

ANNEX VI

Template of a programme for the AMIF, the ISF and the BMVI - Article 21(3)

CCI number	
Title in English	[National Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria under the Instrument for financial support for Border Management and Visa Policy] ¹
Title in the national language	[Национална програма на Република България по Инструмента за финансова подкрепа подпомагане за управлението на границите и визовата политика]
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1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses

Reference: points (a) (iii), (iv), (v) and (ix) Article 22(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

This section explains how the programme will address the main challenges identified at the national level based on local, regional and national needs assessments and/or strategies. It provides an overview of the state of implementation of relevant Union acquis and the progress achieved on Union action plans, and describes how the Fund will support their development through the programming period.

Text field [15 000]

Recent development and baseline situation

Migratory pressure continues to pose serious challenges for the EU despite its significant reduction following the "closure" of the Balkan route. The decrease of the migratory

¹ Number in square brackets refer to number of characters without spaces

pressure in the recent years as well as the measures against illegal migration have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of persons detained for illegally crossing the borders of Bulgaria. The situation at the state border remains dynamic as a result of political instability as well as the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and Africa. Bulgaria is a front line country with some of the most sensitive external borders of the EU. This predetermines its mission as a Member State which assumes large responsibilities in order to ensure the security of the EU and the control of the legal crossings of the external EU borders.

In the period 2013-2016 Bulgaria was subjected to unprecedented migratory pressure as tens of thousands of illegal crossings of the state border were registered as well as third country nationals apprehended without the right to reside on the territory of Bulgaria. In view of the disproportionately high migratory pressure and in accordance with the principle of solidarity in 2016 Bulgaria received significant emergency assistance aimed at increasing the effectiveness of border control at the EU external borders and specifically to deal with the emergency situation at the Bulgarian-Turkish border. Due to the national efforts and the support received from the EU Bulgaria successfully coped with the emergency situation.

In 2017 a total of 8 044 attempts of TCN to cross the state border of Bulgaria were registered.

In 2018 10 019 attempts were registered which is an increase of 25% compared to 2017.

In 2019 7422 attempts were registered which is a decrease of 26% compared to 2018.

In 2020 the migration situation remained dynamic with a total of 13 042 registered attempts which is an increase of 76% compared to 2019.

Bulgaria participates in the development and implementation of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) guided by the principle that it is one of the main elements for guaranteeing an area of freedom, security and justice. The uniform and harmonized application of border control rules and standards is essential for the effective management of the EU's external borders, overcoming migration challenges and contributing to EU security. This principle is enshrined in the National Integrated Border Management Strategy for the period 2020-2025.

The Visa policy as part of the EU's immigration policy aims to contribute to the creation of a single area of freedom, security and justice. The abolition of controls at the common internal borders requires the strengthening of the controls at the Union's external borders.

Bulgaria actively participates in the development and implementation of the EU visa and migration policy.

Main national strategic challenges and policy responses

The Bulgarian-Turkish border is the most active external border in terms of migratory pressure towards the country and migrants are mainly from politically and socio-economically unstable countries of the Middle East. At the same time the dynamic political and social situation in Turkey is a factor that generates additional illegal migration by Turkish citizens.

Due to its geographical location and visa-free regime with more than 60 countries in the Middle East and Africa, Turkey continues to be a crossroad of all channels for illegal migration to EU countries including those through Bulgaria.

Taking into account the existing threat and the risk of crises, the implementation of a set of measures has started, including changes in the legislation and implementation of joint security measures between General Directorate Border Police, other structures of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence at the external border with Turkey.

The border control measures applied and the continued efforts of Bulgaria to prevent illegal

entry into the territory of the country, Turkey's compliance with both agreements with the EU on migrants as well as the support of the EU through funding for the national programme and the emergency assistance provided to Bulgaria under the ISF- B&V and the EBCGA led to successful management and reduction of the levels of the migratory pressure at the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

The Bulgarian-Greek border is the other main entry point for illegal migration. It is a risk border due to a possible sudden complication of the operational situation as a result of the measures taken to close the Western Balkans route to decrease the migratory pressure from Turkey and the accumulation of a large number of migrants in Greece. Since the beginning of December 2018 a Specialised Police Operation has been executed to counteract illegal migration at this border. Measures have been taken to organize and prevent the illegal crossing of the state border in the area of responsibility of the Novo Selo Border Police Unit and the Ivaylovgrad BPU at the Smolyan Regional Directorate of Border Police.

The concentration of a significant number of migrants on the territory of Turkey and Northern Greece represents a potential risk for Bulgaria and contingency plans have been developed at national level in this regard.

At the Bulgarian-Turkish, sea and partly at the Bulgarian-Serbian border Integrated Surveillance Systems (ISS) have been built and put into operation.

As stated in the Analysis of the Social and Economic Development of Bulgaria 2007-2017 and for Defining the National Priorities for the period 2021-2027 due to the geographical position of the country the borders of Bulgaria are also external borders of the EU which inevitably makes them an object of numerous transit, migration, smuggling and criminal flows. According to the stated document security and migration are among the three horizontal policies under which Bulgaria will take targeted actions in the period 2021-2027. The analysis focuses on supporting the implementation of the EU's common policy on external border and visa management through the strengthening of the European IBM, the purchase of border management equipment to be used by the EBCGA the common visa policy and the relevant information systems.

According to the National IBM Strategy 2020-2025 Bulgaria shares the responsibility for ensuring the normal functioning of the Schengen area with the Schengen Member States. The monitoring of the operational and situational picture is maintained; information on potential threats and risks is exchanged; secondary movements are monitored and measures are taken to prevent illegal crossings at exit at the borders; enhanced cooperation is maintained with the neighbouring countries that are not members of the EU in order to prevent illegal entry into Bulgaria as well as the returns of third-country nationals.

With ISF-B&V financial support the existing ICT technologies, technical systems and vehicles related to the control of the external borders are being modernized, an additional number of police and border police officers are being appointed and seconded, the conditions in the structures for border control at the external borders are being improved.

The Fund provided financial resources for the development and maintenance of information systems related to border control as well as the ISS at the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

Two specific actions for the delivery of a mobile surveillance system and a border patrol ship are being implemented with regards to EBCGA support. The equipment will be made available to the Agency in the framework of joint operations.

In 2018 additional funding was provided to Bulgaria for the implementation of the EES and the creation of a National Unified Interface and its integration to the existing national border infrastructure.

With view of the EES implementation an assessment of the current state of the border crossing points and the need for technical solutions and measures related to the integration

of EES in the BCP's infrastructure was made. As a result the new EES functionalities will be integrated into the current Automated Information System (AIS) Border Control. A National Plan for the Implementation of the EES is also being prepared.

In the second half of 2019 additional funds were allocated to Bulgaria for the development and implementation of ETIAS as well as the support to the quick and effective upgrading of the national SIS component.

Based on an analysis performed changes in the relevant regulatory framework were made with view of the establishment of the ETIAS National Unit in the framework of the MoI.

A working group on the new SIS legislative framework coordinates the planned technical construction of the new functionalities of the system and the preparation of the structures for the implementation of the new SIS legislation by the end of 2021.

Interoperability of the large-scale IT systems is one of the most ambitious projects at EU level that is expected to increase the overall level of security of European citizens and set a qualitatively higher level of information exchange.

The coordination of Bulgaria's preparation for implementation of interoperability at national level is carried out by a Strategic Working Group at the National Council for Migration, Borders, Asylum and Integration chaired by the Deputy Minister of Interior and including representatives at management level of all stakeholders involved in the project.

In the context of the efforts to ensure uniform and high-quality control of the external borders and to prevent and combat illegal migration Bulgaria's NVIS and its interoperability with the EU VIS and other large-scale information systems of the EU are constantly being developed and modernized with the support of ISF-B&V. Efforts to organize, manage, operate and maintain the NVIS are also aimed at preparing Bulgaria for full participation in the Schengen area and using the visa system in the interest of the EU's common policy on external border management.

Administrative capacity of competent authorities and stakeholders is of major importance for the proper functioning of the asylum and migration systems in Bulgaria. A number of trainings for enhancing the professional qualification of the staff are performed for improving the performance of the staff's work – acquiring new knowledge and developing skills, regular trainings in the areas of project preparation, reporting, financial reporting, public procurement use of specific information systems for project submission and reporting, etc. were implemented in 2014-2020 period. These measures are to be continued.

Lessons learned

Following the implementation of the 2014-2020 ISF-B&V NP some important considerations were made. The NP is to provide mechanisms for flexible implementation of the envisaged activities as well as for redirection of funding relevant to the changing situation during the multiannual implementation period. The migration crisis of 2013 and the COVID-19 situation has shown the need for swift introduction of new measures and activities to adapt to changing circumstances.

State of play of implementation of the EU acquis (in particular identifying and explaining the shortcomings/gaps)

With view of the implementation of the EES and ETIAS Regulations as well as the technical means that will be used for the functioning of these systems it will be necessary to develop the relevant national legislation. The introduction of the rules of both regulations will require to expand the scope of the conditions for entry, residence and departure of the country by TCN, as well as to regulate the activities that will be performed by border police officers for the purposes of both systems.

Pursuant to the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2019/817 interoperability should be established between EU information systems, namely EES, VIS, ETIAS, EURODAC, SIS and ECRIS-TCN. Several interinstitutional working groups (WG) are established at national level the implementation of these tasks – WG for implementation of the SIS recast; Strategic WG for implementation of interoperability of large scale IT systems and WG for development of EES and ETIAS.

In June 2018 the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted conclusions calling on EBCGA in close cooperation with the MS and the EC to develop a Technical and Operational Strategy for European IBM.

On 27 March 2019 EBCGA approved the Technical and Operational Strategy for European IBM in line with Art. 8 (5) of Regulation 2019/1896.

Following these documents the National IBM Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2025 was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria on 30 October 2020. The Strategy was elaborated by a Strategic working group at the National Council for Migration, Borders, Asylum and Integration.

The Strategy is prepared in accordance with the Technical and Operational Strategy for European IBM. It follows the European IBM four-step model for access control and strategic components. In addition to the main components the Strategy covers all three horizontal themes: fundamental rights, education and training and research and innovation. The Strategy sets out two main strategic goals regarding the technical provision of border control:

- Upgrading the available technical capabilities for border surveillance by building and maintaining the ISS, acquiring new and upgrading the existing technical and operational equipment, further developing the capabilities for air surveillance using manned and unmanned aerial vehicles.
- Development, introduction and efficient use of technical solutions and systems to achieve reliable and effective border checks.

The implementation of the Strategy will ensure that border control is fully compliant with the regulations and requirements of the EU and Schengen legislation aiming to ensure security not only at the borders of Bulgaria but also to contribute to the security of the other EU MS.

Strategy for the period 2021-2027

The BMVI National Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2027 will provide support in the framework of the two specific objectives of the Instrument.

The financial support under BMVI will provide effective contribution in the field of border control and common visa policy. The improvement of the information systems in support of these policies will be ensured and hence the strengthening of the national capabilities of Bulgaria and the capabilities of the EU in these areas.

The Instrument will provide support to continue and further develop efforts to ensure more effective and efficient protection of the external borders. Measures related to systematic border checks, the introduction of large-scale and interoperable information systems, including the SIS, EES and ETIAS will be supported and further developed.

The BMVI will to a large extent contribute to the implementation of the National IBM Strategy by supporting measures related to the ISS, technical and operational capabilities for border checks and surveillance, border control infrastructure, large-scale ICT systems, training of staff, etc. National funding will also be invested.

The Instrument will ensure the further development and modernization of the visa policy while strengthening security and reducing the risks of illegal migration. In terms of the

NVIS funding by BMVI will be combined with own national funding due to the availability of mixed use of services rendered through the system.

The implementation of all major ISF-B&V priorities will continue under the BMVI NP. These measures have been implemented successfully and their continuation is considered necessary for ensuring effective border control and visa policy. New measures included in the BMVI NP such as the establishment of specialised training infrastructure for the purpose of effective border control are relevant to the main needs identified at national and EU level. Complementarity and coordination with other funding instruments will be ensured at national level. BMVI will be the main instrument to provide support for operating, IT equipment and communication systems required for effective and secure border control. Actions related to the development of Eurodac system and improving visa application processing will be supported under BMVI. Synergies between ISF and BMVI exist in relation to border surveillance systems. Regarding the CCEI BMVI NP will allow the use of operating equipment, including means of transport, and infrastructure for dual use (border management and customs control) provided that the main scope of use is integrated border management.

Following Art.47 of the CPR Bulgaria will use the contribution from the Funds under all SOs of 2021—2027 BMVI NP to provide support to beneficiaries in the form of grants.

Partnership is also an underlying principle as regards the preparation of the 2021-2027 BMVI NP. Besides the stakeholders participating in the ISF 2014-2020 coordination and implementation new ones were also involved in the process of preparation of the next programming period in an effort to achieve best representation of the stakeholders concerned. Project ideas were gathered and broad discussions were held with the aim to include adequate responses to the national challenges in the BMVI NP. The draft programme is consulted with participating stakeholders at all stages of its preparation and reflecting the EC guidance. This cooperation and interaction will also continue during the implementation of the BMVI NP.

The envisaged activities respect the climate and environmental standards and priorities of the Union and would do no significant harm to the environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 2020/852.

2. Specific objectives (repeated for each specific objective other than technical assistance)

Reference: Article 22(2) and (4) CPR

2.1 Title of the specific objective [Supporting effective European integrated border management at the external borders, implemented by the European Border and Coast Guard as a shared responsibility of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the national authorities responsible for border management, to facilitate legitimate border crossings, to prevent and detect illegal immigration and cross-border crime and to effectively manage migratory flows]

2.1.1 Description of a specific objective

This section describes, for each specific objective, the initial situation, main challenges and proposes responses supported by the Fund. It describes which implementation measures are addressed with the support of the Fund; it provides an indicative list of actions within the scope of Articles 3 and 5 of the AMIF, ISF or

BMVI Regulations.

In particular: For operating support, it provides an explanation in line with Article 21 of the AMIF Regulation, Article 16 of the ISF Regulation or Articles 16 and 17 of the BMVI Regulation. It includes an indicative list of beneficiaries with their statutory responsibilities, main tasks to be supported.

Planned use of financial instruments, if applicable.

Text field (16 000 characters)

I. Baseline situation

The total length of the state borders of Bulgaria is 2368 km, 1345 km land, 412 km sea and 611 km river along the Danube. Of these the EU external borders are 1225 km and 1143 km are internal borders.

The Bulgarian-Turkish and the Bulgarian-Greek borders are the most vulnerable and active in terms of illegal crossings. Since 2018 there is a trend of increased migratory pressure at the Bulgarian-Greek border at the expense of a reduced pressure at the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

For the period 2017-2019 a total of 8 024 TCNs were apprehended. 1921 at entry at the state border. 1 603 at exit. 4 811 were apprehended inside the country.

EBCGA is Bulgaria's main partner in activities related to the protection of the external borders. The cooperation with the Agency is based on mutual support and coordination of ongoing tasks as well as the application of the European border management standards.

Based on the vulnerability assessment of Bulgaria conducted by the EBCGA it was ascertained that border control is carried out by an insufficient number of border guards. In October 2020, the implementation a project Provision of additional personnel for participation in specialized police operations started under the ISF-B&V with duration of 18 months.

Bulgaria takes all measures to ensure the management of the external EU borders in close cooperation with EBCGA, in its own interests and in the common interest of all MS, in full compliance with Union law, including respect for fundamental rights and in accordance with the multiannual strategic policy cycle for EIBM as per Art. 8 of Regulation 2019/1896.

The National system for deployment of resources in joint operations in coordination with the Agency includes professionally trained staff selected at national level for the participation in joint operations. A national reserve of MoI officials that is annually updated has been created for the rapid deployment and participation in EBCGA joint operations. Participation is planned on the basis of an analysis of the available national resources, the Agency's operational needs and a risk analysis.

As a result of the establishment of EBCGA's Standing Corps the functionalities of the National FRONTEX Contact Point will be expanded as part of the management of the national reserve of officials who will be included in the Standing Corps.

The development of the cooperation in the field of coastguard is supported through multi-purpose maritime operations organized and coordinated by EBCGA. Bulgaria strengthens the protection of the external borders by sending technical means to participate in operational activities. Border police ships are actively involved in maritime operations.

The competent authority responsible for border control is GDBP. A three-tier management system is applied on the principle of one directorate-one border. There are 7 territorial units – Regional Directorates of Border Police in the composition of

which units of lower rank are created - 38 Border Police Units, 2 Border Police Ship Bases and 38 Border Check Points.

In terms of border control GDBP interacts with other MoI structures and governmental organisations.

Border checks are carried out at 38 BCPs 20 of which are at the external borders of Bulgaria with Turkey, Serbia, North Macedonia, at international airports and at seaports, 18 are at the internal borders of Bulgaria with Greece and Romania. They will continue to be carried out while maintaining the trends for the introduction of new automated control systems and new technical means.

Through posts for technical surveillance of the Danube River and the established ISS at the sea areas of Bulgaria continuous monitoring of the surface situation at sea and river is carried out.

The aerial surveillance of the border area and the territorial sea is carried out by the Specialised Unit for Aerial Surveillance independent unit in GDBP.

The main means for monitoring the state border of Bulgaria are the helicopters purchased for the needs of the GDBP in 2010.

Bulgaria has 3 ships with a displacement of over 100 Gross Tons that ensure the border surveillance activities at the sea border. Two of them were produced respectively in 1969 and 1970. They have expired service life and are dangerous for navigation.

Three Border Police Ships were delivered in the period 2003-2005. At the end of the MFF the 25-year service life of these vessels will expire and it is expedient for the ships to be overhauled and modernised or to be replaced with new similar ones.

The geo information activity allows elaboration of new modern border documentation for the state border, description and coordinate lists with the coordinates of the border signs. Such documentation has already been prepared for the border with Serbia. Documentation for the border with North Macedonia is currently under preparation. The accumulated geographical information is widely used in the design and construction of ISS at the Bulgarian-Turkish and Bulgarian-Serbian borders.

With the support of EMAS ISF-B&V Bulgaria is implementing activities related to the expansion of the ISS at the Bulgarian-Turkish border in order to fully cover all of its sections.

The Automated surveillance system in the area of responsibility of BPU Kalotina and in the area of BPU Bregovo contributes to the increasing of the efficiency of border surveillance and at the same time to the optimization of the forces used.

The ISS Blue Border (ISS BB) is designed for border surveillance of the maritime state border and control of vessel traffic in the maritime areas of Bulgaria. ISS BB includes a coastal component (1 Regional Coordination Center /RCC/, 2 Local Coordination Centers /LCC/, 12 Stationary Technical Monitoring Posts /STMP/ and 2 Mobile Technical Monitoring Systems /MTMP/) and a maritime component (survey-sensor systems mounted on 12 Border Police Ships).

The capacity for surveillance is increased by introducing new mobile systems for border surveillance and gradual replacement of the used individual means for border surveillance. All measures aimed at the enhancing of the border surveillance capacity will be carried out in compliance with the common minimum standards for border surveillance developed with the contribution of EBCGA in line with Regulation 2019/1896.

76 minibuses and 594 cars are currently used. Most of them were delivered by 2009

and have expired technical resources. 121 cars, 15 minibuses and 2 buses were delivered under the ISF-B&V. In the framework of the emergency assistance granted to Bulgaria under the ISF-B&V 70 cars, 4 minibuses, 2 buses, 10 all-terrain patrol vehicles and 2 specialised vehicles for transport of detainees were delivered. Under an agreement with the Czech Republic 11 more cars were delivered. 8 all-terrain patrol vehicles were delivered with national funding.

The National EURODAC System is designed for processing fingerprints of applicants for international protection illegally crossing the border and illegally residing on the territory of Bulgaria. With the help of the system the fingerprints of 112 721 applicants for international protection, persons that have illegally crossed the state border and persons illegally residing on the territory of Bulgaria were checked and 6 019 applicants for protection in other EU MS were identified. In 2019 with the support of the emergency assistance under AMIF the National Fingerprint Identification System was expanded with a module enabling the verification of fingerprints of persons detained at the border in the SIS II AFIS database.

For 2019 at central and national level 2 sub-versions of NSIS 2 are applied concerning new code tables and/or new data categories. At the same time for the past year Bulgaria has contributed to the protection of the Schengen area and the implementation of adequate border control at the national borders by entering 1 500 402 alerts in the SIS, 2 564 of which in the “wanted persons” category. A total of 112 827 978 were made 18 000 of which over received a matching answer. The number of automatic inquiries performed in NSIS 2-109 789 677 is also increasing which clearly shows that more and more new EU and national systems find adequacy and completeness of the data in the SIS database. For 2019 availability of the system of 99, 99% in terms of reports, entering, updating and deletion of signals has been achieved.

Radio communications at the EU's external borders are provided by the TETRA system of the MoI. Its composition at the external borders includes more than 100 sites which are located in hard-to-reach and restricted areas. The expansion of the scope and the maintenance of the system for the 2014-2020 period was supported with under the ISF-B& and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

II. Specific challenges and gaps

According to the Strategic objectives set in the National IBM Strategy the available technical capabilities for border surveillance shall be enhanced by building and maintaining the ISS, acquiring new technical and operational equipment and further developing the capabilities for air surveillance. Maintenance for the systems and equipment shall also be provided. The parameters of the equipment shall be determined in compliance with the technical standards and requirements of EBCGA. Modernization of the border police infrastructure is necessary for the implementation of the border control and for the organization and implementation of border surveillance between BCPs at the external borders.

Through EUROSUR real-time information is exchanged with EBCGA's Situation Center and the National Coordination Centers of the MS. With view of increasing the capacity for processing and summarizing statistical information as well as extracting and visualizing aggregated data EUROSUR needs to be further developed. New equipment and the renewal of the existing one is needed in terms of the geo information activity of the MoI.

In order to ensure the operation of the IT systems supporting the activities of the staff

at the EU's external borders as well as their operability, interoperability and security it is necessary to ensure their complete and comprehensive maintenance and renewal. Further development of video surveillance systems used at the external EU borders is needed in order to improve their operability and efficiency.

With view of the adopted amendments to the EU legislation it is necessary to expand the capabilities and functionalities of NSIS 2 at national level. In order to achieve compliance with the requirements of the central system and support the work of the users of the system it is necessary to create conditions for increasing of the operability, speed and stability in case of load and active use of the system and provision of guaranteed and secure exchange of information with partner structures. In 2022 EES will be put into operation at BCPs. The operationalization of the system requires additional financial, technical and infrastructural resources as well as additional and appropriately trained staff.

Periodic changes in the legal framework, the Regulation establishing ETIAS, the introduction of interoperability, etc., lead to the need for continuous improvement of the qualifications of the Unit's staff through trainings and internships.

With the adoption of Regulations (EU) 2019/817 and (EU) 2019/818 for interoperability between the EU information systems, namely EES, VIS, ETIAS, EURODAC, SIS and ECRIS-TCN national systems need to be adapted to the changes envisaged in the legislation. As part of the EURODAC Central System, the EURODAC National Fingerprint Identification System should be adapted in this direction.

There is no capacity at national level for diagnostics, assembly and disassembly, elimination of defects and damage to the auxiliary equipment and installation and adjustment of the equipment of the TETRA system. Ensuring the maintenance of the system will provide continuous and reliable communication and information exchange between the competent structures at the EU's external borders improving operational cooperation and the capacity to prevent and combat all forms of crime, illegal migration, improving and facilitating control and legal passage.

The necessary conditions need to be created for the authentication of issued documents and their publication in the ICAO's PKD directory intended for exchange between MS in accordance with ICAO technical specifications and policies by paying the necessary fees to ICAO.

In order to fulfil the requirements stemming from the relevant EU aquis it is necessary to enhance the administrative capacity of the border police structures for the purposes of effective border control through trainings. This will also provide the opportunity for their participation in the EBCG Standing Corps.

Smooth continuity of ISF-B&V priorities will be ensured under the BMVI NP by supporting similar actions building on the previous outputs, experience and good practices such as the delivery and maintenance of technical and operational equipment; repair and maintenance of infrastructure; further development and maintenance of ISS and large-scale ICT systems; further development of video-surveillance systems; ensuring document security; training of staff, etc.

Further to the development of the relevant EU legislation and strategic priorities new actions will be included in the NP with view to the further development and maintenance of large-scale ICT systems; ensuring reliable and continuous operation of the relevant national AIS components exchanging data with large-scale ICT; establishment of specialised training infrastructure for the purpose of effective border control in line EBCGA's standards.

III. Implementation measures

Support under the BMVI will contribute to achieving the specific objective set out in point (a) of Article 3(2) by focusing on the following implementation measures and indicative actions such as:

Improving border control in line with Article 3(1)(a) of Regulation 2019/1896 by:

1. Reinforcing the capacities for carrying out checks and surveillance at the external borders;

- systems and services for border surveillance;
- modernisation of the national components of EUROSUR and ELBGSUR; video surveillance/detection systems for fully automatic identification of threats or modifications of the transmission of vehicles at BCPs and video surveillance systems at BCPs at airports.

- operating equipment, including means of transport, and ICT systems required for effective and secure border control;
- delivery of border police ships, vehicles and technical equipment; modernisation of ABC gates; modernisation of the geoinformation activity for the purposes of the control of the state border;

2. Development of the European Border and Coast Guard by providing support to national authorities responsible for border management;

- training in the field of or contributing to the development of European integrated border management;

- training of border guards in the field of integrated border management;

3. Setting up, operating and maintaining large-scale IT systems in the area of border management, including the interoperability of these IT systems and their communication infrastructure.

- development and upgrading of large-scale IT systems;
- further development of NSIS; further development of the National Fingerprint Identification System EURODAC; strengthening the capacity of the ETIAS National Unit; development of components for the large-scale IT systems;

- equipment and communication systems necessary to ensure the proper functioning of large-scale IT systems

- supply of IT equipment for the border police structures;

4. Operating support

Funding for the implementation of measures under operating support will be provided to the following public authorities responsible for the implementation of tasks and services that represent a public service for the Union:

- General Directorate Border Police-MoI in connection with its functions for border checks and surveillance, counteraction to illegal migration, smuggling and trafficking in human beings;

- Communication and Information Systems Directorate-MoI in connection with its functions for construction, maintenance and development of IT systems related to the implementation of the main activities of the MoI;

- Academy of MoI in connection with its functions for organizing and conducting the professional training of the MoI officers;

- Bulgarian Identity Documents Directorate-MoI in connection with its functions for issuing, refusing the issuance, revoking, seizing and declaring invalid and destroyed Bulgarian personal documents under conditions and by order determined by law

- operating support for integrated border management;
 - maintenance of the ISS at the Bulgarian-Turkish border, the Bulgarian-Serbian border and the ISS Blue border; renovation and maintenance of the perimeter surveillance systems; maintenance of ABC gates; repair and maintenance of technical means for border control as well as ships, helicopters and vehicles; supply of fuel and consumables for vehicles, ships and helicopters, incl. insurance of helicopters and staff; repair and maintenance of infrastructure for the purposes of border control.
- operating support for the implementation of large-scale IT systems;
 - maintenance of IT equipment of the border police structures; maintenance of the TETRA system; ensuring reliable and continuous operation of the national components of AIS exchanging data with large-scale IT systems at EU level; provision of support for DBMS licenses, virtualization platform, system software and operating systems.

IV. Desired outcomes

Improving border control at the external borders; Ensuring effective counteraction to the migratory pressure and attempts for smuggling through the border outside BCP areas; Improving the exchange of information at EU and national level; Achieving a unified approach to the application of the requirements for the control at the EU's external borders.

2.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e) of Article 22(4) CPR

Table 1: Output indicators

Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator [255]	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
SO 1		The number of items of equipment purchased for border crossing points	Number	208	2008
		The number of facilities for border crossing points constructed/upgraded	Number	202	202
SO 1		The number of maritime transport means purchased	Number	4	4
		The number of land transport means purchased	Number	300	617

2.1.3 Indicative breakdown of the programme resources (EU) by type of intervention
Reference: Article 22(5) CPR; and Article 16(12) AMIF Regulation, Article 13(12)
ISF Regulation or Article 13(18) BMVI Regulation

Table 3: Indicative breakdown

Specific objective	Type of intervention	Code	Indicative amount (Euro)
SO 1	Border checks	001	9 497 415
SO 1	Border surveillance – air equipment	002	
SO 1	Border surveillance – land equipment	003	23 843 396
SO 1	Border surveillance – maritime equipment	004	1 350 000
SO 1	Border surveillance – automated border surveillance systems	005	
SO 1	Border surveillance – other measures	006	9 501 468
SO 1	Technical and operational measures within the Schengen area which are related to border control	007	
SO 1	Situational awareness and exchange of information	008	2 007 682
SO 1	Risk analysis	009	
SO 1	Processing of data and information	010	
SO 1	Hotspot areas	011	
SO 1	Measures related to the identification and referral of vulnerable persons	012	
SO 1	Measures related to the identification and referral of persons who are in need of, or who wish to apply for, international protection	013	
SO 1	European Border and Coast Guard development	014	187 500
SO 1	Inter-agency cooperation – national level	015	
SO 1	Inter-agency cooperation – Union level	016	

Specific objective	Type of intervention	Code	Indicative amount (Euro)
SO 1	Inter-agency cooperation – with third	017	
SO 1	Joint deployment of immigration liaison	018	
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – Eurodac for border management purposes	019	135 000
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – Entry/Exit System (EES)	020	9 600 000
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) – others	021	
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) – Article 85(2) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1240	022	675 000
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) – Article 85(3) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1240	023	
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – Schengen Information System (SIS)	024	2 250 000
SO 1	Large-scale IT systems – Interoperability	025	1 875 000
SO 1	Operating support – Integrated border management	026	21 360 000
SO 1	Operating support – Large-scale IT systems for border management purposes	027	7 642 500
SO 1	Operating support – Special Transit Scheme	028	
SO 1	Data quality and data subjects’ rights to information, access to, rectification and erasure of, their personal data, and to the restriction of the processing thereof	029	

2.2 Title of the specific objective [Supporting the common visa policy to ensure a harmonised approach with regard to the issuance of visas and to facilitate legitimate travel, while helping to prevent migratory and security risks]

2.2.1 Description of a specific objective

This section describes, for each specific objective, the initial situation, main challenges and proposes responses supported by the Fund. It describes which implementation measures are addressed with the support of the Fund; it provides an indicative list of actions within the scope of Articles 3 and 5 of the AMIF, ISF or BMVI Regulations.

In particular: For operating support, it provides an explanation in line with Article 21 of the AMIF Regulation, Article 16 of the ISF Regulation or Articles 16 and 17 of the BMVI Regulation. It includes an indicative list of beneficiaries with their statutory responsibilities, main tasks to be supported.

Planned use of financial instruments, if applicable.

Text field (16 000 characters)

I. Baseline situation

NVIS is a key component of the National Integrated Consular System as well as a key tool to support processing of visa applications and issuing visas, applications for Bulgarian identity documents, temporary passports, consular registration of Bulgarian citizens, notarial certifications, legalization and registration of requests for administrative and other consular services.

It has been set up in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 767/2008 of the EP and the Council to centralize the information processed in the diplomatic and consular offices of Bulgaria and to establish and maintain a national register of Bulgarian visa applications and visas issued as well as of the biometric data taken from the visa applicants. NVIS is a system of national importance and guarantees continuous year-round and round-the-clock (24x7) access to the EU VIS of all relevant national authorities-Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GDBP-MoI, Migration Directorate-MoI, Migration units at the Regional Directorates of Interior and Sofia Metropolitan Directorate of Interior, State Agency for Refugees, internal and national security authorities as well as authorities combatting terrorism and organized crime.

The system is set up at two levels. The first level is implemented as independent information systems located in the consular offices of Bulgaria abroad and the second one - as a central information system located in the National Visa Center in the Consular Relations Directorate of the MFA. The main functions of NVIS are acceptance and processing of visa application requests, acceptance of Bulgarian identity documents applications and requests for validity extension of passports of Bulgarian citizens abroad.

NVIS ensures collecting of all types of data that have to be submitted to the EU Visa Information System including 10 fingerprints and a photograph of the individual taken with a digital camera.

The most recent statistical data covering the period 2017-2019 shows that approximately 70% of the services in N.VIS are rendered for the purposes of visa issuance for third-country nationals.

In the context of the efforts to ensure the continued use of the best available technologies regarding the EU VIS and national interface in compliance with Regulation 767/2008 the modernization and upgrading of the existing specialized equipment and development of NVIS software will be continued as well as upgrading the existing hardware, expanding the infrastructure and system network connectivity in order to maintain the system's capabilities which are vital for the interoperability of the NVIS with the large-scale NVIS IT systems related to border management.

The further modernization and development of the software and hardware of the local and central NVIS component shall contribute to a greater security in the operation of the system, reduce the risk of data loss in case of disk array failure due to defective disks as a result of continued use, reducing maintenance costs and achieving a higher degree of continuous working capacity and reliability of the systems.

In the context of the efforts to support the common visa policy by establishing compatible visa information systems between EU MS, citizens' needs of facilitated legal travel, provision of high-quality services to visa applicants, equal and fair addressing of the TCN, raising the level of public safety, including prevention and tackling illegal immigration would be met.

The technological modernization and development of the NVIS would provide a continuous and permanent visa consultation infrastructure/platform with other EU MS, ensure full compatibility of the NVIS with the EU VIS in accordance with the Schengen standards which would allow the application of the Schengen visa-issuing provisions and the inclusion of Bulgaria in the EU VIS and the VIS Mail Visa Advisory Network as well as the SIS. This will contribute to the improvement of the quality of technical and software equipment, its modernization and upgrading designated for real-time processing of visa applications and communications on the coordination and issuance of visas at national and EU level. Thus the process of unifying the forms and protocols of the NVIS would be supported in order to actively access the EU VIS and hence to achieve legislative, institutional, technical and administrative readiness for full membership in the Schengen area.

Bulgaria exerts systematic efforts to maintain and strengthen the infrastructure, premises, equipment, technical means and the organization of consular offices in third countries in order to set them in compliance with the Schengen requirements and best practices and set consular offices in full technical readiness to fulfill the Shengen visa-issuing requirements for the future full membership in the Schengen area.

Currently Bulgaria has 89 consular offices 61 of which are located in third countries. Their reconstruction, modernization, expansion and repair of consular offices will

lead to improvement of the working conditions and the visa service and will upgrade on what has been achieved with the support of ISF-B&V.

II. Specific challenges and gaps

With view of Bulgaria's commitments to the implementation of the EU common visa policy and the development of bilateral consular relations it is necessary to ensure the continuous operation of large-scale IT systems, technical means and the relevant infrastructure.

The main Visa equipment of CSCs was installed in 2008-2010 under the Schengen Facility. The analysis shows that the uninterrupted functioning of N.VIS in all regions requires yearly maintenance, development and upgrade of the technical equipment and software for the needs of N.VIS, including repair and replacement of failed components of the N.VIS, Back-up VC, and the equipment of the CSCs. It's necessary that the versions of the operating systems, Mail servers, Relational Database Management Systems, etc., are upgraded. The analysis shows that the uninterrupted functioning of N.VIS in all regions requires yearly maintenance, development and upgrade of the technical equipment and software for the needs of N.VIS, including repair and replacement of failed components of the N.VIS, Back-up VC, and the equipment of the CSCs. It's necessary that the versions of the operating systems, Mail servers, Relational Database Management Systems, etc., should be upgraded.

The main needs related to the implementation of the visa policy refer to the establishing and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure and material environment as well as the preparation of the relevant legislative and administrative documents that comply with Schengen accession requirements in order to effectively implement Schengen aquis and practice. A vital part of this infrastructure is the maintenance of the NVIS in compliance with EU and Schengen requirements and its connection to the EU VIS. The procedure for access to the NVIS has been regulated by the Ordinance on the procedure for access to the NVIS of Bulgaria and to the EU VIS adopted by CMD № 129 of 12.05.2011. The NVIS software and hardware maintenance is essential for ensuring reliability and implementation of the national and the EU policy and legislation in the field of visa in accordance with the requirements for interoperability and ensuring continuous connection of NVIS with the EU VIS, VIS Mail Visa Advice Network and free-exchange of visa data and electronic advice.

The uninterrupted maintenance of the NVIS software and hardware is also based on the need of capacity improvement at national and EU level in order to overcome challenges related to unexpected or disproportionate migratory pressure that might have a negative impact on the overall functioning of the Schengen area.

There is a need of reconstruction and repair of consular offices, purchase, construction and rental of real estate as well as modernization of the technical equipment in the premises and infrastructure of consular offices in third countries

where deviation from the Schengen requirements and best practices has been identified.

When exercising their duties consular officers must be provided with a high level of internal and external building and premises security. They have to be equipped with the latest technology and have reliable, faultless and interoperable systems for visa-information exchange while processing and issuing visas. In the context of the growing number of visa applications and given the impact of the intense migratory pressure from third countries there is an urgent need to ensure security in all its dimensions to the Bulgarian consular staff in the process of visa issuing.

Smooth continuity of ISF-B&V priorities will be ensured under the BMVI NP by supporting similar actions building on the previous outputs, experience and good practices such as delivery and maintenance of technical equipment; development and maintenance of large-scale ICT systems; repair and maintenance of infrastructure, etc.

Further to the development of the relevant EU legislation and strategic priorities a new action will be included in the NP related to the purchase of infrastructure for the needs of consular services.

III. Implementation measures

Support under the BMVI will contribute to achieving the specific objective set out in point (b) of Article 3(2) by focusing on the following implementation measures and indicative actions such as:

1. Providing efficient and client-friendly services to visa applicants

- infrastructure and buildings required for the processing of visa applications and consular cooperation
- purchase of real estate for the consular offices of Bulgaria in third countries
- operating equipment and ICT systems required for the processing of visa applications;
- delivery of technical equipment for the consular offices of Bulgaria in third countries

2. Setting up, operating and maintaining large-scale IT systems in the area of the common policy on visas

- equipment and communication systems necessary to ensure the proper functioning of large-scale IT systems;
- development of an integrated guaranteed communication link and alternative communication channels of the consular services with the National Visa Center
- development and upgrading of large-scale IT systems;
- development of software and hardware for the NVIS

3. Operating support

Funding for the implementation of measures under operating support will be provided to the following public authorities responsible for the implementation tasks and services that represent a public service for the Union:

- MFA in connection with its functions as a national public authority responsible for visa policy implementation, the organization, management, operation and maintenance of NVIS and the development of bilateral consular relations and consular cooperation.

- operating support for the implementation of the common visa policy
- repair of infrastructure at consular offices of Bulgaria in third countries
- operating support for the implementation of large-scale IT systems
- maintenance of the basic, the applied software and NVIS technical equipment

IV. Desired outcomes

Ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of NVIS; Enhancing the efficiency of NVIS; Efficient operations and customer-friendly service to visa applicants.

2.2.3 Indicative breakdown of the programme resources (EU) by type of intervention
Reference: Article 22(5) CPR; and Article 16(12) AMIF Regulation, Article 13(12) ISF Regulation or Article 13(18) BMVI Regulation

Table 3: Indicative breakdown

Specific objective	Type of intervention	Code	Indicative amount (Euro)
SO 2	Improving visa application processing	001	
SO 2	Enhancing the efficiency, client-friendly environment and security at consulates	002	
SO 2	Document security/document advisers	003	
SO 2	Consular cooperation	004	
SO 2	Consular coverage	005	52 500
SO 2	Large-scale IT systems – Visa Information System (VIS)	006	5 306 250
SO 2	Other ICT systems for visa application processing purposes	007	1 676 250
SO 2	Operating support – Common visa policy	008	675 000
SO 2	Operating support – Large-scale IT systems for visa application processing purposes	009	2 790 000
SO 2	Operating support – Special Transit Scheme	010	
SO 2	Issuance of visas with limited territorial validity	011	
SO 2	Data quality and data subjects’ rights to information, access to, rectification and erasure of, their personal data, and to the restriction of the processing thereof	012	

2.3 Technical assistance

2.3.1 Description

Reference: point (f) of Article 22(3), Article 36(5), Article 37, and Article 95 CPR

Text field [5 000] (Technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR)

The Technical assistance shall support actions of the Managing Authority (MA) of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for effective and efficient implementation of the objectives and indicators, set in the National Program (NP).

The International Projects Directorate is a structure within the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for the management of programs and projects funded by the European Union and other international programs and contracts, including the Norwegian Financial mechanism. Functions of the Directorate are described in the Regulations for the Structure and the Activity of MoI and in the Management and Control Systems (MCS). The Directorate is consists of three departments with clearly defined and differentiated responsibilities, which ensures the effective implementation of the activities, related to the management and control of European funds.

The International Projects Directorate has a significant background in managing programs and projects from the previous programing periods.

With Decision № 712 from 6th of October 2020 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, the International Projects Directorate was designated as Managing authority (MA) of the National program under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for the 2021 – 2027 programing period.

The investments envisaged under the Technical Assistance shall continue to providing a good working environment and expert and motivated human resources in order to achieve a high standard of effective management and control of the program.

This will be achieved through the implementation of the following actions:

- providing the necessary technical equipment (hardware and software), including office equipment as in need to ensure the management, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control of AMIF;
- strengthening the capacity of the personnel through trainings, seminars, workshops, study visits, exchange of good practices and experience, and others.
- ensuring an official trips of the personnel;
- ensuring remuneration costs of the personnel, including insurances and all other expenses according to the national law;
- hiring external consultants and experts, if necessary;
- communication and visibility measures.

These activities assist to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of the MA, contributing to the successful implementation of the European asylum and migration policy.

Expected results:

- achieving a high standard of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control of the NP;
- ensuring a good working environment and an improved culture of work aimed at achieving results;
- having an intensified and active dialogue with stakeholders and the general public in order to promote the program, its objectives and results, as well as the EU's contribution.

Text field [3 000] (Technical assistance pursuant to Article 37 CPR)

2.3.2. Indicative breakdown of technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) and Article 37 CPR

Table 4: Indicative breakdown

Type of intervention	Code	Indicative amount (Euro)
Information and communication	001	112 553
Preparation, implementation, monitoring and control	002	1 575 742
Evaluation and studies, data collection	003	112 553
Capacity building	004	450 212

3. Financing plan

Reference: point (g) Article 22(3) CPR

3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 5: Financial appropriations by year

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

3.2. Total financial allocations

Table 6: Total financial allocations by fund and national contribution

Specific objective (SO)	Type of action	Basis for calculation Union support (total or public)	Union contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national contribution		Total e=(a)+(b)	Cofinancing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
					public (c)	private (d)		
SO 1	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(1) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(1) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(1) of AMIF Regulation		94 500 000	31 500 000	31 500 000	0	126 000 000	75%
	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(2) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(2) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(2) of AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0

Specific objective (SO)	Type of action	Basis for calculation Union support	Union contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national contribution	Total e=(a)+(b)	Cofinancing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
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	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(4) of BMVI Regulation (Special Transit Scheme)							
	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(5) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(6) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(5) of AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0
	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(5) of BMVI Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0
Total for SO 1			94 500 000	31 500 000	31 500 000	0	126 000 000	75%

Specific objective (SO)	Type of action	Basis for calculation Union support (total or public)	Union contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national		Total e=(a)+(b)	Cofinancing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
					public (c)	private (d)		
SO 2	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(1) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(1) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(1) of AMIF Regulation		10 500 000	3 500 000	3 500 000	0	14 000 000	75%
	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(2) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(2) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(2) of AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0

	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(3) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(3) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(3) of AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0
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Specific objective (SO)	Type of action	Basis for calculation Union support (total or public)	Union contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national		Total e=(a)+(b)	Cofinancing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
					public (c)	private (d)		
	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(4) of ISF Regulation or Article 12(4) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(4) of AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0

	Actions co-financed in line with Article 12(5) of ISF or Article 12(6) of BMVI Regulation or Article 15(5) AMIF Regulation		0	0	0	0	0	0
Total for SO 2			10 500 000	3 500 000	3 500 000	0	14 000 000	75%

Specific objective (SO)	Type of action	Basis for calculation Union support (total or public)	Union contribution (a)	National contribution (b)-(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national		Total e=(a)+(b)	Cofinancing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
					public (c)	private (d)		
Technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR	Technical assistance		2 251 061	0	0	0	2 251 061	100%

Technical assistance pursuant to Article 37 CPR			0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total			2 251 061	0	0	0	2 251 061	100%

Table 6A: Pledging plan

Category	Number of persons per year						
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Resettlement							
Humanitarian admission in line with Article 19(2) AMIF Regulation							
Humanitarian admission of vulnerable persons in line with Article 19(3) AMIF Regulation							
Transfer of applicants for or beneficiaries of international protection ('transfer in')							
Transfer of applicants for or beneficiaries of international protection ('Transfer out')							
[other categories]							

3.3. Transfers

Table 7: Transfers between shared management funds

Receiving fund / instrument Transferring fund / instrument	AMIF	ISF	BMVI	ERDF	ESF+	Cohesion Fund	EMFAF	Total
AMIF								
ISF								
BMVI								
Total								

Table 8: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management

	Transfer amount
Instrument 1[name]	
Instrument 2 [name]	
Total	

4. Enabling conditions

Reference: point (i) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 9: Horizontal enabling conditions

Enabling condition	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		Criterion 1	Y/N	[500]	[1 000]

		Criterion 2			
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5. Programme authorities

Reference: point (k) of Article 22(3) and Articles 71 and 84 CPR

Table 10: Programme authorities

	Name of the institution [500]	Contact name and position [200]	e-mail [200]
Managing authority	International Project Directorate – Ministry of Interior	Maya Petkova Director of Directorate and Head of Managing Authority	dmp@mvr. bg
Audit authority	Internal Audit Unit – Ministry of Interior	Ivan Petkov Head of Audit Authority	zvo.18@m vr.bg
Body which receives payments from the Commission	International Projects Directorate – Ministry of Interior	Maya Petkova Director of Directorate and Head of Managing Authority	dmp@mvr. bg

6. Partnership Reference: point (h) of Article 22(3) CPR

Text field [10 000]

The partnership principle is a key element in the implementation of the European Funds, which enables a wide range of stakeholders (public authorities, economic and social partners, bodies, representing civil society at national, regional and local level, research institutions and universities, etc.) to participate in the whole process of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, funded by the European Union (EU).

The principle is widely used in the preparation of the National Program (NP) under the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI). The partnership is implemented in several areas: cooperation with the competent bodies, including participation in the Thematic Working Group (TWG) for the preparation of the Programme; consultations on the Program and on other funds and programs with similar areas of support and participation in the inter-institutional working groups for the elaboration of the operational programmes, funded by the EU and close cooperation with the European Commission (EC) at each stage of the process.

With Decision № 196 from 11th of April 2019 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) was designated as the leading institution for the elaboration of the three Home Affairs Funds programmes.

In this regard a Thematic Working Group for the preparation of the National Multiannual Program under the BMVI for the 2021 – 2027 programming period was established.

In accordance with the partnership principle, based on Art. 6 of the Common Provision Regulation (CPR), an invitation for participation in the TWG was extended to the competent authorities and organisations in the field of border management at national level.

The invitation was published on the newly created webpage of the financial instrument for the 2021–2027 period.

With ordinance of the Minister of Interior, a Thematic Working Group was set up for the preparation of the National Multiannual Program under the BMVI for the 2021–2027 period, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Interior with competence to manage European Funds. The TWG includes representatives of the relevant stakeholders working in the field of border management, state administration and academic community.

In the period January–March 2020 two attendance meetings of the TWG were held. Due to the state of emergency in Bulgaria after March 2020 and the subsequent restrictions imposed in relation to the spread of COVID-19, non-attendance discussions on the draft NP were held and decisions were taken by written procedure. The members of the TWG participate in the process of preparation of the Programme by submitting proposals for strategic priorities to be addressed through the funding provided under the Programme, examine and provide comments and remarks on the draft NP.

With Decision № 712 from 6th of October 2020 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria the International Projects Directorate was designated as Managing authority (MA) of the BMVI NP for the 2021–2027 programming period.

In accordance with the provisions of Art. 34 of the CPR a Monitoring Committee (MC) shall be organized through a transparent process and in compliance with the principle of balanced representation of the relevant public authorities and the representatives of the partners.

The Monitoring Committee of the BMVI NP shall be established by an ordinance of the Minister of Interior and shall be chaired by the Deputy Minister of Interior with competence to manage European Funds. The Deputy Chairperson shall be the head of the Managing Authority of the National Program. The Committee members and their deputies shall act as

representatives of the relevant stakeholders in the field of border management. The representatives of the respective institutions shall be designated on the basis of criteria predefined and approved by the Managing Authority, and developed in accordance with Art. 34, par. 1 of the CPR. In the establishment of the MC Art. 4(2a) of the CPR regarding decentralised agencies shall be taken into account. EC and Audit Authority representatives shall participate in the work of the MC as observers.

The list of committee members shall be published on the website, stated in Art. 44, section 1 of the CPR.

The working procedure of the Monitoring Committee shall be regulated by Internal Rules, appended to the ordinance of the Minister of Interior, by which the Committee shall be established. These rules define the powers and responsibilities of the chairman and of the Committee members as their behavior as well as that of the observers are based on the following principles: legality, selflessness, impartiality, independence, objectivity, publicity, responsibility and professional conduct.

The MC shall assemble at least once annually (in person or not, depending on the current situation) and, if necessary, ad hoc.

The functions of the MC shall be in compliance with the provisions of Art. 35 (1) and (2) of the CPR. The Committee shall examine the program implementation and in achieving the milestones and targets as well as any issues that affect the performance of the program and the measures taken to address those issues, including irregularities. The MC shall also examine the contribution of the program to tackling the challenges identified in the relevant country-specific recommendation that are linked to the implementation of the program; the implementation of communication and visibility actions and last, but not least the progress made in carrying out evaluation, syntheses of evaluation and the follow-up given to findings. In addition, Committee shall approve any proposal by the MA for the amendments of a program as well as the annual performance report.

The implementation of the BMVI NP shall follow the same principles of partnership as in the process of its preparation. The Managing Authority shall ensure wide publicity for the partners by providing relevant information on Ministry of Interior website, as well as by holding regular information events open to all stakeholders. The Committee shall also play a primary role in the monitoring of the progress of the implementation of the BMVI NP and the future development, consulting and/or decision-making related to the revision of the program and/or the approval of the monitoring reports.

In addition, the Management and Monitoring Information System will continue to be used to monitor the indicators and information needed to trace the progress towards the objectives agreed upon in the NP.

The complementarity of the National Program and the respective actions to other policies is carried out at the programming stage via the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Interior in the inter-institutional thematic working groups for the elaboration of the operational programs included in the CPR as well as their representatives participation in the preparation of Home Affairs programs. Currently, experts from the International Projects Directorate are participating in 14 thematic working groups for the elaboration of operational programs and of programs for territorial cooperation of the Republic of Bulgaria for the 2021–2027 period; and for the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for the 2021–2027 programming period.

7. Communication and visibility Reference: point (j) of Article 22(3) CPR

Text field [4 500]

The objectives of the communication approach are consistent with the objectives of the programme as follows:

- supporting effective European integrated border management at the external borders implemented by the European Border and Coast Guard as a shared responsibility of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and of the national authorities responsible for border management, to facilitate legitimate border crossings, to prevent and detect illegal immigration and cross-border crime and to effectively manage migratory flows;
- supporting the common visa policy to ensure harmonised approach with regard to the issuance of visas and to facilitate legitimate travel and , while helping prevent migratory and security risks.

Among the objectives of the communication approach is to guarantee the visibility of support in activities relating to operations supported by the Fund with particular attention to operations of strategic importance.

The communication approach includes communicating the funding opportunities towards potential beneficiaries; support to the beneficiaries in communicating their projects; informing the general public about the activities and results of the programme; showing the positive impact and added value of Union intervention. These will be implemented through the following main activities:

In accordance with article 44 (1) of the CPR the Managing Authority will support a website where information on the programme is available, covering the programme's objectives, activities, available funding opportunities and achievements.

The relevant competent institutions and potential beneficiaries are actively engaged in the process of drafting the national programme through their participation in the thematic working groups set up with an Ordinance of the Minister of Interior. Later on they will be invited to participate in the Monitoring committee and will be actively involved in the process of implementation, monitoring and assessment of the national program and which guarantees transparency.

In accordance with article 44 (2) of the CPR the Managing Authority guarantees communicating the funding opportunities towards potential beneficiaries through publishing on the website the information set in the above stated article. This information will also be published in a specialized information system set on national level which will also provide the potential beneficiaries with the opportunity to participate in the calls for proposals and will enable the Managing Authority to evaluate them, conclude the necessary grant awarding contracts and monitor their implementation.

The Managing Authority will guarantee the communication of a list of operations selected for support by the Funds publicly available on the website. This will be done in accordance article 44 (3) of the CPR.

All the above stated published documents shall be in open, machine-readable formats, which allow data to be sorted, searched, extracted, compared and reused in accordance with the requirements of art. 44 paragraphs 4 of the CPR.

Another approach for communicating of the funding opportunities towards potential beneficiaries will be the public events at the start of the implementation of the programme and the information days that will be organized on regular basis by the Managing Authority. These events will be organized with the support of the Press Office and Public Relations Directorate within the Ministry of Interior. It is a specialized directorate responsible for

ensuring the transparency and publicity of the Ministry of Interior' activities and it is actively working with the mass media on national and regional level and has established strong relations with the various communication channels including television, radio and newspapers.

Following the implementation of the programme the Managing Authority will organize a closing event on the results achieved.

In addition for every call for proposal the Managing Authority shall organize an information campaign with potential stakeholders.

For the direct award procedures information days with the appointed beneficiaries will be held where clarifications and guidance for the elaboration of the project proposals will be given as well as problematic issues will be discussed.

Measures aimed to support to the beneficiaries in communicating the result of the implementation of their projects will be envisaged. Guidelines on information and publicity on project level will be published on the website of the programme and provided to the beneficiaries. The guidelines will set the minimum requirements for visibility, transparency and communication that will be obligatory for the beneficiaries and will be in accordance with Art. 45. This will be implanted by the inclusion of this requirements in the grant awarding contracts between the Managing authority and the beneficiaries. The necessary arrangements for monitoring on the implementation of the implementation of those obligations by the beneficiaries will be set in the MCS of and other relevant documents.

Facebook is another communication channel where a separate page for the programme will be used and online publications will be made. The Managing Authority has chosen the Facebook platform due to its popularity and existing profile in this social media which was regularly updated with information regarding the implementation of the Home funds in the previous programming period. On its Facebook profile the Managing Authority will publish the following:

- preliminary information on when, where and on what topic various events will be organized as well as information on the opportunity and way for participation in these events;
- information on organized events, funding opportunities under the programme, results and impact of the programme;
- information on progress, achievements, results and good practices from the implementation of selected projects.

The Facebook profile will also give the opportunity to all interested parties to contact the Managing Authority and follow new events, information and news in real time.

The target audience of the programme includes mainly structures of the Ministry of Interior such as the General Directorate Border Police, the Communication and Information Systems Directorate, the International Operational Cooperation Directorate, the Bulgarian Identity Documents Directorate, the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, the National Forensic Institute as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other relevant structures of the state administration, international and non-governmental organisations. The list of target audiences include the potential beneficiaries and other relevant groups specific to the programme. The target audience is established and defined in accordance with the objectives of the programme as explained above.

The choice of target audiences is consistent with the geographical and thematic scope of the programme. Measures supported with the financial resources under the programme will be to a large extent implemented on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The budget of the planned activities and measures envisaged in the communication approach shall be calculated after the disbursement of financial resources under the programme. It shall

be equal or higher than 0.3% of the programme's total amount. The description shall provide an indicative financial plan by activity/channel and year and other relevant information.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs Reference: Articles 94 and 95 CPR

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	YES	NO
From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>