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COVER NOTE

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Executive Summary of the Evaluation
- Ex-post Evaluation of the Internal Security Fund - Police (ISF-P) for the 2014-2020 programming period

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2026) 83 final.

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

**Ex-post Evaluation of the Internal Security Fund - Police (ISF-P) for the 2014-2020
programming period**

{SWD(2026) 79 final}

BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

The Regulation¹ establishing the Internal Security Fund – Police (henceforth the “ISF-P” or the “Instrument”) for the 2014-2020 programming period, was adopted on 16 April 2014. The ISF-P was established as the successor of the General Programme on Security and Safeguarding Liberties covering the Specific Programmes ‘Prevention of and Fight against Crime’² (ISEC) and ‘Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism and other Security related risks’³ (CIPS) for the 2007-2013 programming period.

The ISF-P benefits from a larger budget, enabling more comprehensive support to Member States. With an initial total EU contribution of ca. EUR 1 004 million for the 2014-2020 programming period compared to ca. EUR 142.17 million for CIPS and EUR 607.36 million for ISEC for the 2007-2013 programming period.

While ISEC and CIPS were exclusively implemented under direct management via actions, the ISF-P is implemented under shared, direct and indirect management. The programming occurs either at the Member State level through the national programmes or at the Commission level, via Annual Work Programmes (Union Actions and Emergency Assistance).

During the 2014-2020 programming period, the Home Affairs Funds are governed by a separate legal act, i.e., the Horizontal Regulation⁴, with the rationale to ensure a better coordination and management between them.

The ISF-P has the general objective to contribute to ensuring a high level of security in the Union. Within this general objective, the Instrument pursued two specific objectives:

1. Crime prevention, combating cross-border, serious and organised crime including terrorism, and reinforcing coordination and cooperation between law enforcement authorities and other national authorities of Member States, including with Europol or other relevant Union bodies, and with relevant third countries and international organisations
2. Enhancing the capacity of Member States and the Union for managing effectively security-related risks and crises and preparing for and protecting people and critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks and other security-related incidents.

The purpose of this document is set out in Article 57(2)(b) of the Horizontal Regulation which requires the Commission to carry out an ex-post evaluation by 30 June 2025⁵ to assess the effects of the ISF-P following the closure of the national programmes.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 513/2014, OJ L 150, 20.5.2014, p. 93, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/513/oj>

² Council Decision No 2007/125/JHA.

³ Council Decision 2007/124/EC.

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 514/2014, OJ L 150, 20.5.2014, p. 112, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/514/oj>

⁵ The implementation period of the Home Affairs Funds 2014-2020 (including of the ISF-P) was extended in 2022 by 1 year (from 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2024) to allow the Member States to fully use any unspent amounts from those programmes, and, where necessary, to swiftly revise the implementation of their programmes to address the challenges arising from the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 (See Regulation (EU) 2022/585 amending Regulations (EU) No 514/2014).

The temporal scope of this ex-post evaluation of the ISF-P covers the period 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2024. Initially, funded activities were meant to end by 30 June 2023. However, following the Russian war of aggression towards Ukraine, an extension of the implementation of the funds by one year was agreed, so that Member States might make full use of still available funding to face the consequences of the war. Consequently, the deadline for the Commission to carry out an ex-post evaluation was also extended by one year, to 30 June 2025.

The geographical scope includes all ISF-P participating Member States, i.e. all Member States except Denmark⁶ and the United Kingdom⁷. The material scope covers activities under the three existing management modes: shared management, direct management and indirect management. The evaluation relied on qualitative and quantitative methods, including the consultation of Member States, Commission officials, implementing partners and beneficiaries.

MAIN FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Effectiveness

The ISF-P contributed to ‘Specific Objective – fight against crime’ through investments in modernising law enforcement tools, intelligence sharing, and cross-border operational projects such as joint investigations and training. It also reinforced cooperation between national authorities, Europol, and international partners by supporting IT interoperability, data exchange, and liaison structures.

At EU level, the indicator target values for most ‘Specific Objective – fight against crime’ indicators were achieved. National ex-post evaluation reports concluded that the funded actions have contributed to preventing cross-border, serious, and organised crime, as well as reinforcing coordination among law enforcement authorities.

The ISF-P contributed to ‘Specific Objective – risk management’ through investments in crisis management centres, early warning systems, and protection of critical infrastructure, including advancements in cybersecurity and CBRN-E threat responses.

At EU level, the combined indicator target values for the ‘Specific Objective – risk management’ indicators were all overachieved. The findings all confirm that ISF-P actions were effective in furthering ‘Specific Objective - risk management’ and highlight the significant progress made across Member States in enhancing administrative and operational capacities for crisis management, critical infrastructure protection, and risk assessment.

The Instrument’s implementation faced recurring challenges, such as delays in project implementation due to procurement issues and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted certain project timelines. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine led some Member States to reallocate resources or adapt security strategies during the programming period.

⁶ As per Recital (36) of the ISF-P Regulation, in accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of Protocol No 22 on the position of Denmark, annexed to the TEU and to the TFEU, Denmark is not taking part in the adoption of this Regulation and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

⁷ As per Recital (38) of the ISF-P Regulation, in accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of Protocol No 21 on the position of the United Kingdom in respect to the area of freedom, security and justice, annexed to the TEU and to the TFEU, the United Kingdom is not taking part in the adoption of this Regulation and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

The one year implementation extension to all Home Affairs Funds 2014-2020, due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, contributed to achieving the specific objectives of the ISF-P by granting necessary extensions of project timelines. This flexibility was welcomed by the Member States for allowing the completion of projects and helping to overcome certain delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Future instruments should retain the flexibility to respond to external events through mechanisms such as implementation period extensions.

Efficiency

The ISF-P has proven to be efficient, with projects across various Member States generally meeting their objectives within reasonable budgets. Cost savings were achieved through digitalisation, procurement, and efficient allocation of financial and human resources, particularly in areas such as training and IT system development.

While the Instrument achieved its intended outcomes, the administrative burden varied across Member States, with some facing inefficiencies due to complex procedures and high personnel costs.

The ISF-P has generally demonstrated effective management and control mechanisms were efficient to safeguard the EU's financial interests. The measures in place to prevent fraud and irregularities and the cooperation between national authorities and beneficiaries have largely contributed to the efficient use of resources.

Simplification and reduction of administrative burden

The ISF-P and the Horizontal Regulations introduced several changes aimed at simplifying the ISF-P management and reducing administrative burden, i.e. the introduction of multiannual programming, simplified cost options, national rules on expenditure eligibility and structured reporting mechanisms.

Overall, these elements have been perceived as a positive development by several Member States. Nonetheless, some Member States encountered challenges related to complexity and difficulties in effectively implementing simplification measures. Efforts should be considered to further simplify and reduce administrative burden. While simplified cost options enhance efficiency in many Member States, their use could be further encouraged and promoted.

Coherence and complementarity

The architecture of the ISF-P was fit for purpose as it enhances internal coherence by fostering complementarity across components. The combination of fund components (national programmes, Union Actions and Emergency Assistance) and management modes (shared, direct and indirect) enables flexible fund management.

Nonetheless, there is room for reinforcing the complementarity between Union Actions and national programmes and to increase the awareness and knowledge of the other's respective projects.

In its external coherence, Member States implemented several coordination mechanisms at national level to ensure the coherence of activities with other programmes funded by EU Instruments with similar objectives to those of the ISF-P. Monitoring Committees played a key role as coordination mechanisms.

As far as coherence with external spending programmes, there may be a need to further strengthen the link between internal and external priorities in the EU's external action dimension, as only few Member States specifically report coordination between ISF-P-funded actions in or in relation to third countries. This is explained due to the very limited external component of the ISF-P.

EU added value

The ISF-P provides an EU added value by supporting projects that go beyond the financial and operational capacities of individual Member States. It significantly contributes to ensuring a high level of security in the Union by fostering cooperation, ensuring compliance with EU standards and alleviating national budget constraints.

The ISF-P is found to generate EU added value across all fund components enabling the development of projects and the acquisition of capabilities and knowledge beyond the individual capacity of Member States. Notably, transferability and transnationality bring the highest added value of the ISF-P and are mostly expressed through Union Actions, which should be considered in future programming.

The consequence of the absence or interruption of the ISF-P would affect Member States to varying degrees, ranging from an inability to meet regulatory requirements to the reduced efficiency and effectiveness of specific individual projects due to changes in priorities. The findings indicate that certain Member States are overly reliant on EU funding. While a few large Member States consider that some projects could still be funded, though potentially at a slower pace and smaller scale, others report that without ISF-P funding, they would have struggled to carry out actions to support the implementation of EU policies in internal security due to having received less to no funding to this policy area owing to national budgetary constraints.

Sustainability

The sustainability of ISF-P funded projects is underpinned by a multifaceted approach integrating financial planning, operational continuity, personnel training, and international cooperation.

Member States have prioritised the development of skills and expertise to ensure that the benefits of ISF-funded projects persist over time. Training programmes have been integral in ensuring that personnel are equipped with the knowledge and capabilities to effectively use and maintain new systems and technologies in the long run. Union Actions projects that have demonstrated sustainability over time are often focused on networking and cross-border cooperation. Despite the short-term duration of Emergency Assistance projects, the integration and further development of tools have been continued after the projects formally ended.

Relevance

The ISF-P has largely addressed the needs identified at the time of the beginning of the programming period in order to achieve the overall objective of ensuring a high level of security in the Union through the fight against organised crime and managing risk and crises. It has also demonstrated adaptability to evolving needs and challenges throughout the implementation period.

At EU level, the consultation process consisted of a policy dialogue between Member States and the Commission to ensure alignment of the national mapping of needs/trends with the ISF-P's objectives and with those identified at EU and national levels.

At national level, the ISF-P supported Member States in implementing targeted actions under shared management, as national programmes were structured to address country-specific internal security needs and were developed through thorough needs assessments and stakeholder consultations, ensuring alignment with both EU-level policy priorities and national security requirements.

Union Actions played a crucial role in funding transnational projects essential in strengthening cooperation between stakeholders, thereby enhancing the EU's collective resilience to internal security threats. The ability of Union Actions to swiftly adapt to emerging internal security challenges further underlined their relevance within the ISF-P framework. Emergency Assistance-funded projects significantly enhanced internal security response capabilities, enabling Member States to mobilise resources quickly in crisis situations.