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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

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COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS

Subject: Launch of the call for expression of interest under the Specific Action “*Innovation for sea/shore, and/or land border surveillance (operational testing in pilot projects)*”, under the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) – Reference No BMVI/2021-2022/SA/1.2.1

1. INTRODUCTION

The 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 (BMVI) foresees that Member States may receive funding for specific actions, in addition to the initial allocation to their programmes.

The specific actions shall fund transnational or national projects that bring high Union added value, in accordance with the objectives of the BMVI and in line with agreed Union priorities, in particular to ensure a strong and effective European integrated border management at the external borders, thereby contributing to ensuring a high level of internal security within the Union, while safeguarding the free movement of persons within it.

These specific actions should be implemented as one of the component of the Thematic Facility.

On 25 November 2021, the Commission adopted the financing decision and the work programme covering the years 2021 to 2024 for actions implemented under shared management, in the framework of the Border Management and Visa Policy Instrument (BMVI) Thematic Facility¹.

By the present note, the Commission launches a call for expression of interest for **the Specific Action ‘*Innovation for sea/shore, and/or land border surveillance (operational testing in pilot projects)*’**, in line with the actions included in the adopted work programme.

¹ Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8459 final of 25/11/2021

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The specific actions will be implemented by one or more Member States participating in the Instrument, via funding received in addition to the allocation under the Member States' BMVI programmes.

Funding for a specific action is added to the Member States' programme allocations at programme's adoption or by means of a programme's amendment. That additional funding is earmarked for the specific action concerned and it shall not be used for other actions in the Member State's programme, except in duly justified circumstances, and as approved by the Commission, through the amendment of the Member State's programme. This means that, as a rule, that in case of under-spending or non-implementation of a specific action, Member States will not be able to use the corresponding amount to support any other action of their programme. In such cases, any unused amount would be reimbursed to the Union budget and/or decommitted, except under the circumstances referred to above.

Whereas the regular EU co-financing rate under the Member States' programmes will not exceed 75% of the total eligible costs, specific actions may benefit from an increased co-financing rate of up to 90% of the total eligible costs.

The specific action must be implemented by the Member States in full compliance with the EU law and acquis, including the EU Financial Regulation, the BMVI Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)².

Your attention is in particular drawn to one provision of the CPR. As regards the valued added tax ("VAT") eligibility regime, the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 provides in Article 64(1)(c) that VAT shall not be eligible, except:

- i. *“for operations the total cost of which is below EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT);*
- ii. *for operations the total cost of which is at least EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT) where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation”.*

In addition, any specific action must be implemented by the Member States in compliance with EU fundamental values, rights and principles enshrined in the Union acquis, in particular with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and with the Union's international obligations as regards fundamental rights.

The supported specific actions will enhance the cooperation and trust among Member States and will further improve the EU external border surveillance, using innovative solutions.

3. CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

3.1. Indicative Budget Available

The BMVI Thematic Facility work programme indicates the overall budgetary allocation reserved for specific actions in the years 2021 and 2022 (plus reserved attributions related to 2023 and 2024).

The indicative amount envisaged for this BMVI/2021-2022/SA/1.2.1 call is **EUR 14 million**.

² [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

The Commission envisages that a Union co-funding of **a minimum of EUR 1 500 000 per project** would be adequate to provide support for operational testing and uptake of innovative solutions.

The Commission encourages project proposals by groups of Member States, in consideration of the potential transnational impact.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The **EU Security Union Strategy 2020-2025**³ underlined that “*EU research, innovation and technological development offer the opportunity to take the security dimension into account as these technologies and their application are developed*”. This is particularly relevant to ensure the security and protection of EU borders.

This specific action focuses on promoting the uptake (validation, piloting in real environment, procurement and/or deployment) of new technologies and methods for border surveillance, especially those coming from Union-funded research projects on border security.

The importance of state-of-the-art, innovative and knowledge-based methods and technologies for the security of the EU external borders is highlighted in key EU policy documents and legislation such as Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard, and in Communications such as the already mentioned EU Security Union Strategy; the New Pact on Migration and Asylum⁴; and the Strategy towards a fully functioning and resilient Schengen area”⁵.

The European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) is particularly enhanced by modern technologies and methods that enable the capabilities needed by European Border and Coast Guard authorities to fulfil their tasks.

These include, for example, being able to provide integrated and continuous border surveillance, situational awareness and analysis, and updating the EBCG’s capabilities including those to perform tasks related to managing irregular migration, trafficking, as well as search and rescue.

The EU research and innovation (R&I) investments on border security technologies and methods, and in particular border surveillance ones, is large and consistent since the inception of the EU civil security R&I programme in 2007. Over time, this led to new knowledge, data, technologies and prototypes at different levels of Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) and operational products for sea/shore and land borders surveillance.

Both the EU civil security R&I programme⁶ and the BMVI regulation state that the latter should be used to support new technologies and methods, in particular those coming from Union-funded R&I on civil security. This support can enable exploitation of results from EU-funded R&I on civil security, and final delivery of the required tools to European security practitioners.

³ COM/2020/605 final

⁴ COM/2020/795 final.

⁵ COM/2021/277 final

⁶ See, for example, Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 on Horizon 2020 and Work Programmes C(2020)1862 and C(2020)1862

EU co-financing is necessary for such an action given the uptake challenges for innovation, new knowledge, technologies and methods in the field of border security. Furthermore, there is a strong EU added-value in promoting European innovation on border surveillance.

Indeed innovation leads to the development of civil security capabilities only if solutions (which must obviously be legally, ethically and socially compliant) that come from (successful) previous R&I are made available to, and used by, practitioners.

Much of the R&I on civil security supported by the EU led to excellent scientific findings, promising technology areas and technology development and deployment. Examples of innovation delivered in support of European police authorities, border and coastguards, civil protection and first responders include solutions for the protection of critical infrastructures, next generation cross border communication systems for security practitioners, virtual reality-based training support tools, or new technologies for border surveillance in land and sea border contexts.

However, barriers and challenges may also often hinder the uptake of innovation in the civil security sector. Examples of these challenges include the lack of funding and development streams dedicated to innovative technologies and methods; a limited understanding of how public procurement can be used as a catalyst for innovation uptake; or the limited visibility and traceability of successful research outcomes.

Synergies between Union-funded border security R&I with the BMVI, within the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), can hence facilitate funding to security practitioners and authorities to build on successful research results, supporting testing, validating or deploying new methods and technologies coming from R&I.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

The objective of the specific action is to provide support to Member States to **test, validate, further pilot, transfer and/or deploy innovative technologies and/or methods (i.e. “uptake” of innovative technologies) for border surveillance.**

This Specific Action lays specifically in the framework of Annex III 1(f), 2(f), 3(f) and Annex IV (7) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1148, regarding support to “*actions developing innovative methods or deploying new technologies with a potential for transferability to other Member States, especially projects that aim to test and validate the outcome of Union-funded research projects*”.

This call targets, in particular, a Member State or a group of Member States **to address the following issue (s):**

- a) The need for increased capabilities for the surveillance of EU external sea/shore and land borders;**
- b) The support to the uptake of innovation such as new knowledge, technologies and methods in the field of borders surveillance.**

The projects to be funded by this specific action **can include activities**, such as: **testing, validation, and/or further piloting (including in groups of Member States) in real environment; procurement; installation and integration in legacy systems; deployment, hands-on training on the use of the new technologies.**

This action aims at especially supporting testing, validating, deploying and/or transfer to other Member States new technologies and methods resulting from Union-funded research projects on border surveillance. However, similar activities building on new technologies and methods deriving from past R&I not funded by the EU civil security research programme, can also be proposed.

Funded projects **can support innovative technologies**, such as:

- **infrastructures;**
- **tools, systems and technologies;**
- **guidance;**
- **and communication.**

for border management Member States' authorities, to improve the border surveillance.

Technologies may include, but are not limited to: **remotely-piloted aerial, ground or water vehicles; computer vision; video analytics; data fusion and information analysis; sensors; augmented and virtual reality.**

Use cases may include, but are not limited to: **detection, classification and identification of manned and unmanned flying vehicles or vessels which may be employed for smuggling, trafficking or other illegal activities; vehicles and vessels tracking, identification and analysis for border surveillance, including search and rescue; increased cross-border situational awareness; and in general improving efficiency, effectiveness, availability and reliability of capabilities of border and coast guards.**

Proposed projects may build on the results of research including, but not limiting to, those of EU border security R&I projects ALFA, ANDROMEDA, ARESIBO, CLOSEYE, COMPASS2020, EFFECTOR, EWISA, FOLDOUT, MARISA, RANGER, SAFESHORE.

Further information on Union-funded research and innovation on border surveillance technologies and methods can be found on:

- the EU Funding & Tenders Portal (for past, open and forthcoming topics and calls);⁷
- on the Common Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) (for ongoing and past projects);⁸
- on the Horizon Dashboard (for aggregated search by country, partner, topic);⁹
- through the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS);¹⁰
- from the National Contact points (NCPs) for EU security research;¹¹
- from DG HOME's Innovation and Security Research Unit.¹²

For proposals building on previous Pre-Operational Validation (POV) and Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP) projects, proposed actions should also engage Member States beyond the initial buyers group.

The project proposals to be submitted under this call should explain **the plans for future deployment and/or scale-up of the new technologies and/or methods, after the activities funded by this Specific Action**, should the activities funded by this Specific Action be successful. Further deployment and/or scale-up for after the activities funded by this Specific Action can be planned with support with national funding, BMVI National Programmes, and/or other public or private funding. Projects that have a credible and committed plan for further uptake will be particularly welcome, as they will ensure impact on the capabilities of national security practitioners.

⁷ [EU Funding & Tenders](#)

⁸ [CORDIS](#)

⁹ [Horizon Dashboard](#)

¹⁰ [Community for European Research and Innovation for Security \(CERIS\)](#)

¹¹ [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹² [EU Innovation and Industry for Security](#)

Activities and innovative technologies must be compliant with EU and national legislation on border surveillance, and they shall promote the respect of fundamental rights and EU values.

Innovative technologies should incorporate an assessment of social acceptance and on the respect of fundamental rights, including privacy.

The specific action proposed should not include research activities, but rather support the use of innovative solutions stemming from past research. As such, new technologies addressed in the projects (which are not necessarily the only technologies involved, but should be the main ones) should be of Technological Readiness Level not lower than 8.¹³

3.4. Expected results following the call

Member States can propose either a project implemented entirely at national level or a project implemented transnationally, in a group of Member States. In the latter case, the proposing Member States should explain the value added to support uptake of new technologies from results of research and innovation with a transnational approach. Examples could be innovative systems for collaborative border surveillance by Member States with contiguous EU external sea/shore or land borders.

The main expected results would be:

- 1) Improved security of EU external borders;
- 2) Enhanced capabilities of border management authorities and relevant services in the Member State for border surveillance operations;
- 3) Improved capabilities for search and rescue, preventing and deterring organised crime activities or irregular migration across EU external borders;
- 4) Uptake of the relevant new technologies and solutions from past, especially Union-funded, security research and innovation initiatives;
- 5) Increased European open strategic autonomy in security technologies.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the BMVI are eligible.

The projects proposals to be submitted under this specific action should:

- **not start before 1 January 2022 and**
- **be completed by 31 December 2025.**

The project proposals submitted by the Member States will be assessed by the Commission - DG HOME.

To be considered admissible, a proposal has to meet the following conditions:

1. to be submitted within the deadline (see below) to the BMVI specific actions functional mailbox HOME-BMVI-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu in the official

¹³ [h2020-wp1415-annex-g-tr1_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

BMVI/2021-2022/SA/1.2.1 Application Form, attached to this note, together with its annexes¹⁴, and readable and complete (all fields necessary for assessment are filled in)

In case of a transnational project proposal, the lead Member State will have to make sure that all participating Member States duly sign the “Partnership Declaration Form” and that they are listed in the Application Form, indicating the share each will receive from the specific action’s amount allocated if the submitted project proposal is successful. Based on this common agreement, each partner will have a role and resulting responsibilities in the implementation of the project and delivering on its objectives.

2. to be submitted by the Managing Authority on behalf of the entity in the Member State that will be responsible for the implementation of the specific action
3. to identify a project beneficiary (an entity) that will be responsible for the implementation of the action in the Member State (in the lead for the action)
4. to include the filled partnership declaration forms of all participating Member States involved in the transnational project proposal.

Other entities can be involved in the implementation of the action as co-beneficiaries.

DG HOME will assess the admissible proposals on the basis of the following **award criteria**:

A. Relevance

1. **Clarity, correspondence and consistency** of the objectives and scope of the proposed specific action seen against the objectives and expected impact/outcomes (if applicable), as identified in this call for expression of interest. The Member States having expressed interest should demonstrate that extra support and participation in the Specific Action may effectively contribute to the overall objective of innovation for the EU external border surveillance.
2. **Cost effectiveness, sustainability and complementarity of the project with the Member State’s programme and other EU funding instruments.** Describe how the project was conceived in order to be complementary to the actions implemented under the Member State’s programme and/or other EU funding instruments.
3. **Innovation:** the potential for innovation, i.e. to develop and/or improve border surveillance capabilities that the Member State(s) needed; to deploy, build and/or train new or additional capacities for border management practitioners using new technologies and methods; to exploit new technologies, methods and knowledge generated by previous Union-funded R&I on border security, including by exploiting the relevant Intellectual Property Rights (IPR); potential for sustainability, including a credible plan for future deployment and/or scale-up of the new technologies and/or methods, after the activities funded by this specific action. Technical soundness of the proposed action shall be proofed.
4. **Geographic focus and transferability of results** – the definition of the geographic focus and the European/trans-national dimension of the proposed action.

B. Quality and content

1. **Maturity of the proposal and appropriateness of the design** and planned implementation, taking into account the envisaged activities methodology (including operational and financial management), the **organisation of work and strategy for project management and monitoring**;

¹⁴ The Commission may still need to update the application form and its annexes in January 2022.

2. **Expected results, evaluation, as well as the measures undertaken to mitigate the identified potential risks to the implementation of the proposed action.**
3. The proposal should indicate how the proposed activities will be implemented in full respect of **EU fundamental rights** and, take into account other relevant horizontal principles, as described in Article 9 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

C. Impact

1. **Impact or effect** of the proposed specific action in proportion to the objective of the call for expression of interest **for the EU (Union added value)**
2. The Member State(s) should demonstrate that extra funding available under the programme financed from the BMVI may effectively **contribute to achieving the priorities and expected outcomes of this call, notably regarding the performance indicators** (output and results indicators) listed in Annex VIII of the BMVI Regulation,
3. Impact on **surveillance capability development for border management and security practitioners**
4. Impact on **European strategic autonomy on technologies for the management of external borders, in particular for the sea/shore, and/or land borders surveillance**
5. Level of **cooperation with other Member States** and impact of the collaboration on innovative border surveillance solutions, and standardisation in that area.
6. The Member State(s) should also describe efforts to **disseminate and communicate the results** of the project to ensure their long-term impact.

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their proposals by **15 MAY 2022** at the latest, using the BMVI/2021-2022/SA/1.2.1 Application Form attached to this note, together with its annexes (Annex 1 - the budget form, Annex 2 - the partnership declaration form for the transnational projects only, and Annex 3 - the non-exhaustive list of output and result indicators to be upgraded following the contribution of the proposed specific action to the BMVI programme).

The proposals should be submitted to the Specific Action functional mailbox HOME-BMVI-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu. Member States may submit additional documentation if necessary.

Deadline for any clarification requests: Member States can send requests by **23 April 2022**, at the latest, to HOME-AFFAIRS-FUNDS-COMMITTEE@ec.europa.eu.

The Commission may also contact the lead Member State to request further specific information. A reply should be provided by the Member State within 3 working days.

In order to ensure equal and fair treatment of the proposals and allow the Commission to allocate at the same date all the available funding, DG HOME will assess all proposals simultaneously. Therefore, the proposals submitted after the deadline will not be admissible.

The members of the Committee for the Home Affairs Funds will be informed at the latest 10 working days before the deadline for the submission of the proposals in case the deadline for the submission of proposals is extended.

Member States will receive information on the successful proposals towards July 2022, while the respective revisions of the Member States' BMVI Programmes will be carried out immediately after.

5. AMENDMENT OF THE BMVI PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After the information on the outcome of this call for expression of interest will be provided by the Commission to the Member States, each successful Member State shall submit to the Commission the request to amend its BMVI programme accordingly. On that occasion, Member States will amend the output and result indicators of their BMVI programme and will have to include the costs linked to this specific action under table 2.1.3 of the relevant specific objective, breaking down the costs by type of intervention (table 1 of Annex VI of BMVI Regulation).

When amending a BMVI programme of a Member State, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure:

- a) For Member States which have decided to fund under their initially adopted BMVI programme under tables 2.1.3¹⁵, types of interventions listed in table 1 of Annex VI of BMVI Regulation which are relevant to this specific action, the expenditure would be eligible as of 1/1/2022.¹⁶
- b) If this is not the case, expenditure for this BMVI Specific Action will be eligible from the date of the submission of the request for the amendment of the BMVI programme to which new types of interventions will be added accordingly.

Electronically signed

Chiara GARIAZZO
Chair of the Committee for the
Home Affairs Funds

¹⁵ Article 13(18) of the BMVI Regulation (EU) 2021/1148,

¹⁶ Article 63 of CPR