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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

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HOME.E.1/AF

HOME-Funds/2022/04

COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS

Subject: Revised version of the Note HOME-Funds/2021/30 sent to the Home Affairs Funds Committee on 22 December 2021 - Launch of the call for expression of interest for the ‘Specific Action EMPACT’ under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) – Reference ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1

This Note and its three annexes revise and replace the Note HOME-Funds/2021/30 sent to the Home Affairs Funds Committee on 22 December 2021. The changes mainly concern the scores allocated to each award criterion under section 4.1, the text of section 5 as well as some editorial modifications.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund¹ for the duration of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 provides foresees that Member States may receive funding for specific actions in addition to their initial allocation in their respective programmes.

Specific actions shall fund transnational or national projects that bring high Union added value in accordance with the objectives of the Fund and in line with agreed Union priorities, in particular in order to contribute to combating and preventing crime, including drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and combating cross-border criminal smuggling networks.

They shall be implemented as one of the components of the Thematic Facility in line with Article 8 of the above mentioned Regulation.

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1149](#)

On 26 November 2021, the Commission adopted the financing decision and the work programme for 2021-2022 Internal Security Fund (ISF) Thematic Facility².

By the present note, the Commission revises the call for expression of interest for the ‘Specific Action EMPACT’³, in line with the actions listed in the above mentioned Commission’s financing decision and work programme.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The actions will be implemented by one or more Member States participating in the Fund via funding received in addition to the allocation under the Member States’ programmes.

Funding for specific actions is added to the Member States’ programme allocations at the time of the approval of the initial programme or by means of a programme amendment. That additional funding is earmarked for the specific action concerned and 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, in case of under-spending or non-implementation of this 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 90%.

The specific action must be implemented by the Member States in accordance with the ISF Regulation⁴ and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)⁵.

Your attention is in particular drawn to one provision of the CPR. As regards the valued added tax (“VAT”) eligibility regime, Article 64(1)(c) of the CPR provides that VAT is not 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”.

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8460 final of 26/11/2021

³ European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund

⁵ [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.

3. CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

3.1. Indicative budget available

The 2021-2022 ISF Thematic Facility work programme indicates that for all specific actions under this Fund EUR 22 million are available.

The indicative amount envisaged for this ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1 call is EUR 15 million.

Requested amounts (i.e. EU contribution to a Member State ISF programme for the “Specific Action EMPACT”):

The requested amount must not be lower than EUR 800 000 per application.

The requested amount should ideally range between EUR 800 000 and EUR 1 000 000 per application, as all EMPACT crime priorities must be considered equally.

In order to optimise the use of ISF funding, the requested amount per application can be higher than the ‘ideal range’ if duly justified, yet should ideally not exceed EUR 2 000 000.

Should a great number of applications be received and successful, the final amount to be allocated to a Member State’s programme may be lowered.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to request coherent amounts, based on their needs.

Should an EU Member State decide not to apply for the “Specific Action EMPACT”, it is invited to inform the European Commission as soon as possible, and no later than 31 January 2022, so that the other EU Member States can be notified and have an opportunity to adapt their potential applications⁶.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The “EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime”, now simply called EMPACT (the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats), was adopted by the EU in 2010⁷. EMPACT runs in four-year cycles and helps connecting the dots to build a real security ecosystem. It is a multidisciplinary cooperation platform of Member States, supported by all EU institutions, bodies and agencies (such as the Commission services, OLAF, Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, CEPOL, eu-LISA, EFCA and others). Third countries, international organisations, and other public and private partners are also associated. EU Member States retain the overall drivership of EMPACT⁸.

⁶ This information can be sent to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu.

⁷ 3043rd Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 8 and 9 November 2010: [Council conclusions on the creation and implementation of an EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime](#).

⁸ According to the [EMPACT Terms of Reference \(Council document 9921/21 of 17 June 2021\)](#), beyond the supervising role of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI), only EU Member States can be appointed as “driver” of an Operational Action Plan (OAP). EU Member States or an EU Agency can be appointed as “co-driver(s)”. The European Commission as well as third countries/parties can be appointed as “action leader(s)”, under the responsibility of the “Driver”.

On 24 July 2020, the European Commission presented the Security Union Strategy 2020-2025⁹. The Strategy identified four main priorities: (i) a future-proof security environment, (ii) tackling evolving threats, (iii) protecting Europeans from terrorism and organised crime, (iv) a strong European security ecosystem. In the Strategy, the Commission emphasised that *“the EU would also benefit from more strategic coherence [and that] EMPACT (...) provides a criminal intelligence-led methodology for authorities to jointly tackle the most important criminal threats affecting the EU.”*

In its Council conclusions on the permanent continuation of EMPACT 2022, the Council of the European Union called upon the Commission to *“integrate and articulate the EMPACT instrument, whenever pertinent, with relevant EU security policies, and capacity-building programmes”*¹⁰.

In this context, the Commission mentioned EMPACT in several of the EU strategies and action plans, recently adopted by the Commission: the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse¹¹, the EU Action Plan on Firearms trafficking 2020-2025¹² (and this latter aspect in the Counter-Terrorism agenda for the EU¹³), the EU Agenda on Drugs and Action Plan / EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025¹⁴, the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025¹⁵, and the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025)¹⁶.

Additionally, in order to address the evolving threats posed by organised and serious international crime, the Commission presented in April 2021 the EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025¹⁷, which strongly articulates with EMPACT. The Strategy sets out actions along four priorities: 1) boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation, 2) effective investigations to tackle criminal networks and high-priority crimes, 3) eliminate criminal profits to fight infiltration of legal economy, 4) make law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age.

As regards the first priority, a Commission “Staff Working Document on EMPACT¹⁸” is accompanying this Strategy and provides the Commission’s views on how to reinforce EMPACT and develop it in the future with six work strands, in order to make it the key EU flagship instrument for cooperation at EU level to fight organised and serious international crime.

One of the work strands aims at significantly reinforcing the funding of EMPACT. Therefore, an envelope dedicated to EMPACT activities has been earmarked via a specific action within the 2021-2022 ISF Thematic Facility.

⁹ [COM \(2020\) 605 final.](#)

¹⁰ [Council document 6481/21 of 26 February 2021 \(Public\).](#)

¹¹ [COM \(2020\) 607 final.](#)

¹² [COM \(2020\) 608 final.](#)

¹³ [COM \(2020\) 795 final.](#)

¹⁴ [Council document 14178/20 of 18 December 2020 \(Public\).](#)

¹⁵ [COM \(2021\) 171 final.](#)

¹⁶ [COM \(2021\) 591 final.](#)

¹⁷ [COM \(2021\) 170 final.](#)

¹⁸ [SWD \(2021\) 74 final.](#)

The reinforcement of the funding of EMPACT through this specific action is also a direct follow-up of the latest independent evaluation, which clearly underlined that the resources allocated to EMPACT over a four-year timeframe were small given the scale and the ambition of the programme, and that EU Member States' involvement and commitment were constrained due to low financial and human resources available at the national level¹⁹.

Funding provided through the “Specific Action EMPACT” is complementary with EMPACT related initiatives and actions that Member States could finance under their ISF programmes in accordance with the ISF basic act, and which should mainly be aimed at national actions needed to intensify the Member State's participation in EMPACT. It is also complementary to the yearly envelope dedicated to EMPACT in Europol's budget (EUR 4 million) that is made available to stakeholders, via two strands of grants, namely high-value grants (HVGs) and low-value grants (LVGs), as well as with other funding sources, e.g. for meetings²⁰ or from EU networks or experts groups²¹.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

The objective of this specific action is to enable EMPACT stakeholders to develop more complex and long-term operations and to increase coordination and cooperation of law enforcement and other competent authorities within and between Member States and with other actors, through the financing of operational actions (OAs) as laid down in the EMPACT operational action plans (EMPACT OAPs²²) and aiming at implementing the common horizontal strategic goals (CHSGs) contained in the EMPACT multi-annual strategic plan (MASP) designed for the EMPACT cycle 2022-2025²³.

The EMPACT OAPs are elaborated by Member States and their partners, for the time being on an annual basis, to coordinate actions against the below mentioned prioritized issues, and approved by the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI).

¹⁹ Independent Evaluation – Council documents 11992/20 (LIMITE) + ADD1 (EU RESTRICTED) & 11993/20 (EU LIMITE).

²⁰ Outside this grant regime, Member States have the possibility to request funding of operational meetings taking place at Europol and strategic meetings referred to in the [EMPACT Terms of Reference \(Council document 9921/21 of 17 June 2021\)](#). Such meetings are directly funded and logistically supported by Europol in accordance with the rules applicable to the Europol Budget. Other EU Agencies – other than Europol – involved in EMPACT activities (e.g. Eurojust, Frontex, CEPOL, etc.) also have to possibility to fund EMPACT-related meetings from their own budget.

²¹ For instance, the @ON Network to counter mafia-style serious and organized crime groups is funded by the EU (DG HOME). It facilitates the on-site deployment of specialised investigators across Member States to assist in investigations into cross-border organised crime groups. The @ON Network has expressed its commitment for a closer link to EMPACT in its work against criminal networks.

²² The EMPACT OAPs define the activities to be implemented per crime priority and specify: (i) the entities that have the overall management responsibility for an OAP (namely the ‘Drivers’ and the ‘Co-Drivers’), (ii) those in charge of the implementation of an individual operational activity (namely the ‘Action Leaders’) and, (iii) those that contribute to the implementation of an activity (namely the ‘Participants’).

²³ Council document 10109/21 of 23 June 2021 (EU LIMITE), ‘EMPACT 2022+: Multi Annual Strategic Plan (MASP) Common Horizontal Strategic Goals (CHSG) 2022-2025’.

Furthermore, this specific action will also provide Member States with an opportunity to access funds that they can use over the whole lifespan of the upcoming EMPACT cycle 2022-2025.

The **specific action proposed has to address either**:

- (i) one of the fifteen (15) criminal topics tackled through operational action plans (OAPs), as defined in the Council conclusions setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime, on the condition that it includes activities related to one or more of the common horizontal strategic goals (CHSGs),

OR

- (ii) one of the nine (9) common horizontal strategic goals (CHSGs), on the condition that it contains activities relevant for at least one of the fifteen (15) criminal topics tackled through operational action plans (OAPs).

The **fifteen (15) criminal topics tackled through operational action plans (OAPs)** are:

1. **High-risk criminal networks** (notably those using corruption, acts of violence, firearms and money laundering through parallel underground financial systems),
2. **Cyber-attacks**,
3. **Trafficking in human beings** (all forms of exploitation, including labour and sexual exploitation),
4. **Child sexual exploitation** (online and offline),
5. **Migrant smuggling**,
6. (Drugs trafficking) **The production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin**,
7. (Drugs trafficking) **The production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances**,
8. (Fraud, Economic and financial crimes) **Online fraud schemes**,
9. (Fraud, Economic and financial crimes) **Excise fraud**,
10. (Fraud, Economic and financial crimes) **Missing trader intra community (MTIC) fraud**,
11. (Fraud, Economic and financial crimes) **Intellectual property crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies**,
12. (Fraud, Economic and financial crimes) **Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery**,

13. **Organised property crime** (organised burglaries, theft and robberies, motor vehicle crime and illegal trade in cultural goods),
14. **Environmental crime** (all forms, with a specific focus on waste and wildlife trafficking),
15. **Firearms trafficking.**

The **nine (9) common horizontal strategic goals (CHSGs)** are:

1. The development or update of the **criminal intelligence picture**,
2. **Investigations and judicial response**, with a specific focus on high-risk criminal networks (HRCN) and key individuals,
3. **Coordinated controls and operations targeting the online and offline trade in illicit goods & services**,
4. The **fight against criminal finances, money laundering and the facilitation of asset recovery**,
5. The **fight against document fraud**,
6. **Capacity building through training, networking and innovation**,
7. **Prevention, awareness raising and harm reduction, early identification of and assistance to victims**,
8. The **expansion of the external dimension of EMPACT** and the cooperation with non-EU partners (non-EU countries, international organisations and partners), on the basis of a zero-cost participation²⁴,
9. The use of the **‘administrative approach’** against serious and organised crime.

The specific action proposed **can include** the following activities and EMPACT operational actions²⁵:

- Actions to develop or keep updated, through the detection of intelligence gaps, the monitoring of threats, trends and new developments, and the identification of links to other crime areas, the strategic and operational intelligence picture relating to each EU crime priority, including strategic analyses and relevant data collection, including the update of databases in two or more Member States to improve in a harmonized way the intelligence picture of specific threats,

²⁴ For the involvement of third countries, Member States are strongly encouraged to resort to other types of funding, notably grant schemes managed by Europol and projects financially supported by DG NEAR (European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) and DG INTPA (International Partnerships).

²⁵ The list is not an exhaustive. Applicants can also consult the indicative list of “type of possible actions” in the Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP) for the EMPACT cycle 2022-2025.

- Consultancy services, including external expertise from the academic or private sector, and actions to strengthen the cooperation with these sectors,
- Coordinated detection measures, investigations, prosecutions and operations disrupting criminal networks,
- Operational meetings and/or visits directly related to an investigation,
- Cyber patrols and action days, preventive, proactive and reactive action days/initiatives – online, postal, land, maritime, air, etc.–, including regional action days,
- Capacity building, awareness sessions, meetings, conferences, workshops, exercises and dissemination activities (provided that these events are not meetings taking place in the EU Agencies' Headquarters),
- Specialised education and training of staff and experts of law enforcement and judicial authorities and administrative agencies, including through the production of information material such handbooks or manuals, and exchange programs, taking into account operational needs and risk analyses, notably in the fields of financial investigation and on document fraud, and in cooperation with CEPOL and, when applicable, the European Judicial Training Network including on prevention policies with special emphasis on fundamental rights and non-discrimination,
- Actions to support thematic or cross-theme networks of specialised national units and national contact points to improve mutual confidence, exchange and dissemination of know-how, information, experiences and best practices, pooling of resources and expertise in joint centres,
- Actions empowering communities to develop local approaches and prevention policies or initiatives, and awareness-raising and communication activities among stakeholders and the general public on Union security policies and EMPACT activities,
- Actions to better identify and assist victims of crime(s),
- Actions which require the purchase or hire of (special) equipment needed for an investigation, and/or equipment or real estate rented for covert operations (within the limit of the 35% threshold stipulated in Article 13(7) of ISF Regulation²⁶),
- Informant rewards and flash money,
- Technical investigations: forensic and/or scientific analysis, IT or linguistic services delivered by third parties,
- Equipment, means of transport, communication systems and security-relevant facilities (within the limit of the 35% threshold stipulated in Article 13(7) of ISF Regulation²⁷),

²⁶ This ceiling may be exceeded only in duly justified cases.

- Rental or acquisition of supplies or goods not relating to an investigation but necessary to the implementation,
- Cost of staff involved in the actions that are supported by the Fund or actions requiring involvement of staff for technical or security-related reasons.

The specific action proposed **should not include** activities related to²⁸:

- Meetings, workshops and events taking place at the Headquarters of EU institutions, bodies or Agencies supporting EMPACT (or any alternative premises made available by them in their respective host cities).
- Purely national actions needed to intensify the participation in EMPACT of a single Member State, as these activities should be funded via the National Programme.
- Actions limited to the maintenance of public order at national level.
- Actions with a military or defence purpose.
- Equipment of which the primary purpose is customs control.
- Coercive equipment, including weapons, ammunition, explosives and riot batons, except for training purposes.
- Contribution (generally in cash) paid to third parties or used by law enforcement authorities to sustain an investigation, such as allowance for operational activities.
- Rewards for members of general public who contribute to arrests of fugitive criminals.
- Fictitious purchase (confidence buy) aiming at arresting suspects, identifying illegal production sites of illicit goods, seizing illegal goods or gaining access to intelligence through building a relationship of trust with a criminal network.
- Witness protection measures in the form of contribution to the expenses related to witness relocation.

For the last four points only, Member States should resort to the EMPACT funding scheme managed by Europol, namely the high-value grants (HVGs) and low-value grants (LVGs).

3.4. Expected results following the call

Beyond unlocking the timeframe of the actions by providing Member States with an opportunity to access funds to be used over the whole lifespan of the upcoming EMPACT cycle (2022-2025), the (non-exhaustive) expected results would be:

²⁷ This ceiling may be exceeded only in duly justified cases.

²⁸ See also Article 5 paragraph (5) [ISF Regulation](#).

- The development of complex and long-term activities against organised and serious international crime, which would significantly disrupt criminal networks, criminal business models, and lead to the arrests of criminal individual entrepreneurs,
- An increase in the number of joint cyber patrols and preventive, proactive and reactive action days/initiatives,
- A stronger focus on new priorities and long-lasting issues – e.g. high-risk criminal networks (HRCNs), the trafficking in human beings, etc. – that require a collective effort,
- The protection of the legal infrastructure and economy against infiltration of illicit activities and undermining effects of organised crime,
- An increase of the freezing, confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime,
- The integration of financial investigation techniques into serious organised crime investigations (for the benefit of understanding criminal structures and not only for asset recovery / for the benefit of identifying victims and working on victims' compensation),
- The enhancement of the fight against corruption,
- The development of innovative and collaborative solutions based on undertaken criminal investigations and operations, as well as on identified operational needs,
- Stronger capacity building and specialised education measures, of actions empowering communities to develop local approaches and prevention policies or initiatives, of actions to better identify and assist victims of crime(s),
- The protection of (possible) victims and preventing young people becoming an offender, as well as the reduction of risk of crime occurring, including recidivism,
- The ownership and active involvement of Member States and increase awareness among frontline officers,
- The increase of the participation of national competent agencies and authorities and foster the overall multidisciplinary aspect of EMPACT (e.g. Member States could send multiple representatives from different national agencies to meetings, or engage them in actions, etc.),
- The enhancement of multinational Law Enforcement and Judicial cooperation and coordination, better global threat response and EU.

3.5. Target audience for the call

The Member States ‘driving’ (and ‘co-driving’) the various EMPACT OAPs, or specifically involved in the implementation of a strategic goal, form the prime target audience for this call, together with their partners and following up a detailed partnership agreement.

Should Member States be ‘driving’ several OAPs, they can submit several applications. Theoretically, one application should be submitted per OAP or topic.

The lead Member State will have to make sure that all participating Member States (co-drivers, action (co)leaders and participants) duly sign the “Partnership Declaration Form” and are listed in the Application Form indicating the share each will receive from the top up amount allocated if the 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.

Activities and operational actions could involve third countries that are participating in EMPACT (bearing in mind that third countries could not benefit directly from EU funding).

EU Institutions, Bodies and Agencies would not be directly eligible, yet applicants would have to make them aware of the projects and coordinate with them, whenever relevant.

EMPACT stakeholders (Member States in the first place, in their capacity of “Drivers” of the EMPACT OAPs) must bear in mind that *‘under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget’*²⁹. “Double funding”, which is the situation where the same costs for the same activity are funded twice through the use of EU funds, is prohibited. Nevertheless, different activities can have different funding sources. In the EMPACT context, and for the sake of illustrating, this means that two different EMPACT activities under the same EMPACT OAP or operational action (OA) may have two different funding sources.

Therefore, EMPACT stakeholders, and notably the ‘Drivers’, must ensure sound financial management and properly ‘combine’ funding opportunities, whenever appropriate. To avoid the risk of “double funding”, applicants must indicate in the application form how their project proposal for the “Specific Action EMPACT” is complementary with Member States’ ISF programmes and other EU funding instruments.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the ISF and involved in EMPACT – notably in the capacity of ‘Driver’, ‘Co-Driver’, ‘Action (co-) Leader’, ‘Participants’, ‘Coordinator of a CHSG’³⁰ – are eligible.

The specific action proposed should:

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

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

To be considered admissible a proposal:

²⁹ Article 191 [EU Financial Regulation](#) – “principle of non-cumulative award and prohibition of double funding”.

³⁰ See Council document 10491/1/21 REV 1 (EU LIMITE) ‘identification of the relevant actors’.

1. has to be submitted within the deadline (see below) to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu in the revised official ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its revised annexes, and readable and complete (all fields necessary for assessment are filled in),
2. has 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. has to identify a project beneficiary (an entity) that will be responsible for the implementation of the specific action in the Member State (in the lead for the action),
4. has to include partnership declaration forms of all participating Member States, involved in the project proposal.

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

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

A. Relevance (30 points)

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 objectives of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).
2. **Cost-effectiveness, sustainability and complementarity with other funding sources for EMPACT:** the Member State(s) should present the amount of financial support requested and its appropriateness in relation to the scale and type of the activities (personnel, equipment, travel, etc.), and to the (long-term) expected results. It should also demonstrate the overall costs effectiveness and value for money, as well as the complementarity with other funding sources, notably with: the ‘EMPACT grants’ (HVGs/LVGs) and other grants managed by Europol (High-Value Targets/Operational Task Forces – HVT/OTF, law enforcement activities against euro counterfeiting), the financial support provided by EU Agencies other than Europol (e.g. Eurojust and the Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) grants, Frontex, CEPOL, etc.), the ISF-Police targeted calls for proposals under Union Actions and other possible EU funding instruments relevant for the EMPACT crime priorities (e.g. the ‘Pericles programme’ that aims to combat euro-counterfeiting, etc.), the Member States’ ISF Programmes.

B. Quality and content (40 points)

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

innovative aspect of the content of the proposal (approach, actions, tools, equipment, etc.), the expected results and evaluation as well as the measures undertaken to mitigate the identified risks.

2. **Level of involvement and cooperation of all relevant competent authorities from the group of EU Member States working in EMPACT:** police, gendarmes, border guards, customs and tax authorities and other specialised law enforcement services in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences, prosecutors and judges, public and private entities involved in the tackling of the identified issues, etc.
3. **Involvement of all relevant EU entities (Institutions, Bodies and Agencies):** e.g. Europol, with a commitment to introducing (operational) information into Europol systems and involving the relevant Europol Analysis Projects; Eurojust with a commitment to involve prosecutors and recourse to joint investigation teams; CEPOL with a commitment to work together with the agency on capacity building activities; Frontex with a commitment to address the challenges at the EU's external borders and the cross-border crime dimension, the relevant Commission services, OLAF, etc.

C. Impact of the project (30 points)

1. **The impact or effect** of the proposed specific action in relation 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 ISF may effectively **contribute to achieving the priorities and expected outcomes of this Call, notably regarding the output and results indicators** listed in Annex VIII of the ISF regulation (see Annex 3), as well as regarding the implementation of the EMPACT common horizontal strategic goals (CHSGs) and the achievement of the key performance indicators (KPIs) mentioned in the MASP.
3. The Member State(s) should also describe efforts to **disseminate and communicate the results** of the project.

Member State(s) should also ensure respect for the horizontal principles described in Article 9 or the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their proposals by **31 March 2022** at the latest, using the revised official ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its revised annexes.

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

Deadline for any clarification requests: Member States can send requests by **18 March 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, 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 ISF Programme(s) will be carried out immediately after.

5. AMENDMENT OF THE ISF PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After information on the outcome of the call for expression of interest is provided by the Commission to the Member States, DG HOME will invite successful Member States to submit a reasoned request for an amendment of their ISF programme, together with amended programme, setting out the expected impact of that amendment on the achievement of the programme's objectives pursuant to Article 24 of the CPR. They should amend the output and result indicators as well as include the costs linked to this "Specific Action EMPACT" breaking down the costs by type of intervention (respectively under tables 2.1 and 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective of their ISF programme in SFC). The Monitoring Committee shall approve any proposal by the Managing Authority for the amendment of the ISF programme per Article 40(2)(d) of the CPR Regulation.

When amending an ISF programme of a Member States, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure:

1. For Member States that have included types of interventions (listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF regulation) relevant to this "Specific Action EMPACT" in the tables 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective in their initially adopted ISF programme, expenditure for the "Specific Action EMPACT" would be eligible as of 1/1/2022.
2. For Member States that have not included types of interventions (listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF regulation) relevant to the "Specific Action EMPACT" in the tables 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective in their initially adopted ISF programme, expenditure for the "Specific Action EMPACT" will be eligible from the date of the submission by the Member State of its request for the amendment of the ISF programme to which new types of interventions will be added accordingly.

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