



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Directorate E – HOME Affairs Funds
The Director

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HOME.E.1/AF

NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS

Ref.: HOME-Funds/2025/43

**Subject: Launch of the call for expression of interest under the Specific Action
“Uptake of innovative digital technologies, including Artificial
Intelligence, by Law Enforcement Authorities (INNO)” under the
Internal Security Fund (ISF) – Reference ISF/2026/SA/INNO/3.4.3**

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund provides that Member States may receive funding for specific actions in addition to their initial allocations in their respective programmes.

Specific actions aim to fund transnational or national projects that bring Union added value in accordance with the objectives of the Fund for which one, several or all Member States may receive an additional allocation to their programmes.

They will be implemented as one of the components of the Thematic Facility in line with Art. 8 ISF of the above-mentioned Regulation and in accordance with the relevant financing decisions and work programmes for the Fund ⁽¹⁾.

By the present note, the Commission launches a call for expression of interest for the Specific Action “Uptake of innovative digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, by Law Enforcement Authorities - INNO” in line with the actions listed in the above-mentioned Commission’s financing decision and work programme.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Specific actions will be implemented by one or more Member States participating in the Internal Security Fund via funding received in addition to the allocation under their ISF programmes.

(1) Internal Security Fund (2021-2027) (europa.eu)

Funding for specific actions is added to the Member States' programme allocations by means of a programme amendment. That additional funding is earmarked for the specific action concerned and shall not be used for other actions in the Member State's programme, except in duly justified circumstances and as approved by the Commission through the amendment of the programme.

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

The specific action must be implemented by the Member States in accordance with the ISF ⁽²⁾ Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) ⁽³⁾. This includes compliance with fundamental rights.

Your attention is drawn to one provision of the CPR. As regard the value added tax ("VAT") eligibility regime, Article 64 (1)(c) of the CPR provides that VAT is not eligible, except:

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

3. CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

3.1. Indicative Budget available

The indicative amount envisaged for this call ISF/2026/SA/3.4.3 is **EUR 3 550 000**.

The requested amount (i.e. the Union contribution to the Member State's ISF programme under the Specific Action):

- should ideally not be lower than EUR 250 000 per application,
- should ideally not be higher than EUR 700 000 per application.

Should many applications be received and successful, the final amount to be allocated to a Member State's programme may be lowered.

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

In case of a transnational project, the Commission recommends, for the sake of efficiency, the choice of Option 1 as presented in the Note HOME-Funds/2022/07(Ares(2022)1060102) of 14 February 2022 on *Transnational specific actions under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Instrument for*

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

Any proposal submitted by a single Member State still must demonstrate its transnational impact by its transferability, as well as dissemination activities, trainings, or others.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The **ProtectEU – European Internal Security Strategy** (COM/2025/148 final) ⁽⁴⁾ sets out the Union’s strategic framework for the coming decade. It calls for a “culture change on security”, based on a whole-of-society approach and on the mainstreaming of security and preparedness considerations across all EU policies from the design stage. It underlines that the EU’s internal security must rely on strong law enforcement capabilities, trust in innovation, and seamless cooperation among Member States and EU agencies.

ProtectEU stresses the need to equip law enforcement authorities (LEAs) with a **modern legal and technological toolbox** to address terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. The Strategy is further complemented by a **Roadmap on effective and lawful access to data for law enforcement** (COM/2025/349 final) ⁽⁵⁾, covering six domains - data retention, lawful interception, digital forensics, decryption, standardisation, and interoperability - and foresees a *Technology Roadmap on encryption* to identify solutions enabling lawful access to encrypted data while safeguarding cybersecurity and fundamental rights. These initiatives highlight the **central role of innovation** and interoperability in ensuring an effective, trusted and rights-compliant law enforcement ecosystem.

At the same time, the **EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security** and the **Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS)** have documented persistent barriers to innovation uptake by LEAs. The uptake of innovative technologies, methods and data-driven approaches emerging from **EU security research and innovation programmes** (Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe) remains hindered by several persistent barriers: fragmentation of demand, lack of funding for piloting and validation, complex procurement and certification procedures, and limited visibility or traceability of research results. The **Internal Security Fund (ISF)** is therefore well placed to overcome these barriers and bridge this “last-mile gap” and support the transition from successful research outcomes to operational use in real-life environments.

EU funding under this specific action is necessary to overcome these uptake challenges and ensure that promising R&I results in the field of fighting serious and organised crime reach law enforcement authorities. Synergies between Union-funded research and innovation and the ISF can facilitate the testing, validation and deployment of new methods and technologies stemming from R&I actions. They can also help technology suppliers to industrialise and commercialise innovative products and enable law enforcement authorities to further test, validate and acquire innovative solutions.

In the longer term, these efforts will contribute to developing shared operational standards and trust across Member States, increasing the efficiency of EU-funded research investment and ensuring lasting impact through deployment and scale-up of successful

⁽⁴⁾ [EUR-Lex - 52025DC0148 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁽⁵⁾ [EUR-Lex - 52025DC0349 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

technologies. The Union added value lies in the cross-border dimension and the reinforcement of European open strategic autonomy in internal security technologies.

Thus, in this context, the **Specific Action “Uptake of innovative digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, by Law Enforcement Authorities (INNO)”** aims to help Member States **test, validate, further pilot and deploy innovative digital technologies, tools and methods**, including Artificial Intelligence, developed through EU-funded research. It will complement the research and innovation efforts under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe by financing the operational phase — ensuring that tested solutions reach law enforcement authorities on the ground and that interoperability, data protection and ethical standards are observed.

The action contributes directly to the implementation of **ProtectEU** by:

- supporting lawful, secure, and interoperable deployment of innovative tools in line with the **Roadmap on effective and lawful access to data for law enforcement**;
- enhancing European **technological and data autonomy** in sensitive domains such as digital forensics, AI or encryption;
- promoting **training, guidance, and capacity-building** for LEAs on the operational use of innovative technologies; and
- reinforcing **cross-border cooperation and interoperability**, in synergy with Europol, CEPOL, eu-LISA, EUDA and other relevant EU agencies.

By fostering uptake of **EU-developed technologies, tools and methods**, the INNO Specific Action will strengthen the Union’s collective capability to anticipate, prevent and respond to evolving internal security threats - thus operationalising the ProtectEU vision of a more resilient, innovative and prepared Europe. These challenges and the role of the ISF in addressing them are described above.

Furthermore, there is a strong EU added value in **promoting European innovation**, as they lead to reinforcement of existing and development of new law enforcement authorities’ capabilities ⁽⁶⁾.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

The objective of this specific action is to provide financial support to Member States to test, validate, further pilot and/or deploy innovative digital technologies, tools and/or methods of Technological Readiness Level not lower than 8 for law enforcement authorities, aimed at preventing, detecting and/or investigating serious and organised crime, **building on results of EU-funded security research and innovation projects**. The support will focus on co-funding solutions with **compulsory innovative elements** at least at European level.

Purchase of off-the-shelf technology is not eligible under this specific action, as it is planned under other strands of ISF or other EU funding instruments (e.g., ISF Member States Programmes, ERDF, ISF PROTECT call for the topic of firearms).

⁽⁶⁾ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Enhancing security through research and innovation, Brussels, 15.12.2021 SWD (2021) 422 final.

Projects proposals must build on outcomes of security research and innovation, especially taking up results of EU-funded security research activities ⁽⁷⁾ in the area of fighting organised crime and terrorism, in order to ensure some of the following:

- **improved fight against online threats, such as use of gaming platforms for radicalisation purposes, spreading illegal disinformation, or other cyber-enabled serious and organised crime;**
- **strengthening prevention, awareness and resilience against cyber-enabled crime and online risks, including tools and training for children, young people or other vulnerable groups;**
- **uptake of digital platforms or solutions developed under EU research projects to fight serious and organised crime;**
- **improved fight against illicit online trafficking, such as of drugs, firearms or in human beings;**

and in all instances:

- **training and guidance for law enforcement authorities (LEAs).**

Proposed actions must build on results of previous EU security research and innovation projects, in order to ensure the uptake in some of the following:

- Guidance, training and communication for law enforcement authorities on innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence where relevant,
- Enhanced situational awareness, intelligence picture and operational capabilities of law enforcement authorities;
- Reinforced resistance of European society against online threats and illicit online trafficking;
- Uptake of relevant new technologies and solutions, especially from Union funded security research and innovation programmes;
- Increased European open strategic autonomy in internal security technologies;
- Tools, methods and technologies (min. TRL 8) for boosting innovative digital technologies, including AI, for LEAs in the EU through further advancing on using well trained algorithms, high-quality datasets, an interoperable and standardised framework for long term sustainability of solutions.

Examples of such previous initiatives include, but are not limited to, the EU funded projects: GRACE (H2020), TRACE (H2020), RAYUELA (H2020), ROXANNE (H2020), FORMOBILE (H2020), EXFILES (H2020), STARLIGHT (H2020), VIGILANT (HE), FERMI (HE), GEMS (HE), TENACITY (HE), ARIEN (HE), VANGUARD (HE), EITHOS (HE).

Further information on Union-funded research and innovation in security technologies and methods can be found on:

- the EU Funding & Tenders Portal (for past, current and forthcoming topics and calls) ⁽⁸⁾,
- the Common Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) (for ongoing and past projects) ⁽⁹⁾,

⁽⁷⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/innovation-and-security-research_en

⁽⁸⁾ [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁽⁹⁾ [CORDIS | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

- the Horizon Dashboard (for aggregated search by country, partner, topic)⁽¹⁰⁾,
- through the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS)⁽¹¹⁾, and
- from the National Contact points (NCPs) for EU security research in each Member State,
- from DG HOME's Innovation and Security Research Unit⁽¹²⁾.

Purchase of products and services that are commercially available, unless being a minor and complementary part of the integration effort in an innovative solution, are not supported by this action.

The specific action does not cover projects related to cybersecurity.

The specific action **can include but should not be limited to** activities such as:

- testing, validation, and/or further piloting (including in groups of Member States) in real environment,
- procurement,
- evaluating digital tools for operational maturity,
- installation and integration in legacy systems,
- deployment, hands-on training on the use of the new solutions.

Cooperation with Europol in any of these elements is strongly encouraged especially utilisation of the Europol's repository tool, as it should leverage proposals' quality and impact. Cooperation with CEPOL on training aspects and cooperation with EUDA on drug-related issues is strongly encouraged as well.

Article 5(5) of the ISF Regulation provides that is not eligible:

- (a) actions limited to the maintenance of public order at national level;
- (b) actions with a military or defence purpose;
- (c) equipment of which the primary purpose is customs control;
- (d) coercive equipment, including weapons, ammunition, explosives and riot batons, except for training purposes; (...).

If expenditure is planned for purchase of equipment or means of transport or construction of security-related buildings or facilities and the project proposal is selected, the ISF Managing Authority should ensure that the expenditure will be included in the calculation under the ISF Programme for the 35% threshold stipulated in Article 13(7) of the ISF Regulation.

Proposals should explain the plans for future deployment and/or scale-up of the new technologies, and/or methods, should the activities funded by this specific action be successful. Further operational deployment, use and/or scale-up can be planned with support with national funding, Member States' ISF programmes, and/or other public or private funding. Project proposals that have a credible and committed plan for further

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-observatory/terrorism-and-radicalisation/)

⁽¹¹⁾ [CERIS - Community for European Research and Innovation for Security \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-observatory/terrorism-and-radicalisation/)

⁽¹²⁾ [Innovation and security research \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-observatory/terrorism-and-radicalisation/)

uptake will be particularly welcomed, as they will ensure impact on the capabilities of national security practitioners.

The call for expression of interest is open for both national and transnational projects proposals. However, in both instances, proposals must clearly and convincingly demonstrate the **transnational impact of their efforts**.

In case of a transnational project proposal, the lead Member State will have to make sure that the ISF Managing Authority of each participating Member State duly signs the “Partnership Declaration Form”. In the Application form, each project beneficiary in each participating Member State should be listed and the share that each Member State will receive from the additional amount allocated, if the project proposal is successful, should be indicated. Based on this common agreement, each partner will have a role and resulting responsibilities in the implementation of the project and delivering on its objectives.

The specific action proposed **should not include activities related to research** but must rather support the uptake and use of innovative solutions stemming from past research. As such, new technologies addressed in the project proposals (which are not necessarily the only technologies involved but should be the main ones) should be **of Technological Readiness Level not lower than 8**.

This specific action falls specifically under point (e) of Annex III of the ISF Regulation, regarding support to “actions developing innovative methods or deploying new technologies with a potential for transferability to other Member States, in particular projects aimed at testing and validating the outcome of Union-funded security research projects”.

3.4. Expected results following the call

Member States can propose both projects implemented entirely at national level and projects implemented transnationally by a group of Member States. In such case, the proposing Member States should explain the specific added value of their transnational approach.

As outcome of the present call for expression of interest, three to four projects are expected to be selected, targeting the three issues listed under Section 3.3.

Examples of activities to be included in the proposed actions:

- uptake and testing of digital tools, related methods and training material stemming from EU funded research programmes,
- validation and dissemination of such tools, methods and training material,
- cross-border operational actions related to digital technologies,
- mechanisms to exchange digital information across borders,
- awareness raising campaigns,
- empowering communities to develop local approaches and prevention policies, awareness-raising and communication activities among stakeholders and the general public on Union security policies,
- increased public-private partnerships to prevent / detect / investigate specific form of crime using digital technologies.

As a result, selected projects should achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- Improve the security of EU citizens and economy, such as improved prevention and resilience of European society against serious and organised crime, terrorism, cyber-enabled threats, radicalisation and online exploitation, through the uptake of innovative awareness, training and engagement tools developed in EU research projects (e.g. serious-game or simulation-based approaches),
- Enhance situational awareness, intelligence picture and operations capabilities of law enforcement and relevant services,
- Uptake relevant new digital technologies and solutions, especially from Union-funded, security research and innovation programmes,
- Increase European open strategic autonomy in security technologies.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the ISF are eligible.

The Specific Action proposed should not start before 1 December 2025 and should ideally be completed by 31 December 2027 at the latest.

DG HOME will assess the proposals submitted by the Member States.

To be considered admissible a proposal must:

1. be submitted within the deadline (see below) to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu,
2. consist of the official ISF/2026/SA/3.4.3 Application form attached to this note together with its annexes, which must be readable and complete (all fields necessary for assessment are filled in),
3. be submitted by the Managing Authority on behalf of the entity in the Member State that will be responsible for the implementation of the specific action,
4. identify a project beneficiary (an entity) that will be responsible for the implementation of the specific action in the Member State (in the lead for the action),
5. in case of a transnational project: include partnership declaration forms signed by the Managing Authorities of all participating Member States ⁽¹³⁾.

DG HOME will assess admissible proposals based on the following criteria ⁽¹⁴⁾:

⁽¹³⁾ Please refer to the note HOME-Funds/2022/07 on the arrangements between partners to be sought when submitting proposals for transnational specific actions.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Proposals not meeting the 'pass score' of criterion A (15 points) will not be further assessed. Only proposals scoring at least the 'pass scores' defined for each criterion (A, B and C) can be proposed for funding, depending on their overall ranking and budget availability.

A. Relevance (30 points – minimum score : 15 points)

1. **Clarity** of the proposed solution, **its correspondence** with the objectives and scope of this call for expression of interest, and **its contribution** towards the output and results indicators listed in Annex VIII of the ISF Regulation (see Annex 4).
2. **Innovation** of the proposed solution (of min. TRL 8) in comparison with available state-of-the-art tools.

B. Quality and content (30 points – minimum score: 15 points)

1. **Maturity of the proposal**; appropriateness of the design and planned implementation, considering the envisaged activities; methodology (including operational and financial management); **organisation of work and strategy for project management and monitoring**; measures undertaken or envisaged to mitigate the identified risks.
2. **Cost effectiveness, complementarity and sustainability**: the proposal should present the distribution of the financial support requested, and its appropriateness in relation to the scale and type of the planned activities (personnel, travel, training, etc.). It should also demonstrate the overall cost effectiveness and value for money, and the complementarity with other EU funding sources (Member States' ISF programmes, ISF calls for proposals under Union Actions, etc.). Finally, the sustainability model should be explained, including a credible plan for future deployment(s) and/or scale-up after this action lifetime.

C. Impact (40 points – minimum score : 20 points)

1. **EU Added Value**: the concrete benefits and quantified results of the project for the European Union and the Member State(s) concerned, as well as its potential for transferability should be demonstrated.
2. **Impact** of the proposed solution on **capability development** for innovative digital technologies for LEAs
3. **Involvement of and cooperation with** competent entities from Member States (law enforcement authorities, private and public entities, e.g. research organisations, industry) and relevant EU entities (e.g. Europol, CEPOL, eu-LISA, EUDA) whenever appropriate, and explanations on how this will be achieved.
4. **Dissemination and communication** strategy, including **transferability of the solution to other Member States**, and its relation and/or contribution to **European strategic autonomy**.

Member States must ensure respect for the horizontal principles described in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060⁽¹⁵⁾, including respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as well as Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and Directive (EU) 2016/680⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/680 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework

Moreover, Member States must also ensure that the envisaged actions are not affected by a reasoned opinion delivered by the Commission in respect of infringement proceedings under Article 258 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) that put in doubt the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of the actions (Article 8(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1149).

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their proposals by **27 March 2026** at the latest, using the official ISF/2026/SA/3.4.3 Application form attached to this Note, together with its annexes. Proposals can be submitted in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, it is strongly advised to use English for the entire proposal.

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

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

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

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant/ lead Member State during the evaluation process. A reply should be provided by the Member State within 3 working days from the request date.

Any requests for clarification of the Member States on this call for expression of interest may be sent by **6 March 2026** at the latest, to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu.

Requests for clarifications should be sent only **by the Managing Authority**. The Managing Authority has an important role to play in explaining to potential beneficiaries the applicable rules and specificities of the ISF programme and the Specific Actions scheme, as well as helping them to prepare their applications. The Managing Authority should be their sole contact point and has the responsibility to review and reply to any questions received from applicants. It may, however, address these questions to the Commission services if further clarification is needed. As projects under specific actions are managed at national level, according to national rules, specific questions on eligibility of costs should be addressed first to the Managing Authority.

To respect the equal treatment and transparency, the replies to the written requests for clarification received will be sent to all Member States, via HOME-AFFAIRS-FUNDS-COMMITTEE@ec.europa.eu.

DG HOME will inform Member States of the outcome of the assessment of the proposals towards May 2026.

5. AMENDMENT OF THE ISF PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After having been informed of the outcome of the call for expression of interest, each successful Member State should submit to the Commission a request to amend its ISF programme via SFC. The amended programme should include a short description of the specific action, adjust the output and result indicators, and include the costs and codes linked to this specific action (respectively in the description and under tables 1, 2 and 3 of Specific Objective 3, and table 6 of the programme).

When amending an ISF programme of a Member States, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure ⁽¹⁷⁾:

1. For Member States that have included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Uptake of innovative digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, by Law Enforcement Authorities - INNO” ISF/2026/SA/3.4.3” in table 2.1.3 of Specific Objective 3 in their *initially approved* ISF programme: expenditure for the Specific Action will be eligible as of 1st December 2025.
2. For Member States that have *not* included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Uptake of innovative digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, by Law Enforcement Authorities - INNO” ISF/2026/SA/3.4.3” in table 2.1.3 of Specific Objective 3 in their *initially approved* ISF programme: expenditure for the Specific Action will be eligible from the date of submission by the Member State of its request for amendment of the ISF programme that will add the respective types of interventions in the programme.

Yours faithfully,

Silvia MICHELINI

Encl.: Annexes 1-4

⁽¹⁷⁾ Art. 63(7) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.