemented, asylum seekers benefit from the following assistance measures:

- Enjoy free accommodation upon demand in one of the six centers of the General Inspectorate for Immigration. These accommodation centers have living rooms and kitchens equipped properly, as well as recreational facilities (prayer rooms, clubs, playrooms, computer rooms and gyms) that are used for free by asylum seekers.
- Accommodation in Regional IGI Centers involves ensuring personal hygiene and cleaning products, as well as providing material goods necessary for the preparation and cooking of food and for dining.
- They benefit, on demand, if they do not dispose of material means for maintenance, of food within the amount of 10 lei / person / day, of an allowance for the purchase of

clothing worth 100 lei / winter and 67 lei / hot season and for other expenses in the amount of 6 lei / person / day.

- They have access to the labor market under the conditions provided by the law for Romanian citizens, after the expiry of a period of 3 months from the date of filing the asylum application, if the asylum seeker is still in the procedure of determining a form of protection.
- They have access to free medical care and hospital emergency as well as medical assistance and free treatment in cases of acute or chronic illnesses;
- Minor asylum seekers attending the Romanian language courses during the school year, will be enrolled after completing it in the compulsory school education system under the same conditions as Romanian citizens and minors. To ensure participation in the courses, IGI grants packages of school supplies.



- They participate free of charge in cultural adaptation activities and may benefit in case of need from counseling and psychological support.
- Children who are asylum seekers receive from the state the allowance for minors under the same conditions as for Romanian citizens.

Steps

The asylum procedure in Romania has several steps. The whole procedure can take between several months and several years, depending on the circumstances of the case.

1. Making an asylum application The intention to seek asylum can be expressed orally or in writing to one of the designated authorities. The authorities responsible for receiving asylum applications are: The ministry for migration, the border police, the police and the ministry of justice. The asylum application has to be completed in writing and signed. The application includes taking a picture and taking fingerprints.

2. Temporary authorization to stay in Romania After the application for asylum, the authorities issue a temporary document authorising the asylum-seeker to stay in Romania until a certain date specified on the document. If the date expires, the authorization is renewed with a stamp on the same document.

3. The asylum procedure There are two interviews. In the first interview, the authorities ask for personal details and the travel route until Romania. The aim is to find out whether a person has already applied for asylum in another country or had their fingerprints taken in another country. If this is the case, the Romanian authorities start a Dublin procedure. The second interview is about the reasons for applying for asylum, so the questions focus on persecution. The waiting time for the first decision is around one month. If the first decision is negative, there are only 10 days to lodge an appeal to the court of first instance. If the appeal is rejected, it is possible to continue with the court of second instance. If this is also rejected, it is possible to ask for toleration instead of asylum. Persons who are rejected and who receive no form of authorised stay in Romania, are interdicted to enter Romania for a period of 5 years.



This period can be reduced from 5 years to 2,5 years if the person concerned accepts "voluntary return" with IOM (for further info, see: Deportation).

Currently, almost all people from Syria receive a form of protection in Romania (either refugee status or subsidiary protection). For persons from Iraq, the record is mixed.

Vulnerable

Vulnerable persons are those persons who were granted a form of protection in Romania and have low potential for self-support.

They are considered vulnerable:

- a) unaccompanied minors;
- b) persons with disabilities;
- c) persons who have reached retirement age and do not receive a pension;
- d) pregnant women;
- e) single parents with minor children;
- f) victims of trafficking;
- g) victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

The General Inspectorate for Immigration can accommodate in its centers vulnerable people that do not require specialized assistance.

For good reasons IGI may agree to extend the integration program for these persons beyond the one year limit.

Vulnerable people can be accommodated free of charge in centers managed by IGI.





Documents that are issued to people with a form of protection in Romania

1. The residence permit

The beneficiaries of a form of protection in Romania have the right to obtain the appropriate documents to prove their identity and to cross the state border. To that effect, the foreigner must benefit from one form of protection, that is refugee status or subsidiary protection. The applicant will submit in person the application for the issuing of the residence permit. In order to certify the residence, the beneficiary of the form of protection is required to submit one of the following documents: ownership title, lease contract registered at the tax office, authenticated bailment or any other act concluded validly according to the Romanian legislation in force regarding property, in order to prove the acquiring of housing rights. Residence permits are issued as soon as possible after the granting of international protection in Romania, for a period of 3 years in the case of individuals having received refugee status, or for a period of 2 years, for persons who were granted protection subsidiary. After expiration, a new residence permit with the same validity period will be issued. There are no fees for issuing the residence permit.

2. Travel document

Border crossing documents will be issued on request to the foreigners receiving a form of protection in Romania, namely refugee status or subsidiary protection. The applicant will personally submit the application for the release of the electronic travel document. In order to certify the residence, the beneficiary of the form of protection is required to submit one of the following documents: ownership title, lease contract registered at the tax office, authenticated bailment or any other act concluded validly according to the Romanian legislation in force regarding property, in order to prove the acquiring of housing rights. For the issuing of an electronic travel document the person must pay a fee 258 lei in any C.E.C. office in the account of the National Company "IMPRIMERIA NAȚIONALĂ" S.A. RO29CECEB00130RON2431503 (the payment will be labeled: documents / foreigners passports), representing the cost of the passport. The electronic travel document is issued on request to the beneficiaries of refugee or subsidiary protection for a period of 2 years with no possibility of extending the validity period. After expiration, a new travel document will be issued with the same validity. In the case of foreigners benefitting from refugee status or subsidiary protection who are abroad and do not possess valid travel documents, the diplomatic missions or consular offices of Romania, with the approval of the General Inspectorate for Immigration, will provide them with travel documents valid only for the return to Romania. The validity of the travel title is at most 30 days and ceases with the holder's entry on Romanian territory."



Life Stories



He arrived in Romania at the end of 2016, after first travelling through Lebanon and then Turkey. For a young man like him, the decision to leave his home, family and friends was made after the war started taking away any sense of certainty and stability.

During the war, the chances of finding a good job and following your dreams seem utterly impossible for most, setting aside the fact that lives are in danger.

Hussain chose to come to Romania to reunite with his uncle that had already been living there for more than 20 years.

"When I first arrived here I was a little scared, arriving in a new country seemed overwhelming, even if I had someone I knew here," Hussain explained.

"I had no idea what to do when I came to Romania, or how to find my way around. Fortunately, everyone I met was really welcoming. The people working at IOM Romania helped me a lot and changed my [original] impressions. I miss my family and my friends in Syria the most, a lot of them stayed back in Aleppo. If I think about home, the image and feel of the soft sand comes into my mind. Living in Romania has not been without challenges so far, but meeting people with a nice attitude has helped a lot."

"Hussain is a 28 year old from Aleppo, Syria who chose to leave his country in search of a better life"

Settling in Romania is part of Hussain's plan; he wants to open a business that will connect the two countries. His biggest challenge for the moment is learning the Romanian language, but he follows his friends' advice to listen to the radio and to Romanian music every day. He often thinks about the people back home, and hopes that they find ways to stay united and agree with each other. Nevertheless, he is adjusting to his new reality away from his beloved country.

"Home will always be in Syria for me, but Romania is my adoptive country," Hussain concluded.



“I came to Bucharest in 2012. For three years, I was worked as a housekeeper in different homes. When you go to a country which is not yours, sometimes you will face challenges. But that will not make you hate the people, no matter what the situation is in the country.

Like here in Romania, when some of us wear African dress, others will turn to stereotypes and abuse us or call us names. Not even that will make me hate the people, because God brought me here, and God owns all the nationals. I'm a hair stylist now. What I'm doing here and the way I would work in Nigeria are not the same. The work here is better. It's very hard in Nigeria. The economic situation and the government are not good. You can't depend on the government, because they will not put food on your table. You have to fight for yourself, so that's why I'm here - to fight for myself.

The first two years in Romania were fantastic because back then, when you worked, you would get your money at the end of the month. Back then, I regarded this country so highly, like America, because this is my America. But as time went on, it could take three or four months to get your money.

In 2016, I opened my own beauty salon.

"When things are up and down, I have to stand by the people"

The work situation before was better, now everyone is complaining 'no money, no money,' referring to the economic situation in Romania. What makes me most excited about the salon is my customers. When they come, they relate to me as friend, especially some Romania women. The way they treat me makes me feel good. I like fashion. God created women to look beautiful, so I love to make women beautiful to their husbands. Even those who are not married yet should look good so that their future husbands can see them.

I gave birth to my two children here, but when things got bad, I sent them back to Nigeria. I miss my children even if their grandparents are taking care of them. I'm afraid that they will not feel their mother's love. There is no mother's love there. No matter how life is with their grandparents, there is no father's love. So, I feel bad somehow that we are not there with them and I can't bring them back here to Romania. Generally, I will tell people who work in Romania to have a holy life. To do only good things and love the people. That will be the advice I will give to them."



"We decided to return to our home, but in due time"

"My name is Azad Shirwan Mohamed and I have a little daughter called Pelin. She is three years old. We arrived in Romania with my wife Helen, 5 months ago. We left our hometown, Erbil in Iraq, looking for a better job and a higher income. Back home, we were running a small family business, a mini market, but from the moment we could not afford supporting our little store, we shut it down. Meanwhile, my wife got pregnant and things got more complicated. Our journey to Europe was not easy. We were travelling for months and we arrived in Romania by Greece and through Turkey. We applied for asylum, but it proved to be a time-consuming procedure for us; my wife was already seven months pregnant. We realized that giving birth away from our hometown and our family was not a wise decision. So we decided to return to our home, but this time in a safe and organized way.

We found out about an NGO that deals with such causes voluntary return programmes from a friend. So, we visited the NGO's premises in Bucharest and upon referral we were provided a reintegration counseling session discussing about our options. Since we had a experience in running our small business, we agreed with the reintegration counselor to restart our new business back home. Thanks to reintegration programme, we are now able to open a new mini – market and pay part of our rent. Our first expenses will be covered by this NGO. I have realized that returning to Iraq won't be a piece of cake. But through this NGO's assistance we are looking forward to opening our new small business; we are looking forward to starting our new life and welcoming our baby. Furthermore, my wife who is giving birth in a few weeks, will have the sincere support of our families who are waiting for us back home."



Massoud, together with his wife and two daughters, came to Romania from Afghanistan a year and a half ago. They spent most of this time at Elliniko, the former Athens international airport turned into an unofficial camp site during the peak of the refugee crisis. It's been three months now that Elliniko, infamous for the harsh living conditions, was evacuated.

Massoud and his family were among the 150 people who moved to Romania and ended up in the center for refugees in Timisoara.

"Leaving our land was a not an easy decision to make. However, there are many problems in Kabul: security issues, suicide attacks, bombs, constant gunfire. These are some of the reasons people from Afghanistan are coming to Europe. There's no security, we cannot walk in the streets because we don't know when another bomb is going to blast, there's always trouble and it's getting worse. So, we left in 2016 and it took us about 28 days to arrive. It was a really bad journey. It's dangerous when you cross the borders and even more dangerous when crossing the sea. But people are doing it because they don't have much of a choice

. We crossed to Greece before the EU-Turkey deal, the border was still open. We arrived on the island of Chios in February and went straight to the northern border, where tried to cross to Macedonia. However, by that time, the border had closed. We didn't stay at the makeshift camp, there was no way I'd let my family stay there. We came back to Athens, to the unofficial site of Elliniko. The experience there was not good, there were way too many people, we were living in tents.

"Leaving our land was a not an easy decision"

At first it was really bad and to be honest, it never got better until we settled here in Timisoara. It's been 3 months that we live here and we feel so much better. People finally have a nice place to live, the conditions are improved. Each family has its own space, a place we can call home. We can cook, we have running hot water. We are very well equipped, everything's really good. And the people working here are really nice, they listen to us, they help us. Back in Afghanistan I was working for European companies in the field of logistics and I've learnt English through my work, a fact that has helped me a lot.

I would like to build a life here in Greece, get a job to support my family. My wife and the girls want to stay here in Romania, maybe go to the capital, Bucharest the people are nice and friendly, everyone is treating our children with love and I really like that. I believe that our future is going to be better, for my daughters in particular. That's why people are coming to Europe, to ensure a bright future for their kids. My girls are 9 and 4. The older one goes to school here in the camp and come September, she will attend the local Greek school. I'm really looking forward to see her back to school!"



Yamman and Fatma are a young couple from Syria. Together with their children, Abdalrahman and Omar, they are among the first group of refugees to relocate to Sweden. "I'm so happy to relocate to Romania; I really wanted to go there. It is a good country, a safe place for our children and for us.

Also, my brother is there for a number of years, so I will meet him again. Before the war, I was studying computer technology at the university in Syria.

I wanted to continue with my studies, to do something more but the war broke and I had to stop. It was very difficult. Men were forcibly recruited to the government's army and if I stayed, I'd have to kill people, but I don't want to hurt anybody. I left Syria 5 years ago, alone. At first, I stayed in Turkey for 4 months and then I went to Egypt. I spent there about ten months and then I moved back to Turkey, where I stayed for 2.5 years. At that time, my then fiancé, Fatma joined me there. Our first child was born in Turkey and by the time Fatma was pregnant on our second, we left for Greece. Like so many others, we crossed the sea on a rubber boat and it was a terrifying adventure. About 30 minutes into the journey, the boat stopped, it was about 4 am in the night. We drifted for hours. We called the emergency number and the Greek coast-guard came with a boat and took only the women and children. They told us that they'd take our families to Greece and that they'd come back for us, the men. So they left, but it was the Turkish coast-guard that arrived instead, 30 minutes later. Maybe we had drifted towards Turkey, I don't know. They told us that they had to take us back to Turkey. I got very angry. I speak Turkish, I explained to them that our families were already taken to Greece. But they insisted and they took us back and since they were really angry, we didn't resist. In Turkey, they checked our papers and they let us go. However, I had all of the family's passports and our only mobile phone. Fatma, terrified, ended up all alone with our child on a tiny Greek island. Fortunately, I was able to take another boat the next day and joined my family on the island of Kastelorizo.

"I really wanted to go there"

It was the 19th of February 2017. Then, the coast-guard moved us to the island of Rhodes where we got registered. Another boat journey took us to Athens. We decided to continue to the border, which was still open. It took us five days to get to the makeshift camp of Idomeni. We crossed Greece sleeping rough, one night at a basketball court, another night at a restaurant. We spent three weeks at Idomeni, waiting to cross, to no avail. We were given the number 136 and the last number allowed to cross was 65. So, we came back to Athens and went directly to the Asylum service and applied for the relocation programme. We were given an apartment in the centre and waited for the news. In the meantime, our time here was well-spent. Greece is the most beautiful country I've ever seen.

We visited the Acropolis, a lot of other sites; we took the kids to the beach. We have almost become locals. And the people here are simple and very supportive to the refugees, we never had any problems. Three weeks ago we got the news that we're going to Sweden. We'll have to learn the language, but I don't mind since I love learning languages and meeting new people. I would like to continue with my studies in Bucharest and look for a job. I don't want to sit around doing nothing. I need to update my training on computer technology, it's been 5 years that I graduated and I really have to learn again, to follow the new developments. And Fatima, too, wishes to continue with her studies as well, she actually wants to be a nurse. I hope we will be able as parents to provide a safe, beautiful life to our children in our new home in Sweden".



"Hope to end in Finland and see my sun"

"It's been 11 years since the last time I saw my son. I can't wait to hold him in my arms again!"

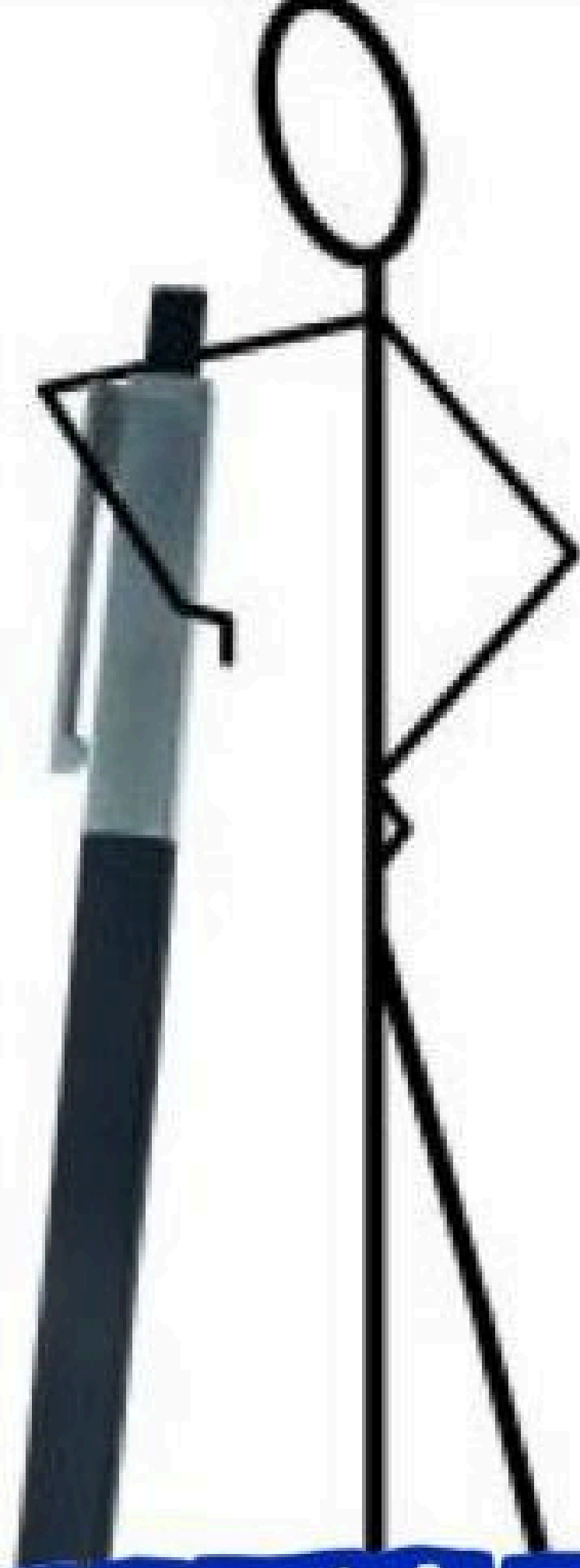
Hamide is taking out her phone and proudly shows photos of her son who lives in Finland, where she and her husband, Fawzi, will soon relocate. Her face lights up as she talks about her son and Fawzi shares her joy and pride: "Our boy left Syria to work in Europe when he was just 17 years old. He lives in Finland for 6 years now, where he works as an interpreter and he's engaged with a Finnish girl". "It was the first thing I told during the first interview of the relocation procedure! I need to go to Finland!" says Hamide. "I have three daughters, too. One of them is with her family on the island of Chios. The other two are still in Afrin, our hometown in Syria. I hope they will be able to make it safely to Europe..." she adds with a tone of sadness in her voice. Fawzi recounts the couple's journey from Syria: "we arrived in Romania on February 20, 2016.

From Chios we went to Athens and then straight to Idomeni, but we arrived too late, the borders had already closed. We have seen bad things happening at the camp there... after about a month we got back to Athens and started the relocation procedure. At first, we stayed in a squat in central Athens and then we moved to a wonderful hotel in Nea Makri. It was so nice there, so cozy. After that, with the EU program of relocation we went to Bucharest, Romania, a nice town but the conditions are not as good as in Greece. But you know, Romanian have been really supportive and helpful. They understand. I have worked very hard all my life, I've worked in hospitals, in cafes, you name it, I've done everything to bring my children up, and Hamide, too. Even now, we have crossed the sea and fields and mountains, we have endured so many hardships just to see our boy again." Hamide nods approvingly: "I wish that my girls, too, will eventually join us in Finland so that we can be all together again."



Some of the people were beneficiaries of the EU Relocation Programme, supports the Government of Greece in relocating with safety and dignity asylum seekers to other EU Member States of Relocation (MSR). The Programme is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union (AMIF). The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) was set up for the period 2014-20, with a total of EUR 3.137 billion for the seven years. It will promote the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. This Fund will contribute to the achievement of four specific objectives:

- **Asylum:** strengthening and developing the Common European Asylum System by ensuring that EU legislation in this field is efficiently and uniformly applied;
- **Legal migration and integration:** supporting legal migration to EU States in line with the labour market needs and promoting the effective integration of non-EU nationals;
- **Return:** enhancing fair and effective return strategies, which contribute to combating irregular migration, with an emphasis on sustainability and effectiveness of the return process;
- **Solidarity:** making sure that EU States which are most affected by migration and asylum flows can count on solidarity from other EU States.



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