



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Directorate E – Borders, Migration and Security in Member States I
The Director (acting)

Brussels
HOME.F.2/WK

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

Ref.: HOME-Funds/2026/27

Subject: Launch of the call for expression of interest under the Specific Action “Support for national Schengen governance frameworks” under the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) – Reference BMVI/2026/SA/1.3.2

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, 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 Instrument 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 of the above-mentioned Regulation and in accordance with the relevant financing decisions and work programmes for the BMVI Thematic Facility ⁽¹⁾.

By the present note, the Member States participating in the BMVI ⁽²⁾ are invited to submit an application under the specific action “**Support for national Schengen governance frameworks**”, in line with the actions listed in the above-mentioned Commission’s financing decision and work programme.

⁽¹⁾ [Integrated Border Management Fund – Border Management and Visa Instrument \(2021-27\) \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁽²⁾ Reference to Member States in this note should be understood as including the **Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland)**, for which the arrangements for their participation in the BMVI are in place.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Specific actions are implemented by one or more Member States participating in the BMVI ⁽³⁾ via funding received in addition to the allocation under their BMVI programmes.

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.

Specific actions must be implemented by the Member States in accordance with the BMVI ⁽⁴⁾ Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) ⁽⁵⁾. This includes the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Moreover, Member States must 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).

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 "for operations the total cost of which is below EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT).

3. CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

3.1. Indicative Budget available

The indicative amount envisaged for this call (BMVI /2025/SA/1.3.2) is **EUR 4 million** (including technical assistance).

The requested amount should not be **lower than EUR 400 000** and **not higher than EUR 1 000 000** per application.

Each Member State may submit only **one** application.

(3) Reference to Member States in this note should be understood as including the Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), for which the arrangements for their participation in the BMVI are in place.

(4) Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

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

If the objectives are not met, the Commission services may decide not to allocate the entire amount envisaged for this call. The Commission services may also decide to reduce the total amount of individual applications and/or establish a reserve list for applications or parts of applications.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The **2025 State of Schengen Report** ⁽⁶⁾ showed that around 65% of the recommendations following a Schengen evaluation remain unimplemented, many of which are related to strategic and governance aspects of the Schengen framework. Across all Schengen States, for instance, Schengen evaluations issued 1226 recommendations under the **national Schengen governance dimension**, of which 811 remain outstanding until March 2026. These concern inter-institutional coordination and cooperation for the effective implementation of the Schengen *acquis*, ineffective functioning of the authorities, insufficient national capabilities, fragmented situational awareness and information exchange, inadequate quality control systems in place, shortcomings on effective cross-sectoral implementation of large-scale IT systems, gaps on data protection, and fundamental rights aspects.

These deficiencies could result in critical vulnerabilities and impose significant operational consequences on the functioning of Schengen. These persistent gaps need to be addressed in order to prevent those deficiencies from undermining the integrity and overall security of the Schengen area. Repeated findings under the Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism (SEMM) show that these implementation deficiencies often stem not only from a lack of capacity, but from weak internal coordination and fragmented follow-up. Strengthening national Schengen governance is therefore also a prerequisite for adequately addressing evaluation recommendations and for ensuring coherence between national measures and Union-wide priorities.

The 2025 and 2026 State of Schengen Reports and the **Schengen cycle priorities** endorsed by the Council in June 2025 ⁽⁷⁾ identified the consolidation of national Schengen governance frameworks as a priority for all Schengen States, with a particular focus on developing effective national governance systems with stronger internal coordination of all Schengen-related matters and streamlined strategic processes. This political commitment was further reinforced in the **Schengen Declaration**, adopted in June 2025 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement ⁽⁸⁾, in which the Council committed to further consolidating Schengen governance at EU and national levels and underlined that appropriate EU-level funding for structural investments and for addressing identified priorities, vulnerabilities and deficiencies is key to a well-functioning Schengen area. Member States are therefore encouraged to take further action to improve their national Schengen governance frameworks and ensure the well-functioning of the Schengen area. This political commitment was most recently confirmed at the June 2026 Justice and Home Affairs Council, which adopted **Council Conclusions on strengthening EU and national Schengen governance** ⁽⁹⁾ inviting Member States to further develop an

⁽⁶⁾ COM/2025/185 final.

⁽⁷⁾ 9380/1/25.

⁽⁸⁾ 10068/25.

⁽⁹⁾ 9420/26.

integrated, whole-of-government approach ensuring coherent and coordinated action across all relevant policy areas, and underlining that appropriate resources (including EU funding) must be taken into due consideration for the effective implementation of national Schengen frameworks, including in the context of the next **Multiannual Financial Framework** (MFF).

Hence, this specific action is also launched in the context of the ongoing preparations for the next MFF programming cycle, in which strengthening Schengen governance and the integrity and security of the Schengen area is expected to become a central objective, with Member States required to direct funding towards projects that contribute to this goal. In this respect, Member States are strongly encouraged to carry out a thorough assessment of their outstanding Schengen evaluation recommendations, the priorities identified under the Schengen cycle, and the individual priorities communicated to them through their Schengen scoreboard letters, to identify the most pressing governance needs that could be addressed under this call. The lessons drawn from this specific action will inform the design of future funding instruments and contribute to building a shared understanding of what effective national Schengen governance looks like in practice.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

The objective of this specific action is to provide targeted support to Member States in strengthening structures and tools for their national Schengen governance framework. This will help foster operational coordination, enhance monitoring and facilitate effective and continuous Schengen implementation.

This call is deliberately horizontal in scope. It builds on, but is distinct from, the earlier BMVI Specific Action ‘To support Member States’ national strategies for a European integrated border management’ Ref: BMVI/2023/SA/1.2.3, that focused primarily on reinforcing cooperation between border management authorities in the context of European Integrated Border Management. The present call extends that logic to encompass all national authorities responsible for implementing the Schengen *acquis* (including border, police, migration, customs, judicial, and IT authorities), reflecting the integrated and cross-cutting nature of Schengen governance.

Applications for this specific action should take into account the institutional and administrative particularities of the Member State concerned. They could be put into effect by means of cooperation agreements between authorities which would lay down forms of cooperation, as well as concrete activities. Actions should primarily be focused on, and initiated by individual Member States, but may be extended to other Member States when the aim of the action is cooperation and the exchange of experiences.

The specific action can support the following activities:

1. **Audit, analysis, study or impact assessment** of the existing national Schengen governance structures (including an assessment of institutional responsibilities, task distribution, and inter-agency coordination arrangements) conducted either internally or by an external contractor. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of such an assessment, development of standard operating procedures and/or inter-agency cooperation agreements to address identified gaps and strengthen the national coordination framework.

2. **Training activities, seminars, workshops and simulation exercises** to strengthen the capabilities of all national authorities responsible for Schengen implementation to cooperate among themselves. Activities could include inter-agency workshops and simulation exercises, the establishment of centralised training systems on several areas of the Schengen *acquis* and the development of a national training strategy ensuring that all relevant staff receive basic, specialised and refresher training to be able to effectively implement specific elements of the Schengen *acquis*. Specific support may also be directed towards training national Schengen coordinators and their supporting staff, as well as building a national pool of Schengen evaluators. Member States may also organise or participate in joint training activities, study visits, and expert exchanges with other Schengen States, including on best practices identified in recent Schengen evaluations, as compiled in the annex of the 2026 State of Schengen Report ⁽¹⁰⁾.
3. **Targeted pilot projects** to test and improve practical cooperation, coordination and communication arrangements among national authorities responsible for Schengen implementation, particularly where Schengen evaluations or internal assessments have identified specific gaps in inter-agency cooperation. Eligible activities include field and table-top exercises, interoperability tests, and the piloting of new coordination or reporting mechanisms involving the relevant national authorities. Pilot projects may also be used to trial structural improvements (i.e. new inter-agency coordination arrangements, communication tools, strengthen human resource capacities) prior to their full-scale implementation.
4. **Development, implementation or upgrading of IT infrastructure and information management systems** to strengthen monitoring capacities, streamline inter-agency information sharing, and reduce administrative burden across national authorities responsible for Schengen implementation. Eligible activities include digital dashboards for tracking the implementation of Schengen evaluation recommendations and action plan milestones, case management tools, and inter-agency communication and reporting systems. Member States may also invest in the setting up of a shared national portal or platform consolidating relevant information across the different areas of Schengen implementation to support coordination and institutional knowledge management at all levels.

Applications should present a clear intervention logic, demonstrating the added value of the activities to be carried out. To that end, they should:

- a) Describe the existing organisational setup, particularly the authorities at the national level involved in Schengen implementation, as well as the relations between them and the existing levels and methods of cooperation.
- b) Describe the identified gaps and challenges, including the Schengen evaluation recommendations, and explain how the proposed activities under the specific action will address them and consolidate the Schengen evaluation framework. Illustrate any complementarities with actions financed under other EU instruments and funds.

⁽¹⁰⁾ SWD(2026) 150 final.

- c) Identify the national authorities responsible for, and involved in, the implementation of the activities under the specific action, and the national authorities (and, if applicable, other Member States) that would benefit from it.
- d) Provide a detailed workplan and explanation of how the requested EU contribution will be used to achieve the purpose of this call.

3.4. Additional guidance / requirements from Member States

For proposals selected, applicants are expected to participate in **monitoring and dissemination activities**, such as:

- Collection of information and data on project activities (participation of project beneficiaries in questionnaires, information and awareness-raising campaigns, studies).
- Transferability and peer learning potential: Workshops or committee meetings where Member States' projects would be presented and discussed with the aim of disseminating best practices in the Member States (e.g. Schengen Matters Working Party, Schengen Committee).
- Reports on the implementation of the project and discussion of the outputs in relevant fora (Schengen Committee, Working Parties for Schengen Matters, Frontiers, Law Enforcement, Information Exchange and Data Protection, Visa, and Integration, Migration and Expulsion).

3.5. Expected results following the call

The main expected results are to improve national Schengen governance structures and to address the relevant recommendations.

The supported actions are expected to result in:

- A structured diagnosis of the national governance structure and a concrete roadmap for its improvement, resulting in clearer institutional responsibilities, operational capacity and stronger inter-agency/ authority coordination;
- Practical validation of new or improved cooperation arrangements, with concrete lessons learnt feeding directly into the broader strengthening of the national framework; and
- More efficient and timely information flows between national authorities, supported by digital tools that reduce administrative fragmentation and improve monitoring of implementation.

These results are expected to contribute to a more coherent approach to Schengen implementation, addressing key areas including operational coordination, implementation monitoring, information management, and the implementation of the Schengen *acquis*.

Beyond the national level, this initiative is also expected to enhance cooperation and convergence of practices among Member States. By supporting structural improvements across a range of Member States simultaneously, this specific action contributes to raising the overall standard of Schengen governance across the Union and to building the shared foundation of mutual trust.

Stronger national Schengen governance frameworks will moreover produce indirect benefits for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum given that Schengen and Pact implementation are mutually reinforcing (sharing common institutional actors, operational processes and information flows). The coordination structures, strategic capacities and inter-agency arrangements supported under this call will also contribute to meeting the implementation requirements of the Pact.

For these reasons, the monitoring and dissemination activities referred to above form an integral part of the work to be carried out under the specific action between the successful applicants and the Commission.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the BMVI and the Schengen Associated Countries are eligible ⁽¹¹⁾.

The Specific Action proposed should not have started before 1 January 2025 and should be completed by 31 December 2029.

The Commission services will assess the applications submitted by the Member States. To be considered admissible an application must:

1. be submitted **within the deadline** (see below) to the BMVI specific actions functional mailbox HOME-BMVI-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu;
2. consist of the official BMVI/2025/SA/1.3.2 **application form** attached to this note together with its annexes, which must be readable and complete (all fields necessary for assessment are to be 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;

The Commission services will assess **admissible applications** based on the following criteria ⁽¹²⁾:

A. Relevance (maximum 45 points, minimum score 25 points):

⁽¹¹⁾ In the case of Liechtenstein, selected specific actions are to be implemented under direct management according to Article 3, scope of participation, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Principality of Liechtenstein on supplementary rules in relation to the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, for the period 2021 to 2027 (http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2024/200/oj).

⁽¹²⁾ Applications not meeting the minimum score of 25 points under criterion A, relevance, will not be further assessed. Applications must meet the minimum score under both criterion A; relevance, B, quality and C Impact, to be proposed for funding – depending on their overall ranking and budget availability.

1. Clarity and consistency of the objectives and scope of the application against this call's objectives and expected results: degree to which the proposal would contribute to supporting the national Schengen governance structure. Consideration will be given to the extent to which the application ensures the structured involvement of all relevant national authorities responsible for Schengen implementation, reflecting a genuine whole-of-government approach. **(10 points)**
2. Added value to ongoing efforts: degree to which the activities of the proposal reinforce and accompany existing activities relating to the improvement of coordination, information sharing and cooperation between national authorities **(10 points)**
3. Justification of identified needs: the extent to which the application demonstrates a clear diagnosis of existing gaps in the national Schengen governance structures, including by reference to outstanding Schengen evaluation recommendations or findings from national assessments. **(10 points)**
4. The four elements of the intervention logic listed under 3.3 *Scope and purpose of the specific action* (a-d) **(10 points)**

B. Quality and content (maximum 25 points, minimum score 15 points):

The appropriateness of the design (methodology, organisation of work: actors involved and their roles), the strategy for project management (including operational and financial management) and implementation (timetable); the envisaged communication activities; monitoring and reporting to achieve the expected results; risk management; and cost-effectiveness (breakdown of financial support requested and its appropriateness in relation to the scale and type of the activities and expected results).

C. Impact (30 points, minimum score 15 points):

1. Impact of the proposed action in relation to the objective of the call: how the project will contribute to improving the overall Schengen implementation at national level. Under this point consideration will be given to the role of the action in the follow-up on relevant Schengen evaluation recommendations. **(15 points)**
2. Sustainability: how the project will continue having an impact on national Schengen governance after the completion of the planned activities, through the provision of sufficient resources (financial, human, etc.) and, where appropriate, formal institutional arrangements. **(15 points)**

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application

Member States are invited to submit their application by **24 September 2026** at the latest, using the official BMVI/2025/SA/1.3.2 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes. The application may 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 application.

In line with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ⁽¹³⁾, any document held by the Commission, including documents containing sensitive information, may be subject to a request for public access.

To ensure equal and fair treatment of the applications and allow the Commission to allocate at the same date all the available funding, all applications will be assessed simultaneously. Therefore, applications 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 applications in case the deadline for the submission of applications is extended.

E-mail address for the application

The applications should be submitted to the BMVI specific actions functional mailbox: HOME-BMVI-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 services 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 the expression of interest may be sent by **10 September 2026** at the latest, to the same BMVI specific actions functional mailbox.

Requests should only be sent **by the Managing authority**. The Managing Authority has an important role to explain to the potential beneficiaries the applicable rules and specificities of the programmes in general and of a specific action in particular and to help prepare applications for a specific action. The Managing Authority should be the contact point and take the responsibility to review questions from potential beneficiaries and raise questions to or request clarifications from the Commission services where necessary. 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.

Member States will be informed of the outcome of the assessment of the applications towards **November 2026**.

⁽¹³⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents

5. AMENDMENT OF THE BMVI PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After having been informed of the outcome of the call for expression of interest, each successful Member State shall submit to the Commission a request to amend its BMVI 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 the relevant specific objective, and table 6 of the programme).

When amending a BMVI programme of a Member States, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure ⁽¹⁴⁾:

1. For Member States that have included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 1 of the BMVI Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Support for national Schengen governance frameworks” in table(s) 2.1.3 of the relevant specific objective(s) in their *initially approved* BMVI programme: expenditure for the Specific Action will be eligible as of [01/01/2025].
2. For Member States that have *not* included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 1 of the BMVI Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Support for national Schengen governance frameworks” in the tables in the table(s) 2.1.3 of the relevant specific objective(s) in their initially approved BMVI 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 BMVI programme that will add the respective types of interventions in the programme.

Yours faithfully,

Silvia MICHELINI

Enclosures: Annex I - Application form (to be filled in)
 Annex II – Budget form (to be filled in)
 Annex III – Performance Indicators

c.c.: Permanent Representations – JHA Counsellors

⁽¹⁴⁾ Art. 63(7) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.