

# POSITION PAPER

Sweden and Finland

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## Introduction

Even though the migration crisis is slowly relaxing, the EU still faces major problems associated with it. There is an uneven share of responsibilities for asylum procedures, especially with the massive irregular migration within the EU. On average, around 72% of Europeans want the EU to do more about immigration.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Commission's reform plans focus on the two main points of the asylum policies' internal arm: 1. "the introduction of a fair mechanism regulating the responsibilities for asylum procedures", 2. "the harmonisation of the standards for the procedures and the treatment of applicants aiming at lower incentives for secondary migration".<sup>2</sup> In order to make these applicable, considering the EU budget and its division is vital. The budget for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, set up for 2014-20, was a total of €3.137 billion.<sup>3</sup> It will promote the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration.<sup>4</sup> All EU States – with the exception of Denmark – participate in the implementation of this Fund organisations.<sup>5</sup> The basic allocation for Sweden under this fund is €118.536.877,00<sup>6</sup> while for Finland it is €23.488.777,00.<sup>7</sup> European Union's approach to migration has improved with the implementation of deeper cooperation with partner countries, better protected external borders, and more effective tools to manage migration inside the EU.<sup>8</sup> In this matter, Finland's objective is to bring the uncontrolled migration in Europe under supervision and direct the migrants towards safer legal routes.<sup>9</sup> There is a need for effective measures in the countries of origin as well as in transit states. This elevates the importance of cooperation with African and Middle Eastern states, regional actors and the entire international community. Additionally, Sweden's objective is to guarantee, in a long-term and sustainable way, a migration policy that safeguards the right of asylum, simplifies mobility across borders, promotes needs based on labor migration, harnesses and takes into account the effects of migration on development, and extends European and international cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Refugees'

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<sup>1</sup>Results from Eurobarometer Poll, May 2018

<sup>2</sup>Bräuninger, D. (12 April 2018). Reform of the Common European Asylum System. *Deutsche Bank*.

<sup>3</sup>European Commission. (30 March 2019). Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). *Derived from Europa.eu*

<sup>4</sup>European Commission. (30 March 2019). Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

<sup>5</sup>European Commission. (31 May 2018). COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 31.5.2018 on the adoption of the work programme for 2018 and the financing of Union actions in the framework of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. *Derived from Europa.eu*.

<sup>6</sup>European Commission. (30 March 2019). Migration and Home Affairs: Sweden. *Derived from Europa.eu*

<sup>7</sup>European Commission. (30 March 2019). Migration and Home Affairs: Finland. *Derived from Europa.eu*

<sup>8</sup>European Commission. (4 December 2018). Press Release, Managing Migration: Commission calls time on asylum reform stalling. *Derived from Europa.eu*

<sup>9</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. (n.d). *Migration and refugee crisis in Europe*

<sup>10</sup>Government Offices of Sweden. (26 September 2017). Migration and asylum policy objectives.

path to employment is usually longer than economic migrants', and education plays a major role in that. Moreover, as the OECD points out, the delay on necessary intervention on the shortage of housing postpones integration activities.<sup>11</sup>

## Migration and the MFF 2021

In 2014, Sweden hosted over 80,000 asylum seekers – mainly comprised of Syrians, Eritreans, and stateless migrants, which meant that they accepted the highest number of asylum seekers in relation to the country's population in the EU.<sup>12</sup> However, the country witnessed a fall in migration after peaking in 2015.<sup>13</sup> One of the pressing challenges that the country faced was the large number of unaccompanied minors (35,000) that entered Sweden forcing the authorities to limit entries without valid identification documents.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in June 2016, the Swedish Parliament implemented legislation hindering the granting of resident permits.<sup>15</sup> The main reason for implementing this policy was that most EU member states were unwilling to accept their pre-agreed share of migrants. At the same time, just in 2015 Finland received 32,476 refugees.<sup>16</sup> Since 2001 (except for 2014 and 2015), Finland has followed its migration quota of 750<sup>17</sup> and the country's openness towards refugee acceptance allows this number to expand. The overall approach to migration both in Sweden and Finland is overwhelmingly positive. Sweden, for instance, became a "humanitarian superpower"<sup>18</sup> while Finland agreed to double the number of refugees they are willing to accept (making it 30,000) and some of these migrants may end up living with the PM Juha Sipilä as he voiced his willingness to "give up one of his houses".<sup>19</sup> However, this optimism is slowly fading as not all EU members were as enthusiastic about migration. This issue is interlinked with the EU financial framework and the division of the budget. Currently there is a disbalance when it comes to net contributions to the EU budget even though the negotiations are always conducted under the logic of "juste

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<sup>11</sup>OECD Newsroom. (13 May 2018). *Sweden in a strong position to integrate refugees, but support for the low skilled needs to be strengthened*

<sup>12</sup>Swedish Institute. (22 March 2019). *Sweden and Migration: the Refugee Challenge. Derived from Sweden.se.*

<sup>13</sup>Swedish Institute. (22 March 2019). *Sweden and Migration: the Refugee Challenge.*

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ministry of Interior Finland. (n.d.). *Refugees flee persecution in their home countries. Derived from Intermin.fi.*

<sup>17</sup>Ministry of Interior Finland. (n.d.). *Refugees flee persecution in their home countries.*

<sup>18</sup>Cheng, S. (23 June 2016). "I feel betrayed by my country": The Swedes who think their Scandinavian utopia is being ruined by refugees. *Quartz, Derived from Qz.com.*

<sup>19</sup>BBC News Europe. (9 September 2015). *Migrant crisis: Finland's case against immigration. Derived from BBC.com*

retour”<sup>20</sup>. Since richer countries have higher GNI, their budget contribution is higher thus Germany (which paid €12,9 billion more than it received in 2016), France, and UK are the top three net contributors while Poland, Romania, and Greece are the top three net receivers.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, Sweden and Finland are on the contributing side with €1,6 and €0,29 billion budget contributions respectively.<sup>22</sup> In order to ensure economic growth, social inclusion, and innovation, the conditionality system was expanded for the 2014-2020 EU budget and both Sweden and Finland believe the next MFF should take it further. Currently, it includes macroeconomic, ex-ante, and ex-post conditionality and covers the ESI funds, CSF, and other areas.<sup>23</sup>

## Policy Offer

The Union’s fundamental values include respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, and rule of law. These values unite and define the EU member states and to be in sync with them it is important to modernize the links between funding policies and EU values through ex-ante quotas and ex-post conditionality. Specific applications to be funded through this budget can include a wide range of initiatives, such as the improvement of accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers, information measures and campaigns in non-EU countries on legal migration channels, education and language training for non-EU nationals, assistance to vulnerable persons belonging to the target groups of AMIF, information exchange and cooperation between EU States, and training for staff on relevant topics of AMIF.<sup>24</sup>

To preserve the current quota of 1% GNI contribution, an updated conditionality system will be necessary when reallocating the EU budget. The contribution to the 2007-2013 EU budget, was 1.05% of their GNI as it included only 27 member states, and for 2014-2020, it decreased to 1% as the number of member states increased to 28.<sup>25</sup> This situation directly steers us to the Brexit case. While the process has been taking longer than expected and decision-making is slow, some revised ex-ante conditions could be re-regulated to compensate this budget loss.

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<sup>20</sup> Tang, P. & Bussink, H. (May 2018). Net Contributions to the EU Revisited. *Published by The Dutch delegation of the Labour Party (PvdA) in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)*. p. 3

<sup>21</sup> Deutsche Presse-Agentur. (7 August 2017). EU: Payers and Receivers. *ednHUB*.

<sup>22</sup> Deutsche Presse-Agentur. (7 August 2017). EU: Payers and Receivers.

<sup>23</sup> Kölling, M. (November 2017). Policy conditionality – a new instrument in the EU budget post-2020?. *Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies*.

<sup>24</sup> Margaras, V. (April 2017). Guide to EU Funding 2014-2020. *European Parliamentary Research Service*.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission Press Release Database. (17 May 2006). Q&A on Interinstitutional Agreement on Budgetary Discipline and Sound Financial Management 2007-2013. *Brussels, Derived from Europa.eu*.

Meaning during the period of indecisiveness, they would be penalized for financial damages to the other members, so the 27 remaining states can keep the 1% GNI contributions.

Migration policy should be generalized and standardized for all member states as much as possible. Those who do not participate in accepting refugees still enjoy their portion of the EU funding which creates a financial unfairness. For example, Poland – as well Hungary – which is a predominantly catholic nation ruled by a right-wing religious party has shown unwillingness to accept Syrian refugees right from beginning of the crisis.<sup>26</sup> To prevent this situation, our proposal is to share all migration applications among *all* of the member states and implement quotas to regulate the process which would bring more equal division of responsibilities and benefits.

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<sup>26</sup> Al Jazeera. (26 June 2018). Poland: Eastern Europe remains firm on anti-migrant stance. *Al Jazeera News: Europe*.

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