



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

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

Brussels
HOME.E.1/MGM

HOME-Funds/2026/47

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

Subject: Launch of the call for expression of interest under the specific action “Innovative and automated solutions and equipment for the facilitation of (pre-) registration in the Entry/Exit System at land and sea borders - EES” under the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) – Reference BMVI/2026/SA/1.5.3.

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 (the BMVI Regulation) 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 Article 8 of the above-mentioned Regulation and in accordance with the relevant financing decision and work programme for the Thematic Facility ⁽¹⁾.

By the present note, the Commission launches a call for expression of interest under the specific action **“Innovative and automated solutions and equipment for the facilitation of (pre-) registration in the Entry/Exit System at land and sea borders - EES”**, 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 \(2021-27\) - Migration and Home Affairs.](#)

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Specific actions are implemented by one or more Member States participating in the BMVI ⁽²⁾. via funding received in addition to the allocation under their 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 Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) ⁽³⁾. This includes compliance with 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 the BMVI Regulation).

Your attention is drawn to one provision of the CPR. As regard the value added tax ("VAT") eligibility regime, Article 64(1)(c) 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, BMVI/2026/SA/1.5.3, is **EUR 37 million** (including technical assistance).

The requested amount should **not be lower than EUR 500 000** and **not higher than EUR 7 million** per application.

⁽²⁾ Reference to the 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

⁽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.

Each Member State may submit **only one application**. Within the application, there may be different work packages – concerning, for instance, different solutions/pilots for different Border Crossing Points (BCPs). If the application includes different work packages, it should describe each of them separately in the application form and in the budget form.

If the objectives of the call are not met, the Commission services may decide not to allocate the entire amount. 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/work packages.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The Entry/Exit System (EES) ⁽⁴⁾, which is in full operation as of 10 April 2026, contributes to improving border management and security at the external borders of the Member States, as well as facilitating border crossings.

Since the EES digitalises border management and supports the automation of border checks, it is expected to gradually reduce waiting times at external borders and to make travel to the Schengen area more efficient for third-country nationals (TCNs). However, registering TCNs in the EES at land or sea BCPs may still pose logistical challenges, particularly for those travelling in vehicles, and especially at the time of their first entry for a short stay in the Schengen area. Several factors explain these challenges, including persistent structural deficiencies such as staff shortages, inadequate training of border guards, or insufficient automation, all of which may lead to delays or hinder the full registration in the EES. In addition, technical difficulties in the deployment of the EES may contribute to longer waiting times, particularly during peak periods.

The Commission monitors and supports Member States that are encountering technical and operational challenges at their borders to ensure, as a matter of priority, full compliance with the EES legal framework. While this work is ongoing, this specific action is intended to address solely the needs related to automation of border checks in land and sea BCPs for passengers in vehicles as automation is considered the most effective way to help Member States fully comply with the requirements of the EES legal framework, while reducing processing times per passenger.

This focus on automation responds to a key implementation gap at land and sea BCPs, where the operating environment makes the deployment of automated solutions considerably more difficult than at airports.

At airports, automated border processes are already widely used because procedures take place in a more controlled and predictable setting. By contrast, land and sea BCPs must manage a combination of constraints that make compliance with EES requirements more

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulations (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011 ('EES Regulation').

operationally demanding and make automation not only more complex to introduce, but also more necessary to ensure both effective registration and smooth traffic flows.

Some of the identified constraints are the following:

- Physical constraints: limited and non-flexible space, often without the possibility to redesign flows easily;
- Operational constraints: no real ‘staging’ areas where travellers can wait, prepare, or be channelled before checks;
- Legal and access-related limits: travellers may only be allowed in certain restricted areas, reducing where equipment or pre-processing steps can be placed;
- Technical constraints: infrastructure is often less suited to installing and integrating automated systems;
- Human-related constraints: border procedures may rely more heavily on staff intervention and manual handling;
- Environmental challenges: especially at land and sea crossings, equipment must function in adverse weather and other difficult outdoor conditions.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

This specific action aims to:

- assist Member States in achieving full automation at land and sea border crossing points for passengers in vehicles in order to facilitate and speed up the pre-registration and registration in the EES while reducing waiting times;
- support more technologically advanced solutions, taking into consideration the challenges identified at those BCPs following the entry into operation of the EES.

It is complementary with, and builds upon, the specific action on “Integrated solutions for the facilitation and automation of border crossings”, BMVI/2023/SA/1.1.3, aimed at the optimisation of border controls when the EES was not yet in full operation.

It focuses on the **procurement and deployment of specialised, automated in-vehicle biometric capture solutions tailored to land and sea BCPs** that would achieve the above-mentioned objectives, including **pilot projects** as well as **studies aimed at accelerating the EES processes**.

The scope covers, in order of priority:

1. **Fully automated solutions** including Automated Border Control (ABC) systemstailored for registering and/or verifying passengers travelling in vehicles, as well as relevant pilots;
2. **(Pre-)registration systems**, provided they are accompanied by technical means that allow progressively full automation, including relevant pilots;
3. **Studies** for identifying and testing new accelerated procedures for the implementation of EES processes at land and sea borders;
4. **Self-Service Systems and (pre-)registration solutions**, only where no basic or full automation whatsoever is currently in place at the BCP concerned.

When assessing the relevance of the applications in the above-mentioned priority order, the Commission services will take into account, in addition, the degree to which they focus on particular BCPs encountering the most challenges, i.e. which, since the full deployment of the EES on 10 April 2026, have been confronted – as demonstrated by statistical data – with a high throughput (i.e., a high amount of travellers and vehicles), a lack of technological capacity to complete biometric registrations and, as a consequence, systematic excessive waiting times. Such waiting times may be reduced by accelerating, in the context of this specific action, EES processes through increased automation and innovative solutions.

The target is:

- a) **individual Member States** that aim to build, develop, update or deploy any or all of the above-mentioned automated means, or conduct studies and carry out pilots with the aim to reduce processing times in the EES (pre-) registration.
- b) **groups of Member States** that aim to build, develop, update or deploy any or all of the above-mentioned automated means, or conduct studies and carry out pilots with the aim to reduce processing times in the EES (pre-) registration.

In this case, for the sake of efficiency the Commission services recommend the choice of option 1 (= allocation of funding to the programme of the lead Member State only), as set out in Note HOME/Funds/2022/07.

As regards **full automated solutions**, the specific action may support:

- Weather-proof **self-service systems**, positioned alongside vehicle lanes at appropriate heights for different vehicle types, including passenger cars and commercial vehicles, enabling travellers to complete the required self-service procedures, including biometric capture, without leaving their vehicles.
- **Adaptive facial image acquisition solutions**: approaches may include telescopic or auto-adjusting cameras, multi-camera arrays, adaptive visible-light illumination, burst/multi-frame capture, or a combination of these. Biometric data quality assessment toolkits such as ‘USK’ User Software Kit could be used.
- Integration of the biometric data quality assessment toolkit (**USK** - User Software Kit) provided by eu-LISA into the biometric acquisition ecosystem.

As regards **other automated solutions** for land and sea BCPs, the specific action may support equipment that contributes to the facilitation of border crossings with full biometrics and to the reduction of processing times for EES registration, such as:

- Compatible **fingerprint readers** that can be extended or positioned to reach passengers inside vehicles, enabling fingerprint capture from all seating positions without requiring passengers to exit the vehicle.
- Compatible **facial image acquisition equipment**, capable of capturing biometric-quality facial images of occupants from different seating positions within a vehicle, with the objective of eliminating the need for passengers to exit the vehicle. The equipment must contain controlled or adaptive illumination in visible spectrum, to support compliant facial image capture under the specific conditions of in-vehicle capture.

- **Hardware and/or software** to be deployed in the border crossing point(s) for the purpose of integrating or upgrading automated solutions for registration of travellers in the EES.
- **Mobile app:** integration of the EU-level mobile application (the Travel to Europe app) that allows TCNs to pre-enrol their alphanumeric passport data and facial images securely from home or while driving, in national systems. This integration may cover feasibility assessment, design and adaptation to the national system, testing, pilot projects and deployment.
- **Pilot projects** testing new advanced automated solutions with the aim to examine their efficiency and impact on EES processing operations.
- **Studies, proof of concepts** and other relevant actions for solutions assessing the placement of robust, weather-proof self-service systems or devices located in designated places close to passport control lines. The studies may measure how much bottlenecking is reduced when travellers complete their first-time biometric enrolment independently under the supervision of technical means.
- **In-vehicle biometric capture solutions related to handheld border checks devices** that would allow border guards to scan passports and capture biometrics directly at the vehicle window. Solutions may focus on battery life, outdoor connectivity to the National Uniform Interface (NUI), and biometric capture speeds under adverse weather conditions ⁽⁵⁾.
- **In-vehicle biometric capture solutions related to drive-through biometric corridors** that would track the effectiveness of specialised gantries or drive-by lanes equipped with advanced cameras capable of facial recognition while passengers remain inside the vehicle.
- Integration of the biometric data quality assessment toolkit (**‘USK’** - User Software Kit) provided by eu-LISA into the acquisition ecosystem, wherever feasible, to support guided acquisition through a biometric quality-feedback loop.

Applications submitted under this specific action and the activities planned therein must be designed and implemented in full compliance with the Schengen Borders Code and the EES and ETIAS legal framework, including the technical requirements related to capturing fingerprints and facial image provided by Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/329 laying down the specifications for the quality, resolution and use of fingerprints and facial image for biometric verification and identification in the EES ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁵⁾ sBMS fingerprint quality assessment is based on NFIQ2, which is not designed for contactless workflows where RGB images captured using smartphone cameras are processed into friction-ridge images. Such solutions may therefore raise compatibility and interoperability issues with contact-based fingerprint images, potentially affecting identification accuracy.

⁽⁶⁾ [Implementing decision - 2019/329 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

3.4. Expected results following the call

Support under this specific action is expected to result in an improvement in registration in the EES of all files with both biometric identifiers as well as a decrease in processing and waiting times compared to previous levels, with priority on particularly challenging BCPs.

The planned improvement must be presented by comparing, by simulation, the throughput per lane or per BCP with and without automation. Member States whose applications are selected will be requested to inform the Commission services about their progress and will be encouraged to present the results in the Smart Borders Committee, to support peer learning and exchange of good practices on solutions relating to the processing at sea and land BCPs. For that purpose, the Commission services may suggest appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements. The Commission services may suggest specific indicators and also organise on-site visits.

Member States are required to indicate, in the excel sheet accompanying their application, for each targeted BCP, base line data:

- The average levels of waiting times in 2025 and the first 8 months of 2026, with a breakdown per month;
- The latest average EES processing time per traveller (month of the application), distinguishing between first-time enrolment and subsequent verification, as well as visa-required and visa-exempt travellers;
- The number of border crossings in 2025 and the first 8 months of 2026, with a breakdown per month, and the number of vehicles passing through, indicating the number and share currently processed through automated means, where applicable;
- The number of manual booths and of automated systems currently in operation at the time of the application, as well as the total number of lanes at the BCP and the possibility where applicable to dynamically use lanes;
- The monthly percentage of files registered with biometrics at that specific BCP as of 10 April 2026.

The application should present the intentions on the throughput, identify the targets for improvements to the baseline covered by the activities in the application, but also indicate possible accompanying measures necessary to achieve the objective of ensuring effective deployment of automation, considering factors not necessarily covered by the budget of the application, such as staff deployment, training of border guards, changes in the infrastructure at the BCP concerned, information and flow management actions..

Member States are also required to indicate in their application the activities and outputs relating to the measurement and evaluation of the expected results. Applications must include at least quantified targets for the following core indicators, each measured against the corresponding baseline data provided above:

- The expected decrease in average waiting times per traveller in low and peak season compared to the existing levels.
- The expected decrease in average EES processing time per traveller, distinguishing between first-time enrolment and subsequent verification as well as visa required and visa exempt travellers;

- The expected increase in throughput per lane per hour (travellers and vehicles), compared to the current throughput of manual booths and the expected number and share of automated lanes out of the total number of lanes at the BCPs
- The increase towards the aim of 100% of files registered with full biometrics following the funded solutions.

The budget form can be used to specify the related costs, including costs to assess alternatives in the event the results are not as planned.

As regards applications for studies, these projects should produce results quantifying processing time reduction (in seconds per passenger) across both first-time enrolment and subsequent journeys; operational concepts documenting smart lane layouts, passenger flow management, and system integration schemas for land and sea borders; actionable standard operating procedures detailing business-continuity configurations and queue management protocols; open-access technical specifications, procurement-ready capability matrices, implementation guidance enabling adoption by other EU and Schengen States.

3.5. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All Member States participating in the BMVI and the Schengen associated countries are eligible ⁽⁷⁾.

The Commission services will assess the submitted applications. 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/2026/SA/1.5.3 **Application Form** attached to this note, together with its annexes (statistical data, budget form, and where applicable partnership declaration forms) 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 (in the lead for the action).
5. For applications submitted by a lead Member State on behalf of two or more Member States, include the **partnership declaration forms signed by the Managing Authority of all participating Member States** ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ In the case of Liechtenstein, specific actions are to be implemented under direct management, according to its Agreement with the Union on supplementary rules in relation to the BMVI for the period 2021-2027.

⁽⁸⁾ Please refer to the note HOME-Funds/2022/07 on the arrangements between partners to be sought when submitting proposals for transnational specific actions.

The Commission services will assess admissible applications on the basis of the following assessment criteria ⁽⁹⁾:

A. Relevance (50 points; minimum score: 25 points)

1. **Clarity and consistency** of the objectives and scope of the application against the objectives and expected results identified in this call for expression of interest (see points 3.3 and 3.4).
2. **Coherence and complementarity** with the activities supported by Union funding on the EES.

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

1. **Maturity** of the proposal: (i) appropriateness of the design and planned implementation (including a timetable setting out the sequencing and duration of the envisaged activities and justifying the extent to which their duration is realistic); (ii) organisation of work and strategy for project management (operational and financial) and monitoring; (iii) approach to data management enabling the measurement of the results referred to in point 3.4 of this call; (iv) integration of considerations on security, cybersecurity, integrity, reliability and resilience of components and systems; (v) considering all the above, identification of potential risks and proposed mitigating measures.
2. **Cost-effectiveness**: detailed breakdown of the requested financial support and its appropriateness in relation to the scale and type of the envisaged activities; demonstration of the overall cost-effectiveness.

C. Impact (20 points; minimum score: 10 points)

1. **Impact** in relation to the objectives of the call: to what extent does the application lead to an increase of the biometric registration of travellers in the EES and to what extent to the decrease in processing and waiting times per traveller compared to previous levels. The application should explain the Union added value of the actions, translated into the strategic importance in the EU of the targeted BCPs, in terms of size, position, level of traffic, processing and waiting times per traveller.

3.6. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their applications by 15 January 2027 at the latest, using the official BMVI/2026/1.5.3 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes.

Applications may be submitted in any official EU language (abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, it is **strongly advised to use English for the entire application**.

⁽⁹⁾ Applications not meeting the minimum score under criterion A, relevance, will not be further assessed. Applications must meet the minimum score defined for each category (A, B and C) to be proposed for funding - depending on their overall ranking and on budget availability.

In line with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ⁽¹⁰⁾, 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 request for clarification by the Member States on this call for expression of interest may be sent by **30 November** at the latest to the same functional mailbox HOME-BMVI-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu.

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 March 2027.

⁽¹⁰⁾ 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.

4. 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 should 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 State, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure ⁽¹¹⁾:

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 this specific action 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 1 January 2023.
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 this Specific Action 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

Marie BOURJOU

Enclosure: Annex 1: Application form
 Annex 1a: Statistical data
 Annex 2: Budget form
 Annex 3: Partnership Declaration form
 Annex 4: Indicators

⁽¹¹⁾ Art. 63(7) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.