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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

Commission Implementing Decision

on the adoption of the multiannual work programme for the Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, and the multiannual financing decision for the implementation of this programme for 2023-2024

ANNEX

Work Programme for 2023 and 2024 for the Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment (CCEI)¹

(1) Introduction

This is the second multiannual work programme adopted under the Instrument, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), which also comprises the instrument for financial support for border management and visas. This work programme presents the framework for the objectives, policy priorities, and activities of CCEI for 2023 and 2024.

The CCEI, according to Article 3 thereof, has the general objective to support the customs union and customs authorities to protect the financial and economic interests of the Union and Member States, to ensure security and safety within the Union and to protect it from illegal trade while facilitating legitimate business activity.

1.1. Overall Policy Context

An efficient customs union is fundamental to ensuring safety and security, protecting citizens from non-compliant and dangerous goods, removing goods from the EU market that do not meet relevant environmental and labour standards, protecting European companies from unfair competition, protecting the EU and Member States' budgets, and contributing to the EU green and digital transitions.

Recent events/trends have exacerbated the challenges the customs union faces today, making the availability of modern reliable customs control equipment even more essential (1) for customs authorities to perform their tasks effectively and (2) to help reach equivalent levels of customs control across the customs union. Amongst these events/trends, it is worthwhile mentioning four:

- **Russia's military aggression against Ukraine**, following which the EU adopted a series of import and export restrictions in relation to certain goods originating in Russia, in 2022 and 2023². As a result, traffic flows in certain border crossing points (BCPs) have been significantly reduced, or sometimes stopped, whilst other BCPs may now require additional capacity in customs control procedures, including that of modern equipment, because of the diversion in traffic and the creation of 'solidarity lanes'³. These sanctions have also influenced the number and type of samples analysed in customs laboratories.
- the changing volumes and nature of trade with the exponential growth of **e-commerce**, as acknowledged by Regulation (EU) 2021/1077 in recital 3, further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The last 3 years witnessed the increasing flow of millions of small individual consignments to be controlled and checked for

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1077 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the instrument for financial support for customs control equipment, OJ L 234, 2.7.2021, p. 1–17, hereinafter Instrument or Regulation (EU) 2021/1077.

² For an overall view of the EU sanctions against Russia see [here](#); for a detailed list of the customs-related measures see [here](#).

³ COM (2022) 217 final.

fiscal and non-fiscal requirements⁴. For example, from July to December 2021 – the first 6 months of compulsory customs declaration for all goods imported into the EU irrespective of their value – traditional trade in goods represented over 220 million import declarations for a value of EUR 1,250 billion. In contrast, it is estimated that e-commerce represented 490 million customs declarations for a total value of EUR 4,8 billion. So, e-commerce represents more than twice the number of traditional transactions for only 0.4 % of the value⁵;

- calls from European citizens requesting more from customs authorities on **safety and security, sustainability, and the protection of the environment**. Responding to this, customs authorities and the customs union ensure that prohibitions and restrictions related to sustainability are properly implemented on imported products. Evidence⁶ shows that the ratio of non-compliant or dangerous products is significantly higher for imported products than for EU manufactured products, particularly in the area of chemicals, pointing at serious weaknesses in the controls of products entering the EU⁷;
- expectations on customs authorities and the customs union to substantially contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal. Through its support for the purchase, maintenance, or upgrade of modern customs control equipment, the CCEI can play, for example, a key role in the shift in cargo traffic as one of the initiatives for greener transport routes and increased cargo by rail⁸.

Helping them in their difficult tasks, customs authorities can count on increasingly innovative equipment allowing them to perform deeper controls without delaying trade flows. One important feature of innovative equipment is its potential interoperability, ensuring ‘communication’ between equipment and therefore more efficient and harmonised controls.

1.2. CCEI policy priorities for 2023 and 2024

In its policy priorities, the CCEI programme takes into account the Communication from the Commission “Taking the Customs Union to the Next Level: a Plan for Action” (Customs Action Plan)⁹. For the programming period 2023-2024, the Instrument has also included elements identified in the reflections of the Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union (WPG)¹⁰, the Report on the Performance of the Customs Union for 2021¹¹, as

⁴ The role of e-commerce in the entry of illicit substances and non-compliant/unsafe products has also been recognised. For further details, see REF8. Forum report on the enforcement of REACH/CLP to on-line products

⁵ Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union ([WPG](#)); Source: DG TAXUD using Surveillance data. This is the number and value of goods below EUR 150 declared using the simplified declaration “H7”, which is mostly used to declare parcels up to EUR 150 under the Import One Stop Shop scheme. Note that e-commerce goods can also be declared with the standard customs declaration ‘H1’ declaration, but the calculation here excludes them, so the proportion of e-commerce can be seen here as a low-bound estimate.

⁶ According to the data submitted by the 27 customs authorities reporting interventions, 381 313 customs controls took place in 2021 in the field of product safety and compliance.

⁷ Impact Assessment.

⁸ COM (2022) 548 final.

⁹ COM (2020) 581 final.

¹⁰ Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union ([WPG](#)).

¹¹ Customs Union Performance Report 2021.

well as the proposal for a reform of the customs union¹², and the challenges identified as part of the discussions on reforming the EU customs governance, through, in particular, the financing of equipment.

These inputs, independent of respective source (the Commission, Member State customs authorities¹³, independent experts) pointed out the need to address imbalances between Member States in customs controls, by ensuring that Member States have modern and reliable customs control equipment as well as sufficient and trained personnel to operate it. The objective remains contributing to better customs union performance.

More specifically, as described in the 2021-2022 Multi-Annual Work Programme¹⁴, the Instrument is implemented in **two** stages (giving priority first to adequacy and then to equivalence of the equipment). The first stage corresponded to a short-term approach dedicated to addressing the most urgent needs and raising customs control performance. For this purpose, on 14 October 2021, the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals¹⁵ was launched with over EUR 273 million allocated to co-financing the purchase, upgrade or maintenance of customs control equipment as result.

In accordance with Article 11(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the implementation of the Instrument is driven by a common vision for equipping the customs union and a data-driven needs assessment. As such, the second phase will provide the long-term vision aiming to achieve the specific objective of contributing to adequate and equivalent levels of results of customs controls, thus continuing to consolidate its Union added value.

The data collected in the first CCEI call¹⁶ allowed for a comprehensive mapping of the entire customs union to determine areas that need particular attention. As a result, it has been possible to identify that there are still urgent needs in terms of missing and inadequate equipment in the customs union. Therefore, it is essential to identify concrete policy priorities to ensure targeted and efficient use of the available funds. In this context, and to ensure synergies with other Commission initiatives, five policy priorities have been identified to guide the CCEI implementation. All policy priorities will need to demonstrate performance targets and planned results. The Commission will recommend equipping BCPs and customs laboratories on this basis.

1.2.1. CCEI Policy Priority: Safety and Security

The customs union is inherently well placed to perform tasks relating to EU safety and security. In recent years, these tasks have continuously grown in importance as have expectations by EU stakeholders, becoming a main focus of customs work. In acknowledgement of the increasing role that customs play to ensure security in the Union and protect it from illegal trade, safety and security will be a priority. Under this priority, strategic BCPs and their related threats and risks are identified. This priority will be mandatory to fulfil

¹² COM (2023) 258 final.

¹³ The CCEI Coordination Group (E03786) assists and supports the Commission in the implementation of the CCEI and the development of the policy aspects required by the CCEI regulation. Further information available [here](#).

¹⁴ Annex on the financing of the Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment for 2021 and 2022 [hereinafter the 2021-2022 Multi-Annual Work Programme. Available here](#).

¹⁵ Reference documents are available on the [funding and tenders portal](#).

¹⁶ Reference documents are available on the [funding and tenders portal](#).

and will ensure the adequacy and equivalence of equipment to mitigate the safety and security related priority risks.

The preparedness levels and capabilities of the customs authorities to handle increasing tasks and priorities must be assessed at the level of each BCP and customs laboratory, looking at strengthening each of them by putting a key focus on the safety and security risks and threats and notably in relation to drugs and drug precursors. The CCEI targets results to improve and contribute to Commission actions in the civil security domain as a whole.

1.2.2. CCEI Policy Priority: Mitigating international conflicts and crises

Customs authorities play a vital role in the response to a crisis, both in the immediate response, but also in the follow-up and aftermath of a crisis. The CCEI will, in line with the Commission priority to increase the resilience and capabilities for responding to crises, work together with Member States to ensure that their capacity to respond in crisis situations expands. As an immediate step, Member States have to ensure that new needs in relation to the Russia's military aggression against Ukraine are met for countries bordering the region. CCEI funds have already served European interests in countering Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. For the upcoming programming period, the emphasis will be on addressing the challenge of equipping BCPs to correctly implement the sanctions imposed under elevated customs security risks¹⁷, whilst performing the necessary controls to enable the continuous and seamless flow of trade through the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes¹⁸.

In addition, the **CCEI will contribute to Member States' increase in agility and capability to respond to shifting situations and drastic changes to traffic and trade flows**. The immediate focus will be given to enhance equipment mobility and projects with **co-sharing between Member States**, to foster and enhance the customs union acting as one in crisis situations by providing the **funding of mobile equipment for deployment in such situations**.

1.2.3. CCEI Policy Priority: e-Commerce

As a corner stone of the EU single market, the customs union is doing its utmost to support e-commerce and make sure that safety and security is ensured as the trade increases. The challenge of the increase of e-commerce is clearly identified in Regulation (EU) 2021/1077 and the Customs Action Plan¹⁹, and it continues to grow, particularly for low-value consignments.

The challenge of controlling e-commerce is a priority for the CCEI, where investments into the postal hubs, airports and other postal handling centres will enable more efficient controls. In addition, customs laboratories' response to the traffic increase related to e-commerce, as well as the sensitivity of the equipment needed, will also be a priority. The time for testing and sample analysis in the e-commerce flow can impact greatly the number of samples and seizures made, enabling the work of the customs authorities. In the long term, the CCEI ambition is to drive the creation of more specialised customs capacities associated to the postal hubs and airports to increase the samples, seizures and shorten the time taken to perform controls.

¹⁷ For example, increased radiological risks, arms trafficking, etc.

¹⁸ COM (2022) 217 final.

¹⁹ COM (2020) 581 final.

1.2.4. CCEI Policy Priority: Building Green Capabilities

The EU is at the forefront of international efforts to fight climate change. Inevitably, the customs union has a key role in facilitating the efforts with the tasks of controlling and facilitating the trade flows.

The CCEI's ambition is to invest in preparing customs for this task. The CCEI will focus on the change in trade flows, where the necessary investments should be made to handle increased flow of goods to railways and in-land waterways. The customs laboratories will be equipped with the appropriate equipment to ensure the coverage of analysis related to environmental priorities as well as be managed in an environmentally friendly way.

The CCEI will be a key factor to build the capabilities of customs to handle greener trade flows and to support the enforcement of green policies, but in addition, it will also be a catalyst for sustainable and environmental-friendly equipment with the aim of lowering the carbon footprint of the customs infrastructure. This enforces the long-term use of equipment optimising the lifecycle with upgrades and maintenance through CCEI funds.

In terms of maintenance, it is a core activity of the CCEI with the purchase and upgrade of customs control equipment. It will continue to be promoted as an integral part of the CCEI which ensures the sustainable long-term use of the equipment for the entirety of the equipment lifetime. The environmentally friendly disposal of the equipment, when replacing existing available equipment, will also be a continuous requirement under the programme.

1.2.5. CCEI Policy Priority: Interoperability & Innovation

The current technological developments are progressing rapidly and create many new opportunities for Member State customs authorities. As acknowledged in Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, innovation is at the forefront of the CCEI vision; it has already been recognised as one of the priorities in the 2021-2022 Multi-Annual Work Programme. The second programming period will continue to prioritise innovation to reduce the gap between research of customs control equipment and especially non-intrusive detection technologies and its operational availability at BCPs, for the uptake and support of the innovation cycle of new equipment.

The equipment financed under the Instrument should be state-of-the-art and should equip customs authorities to face new challenges in the most efficient way, making best use of innovative approaches²⁰. As stated in Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, testing of innovative equipment is an eligible action, and will be continuously promoted. For customs laboratories specifically, there are equipment types for which the technology is evolving and the use of the new equipment entering the market could be promoted.

The interoperability of the equipment and the interconnectivity of the support systems is, and will remain, a priority and key requirement. The CCEI promotes interoperability, and it should be seen as a long-term goal of the customs union, where all customs services in the EU are interoperable, allowing for an efficient and effective exchange of data in real time, with a common database for Member States. It will speed up and enrich the decision-making process of customs and contribute to adequate and equivalent results of customs controls', helping the customs authorities to act as one.

²⁰ 2021-2022 Multi-Annual Work Programme Award Criteria.

1.3. Synergies with other Union programmes and initiatives

The CCEI will continue to contribute to several important Commission action plans, highly relevant and directly linked with the work of customs, such as: the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025²¹, the EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025²², the 2020-2025 EU Action Plan against firearms trafficking²³, the EU Action Plan against trafficking in cultural goods²⁴.

In particular, on 18 October 2023 the Commission adopted a Communication on the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime²⁵, including a European Ports Alliance. The CCEI will also contribute to this important EU initiative.

Furthermore, the CCEI is a key initiative that increases synergies with the EU Security Union strategy²⁶, explicitly mentioned and referenced in the progress reports and updates for ensuring the security of our borders and supporting law enforcement and judicial cooperation²⁷. What is more, the EU Security Union Strategy involves innovative aspects for new capabilities and equipment, where the CCEI is a driving force and is putting innovation at the centre of the Instrument.

Moreover, the CCEI programme will continue feeding into the wider Commission agenda and will create synergies with other Union programmes, such as the EU Anti-Fraud Programme²⁸, the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI)²⁹, the Internal Security Fund (ISF)³⁰, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)³¹, Horizon Europe³², and the Technical Support Instrument (TSI)³³.

Complementarities with these programmes are very much encouraged and will ensure the Union added value of the CCEI. The Instrument can, in various ways, accommodate complementarities and synergies, for example: the equipment financed by the CCEI should be complementary to the planned projects in Member States' RRF plans and TSI projects to

²¹ COM (2021) 170 final.

²² COM (2020) 606 final/2.

²³ COM (2020) 608 final.

²⁴ COM (2022) 800 final.

²⁵ COM (2023) 641 final.

²⁶ COM (2020) 605 final.

²⁷ COM (2022) 745 final.

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/785 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Union Anti-Fraud Programme and repealing Regulation (EU) No 250/2014 (OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 110).

²⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ L 251, 15.7.2021, p. 48).

³⁰ Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund (OJ L 251, 15.7.2021, p. 94).

³¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17).

³² Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1).

³³ Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 February 2021 establishing a Technical Support Instrument (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 1).

exploit the synergies, especially regarding the cybersecurity, interoperability and interconnectivity of equipment in Member States customs authorities. In addition, the co-sharing of equipment financed by the CCEI can also be used by border guards or other authorities present at the border (albeit non-systematically) and/or customs may perform controls with the respective equipment for other border authorities. Horizon Europe has funded various innovative projects in customs related equipment areas where the CCEI can support the testing of equipment and support Member State customs authorities in the uptake of these innovations. Member States must ensure there are no overlaps and double funding with other EU programmes.

1.4. Operational Implementation

Based on the objectives provided for in Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for the years 2023 and 2024 to be implemented in direct management in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046³⁴.

It will provide funding exclusively by means of grants to be awarded and managed in accordance with Title VIII of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

Direct management means that the Commission, which bears the main responsibility for its sound implementation, manages the Instrument. Member States are to contribute to prudent spending of the support provided under the Instrument and abide by applicable EU and national rules and regulations. A particular focus on ensuring the security of the equipment purchased under the CCEI should be given during the procurement procedures and Member States are expected to fully align them with relevant EU security policies and interests.

After the adoption of the 2023-2024 CCEI Work Programme, the Commission services will provide as additional guidance recommendations tailored to Member State customs authorities based on the policy priorities mentioned in section 1.2. These recommendations will be aligned with the information provided by Member States as part of the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals³⁵ and will specify the general rule for the objectives to be achieved through the CCEI programme. In this manner, the 2023-2024 Work Programme will be implemented in a targeted manner, with a view to achieving the long-term aim of the harmonised application of customs controls by Member States. Member States customs authorities will be encouraged and expected to take the recommendations into account in their funding requests.

1.5. Financing and budget

On the basis of the objectives laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for years 2023 and 2024 as follows:

³⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

³⁵ Reference documents are available on the [funding and tenders portal](#).

For grants (implemented under direct management, point 2)

Legal basis

Articles 3, 5 and 6 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077.

Budget line

[11 03 01 – Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment]

Objectives pursued

In accordance with Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the general objective of the programme is to support the customs union and customs authorities to protect the financial and economic interests of the Union and Member States, to ensure security and safety within the Union and to protect the Union from illegal trade while facilitating legitimate business activity.

In line with Article 3(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the specific objective aims at contributing to adequate and equivalent results of customs controls through the transparent purchase, maintenance, and upgrade "of relevant and reliable state-of-the-art customs control equipment that is secure, safe and environmental-friendly".

This work programme sets out the policy priorities of the Instrument which will guide the implementation to fill the continuous important performance gaps in the availability of equipment in relation to each policy priority.

Each action should improve the technical capacities of Member States and match the policy priorities of the work programme and correspond to identified gaps that Member States are facing while carrying out customs controls where such shortages compromise the proper or effective functioning of the customs union.

Within the policy priorities, Member States should commit themselves to apply performance targets, considering the specific characteristic of their BCPs and customs laboratories. The equipment should address the specific risks and threats presented at BCPs or customs laboratories, taking into consideration the context (e.g., traffic, trade) in which they operate. The context and the risks or threats should be identified in the project proposals.

By focusing their project proposals on actions towards the policy priorities, Member States will strive to tackle their vulnerabilities with a view to contributing to a stronger and better equipped customs union and to boosting its performance thus contributing to enhanced Union added value.

Expected results

The implementation of the activities funded with the Instrument is expected to contribute to achieving adequate and equivalent results of customs controls. The Instrument will support Member States in addressing the need to ensure that the customs authorities act as one in protecting the interests of the Union.

Performance targets

A monitoring and evaluation framework, consisting of progress and periodic reports, has been set up to ensure that data for monitoring the implementation and the results of the Instrument are collected efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner.

To ensure the commitment to achieving certain performance targets, Member States will have to demonstrate the expected results from the actions financed with the Instrument, in line with their own customs performance targets and the customs performance targets set in the context of the policy priorities. Member States should highlight how the use of the equipment purchased contributes to reaching those targets.

The results achieved should contribute to the added value of the Instrument in improving the performance of the customs union.

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming contribution - description of how the action(s) included in this work programme contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming, in qualitative and quantitative ways.

The CCEI provides funding for customs control equipment at border crossing points and customs laboratories and includes Sustainability (including the environmentally friendly disposal of replaced and/or upgraded equipment) as one of its award criteria.

2. GRANTS

The global budgetary envelope reserved for grants under this work programme is EUR 283 963 000.

The yearly budgetary implementation of the financing decision is subject to the availability of budget appropriations for the respective financial years after the adoption of the Commission annual budgets.

2.1. Financial support to the purchase, upgrade or maintenance of equipment for customs controls

Type of applicants targeted by the invitation to submit a proposal

In accordance with Article 195, first paragraph, point (d), of the Financial Regulation, grants shall be awarded without a call for proposals.

The eligible entities are defined in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077. They are the customs authorities of the EU Member States where they provide the information necessary for the assessments of needs as set out in Article 11(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077.

Description of the activities to be funded by the grant(s) awarded without an open call for proposals based on Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, as well as of the objectives pursued and the expected results.

This programme will support the purchase, maintenance, and upgrade of customs control equipment for BCPs and customs laboratories and related items. The final list of eligible cost items will be indicated in the invitation to submit a proposal.

In accordance with Article 6(1), point (b), of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the items of equipment to be financed with the Instrument shall have one or more of the following customs control purposes:

- (a) non-intrusive inspection;
- (b) indication of hidden objects on humans;
- (c) radiation detection and nuclide identification;
- (d) analysis of samples in laboratories;
- (e) sampling and field analysis of samples;
- (f) handheld search.

The financed activities will be divided into two categories each benefitting from a pre-allocated share of the budget:

2.1.1 Customs control equipment for border crossing points

This category is expected to receive 80% of the overall dedicated amount for 2023-2024 under the Instrument. Following an invitation to submit proposals, each national customs authority may submit one project proposal comprising a maximum of 20 work packages. In this category, one work package expresses the needs at a single BCP. It is not possible to submit more than one work package per BCP. One work package may include multiple equipment needs at that specific BCP, including equipment that is mainly assigned to this BCP, but that could be shared with other BCPs (mobile equipment in particular) or other border authorities. Each package should have a measurable impact that can be objectively evaluated against the award criteria so that the policy priority performance gaps across the customs union are filled in by the most appropriate mix of equipment expected to have the most effective and efficient performance in accordance with the policy priorities identified in this work programme.

2.1.2. Customs control equipment for customs laboratories

This category is expected to receive 20% of the overall dedicated amount for 2023-2024 under the Instrument. Following an invitation to submit proposals, each national customs authority may submit one project proposal comprising a maximum of 5 work packages. In this category, one work package expresses the needs of one customs laboratory and may include multiple equipment needs at that specific laboratory. It is not possible to submit more than one work package per customs laboratory.

Co-financing rate

The maximum possible rate of Union co-financing, in accordance with Article 8(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, is set at 80% of the eligible costs [where VAT related costs are considered non-eligible].

Maximum and minimum amounts

The maximum aggregated amount that a Member State could apply is set at 15% of the total budget available in each category for the entire reference period (2023-2024).

Duration of the project

The duration of the project presented in every work package shall indicatively be between 12 and 36 months. The action (purchase and upgrade of equipment) is to be considered complete when the entirety of the equipment, for which the grant has been awarded, is purchased, delivered and put into use by the customs authorities.

Double funding

According to the Regulation (EU) 2018/1046, grants are subject to the principle of non-cumulative award and no-double financing. This principle is reflected in the rule that prohibits the award of more than one grant funded from the Union budget to the same beneficiary for the same action, unless it is otherwise authorised in the relevant basic act.

Member States will have to indicate in their project proposal the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for in respect of the same action as well as any other funding received or applied for in respect of the same action.

According to Article 10(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, by way of derogation from the Regulation (EU) 2018/1046, funding of an action by several Union programmes or instruments should be possible to allow and support, where appropriate, cooperation and interoperability across domains.

However, in such cases, the contributions may not cover the same costs in accordance with the principle of prohibition of double funding established by the Regulation (EU) 2021/1077.

The invitation to submit proposals will contain specific indications of the above-mentioned requirements.

Eligible/non eligible actions/costs

Eligible actions/costs must comply with the requirements listed on Articles 6 and 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077. As that Regulation does not list all costs and their regime (eligible/ineligible), the final list of eligible costs will be indicated in the invitation to submit a proposal.

Admissibility criteria

The admissibility criteria will be based on compliance with the submission modalities:

- submission of project proposals via the Funding & tender opportunities (the Single Electronic Data Interchange Area) portal of the Commission;
- respect for deadlines of submission.

Selection criteria

In accordance with Article 198(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the verification of the financial and operational capacity will not apply to public bodies.

However, as the majority of the customs control equipment eligible for financing with the Instrument requires specialised skills and competences as well as specialised infrastructure, it is necessary that Member States demonstrate their capacity (as well as future strengthening of this capacity) to operate the equipment. This should be done by providing a description (included in the relevant section of the project proposal) of the infrastructure available allowing the effective use of the equipment as well as the project team (staff and experts) that will be responsible for implementing the project actions and including references to their competence to procure and use the equipment.

Interoperability should be demonstrated for those equipment items that require the use of dedicated software to ensure that the relevant equipment items purchased under the Instrument can ‘communicate’ to each other/share information with one another within the Member State and across the entire customs union.

Award criteria

In accordance with Article 199 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, once project proposals have been examined on the basis of the eligibility, admissibility and selection criteria, the proposed actions will be assessed on the basis of four award criteria:

- (a) **relevance**: under this award criterion the conformity of the requested equipment with the CCEI objectives and policy priorities will be assessed, in addition to the overall quality of the project; 30% weighting.
- (b) **added value**: under this award criterion the expected impact and contribution to the EU added value and CCEI policy priorities will be assessed; 40% weighting.
- (c) **sustainability**: under this award criterion the capacity of the BCPs and customs laboratories to ensure the continuous use of the equipment in the long term will be assessed in addition to important aspects such as the reliability and the security of the equipment; 20% weighting.
- (d) **innovation**: under this award criterion the extent to which the equipment is considered as ‘state-of-art’ and allows equipping the customs authorities to face new challenges in the most efficient manner will be assessed; 10% weighting.

The policy priorities identified in the work programme need to be clearly stated in the project proposals that Member States submit, as part of the justifications provided under the award criteria. Each award criterion will be applied with different weighing factors as above. During the evaluation stage, the Commission will ensure that each project proposal contributes to implementing these priorities. Additional specific information about the above-mentioned award criteria (e.g. minimum score requirements) will be indicated in the invitation to submit a proposal and will be aligned with the recommendation issued to each Member State.

Reporting requirements

As part of the monitoring and implementation process, Member States will be required to report on the implementation of their projects in line with the monitoring and evaluation framework under the instrument. The reporting requirements will include information on the equipment effectively purchased/maintained/upgraded under the Instrument as well as specific information related to the use of the equipment and the expected results as already detailed under the added value criterion. Member States should report on the performance targets as identified within the context of this priority.

Unjustified non-fulfilment of expected results may lead to partial or total recovery of the related funds.

In addition, Member States should report on their commitment to have adequately trained staff with appropriate knowledge to use the equipment purchased/maintained/upgraded.

As laid down by Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the indicators data that Member States have to report on the progress of the instrument towards the achievement of the general and specific objectives are set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the Instrument. An annual communication will report the following information where the cost of a piece of customs control equipment exceeds EUR 10 000 exclusive of taxes:

- (a) a detailed list of the customs control equipment financed under the Instrument;
- (b) information on the use of the customs control equipment and the related results, supported with the relevant statistics where appropriate.

Implementation

The grants will be implemented directly by DG TAXUD.

Indicative implementation start date: Q4 2023

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming contribution - description of how this action contributes to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in qualitative and quantitative ways

The CCEI provides funding for customs control equipment at border crossing points and customs laboratories and includes Sustainability (including the environmentally friendly disposal of replaced and/or upgraded equipment) as one of its award criteria.

3. OTHER ACTIONS OR EXPENDITURE

Amount

EUR 600 000

Description, including the objectives pursued and expected results

As set out by Article 4(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1077, the allocated budget can also cover expenses for preparation, monitoring, control, audit, evaluation as well as other activities for managing the Instrument and evaluating the achievement of its objectives.

Implementation

Directly by DG TAXUD.
Indicative implementation start date: Q1 2024

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming contribution - description of how this action contributes to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in qualitative and quantitative ways.

The CCEI provides funding for customs control equipment at border crossing points and customs laboratories and includes sustainability (including the environmentally friendly disposal of replaced and/or upgraded equipment) as one of its award criteria.