Ex-post evaluation of the National Programme of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) 2014-2020

Final report

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1. List of Abbreviations

Table 1. List of Abbreviations Used in the Document with Explanations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ABW	Internal Security Agency
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CAWI	Computer Assisted Web Interview
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interview
CBA	Central Anti-Corruption Bureau
CBŚP	Central Bureau of Police Investigation
COPE	Centre for European Projects Management
EUROSUR	European Border Surveillance System
FBW	Internal Security Fund
FGI	Focus Group Interview
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IDI	In-Depth Interview
ISF	Internal Security Fund
KAS	National Revenue Administration
KE	European Commission
MSWiA	Ministry of the Interior and Administration
OPZ	Terms of Reference
PSP	State Fire Service
RCB	Government Centre for Security
SG	Border Guard
UE	European Union
VIS	Visa Information System

2. Summary

The Internal Security Fund (ISF) was established by the European Union in 2014 as a continuation of the External Borders Fund from the 2007–2013 financial perspective. The primary goal of the ISF was to improve border management, implement a common visa policy, and effectively combat organized cross-border crime. The fund was divided into two components: the "police" component, i.e., the Instrument for Financial Support for Police Cooperation, Crime Prevention and Combating, and Crisis Management, focusing on police cooperation and crisis management, and the "borders and visa" component, i.e., the Instrument for Financial Support for External Borders and Visa, supporting the protection of the EU's external borders.

The ex-post evaluation covered the 2014–2020 perspective and aimed to analyze the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of actions implemented under the ISF. Particular attention was given to the adequacy of project selection criteria with the strategic goals of the fund, such as improving internal security and strengthening the operational capacity of services.

- **Effectiveness of Goal Achievement**: The Responsible Authority effectively achieved the program's key goals through efficient management and well-designed mechanisms for international cooperation. This allowed for the fulfillment of key program objectives, such as improving border management, strengthening international police cooperation, and developing IT systems supporting visa policy. Particularly noteworthy were the expansion of border infrastructure, modernization of technical security systems, and the implementation of advanced technologies supporting security services.
- **Efficiency of Fund Utilization**: Efficient use of funds was possible thanks to a well-planned management and monitoring system. Implemented oversight mechanisms enabled optimal allocation of financial resources, resulting in high cost-effectiveness. Training activities, which enhanced the competencies of Border Guard and Police officers, were also evaluated highly positively.
- **Sustainability of Actions Implemented under ISF**: The activities implemented within the Internal Security Fund are characterized by a high level of sustainability, a critical component of the program's effectiveness evaluation. Investments in infrastructure and modern technologies established a durable foundation for further strengthening internal security systems (e.g., technical security systems). Many initiatives, such as the modernization of border infrastructure and development of IT systems, have long-term impacts, with positive effects expected to persist for years after the funding ends. Special attention should be given to beneficiaries' ability to continue projects through proper staff training and provision of technical support.
- **Contribution to Security Development**: The Responsible Authority played a key role in promoting innovative solutions in border protection and crime prevention. Particular attention is drawn to contributions in developing crisis management systems and strengthening cooperation with EU agencies, such as FRONTEX. The fund also supported initiatives aimed at combating cross-border crime and enhancing residents' security.

Moreover, the analyses conducted did not identify significant risks during the implementation of projects financed under the Internal Security Fund that could jeopardize the achievement of the established objectives. At the same time, respondents emphasized that without the financial and organizational support provided by the ISF, many projects would not have been implemented, or their scope would have been significantly limited. The funding enabled the implementation of key actions crucial for internal security, such as the modernization of border infrastructure, the purchase of advanced technologies, and the execution of training programs.

In summary, the activities undertaken under the Internal Security Fund are an example of well-organized and effective use of public funds, resulting in tangible benefits in the form of strengthened internal security and alignment with European Union policy. For this reason, it is crucial that the program continues in the next financial perspective, enabling further enhancement of security and the development of measures to address emerging challenges.

3. Introduction/Context of the Study

3.1. Research Background

The Internal Security Fund (ISF) was established by the European Union in 2014 as part of the European strategy for internal security, continuing the activities previously implemented under the External Borders Fund, which operated during the 2007–2013 financial perspective within the framework of the general SOLID program, "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows." The overall goal of the Fund was to improve border management, enhance the common visa policy, and effectively prevent and combat organized cross-border crime.

The ISF was divided into two main components, reflecting the internal security priorities of the European Union:

The police component focuses on police cooperation, crime prevention and combating, and crisis management.	**The borders and visa component** is responsible for the protection of the European Union's external borders and the implementation of the common visa policy.

The ISF National Program defines the management structure of the fund in Poland and sets operational and specific objectives for the activities supported by the ISF. The key institutions involved in the fund's management and control process are:

Responsible Authority:	**Delegated Authority:**	**Audit Authority:**
Department of European Funds at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), responsible for the implementation and oversight of the ISF in Poland.	Centre for European Projects Management (COPE) at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), responsible for financial and operational monitoring of the implemented projects.	Head of the National Revenue Administration (KAS), acting as the auditor to ensure the proper use of financial resources.

The main goal of the ex-post evaluation study is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes of activities implemented under the ISF National Program for 2014–2020. This evaluation aims to determine the extent to which projects financed by the Fund contributed to achieving the set objectives and improving internal security in Poland and at the European Union level.

The specific objectives of the study include:

1. Analyzing the effectiveness of activities financed under the ISF, particularly in improving border management and strengthening international police cooperation.

2. Evaluating the efficiency of fund utilization in projects, including administrative costs and the quality of management.
3. Assessing the adequacy of interventions undertaken in response to changing needs in internal security and crisis management.
4. Identifying examples of good practices and barriers in project implementation, which can serve as a basis for drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations for the future.
5. Evaluating the sustainability of results achieved within the projects, including determining the extent to which the effects of activities will be maintained after the end of ISF financial support.

The study covers the period from the beginning of ISF eligibility (i.e., January 1, 2014) to the date of signing the contract for this study. Formally, the analysis encompasses the entire implementation period of the Fund from 2014 to 2020, although certain parts may build on findings from previous interim evaluations without duplicating them.

The cutoff date for the information and documents used in the study will be the activities implemented within the 112 ISF projects carried out since 2014 and settled by June 30, 2024. The contractor is required to consider the extension of the Fund's eligibility period to June 30, 2024, and to determine the impact of this extension on project implementation and the achievement of the Fund's objectives.

The evaluation of the Internal Security Fund was conducted by an external, independent team of experts. A methodology aligned with guidelines was employed, ensuring full independence of the research process from the authorities responsible for program implementation. The contractors possessed experience in analyzing EU programs, which guaranteed high quality and reliability of the study.

The evaluation process relied on data triangulation, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The analyses were supplemented with data from individual interviews and an expert panel. This approach enabled a multidimensional view of project implementation and the identification of key mechanisms affecting their efficiency. Data triangulation confirmed the consistency of conclusions by cross-referencing various sources of information. This approach increased the reliability of the findings and allowed for a precise assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of actions implemented under the Fund.

3.2. Brief Description of the Applied Methodology and Data Sources

Description of the Research Concept and the Approach to Linking Individual Study Elements to Achieve the Research Objective

To achieve the objectives of the study, the Contractor proposed using a Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE) approach, with a particular focus on the Realistic Evaluation method developed by Pawson and Tilley. According to this concept, the effectiveness of an intervention

is determined by its context and the mechanisms triggered by the implemented actions. The outcomes of the intervention (both intended and unintended) are the result of these two factors combined with the way stakeholders engage in the implementation of activities.

Realistic Evaluation assumes two key components:

- **Conceptual Component**: Reconstructing the logic of the intervention.
- **Empirical Component**: Testing the assumptions underlying the intervention logic.

In the evaluation of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for the period 2014–2020, the following research steps were undertaken to support the realization of these components:

☐ **Conceptual Component – Reconstructing the Logic of Intervention**:

- **Detailed analysis of program documentation (desk research)** to identify key assumptions, objectives, and program indicators.
- **Development of an intervention logic framework**, outlining the relationships between objectives, activities, and intended outcomes.

☐ **Empirical Component – Testing the Logic of Intervention**:

- **Desk Research Analysis**:
  - o Examination of existing data from project documentation, implementation reports, and financial statements.
  - o Assessment of the extent to which program objectives were achieved and verification of the consistency of documentation with practice.
- **Qualitative Research**:
  - o **In-depth individual interviews (IDI)** with representatives of beneficiaries, managing authorities, and key stakeholders to identify barriers and success factors.
  - o **Expert panel discussions** to validate preliminary findings with opinions from independent experts.
- **Case Study**:
  - o Analysis of selected projects distinguished by their efficiency or innovation to identify best practices and formulate recommendations.

Linking Study Elements with Primary and Specific Objectives
Each stage of the study aimed to provide data to verify the assumptions underlying the intervention logic:

- **Desk Research Analysis**: Enabled the assessment of whether the scope of support and implemented actions aligned with the defined goals and needs.
- **In-depth Interviews**: Allowed an exploration of the practical aspects of program implementation, including barriers and mechanisms activating change.
- **Expert Panel**: Provided an opportunity to validate the results of previous stages and develop joint recommendations.

- **Case Studies**: Delivered detailed analyses of the effectiveness of selected projects, highlighting their context and mechanisms of action.

Sources and Research Tools The proposed methodology included the use of the following data sources and tools:

- **Reliable Secondary Data**: Including program documentation, project implementation reports, and results of previous studies.
- **Quantitative Data**: Collected through desk research analyses and surveys.
- **Qualitative Data**: Sourced from in-depth interviews (IDIs) and the expert panel.
- **Expert Knowledge**: Utilized to verify conclusions and formulate recommendations.

Stakeholder Inclusion The study involved a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- **Representatives of ISF beneficiaries and applicants**: To evaluate practical experiences related to program implementation.
- **Managing and supervising authorities**: To incorporate decision-makers' perspectives and ensure alignment with program objectives.
- **Security experts**: To develop joint recommendations through the expert panel.
- **Project data analysts**: To facilitate detailed case studies.

Implementation and Conclusions The methodology encompassed key evaluation stages:

1. **Reconstructing the Logic of Intervention**: Detailed analysis of program documentation to identify program assumptions and create an intervention logic framework.
2. **Testing the Logic of Intervention**: Through empirical data analysis, IDIs, the expert panel, and case studies to verify assumptions and identify success mechanisms.
3. **Formulating Recommendations**: Practical guidelines for future actions in similar programs based on the obtained results.

Methodological Comprehensive Approach The analysis indicates that the proposed methodology meets all requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR). Each applied research technique plays a specific role in the evaluation process and contributes to achieving the primary objectives of the study. Additional techniques would not provide significant new insights, making the proposed approach optimal in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

Scientific Basis The methodology was developed based on recognized academic publications, including:

- R. Pawson, N. Tilley, *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage, London, 1997.
- T.A. Grzeszczyk, *Modeling the Evaluation of European Projects*, PLACET Publishing, Warsaw, 2012.
- N.K. Denzin, *The Research Act*, Aldine, Chicago, 1970.

Additional Materials:

- Documents prepared by the European Commission on managing EU funds, such as *Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators*.
- World Bank and OECD reports on program evaluation in economic, social, and security development.
- Publications by organizations like UNDP and ILO, providing conceptual frameworks and examples of evaluation in complex settings.

National Guidelines:

- Guidelines of the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy regarding the evaluation of EU funds in Poland.
- Documentation from national institutions, such as the National Evaluation Unit (KJE), containing guidelines for conducting evaluation studies in compliance with EU requirements.
- Publications and recommendations of the Polish Economic Institute related to public program effectiveness research.

Examples of Best Practices:

- Case studies published under international research projects, such as Horizon 2020 or Interreg, presenting effective evaluation strategies and key mechanisms of success in social and economic projects.
- Analyses of the effectiveness of programs similar to ISF, allowing comparisons of results and adaptation of proven solutions.

Methodological Manuals:

- Documents such as *Evaluation Methodology Manual* (OECD) or *Impact Evaluation in Practice* (World Bank), detailing research techniques like quantitative and qualitative analysis and data triangulation.
- Academic publications on Realistic Evaluation, including *Realistic Evaluation* by Pawson and Tilley, providing the theoretical foundation for the applied approach.

Statistical Data and Public Databases:

- Use of databases such as Eurostat, GUS (Central Statistical Office), and OECD databases, providing key quantitative information on socio-economic conditions in regions covered by the ISF program.
- Monitoring program indicators data to assess the extent to which program activities met the defined objectives.

Scientific Publications and Analytical Reports:

- Academic articles from journals such as *Journal of Evaluation* or *Public Administration Review*, providing the latest knowledge on innovative evaluation methods.

- Reports prepared by independent think tanks, such as CASE or the European Policy Centre, analyzing challenges and successes in public programs.

The proposed concept guarantees not only a thorough analysis of the results achieved under the Internal Security Fund but also the identification of areas requiring improvement, contributing valuable input to planning future interventions.

Catalogue of Research Questions

An essential aspect of the research concept is appropriately linking research objectives, questions, and evaluation criteria, as presented in the following table:

Table 1. Catalogue of Research Questions[1]

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-questions
Relevance	Were the Program's objectives adequate to the changing needs and challenges in internal security?	1. Did the actions implemented under ISF address the key threats related to cross-border crime and illegal migration? 2. How did the program adapt to changing needs in border protection and crisis management?
Effectiveness	Were the actions implemented under the ISF effective in achieving their objectives?	1. What specific results were achieved in improving internal security and border protection in Poland? 2. To what extent did the interventions improve international cooperation in combating organized and cross-border crime? 3. Were the objectives of the visa policy achieved through ISF support?
Efficiency	Were the funds utilized cost-effectively in relation to the achieved results?	1. What were the administrative costs of project implementation, and how did they affect the

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[1] The correlation table is presented in the annex, Chapter 4 (Correlation Table).

Criterion	Main Question	Sub-questions
		efficiency of actions? 2. Was project management efficient in terms of resource allocation and risk management? 3. To what extent did the funds support cost-effective activities?
Sustainability	Do the results of the actions implemented under ISF have a lasting impact, and will they be sustained after financial support ends?	1. What mechanisms were implemented to ensure the sustainability of project results financed by ISF? 2. To what extent are project beneficiaries capable of continuing actions after funding ends?
Coherence	Were the objectives and actions of ISF consistent with other EU-funded policies and programs in the area of internal security?	1. What were the linkages between ISF activities and other EU funds and programs, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) or other EU financial instruments? 2. Were ISF activities consistent with national internal security strategies?
Complementarity	To what extent were ISF actions complementary to other national and EU policies and programs?	1. To what extent did ISF actions complement other national or EU programs, especially in the areas of police cooperation and border protection?
EU Added Value	How did ISF contribute to achieving EU policy objectives in a way that would not have been possible at the national level alone?	1. What specific benefits resulted from implementing ISF actions in the context of EU-wide priorities related to internal security?

Study Objective

The primary objective of the ex-post evaluation study was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effects and outcomes of activities implemented under the National Program of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for 2014–2020. The study aimed to assess the extent to which funded projects contributed to achieving strategic objectives and enhancing internal security, both at the national level and in the context of the European Union's security policy.

The specific objectives of the study included:

1. Analyzing the effectiveness of actions financed under the ISF, particularly in improving border management and strengthening international police cooperation.
2. Evaluating the efficiency of fund utilization in projects, including administrative costs and management quality.
3. Examining the adequacy of interventions in response to evolving needs in internal security and crisis management.
4. Identifying examples of best practices and barriers in project implementation, which can serve as a basis for drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations for the future.
5. Assessing the sustainability of results achieved within the projects, including determining the extent to which the outcomes will be maintained after the ISF financial support ends.

Scope of the Study

Time Scope The study covered the period from January 1, 2014, the beginning of eligibility for the Internal Security Fund (ISF), to the date of signing the contract for the execution of this study. This includes the full cycle of fund implementation during 2014–2020, accounting for changes introduced during the extended eligibility period until June 30, 2024.

The analysis encompassed all key events and activities implemented under the ISF during this period, enabling a comprehensive evaluation of their impact on achieving the program's objectives. The cutoff date for the information used was set as the completion and settlement of 112 projects by June 30, 2024. Special attention was given to analyzing the impact of the decision to extend the Fund's eligibility period on efficiency, effectiveness, and the achievement of intended results. The study included both historical data and current reports to provide the fullest context for project implementation and outcomes.

Subject Scope The study's subject scope encompassed all entities involved in the implementation and management of the ISF in Poland. The following groups of entities were particularly considered:

1. **Responsible Authority** – The central unit responsible for coordinating and overseeing ISF implementation in Poland.

2. **Delegated Authority** – Institutions implementing specific actions under the ISF in accordance with program guidelines and objectives.
3. **Project Beneficiaries** – 112 entities that received ISF support between 2014 and 2024, carrying out activities in internal security, border management, and international cooperation.

The study included the experiences and perspectives of various groups of beneficiaries, including:

- **Public institutions** (e.g., Police, Border Guard, State Fire Service),
- **Non-governmental organizations**,
- **Other entities** implementing projects in crisis management and internal security.

The analysis covered diverse aspects of project implementation, including their adequacy to needs, cost-efficiency, sustainability of results, and alignment with other national and EU programs. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the ISF's impact on Poland's internal security system.

4. Intervention Logic

The intervention logic of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for 2014–2020 was based on identifying key socio-economic needs and responding to challenges related to the internal security of the European Union (EU). A detailed analysis is presented in the annex to the final report: Chapter 2.1. (Table 1. Objectives of the ISF National Program for 2014–2020, number of projects, and examples of funded activities).

The interventions under the Fund aimed to address priority needs in border management, combating organized crime, and strengthening police and technological cooperation among EU Member States.

The interventions implemented within the ISF arose from the dynamically changing socio-economic and political context. The key challenges shaping the Fund's actions included:

1. **Increase in cross-border crime** – Human trafficking, drug smuggling, and cybercrime required immediate strengthening of law enforcement agencies' operational capacities.
2. **Migration crises** – Particularly during 2015–2016, when the influx of migrants at the EU's external borders increased the need for investments in border infrastructure and information systems.
3. **Growing threats to internal security** – Including terrorist threats and the need for improved international coordination.

Strategic Objective

The strategic objective of the ISF was to support Member States in effectively managing the EU's external borders, combating crime, and fostering police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

Key Actions Implemented Under the Program

1. **Modernization of Border Infrastructure**:
   a. Expansion and modernization of border control points.
   b. Procurement of advanced equipment such as thermal imaging cameras and patrol vehicles.
   c. Implementation of information systems such as the Schengen Information System (SIS) and the Visa Information System (VIS).
2. **Strengthening Law Enforcement Operational Capacities**:
   a. Organizing specialized training in areas such as combating cybercrime, human trafficking, and risk analysis.
   b. Financing projects related to combating cross-border crime.
3. **Crisis Support**:
   a. Flexible financing adapted to dynamically changing needs, such as the migration crisis.

b. Procurement of additional equipment for the Border Guard during periods of increased migration flows.

4. **Development of International Cooperation**:
   a. Integration of information systems among Member States.
   b. Collaboration with agencies such as Frontex and Europol.

Expected Outcomes of the Interventions

The activities implemented under the ISF aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Enhanced effectiveness of external border management in the EU.
- Reduction in cases of organized and cross-border crime.
- Improved international cooperation and interoperability of information systems.
- Increased levels of public safety and protection for EU citizens.

The ISF's intervention logic was closely aligned with the EU's priorities and the Member States' needs in the area of internal security. By strategically directing resources towards key areas such as border management, technological modernization, and international cooperation, the Fund significantly improved the operational and technological capacities of its beneficiaries, thereby contributing to enhanced internal security within the EU.

5. Implementation Status

Based on the analysis of secondary data, a detailed description of the implementation status of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) was prepared. This chapter summarizes all analyses conducted, focusing on key achievements, challenges, and contextual changes that influenced the attainment of the program's objectives. The detailed level of indicator achievement for the Program is described in the annex, Chapter 2.25 (Table 4: Implementation of the National Program Indicators).

The implementation of the ISF budget progressed according to the planned schedule, enabling almost full utilization of available funds. Financial resources were effectively allocated to key intervention areas, such as:

- modernization of border infrastructure,
- procurement of advanced technological equipment,
- organization of specialized training for Border Guard and Police officers.

Financial efficiency was achieved thanks to a well-planned management and monitoring system, which allowed for flexible responses to the changing needs of beneficiaries.

The ISF contributed to the implementation of several strategic projects aimed at enhancing internal security. Under border infrastructure modernization, control points were constructed and upgraded, equipped with modern detection and monitoring systems. Additionally, advanced technologies such as optoelectronic systems were implemented, significantly increasing the operational capacity of border services.

Training projects played a key role in enhancing the competencies of officers. Educational programs were tailored to address current threats, such as cybercrime and cross-border crime, enabling more effective countermeasures. The training programs also incorporated principles of equal opportunities, resulting in increased participation of women in the activities undertaken.

However, certain challenges were encountered during the program's implementation. The most significant included:

- changing external conditions, such as the migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which required rapid adjustments to project schedules and annexing contracts,
- the need to adapt to local needs and project specifics given the limited resources of some beneficiaries,
- risk management associated with the implementation of advanced technologies.

Despite these challenges, the introduction of flexibility mechanisms ensured that the activities remained aligned with the original objectives. Particularly significant was the implementation of monitoring systems and ongoing technical support for beneficiaries.

In summary, the implementation of the Internal Security Fund can be considered effective and efficient, both financially and materially. The projects carried out achieved significant progress in improving internal security, modernizing infrastructure, and enhancing the competencies of services. These investments have significantly contributed to the improvement of border protection and citizen security. Despite the challenges encountered, the ISF program delivered lasting and measurable results that will be felt for many years.

6. Evaluation Results by Research Questions

In this report, detailed answers to the research questions that formed the foundation of the conducted evaluation are presented.

To ensure clarity and readability, the answers have been grouped and systematized in dedicated chapters of the report. Each chapter relates to selected evaluation criteria. This organization allows for easy access to information regarding specific areas of analysis while logically linking the results with the evaluation objectives and assessment criteria.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Adequacy of Project Selection Criteria and ISF Objectives Achievement

Analysis of the Adequacy of Project Selection Criteria to the ISF Objectives

The analysis of project selection criteria under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates their flexibility and alignment with strategic priorities. This facilitated the effective implementation of actions aimed at enhancing internal security and strengthening the operational capacities of services. Results based on in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) confirm that these criteria were not only aligned with EU and national priorities but also took into account the specific needs of local stakeholders, contributing to their high evaluation (see 6.21, Category A, Question 2).

The criteria supported the implementation of projects such as purchasing advanced monitoring and detection equipment and developing infrastructure, e.g., constructing observation towers for the Border Guard, significantly improving threat detection capabilities. The importance of investments in personnel training was also emphasized, covering both the operation of modern technologies and skills related to crisis management.

A key strength of the criteria was their flexibility, allowing for project adaptation to local needs. This was evident in initiatives like "Mazowieckie Syreny+" or the modernization of Border Guard facilities to accommodate the needs of individuals with limited mobility. However, a need for simplifying application procedures and increasing technical support was highlighted, which could enhance the efficiency of smaller units in applying for funds.

The project selection criteria under the Internal Security Fund were comprehensively and flexibly designed, enabling the realization of diverse initiatives aligned with the strategic and operational priorities of the Fund. By adequately addressing local and national needs, ISF

projects contributed to increased security levels, infrastructure modernization, and the implementation of innovative technologies.

Despite overall success, identified challenges point to the necessity for further improvements, particularly in the areas of technical support and application procedure simplification. Implementing these recommendations in future program editions could further enhance its efficiency and accessibility, supporting the continued development of internal security at both the national and EU levels.
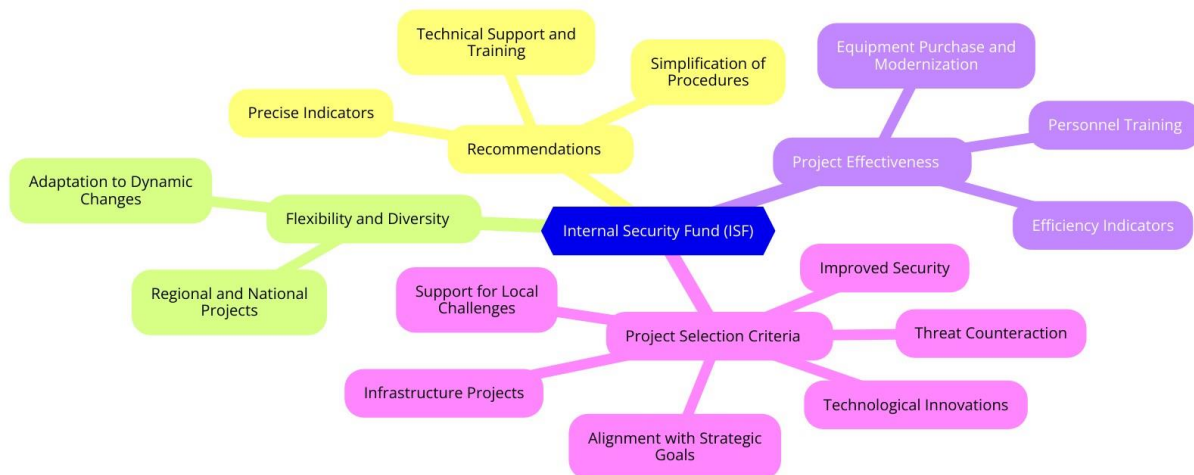
Evaluation of Project Selection Criteria

Based on the analysis of IDI (In-Depth Interviews), it can be concluded that the project selection criteria within the Internal Security Fund (ISF) were perceived by beneficiaries as clear, transparent, and consistent, which facilitated the preparation and implementation of projects aligned with the program's objectives. Respondents appreciated the logical structure of the criteria, which allowed them to understand their connection to the ISF's strategic goals, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the process.

Beneficiaries highlighted the availability of prompt technical support, which was particularly helpful in more complex partnership projects. However, there was also a noted need for further simplification of performance indicators and more precise requirements for infrastructure projects, which could enhance fund accessibility for smaller entities.

Several improvements were proposed, including standardization of documentation, simplification of indicators, and the organization of dedicated training sessions, which could streamline the application process and improve the quality of submitted projects, such as:

- **Standardization of application documentation:** Introducing standardized templates and forms could reduce potential interpretative ambiguities.
- **Simplification of performance indicators:** Replacing more complex indicators, such as the number of person-hours, with simpler and more intuitive measures.

- **Greater precision in defining substantive criteria:** Especially for infrastructure and partnership projects, where requirements were often assessed as too general.
- **Expansion of technical support:** Organizing dedicated training sessions for potential beneficiaries, particularly those with less experience in applying for EU funds.

Conclusions

The project selection criteria implemented under the Internal Security Fund were evaluated as transparent, consistent, and well-suited to the fund's strategic objectives. Their design allowed beneficiaries to effectively prepare applications, minimizing the risk of misinterpretation and supporting the fund's priorities. A key success factor was the clarity of requirements, which enabled the reliable evaluation of projects and their alignment with the ISF's specificity. At the same time, identified challenges, such as the complexity of performance indicators and the need for additional guidelines for partnership projects, provide valuable insights for future program editions. Implementing the proposed improvements could further enhance the program's efficiency and accessibility, supporting diverse initiatives for internal security.
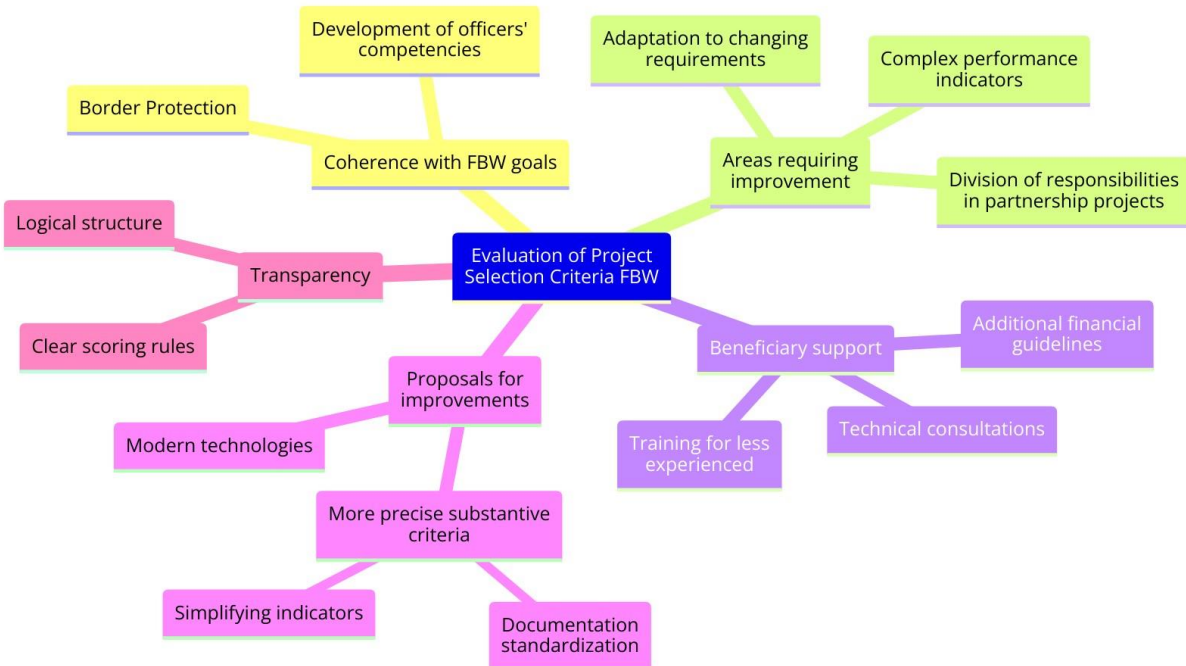
Evaluation of the Possibility of Comprehensive Project Assessment Through Applied Project Selection Criteria

Based on the analysis of interview transcripts with respondents, it can be concluded that the project selection criteria applied under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) were designed to enable a comprehensive and reliable assessment of submitted initiatives. Respondents indicated that these criteria took into account both the strategic objectives of the fund and the specific needs of beneficiaries (see: 6.21: Category A, question 3), allowing for precise

alignment of projects with program priorities and evaluation across various substantive and technical aspects (see: 6.21: Category A, question 2).

Multifaceted and Comprehensive Criteria

The applied criteria were characterized by their multifaceted nature, enabling the assessment of projects on multiple levels. They included, among others, alignment with ISF strategic goals, substantive project quality, technical aspects, and horizontal principles such as equal opportunities and sustainable development, which were consistent with EU policies. According to the transcripts, these criteria allowed beneficiaries to effectively tailor their projects to program requirements, ensuring a transparent evaluation of both large infrastructure investments and smaller training initiatives. For example, training projects for the Border Guard were assessed based on both substantive and technical aspects, such as preparing officers to operate modern monitoring systems.

Transparency and Clarity in Project Evaluation

Interviews with beneficiaries revealed that the project evaluation system was perceived as transparent and fair. Clearly defined scoring criteria allowed beneficiaries to understand the selection rules and effectively tailor their projects to the program's requirements. Projects such as the modernization of alarm systems ("Mazowieckie Syreny+") were evaluated using clearly established parameters, which strengthened trust in the process and ensured equal treatment of all beneficiaries. Respondents highlighted that evaluation tools, such as performance indicators (e.g., the number of trained officers), enabled realistic estimation of potential project outcomes, enhancing transparency and clarity in assessments.

Adaptation to Project Specifics

The interview transcripts indicated that the criteria were designed to accommodate different types of projects—both investment and educational. Beneficiaries noted that tailoring evaluation rules to the nature of activities allowed for better consideration of local needs and project implementation forms. Innovative projects, such as the implementation of Big Data systems, were an example where technical requirements were closely linked to the strategic goals of the fund.

Challenges Related to Criteria Interpretation

Despite the generally positive assessment, some beneficiaries mentioned challenges related to the interpretation of criteria, particularly in the context of smaller initiatives. The proportionality of formal requirements to project scale was problematic, as detailed analysis of result indicators posed a barrier for organizations with limited resources. Respondents suggested greater flexibility in interpreting criteria to meet local needs, which could enhance the efficiency of project implementation.

Proposals for Improvement

Based on the analysis of respondent interviews, several improvements were proposed to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the project evaluation process:

- **Precise definition of criteria for partnership projects**, which would improve collaboration between various institutions.
- **Simplification of formal requirements**, especially for smaller entities, by reducing administrative burdens.
- **Standardization of criteria interpretation** across different evaluation units to minimize discrepancies in the assessment of similar projects.
- **Involvement of external experts** in the evaluation of innovative projects to increase the objectivity and comprehensiveness of analyses.
- **Organization of workshops and training sessions** for beneficiaries to facilitate the preparation of applications and interpretation of criteria, particularly for less experienced applicants.

The interview transcripts provided valuable insights into the perception of project selection criteria, highlighting their strengths as well as areas requiring improvement.

Conclusions

The project selection criteria applied under the ISF ensured the possibility of a comprehensive assessment of submitted applications, taking into account various substantive, technical, and strategic aspects. The transparency of the evaluation system and its adaptation to project specifics were highly rated by beneficiaries, as evidenced by the achieved performance indicators of implemented activities.

However, certain challenges, such as the complexity of formal requirements and differences in criteria interpretation, indicate the need for further improvements. Implementing the recommended changes could further enhance the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of the project evaluation process, resulting in better utilization of available resources and the realization of ISF priorities.
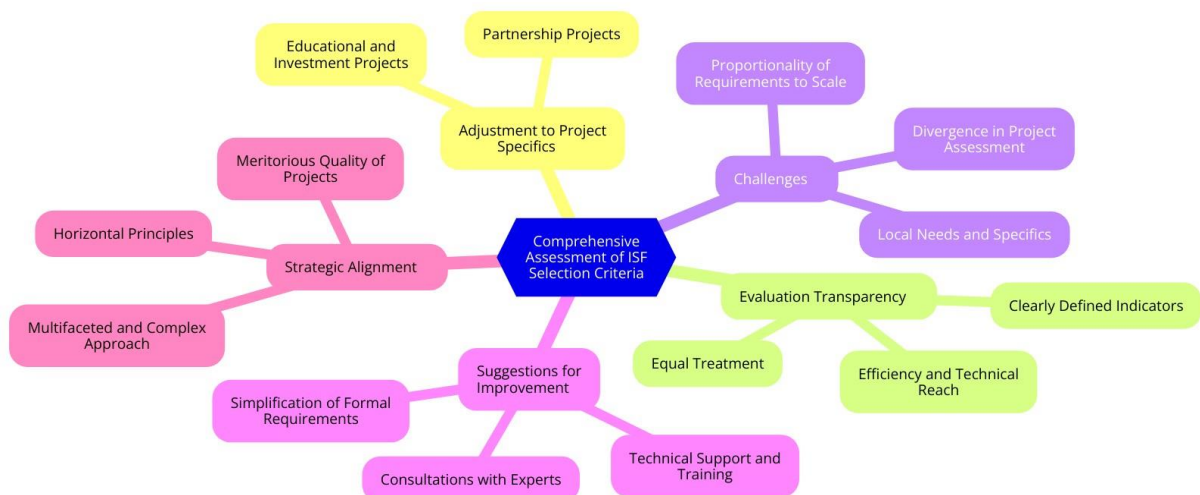
Evaluation of the level of ensuring the implementation of horizontal principles through the applied project selection criteria

Based on the analysis of interview transcripts with respondents, it can be concluded that horizontal principles such as equal opportunities, non-discrimination, sustainable development, and respect for diversity constituted a significant component of the project selection criteria implemented under the Internal Security Fund (ISF). Respondents highlighted that these criteria were comprehensively considered during both the application and implementation phases, supporting the implementation of EU policies and achieving the strategic objectives of the fund.

- **Integration of equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles**
  The interview transcripts confirm that the project selection criteria promoted equal opportunities and counteracted discrimination. Examples include training projects for Border Guard officers, where a high participation of women was noted, demonstrating the elimination of barriers to training access. Similarly, infrastructure projects addressed the needs of persons with disabilities, as evidenced by the modernization of Border Guard facilities through the installation of elevators, ramps, and adapted restrooms.
- **Consideration of sustainable development**
  The principle of sustainable development was also an important element of project evaluation, particularly in the area of infrastructure investments. Respondents pointed out that requirements related to minimizing environmental impact were implemented, such as using energy-efficient technologies and eco-friendly materials. However, in technology-focused projects, such as the purchase of specialized equipment, sustainable development was treated as secondary. Respondents suggested that more detailed guidelines on ecological aspects of projects could strengthen their alignment with the principles of sustainable development.
- **Neutrality toward non-discrimination principles**
  The analysis of transcripts reveals that some projects, especially those of a technological nature, were neutral regarding non-discrimination principles. While these projects did not directly address equality issues, they were implemented in compliance with EU policies without violating these principles. This applied, for instance, to projects related to the expansion of border monitoring systems.
- **Transparency and accessibility of the application process**
  The analysis of interview transcripts indicates that the application process under the ISF was perceived as transparent and accessible, fostering equal treatment of all potential beneficiaries, including smaller organizations. Beneficiaries noted that clearly defined criteria and their availability prevented marginalization of peripheral areas and supported equal access to funding.
- **Monitoring mechanisms for horizontal principles**
  Respondents emphasized the effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms for implementing horizontal principles, such as consultations and ongoing technical

support, which allowed actions to be adjusted to established standards. This type of support increased beneficiaries' awareness of requirements related to equal opportunities and sustainable development principles.

- **Challenges and areas for improvement**
Despite generally positive feedback, the interview transcripts point to certain challenges in implementing horizontal principles. Implementation of these principles proved particularly difficult in strictly technical projects. Respondents proposed more detailed guidelines on the ecological aspects of implementation, such as a requirement to use energy-efficient technologies. They also suggested enhancing beneficiary support regarding the interpretation of horizontal principles through workshops and the publication of detailed guidelines, which could contribute to more comprehensive implementation of these principles in practice.

Conclusions

Horizontal principles were effectively integrated into the project selection criteria implemented under the ISF, enabling their inclusion at both the planning and implementation stages. Beneficiaries positively evaluated the transparency and accessibility of the application process, as well as the effectiveness of implemented monitoring mechanisms. However, certain challenges, particularly in the ecological implementation of projects and beneficiary support, highlight the need for further improvement. Implementing the proposed enhancements could contribute to an even better realization of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and sustainable development principles in future editions of the program.
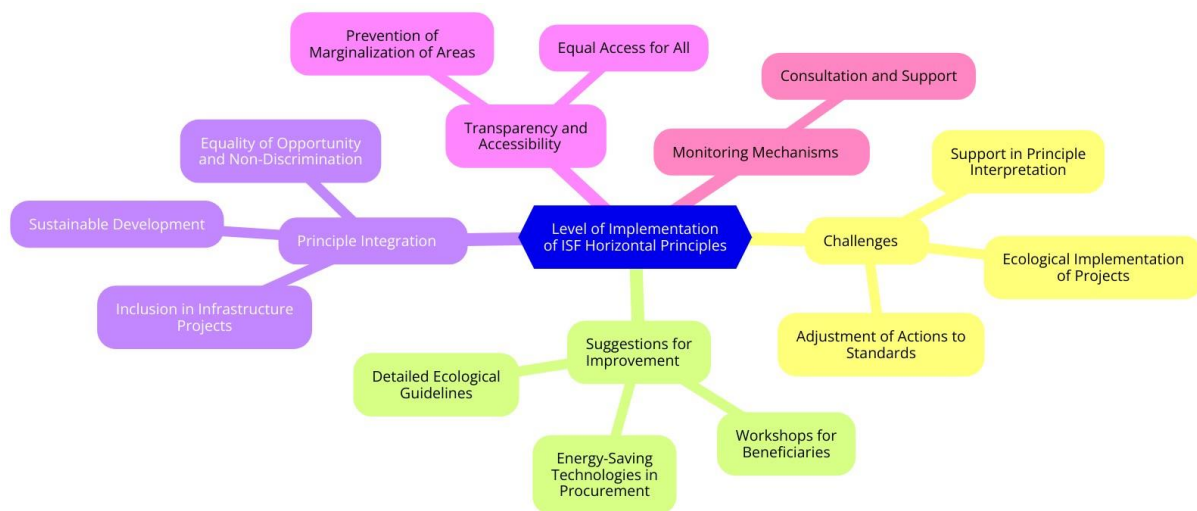
Evaluation of the Impact of Selection Criteria on the Quality of Implemented Projects

The project selection criteria under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) played a fundamental role in ensuring the high quality of implemented initiatives. Their precise formulation, alignment with the fund's objectives, and incorporation of key strategic principles contributed to the effective implementation of projects that met both high operational and social standards. Respondents confirmed that well-defined criteria served as a tool for identifying projects with the greatest potential and for effectively achieving ISF objectives.

- **Clarity and Transparency of Criteria** One of the most critical aspects influencing project quality was the clarity and transparency of the selection criteria. Beneficiaries noted that precisely defined requirements allowed them to align their actions closely with the expectations of managing institutions, minimizing the risk of formal and substantive errors. As a result, the application process was more efficient, enabling evaluating institutions to focus on analyzing the quality of proposed solutions. A positive example of the impact of transparent criteria was the modernization of warning and surveillance systems, such as the "Mazowieckie Sirens+" project. Clear technical requirements outlined in the selection criteria facilitated the procurement of top-quality equipment, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of alarm and security systems in the regions.
- **Alignment with ISF Strategic Objectives** The project selection criteria reflected the strategic goals of ISF, such as border protection, combating cross-border crime, improving the qualifications of uniformed services, and developing infrastructure. Infrastructure projects, such as the construction and modernization of Border Guard facilities, were carried out in compliance with high technical and operational standards. For example, one project implemented mobile CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) laboratories, enhancing response capabilities to crisis threats. Thanks to precise technical criteria, advanced equipment meeting EU standards was employed, increasing the operational effectiveness of the services.
- **Impact on Educational and Training Projects** The selection criteria also positively influenced the quality of training and educational projects. Beneficiaries emphasized that clearly defined rules regarding content, teaching methods, and training goals allowed for the development of effective educational programs. Training projects for Border Guard and Police officers employed practical teaching methods, such as simulations and realistic scenarios, which significantly improved the operational competencies of participants. Additionally, the criteria promoted equal opportunities, leading to increased participation of women in educational programs.
- **Requirements for Sustainable Development and Equal Opportunities** The principles of sustainable development and equal opportunities were integral components of the selection criteria, positively impacting the quality of implemented projects. Infrastructure investments incorporated environmental requirements, such as the use of eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient technologies. For example, new Border Guard facilities were designed with environmental requirements in mind, enhancing their durability and social acceptance. Training projects demonstrated a high level of inclusiveness, stemming from the promotion of equal opportunity principles. Beneficiaries highlighted that well-defined criteria helped eliminate potential barriers to access training and educational activities.
- **Adaptability of Criteria to Changing Conditions** The selection criteria allowed projects to adapt to dynamically changing external conditions, which was particularly evident during the implementation of initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects related to the procurement of medical equipment or the implementation of crisis response systems were effectively managed thanks to the adaptability and flexibility requirements embedded in the criteria.

An example of such an initiative was the purchase of mobile diagnostic kits, enabling rapid response to new health challenges while meeting the fund's strategic objectives.

- **Impact on Efficiency and Sustainability of Results** Respondents indicated that the selection criteria significantly contributed to enhancing the efficiency of actions and the sustainability of project results. For instance, in infrastructure projects, the inclusion of detailed technical requirements allowed for the implementation of solutions meeting the highest quality and operational standards. In the case of purchasing optoelectronic systems for the Border Guard, technical criteria ensured compatibility of new equipment with existing infrastructure, increasing the overall system's functionality. Despite the generally positive assessment of the criteria, respondents pointed out certain challenges, such as:
  - Excessive detail in documentation requirements, which could extend the application process and create barriers for smaller entities.
  - The need for greater flexibility in interpreting requirements, particularly in innovative projects.

Conclusions

The project selection criteria under ISF had a crucial impact on the quality of implemented initiatives. Their precise definition, alignment with the fund's objectives, and incorporation of strategic principles contributed to achieving high substantive and operational standards. Beneficiaries positively evaluated the clarity of the criteria, their adaptability to project specifics, and the technical support provided by managing institutions. Thanks to well-designed criteria, not only were the set efficiency indicators achieved, but a solid foundation was also built for further qualitative development of actions under the fund. Implementing the proposed improvements could further increase the program's accessibility and effectiveness, supporting the realization of its strategic objectives.
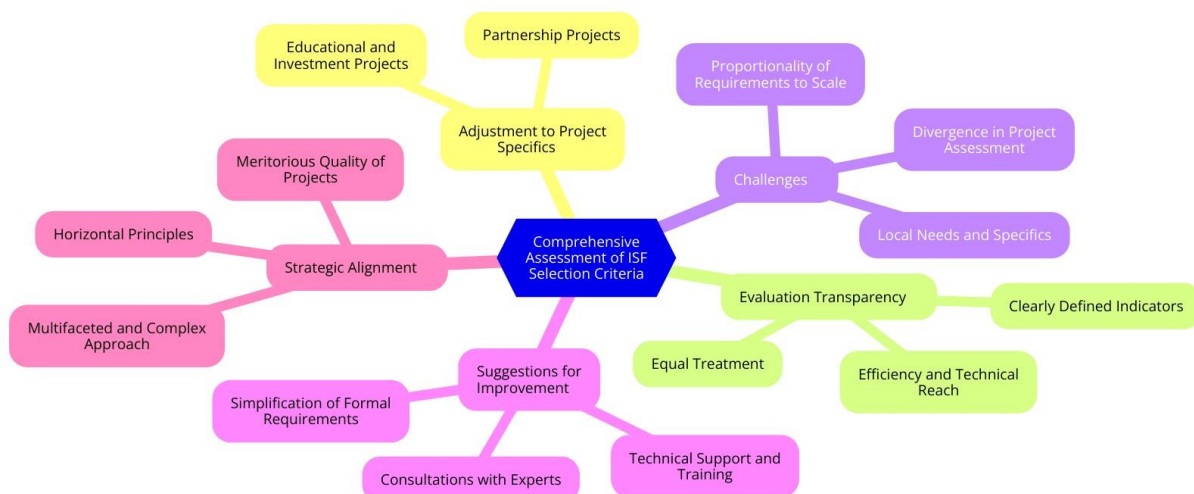
Assessment of the Impact of Selection Criteria on the Fulfillment of Obligations Stemming from the ISF Performance Framework

Based on the analysis of interview transcripts, it can be concluded that the project selection criteria within the Internal Security Fund (ISF) played a crucial role in achieving the program's objectives. Their appropriate formulation and alignment with the strategic and operational goals of the ISF enabled beneficiaries to effectively implement projects, contributing to the achievement of intended performance indicators and the sustainability of results.

- **Alignment of Criteria with ISF Objectives** Respondents highlighted that the project selection criteria were precisely tailored to the ISF priorities, such as enhancing internal security, border protection, and combating cross-border crime. Projects such as the construction of observation towers and the acquisition of mobile CBRN laboratories significantly improved the capacity to respond to crisis threats, demonstrating the effectiveness of the applied criteria.
- **Precision of Performance Indicators and Progress Reporting** The analysis of interview transcripts confirms that a key element of the criteria was the integration of performance indicators, such as the number of trained officers and the number of interventions utilizing new equipment. Respondents emphasized that precisely defined indicators facilitated ongoing monitoring of project implementation progress, ensuring transparency and enabling effective responses to potential challenges.
- **Flexibility of Criteria** One important aspect emphasized by respondents was the flexibility of the selection criteria, which allowed projects to adapt to changing conditions, such as challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mechanisms like schedule modifications and contract annexations proved crucial for maintaining alignment with the program's objectives while ensuring high-quality project implementation.
- **Horizontal Principles** The interview transcripts indicate that the selection criteria incorporated horizontal principles, such as equal opportunities and sustainable development. Beneficiaries noted that projects reflecting these principles, such as increased participation of women in training or infrastructure modernization for persons with disabilities, had a significant impact on achieving the program's equality and social goals. Furthermore, requirements related to minimizing environmental impact contributed to the realization of sustainable development objectives.
- **Risk Management and Sustainability of Results** Based on the interviews, it can be stated that the selection criteria supported responsible planning and risk management. Respondents noted that the risk analysis required at the application stage enabled better project preparation for potential challenges, which, in turn, impacted the sustainability of results, particularly in infrastructure projects, such as the construction of Border Guard facilities.
- **Challenges Encountered** Despite the generally positive assessment of the selection criteria, respondents identified some challenges, such as the excessive complexity of documentation requirements, which posed a barrier for smaller beneficiaries, and the need for greater precision in defining technological indicators, especially in innovative

projects. Additionally, they highlighted the need for increased substantive support for beneficiaries in interpreting criteria and preparing applications, including:

- o Excessive complexity of documentation requirements, which could pose a barrier for smaller beneficiaries.
- o The need for greater precision in defining technological indicators, particularly in innovative projects.
- o Increased substantive support for beneficiaries, especially in interpreting criteria and preparing applications.

Conclusions

The project selection criteria under the ISF played a critical role in fulfilling obligations stemming from the fund's performance framework. Their precise formulation, alignment with strategic and operational goals, and flexibility in the face of changing conditions contributed to the effective implementation of projects.

Thanks to well-designed criteria, beneficiaries not only achieved the intended performance indicators but also implemented sustainable solutions that significantly enhanced internal security and border protection. The proposed improvements for future editions of the program could further increase the fund's effectiveness and accessibility, supporting the achievement of its long-term objectives.
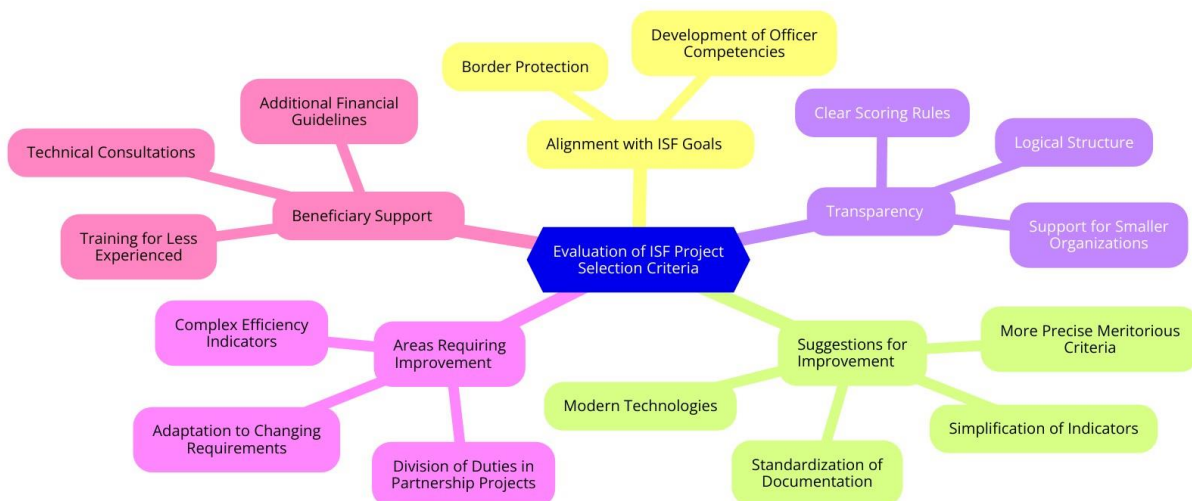
Assessment of the Adequacy of Scoring and the Importance of Criteria in Relation to the Intervention Objectives (see 6.21 Category A, Question 1)

The scoring system used to evaluate projects under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) was assessed as effective and adequate in relation to the intervention objectives. An analysis of respondents' answers indicates that the scoring and assigned importance of the criteria allowed for the reliable selection of projects with the highest implementation potential while ensuring transparency and competitiveness in the application process.

- **Alignment of Scoring with Intervention Objectives** The scoring system was designed to reflect the strategic objectives of the ISF, such as border protection, combating cross-border crime, developing officers' competencies, and implementing innovative technological solutions. Projects received the highest scores if their assumptions were fully aligned with the fund's priorities.

For example, in infrastructure projects such as the modernization of Border Guard facilities, the scoring considered technical criteria (e.g., location relative to the national border, availability of equipment and technologies), which directly supported the fund's operational goals. Similarly, training projects were evaluated based on the quality of educational programs, the number of trained officers, and their impact on improving operational competencies.

- **Significance of Qualitative Criteria** An important element of the scoring system was rewarding projects that demonstrated exceptional added value in terms of innovation and adherence to horizontal principles. Projects promoting equality, sustainable development, and long-term socio-economic effects were eligible for higher scores.

For instance, the mobile CBRN laboratory acquisition project received high ratings for its comprehensive approach to crisis management and its lasting impact on the emergency response capabilities of services. The use of qualitative scoring criteria allowed for distinguishing projects with above-average effectiveness and innovation.

- **Adequacy of Scoring Indicators** The adopted scoring indicators were precise, measurable, and tailored to the specifics of the projects. For example, infrastructure projects were assessed based on the number of facilities built, their location, and compliance with technical requirements. In training projects, key indicators included the number of participants, the quality of educational programs, and the relevance of teaching materials to the specific needs of officers.

The scoring system enabled an objective assessment of projects, reducing the possibility of subjective interpretations. Respondents emphasized that this system's design facilitated the selection of projects that best achieved the fund's strategic objectives.

- **Transparency and Clarity of the Scoring System** One of the scoring system's greatest strengths was its transparency. Beneficiaries could easily familiarize themselves with the evaluation criteria and clearly understand which aspects of their projects would be most highly rewarded. The clarity of the scoring rules enhanced the competitiveness of the application process and encouraged beneficiaries to optimize their projects in line with ISF priorities.

Respondents highlighted that the transparency of the scoring system significantly simplified the preparation of applications, particularly for smaller entities with limited experience in applying for funds.

- **Flexibility of the Scoring System** The scoring system demonstrated flexibility, enabling the evaluation of projects with varying specifics and scales of operation. For

partnership projects, additional points were awarded for institutional collaboration, promoting an integrated approach to achieving ISF goals. Similarly, in innovative projects, the potential for long-term impact was considered, allowing for recognition of highly novel initiatives.

- **Challenges and Limitations** Despite the generally positive assessment, some respondents identified certain limitations of the scoring system:
    1. Favoring large projects: In some cases, larger initiatives received more points due to their scale, potentially marginalizing smaller but significant local projects.
    2. Insufficient flexibility in evaluating non-standard projects: Initiatives such as educational campaigns or training activities were not always proportionally assessed for their long-term impact.
    3. Complexity of criteria: Less experienced beneficiaries reported difficulties fully understanding the technical and qualitative requirements, potentially affecting their ability to compete with larger entities.
- **Recommendations for Improving the Scoring System**
    1. **Additional points for local projects:** Introducing mechanisms to reward smaller local initiatives with significant community impact could increase the diversity of implemented projects.
    2. **Expansion of qualitative criteria:** Incorporating indicators that evaluate the long-term potential of projects, particularly those related to education and training.
    3. **Progressive scoring:** Introducing additional points for projects that demonstrate a high level of innovation or adaptability to new challenges.
    4. **Substantive support for smaller beneficiaries:** Organizing workshops and training sessions for less experienced applicants could improve their chances of achieving high scores.

Conclusions

The scoring system and the importance of project selection criteria under the ISF were assessed as adequate and effective in achieving the fund's strategic goals. Transparency, objectivity, and adaptation to project specifics contributed to the selection of initiatives with the highest implementation potential.

Implementing the recommended improvements could further enhance the system's flexibility, better addressing the needs of local initiatives and innovative projects. Such optimization would contribute to even more effective use of funds and further improvement in the quality of activities implemented under the ISF.
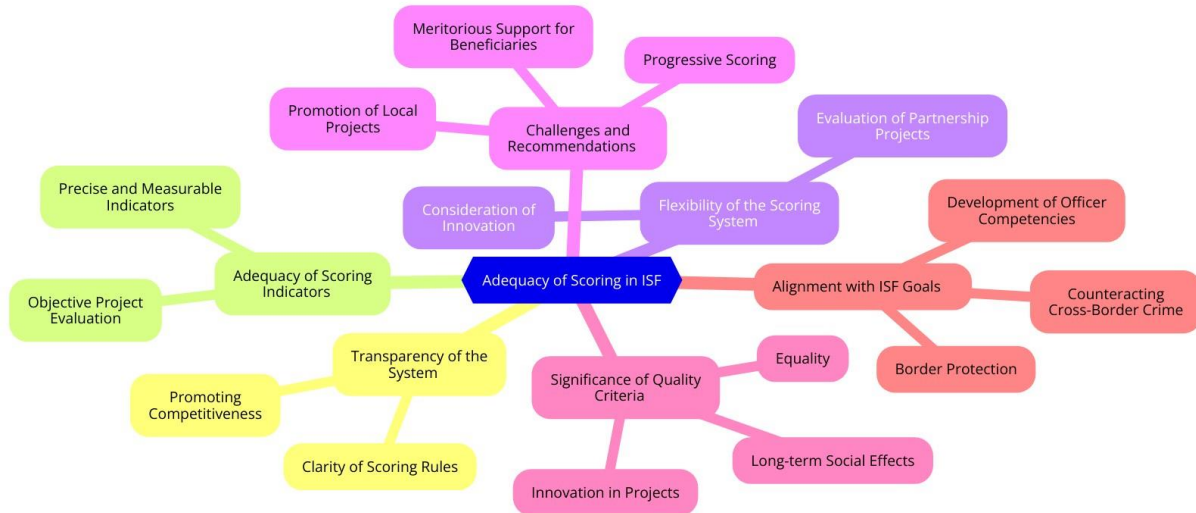
Assessment of the Potential for Discrimination Among Groups of Potential Beneficiaries

The risk analysis regarding discrimination in the project selection process under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) indicates that the applied criteria, recruitment procedures, and project evaluation principles effectively minimized the possibility of unequal treatment of potential beneficiaries. A system based on transparent rules, neutral evaluation criteria, and the promotion of horizontal principles such as equal opportunities and non-discrimination ensured equal access to funding for all groups, regardless of their organizational specificity, scale of operations, or area of activity.

- **Transparency of the Recruitment Process** Respondents unanimously evaluated the recruitment process as fully transparent and open. Information about calls for proposals was widely accessible through websites and dedicated informational platforms. Application documentation, including recruitment regulations and guidelines, was prepared in a clear and understandable manner, free from elements that could limit access for specific groups of beneficiaries.

Transparent rules allowed all interested entities, regardless of their characteristics, equal access to funds. The absence of informational barriers and the availability of technical support, such as consultations or the ability to ask questions to managing authorities, further strengthened the openness of the recruitment process.

- **Neutrality of Evaluation Criteria** The project evaluation criteria were designed neutrally, focusing solely on the substantive value of the proposed initiatives and their alignment with ISF objectives. An analysis of respondents' answers revealed no evidence of favoring specific groups of beneficiaries or prioritizing larger entities over smaller organizations. Scoring rules, based on measurable performance and outcome indicators, limited the possibility of subjective interpretations during the application evaluation process.

For example, procedural neutrality allowed both large public institutions such as border guards or police and local non-governmental organizations or municipal units to apply. Projects were assessed primarily based on their alignment with ISF strategic objectives rather than the characteristics of the organization implementing them.

- **Implementation of Horizontal Principles** Horizontal principles such as equal opportunities and non-discrimination were an integral part of the recruitment and project evaluation process. Beneficiaries were required to incorporate these principles into their initiatives, promoted by awarding additional points for activities supporting inclusiveness and the elimination of social barriers.

Examples of practical implementation of these principles included educational and training projects with a high participation rate of women and the inclusion of diverse professional and social groups. In some cases, specific measures were taken to support people with disabilities, such as adapting project infrastructure or organizing training sessions tailored to their needs (see 6.2 A, Question 2).

- **Openness to Diversity Among Beneficiaries** The ISF recruitment system was adapted to the needs of a wide range of potential beneficiaries, including large public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and smaller local units. Particular emphasis was placed on eliminating barriers for less experienced applicants, reflected in simplified application documentation and the availability of technical support.

Respondents noted that the openness of the process was particularly important for smaller entities, which could compete with larger institutions on equal terms. The recruitment procedures included mechanisms ensuring a balance between supporting large infrastructure projects and local initiatives critical to regional communities.

- **Anti-Discrimination Mechanisms** The anti-discrimination mechanisms applied under the ISF effectively eliminated the risk of unequal treatment of beneficiaries. The scoring system was based on clearly defined substantive criteria, which limited the possibility of subjective application assessments. Additionally, beneficiaries could submit queries to managing authorities to clarify potential doubts, increasing the process's transparency.

Examples of the effectiveness of these mechanisms included projects implemented by small local organizations, which, despite limited resources, received high evaluations due to the alignment of their activities with ISF objectives and horizontal principles.

- **Challenges and Potential Barriers** Despite the generally positive assessment, respondents identified certain limitations that could indirectly impact fund accessibility for specific groups of beneficiaries:
    1. **Complexity of application procedures:** Smaller entities such as local non-governmental organizations might face challenges in preparing the required documentation due to limited technical and organizational resources.

2. **Lack of experience in applying for funds:** Entities with less experience might struggle to meet formal requirements, practically limiting their ability to apply effectively.

- **Recommendations**

  To further increase the inclusiveness of the recruitment process and minimize the risk of excluding certain groups of beneficiaries, the following actions were proposed:

  1. **Introducing training for smaller beneficiaries:** Training on application preparation and project management could enhance the ability of local units to apply for ISF funds.
  2. **Simplifying formal requirements:** Reducing the complexity of application documentation and adopting a more flexible approach to formal requirements could increase the program's accessibility.
  3. **Promoting best practices:** Sharing examples of successful projects implemented by diverse groups of beneficiaries could encourage other organizations to apply.
  4. **Monitoring equal opportunities:** Introducing systematic monitoring of compliance with equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles could ensure their even more effective implementation.

Conclusions

The assessment of the potential for discrimination in the project selection process under the ISF demonstrated that the adopted principles effectively minimized the risk of unequal treatment of beneficiaries. Transparent procedures, neutral evaluation criteria, and the promotion of horizontal principles ensured equal opportunities for all interested entities.

Implementing the recommended improvements could further increase the program's accessibility and enhance equality standards in subsequent editions of the ISF.
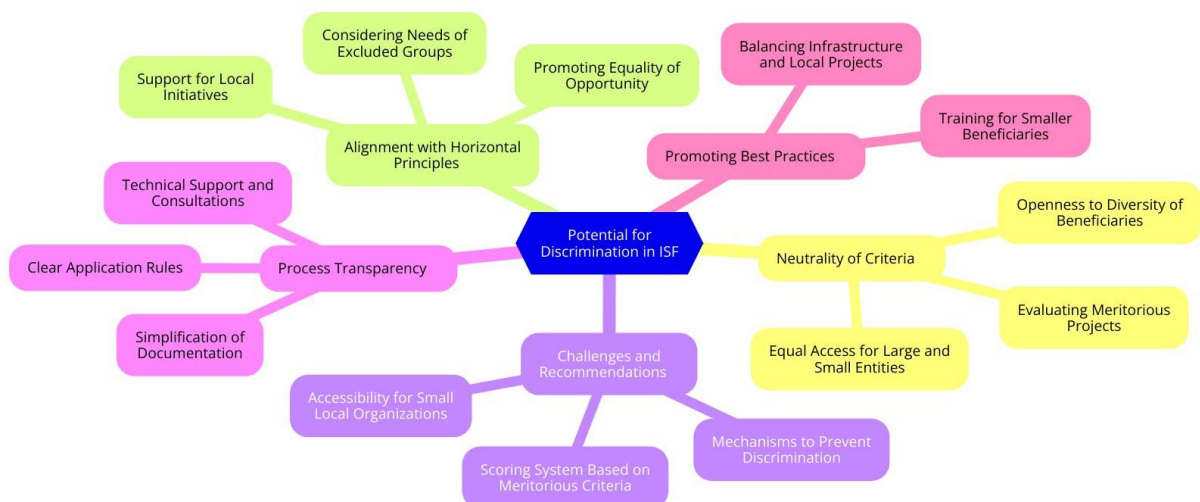
Evaluation of the Scheduling and Assessment of Applications

The scheduling and evaluation processes for applications under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) were assessed by respondents as well-organized, transparent, and tailored to beneficiaries' needs. The established system of timelines, clearly defined rules, and the flexibility of managing institutions enabled the efficient implementation of the application process, minimizing delays and ensuring equal access to the fund's resources.

- **Call for Proposals Schedule** The timelines for calls for proposals were planned with beneficiaries' specific needs and project diversity in mind, allowing adequate preparation of application documentation. Announcements regarding calls were published well in advance, and their accessibility through dedicated online platforms enabled prompt familiarization with the requirements.

Respondents appreciated the transparency of schedules and the ability to plan project activities in advance. They highlighted the flexibility of organizers, who extended submission deadlines in justified cases, particularly during challenging periods like the COVID-19 pandemic (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3). This extension provided beneficiaries with more time to prepare their applications thoroughly, positively impacting the quality of submissions.

However, some respondents noted that delays in communicating European guidelines or dynamically changing external conditions occasionally necessitated schedule adjustments. These situations underscored the need for greater flexibility in planning and communication between managing institutions and beneficiaries (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3).

- **Efficiency in Application Evaluation** The application evaluation process was conducted according to clearly defined principles, ensuring transparency and objectivity. Beneficiaries particularly praised the scoring system, which facilitated a clear and substantive assessment of projects. Evaluation criteria were understandable and proportional to the program's priorities, allowing beneficiaries to tailor their applications to meet the requirements.

The time allocated for application evaluation was appropriate given the number of submissions, and results were announced within the specified timelines. This enabled beneficiaries to initiate project implementation promptly. Nonetheless, for more complex infrastructure projects, there was a need to adjust evaluation schedules to their characteristics. Introducing more flexible evaluation procedures could enhance the efficiency of these projects.

- **Tailoring the Process to Beneficiaries' Needs** The application process was adapted to the diverse needs of beneficiaries, including large public institutions and smaller local organizations. Managing institutions provided technical and substantive support in the form of training, workshops, and responses to queries about application procedures. This approach helped level the playing field and allowed less experienced entities to participate in the calls.

Respondents emphasized that readily available supporting documentation, including form templates and guidelines, significantly facilitated the application process. Additionally, the ability to seek clarification from managing institutions eliminated uncertainties during the application stage, which was especially appreciated by smaller entities with limited experience in applying for EU funds.

- **Minimizing the Risk of Delays** The organization of the application and evaluation process minimized the risk of project implementation delays. The implementation of an efficient management system for calls and constant communication with beneficiaries ensured smooth execution. Despite challenges such as an increased number of submissions or constraints caused by the pandemic, managing institutions maintained timeliness in their actions.

Respondents noted that improvements in communication, such as regular updates on the status of applications, were a critical element in ensuring a smooth process. In some cases, the need to revise or supplement applications extended the evaluation process, highlighting the need for further optimization of verification procedures.

- **Recommendations for the Future** Based on respondents' feedback, several recommendations were identified to further improve the application and evaluation processes under the ISF:
  1. **Extend application deadlines:** Providing beneficiaries with more time to prepare documentation would allow for more comprehensive project development, including consultations with experts and addressing specific technical requirements.
  2. **Simplify procedures for smaller projects:** Introducing simplified formal requirements for smaller administrative units or non-governmental organizations could enhance their access to funds.
  3. **Adjust schedules to the characteristics of infrastructure projects:** Considering the specifics of large technical projects in evaluation schedules could expedite decision-making and implementation of these initiatives.
  4. **Optimize electronic systems:** Enhancing IT tools used in the submission and evaluation process could reduce the risk of technical errors and improve procedural efficiency.
  5. **Strengthen communication with beneficiaries:** Regular updates on the status of applications and easy access to technical support could increase beneficiary satisfaction and improve process fluidity.
- **Conclusions**
  The scheduling and evaluation of applications under the ISF were assessed as effective and tailored to beneficiaries' needs. Transparent timelines, clear application rules, and the flexibility of managing institutions enabled a smooth process and minimized delays.

Implementing the proposed improvements could further enhance the fund's efficiency and accessibility, enabling the realization of even more diverse and comprehensive projects in future editions of the program.
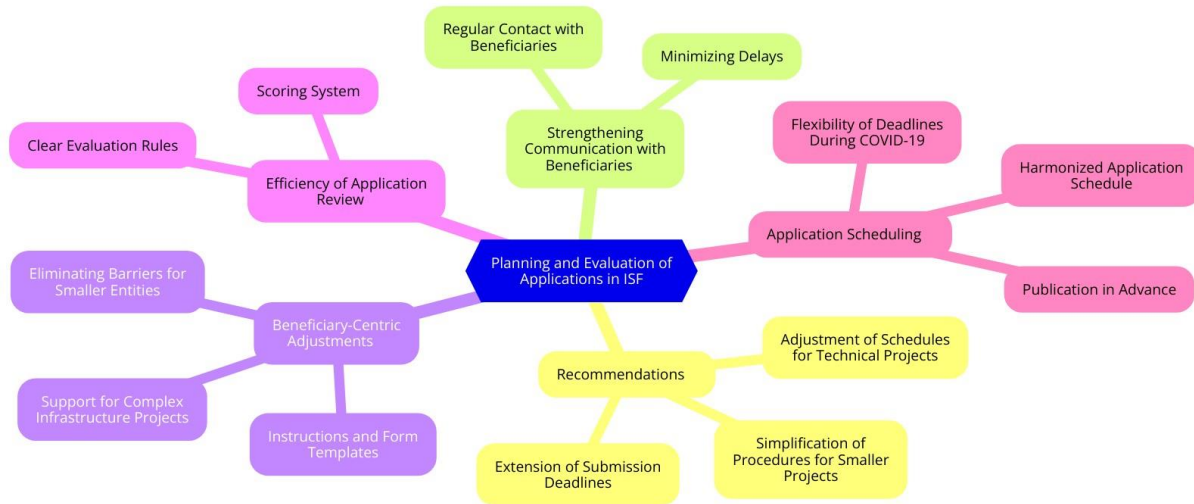
Assessment of the Clarity of Calls for Proposals and Project Selection Regulations

The assessment of the clarity of calls for proposals and project selection regulations under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) highlights their high quality, transparency, and accessibility, which significantly facilitated the application process for beneficiaries. These documents were prepared in a clear manner and aligned with best communication practices, enabling even less experienced applicants to understand the rules and requirements.

Clarity and Precision of Calls for Proposals

The calls for proposals were designed with beneficiaries' needs in mind, containing all necessary information and presented in an understandable way. Key elements of the announcements, such as:

- Submission deadlines and evaluation stages,
- Formal and substantive requirements,
- Instructions for submitting documentation,
- Project selection criteria and scoring system, were detailed, reducing the risk of misunderstandings. Beneficiaries emphasized that the structure of the documents minimized the number of additional inquiries, thus accelerating the application process.

The announcements were accessible through dedicated information platforms and the websites of managing institutions, ensuring broad access to information.

Transparency of Project Selection Regulations

The project selection regulations featured a logical structure and detailed descriptions of application procedures. They included key aspects such as:

- Project evaluation criteria,
- Scope of required application documentation,
- Appeal procedures,
- Timelines and communication methods with managing institutions.

The clarity and precision of the regulations allowed beneficiaries to plan their projects in compliance with program requirements, reducing the number of formal errors. The documents clearly defined the expectations regarding performance indicators, implementation schedules, and budgets, making it easier to tailor applications to the evaluators' expectations.

Accessibility and Intuitiveness of Documentation

The application process was supported by the broad availability of documentation, including regulations, templates, and guidelines. Managing institutions provided these materials on their websites and information platforms. The documentation was easy to download, allowing applicants to familiarize themselves with the requirements conveniently and plan their application activities.

Beneficiaries highlighted the intuitive structure of the documents, which enabled quick access to relevant information. Additional support, such as hotlines, training sessions, and email-based inquiries, allowed potential applicants to receive quick clarifications in case of doubts.

Minimizing the Risk of Errors

One of the critical elements of the application process was reducing the risk of formal errors thanks to clear documentation. Beneficiaries noted that detailed explanations of project evaluation criteria and scoring systems facilitated understanding the ISF's priorities. Intuitive application forms and well-described procedures minimized the need for revisions and accelerated the evaluation of applications.

Interpretative Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite the generally high evaluation, some beneficiaries pointed out certain difficulties, particularly:

- The extensive structure of the documentation, which was time-consuming to analyze, especially for less experienced applicants,
- The complexity of technical requirements and implementation schedules, which required additional consultations,
- The lack of concise versions of the regulations, which could simplify the application process for smaller administrative units and non-governmental organizations.

Support for Beneficiaries

Managing institutions actively supported beneficiaries throughout the application process. Training sessions, workshops, and explanatory materials addressing key aspects of the regulations were provided. Training sessions focusing on preparing performance indicators and budgets were particularly well-received, helping beneficiaries better tailor their projects to program requirements.

Respondents highlighted the quick and professional responses from managing institutions to questions and concerns as a significant factor facilitating the preparation of applications.

Recommendations for the Future

To further streamline the application process, respondents suggested:

1. **Preparing concise versions of regulations:** These would be especially useful for less experienced beneficiaries.
2. **Creating a frequently asked questions (FAQ) database:** Covering technical and procedural issues to reduce the volume of inquiries.
3. **Introducing automated application tools:** Interactive online forms that flag errors in real-time could simplify the process.
4. **Simplifying technical requirements:** Especially regarding performance indicators and schedules, to enhance accessibility for smaller entities.

Conclusions

The clarity of calls for proposals and project selection regulations under the ISF was evaluated as high-quality and beneficiary-oriented. Clear, precise, and accessible documents contributed to a smooth application process, minimizing the risk of formal errors. Despite minor comments regarding the complexity of the documentation, the overall assessment highlights the effectiveness of the adopted solutions.

Implementing the proposed improvements could further enhance the program's efficiency and accessibility, enabling a wider range of beneficiaries to utilize the available funds in future program editions.
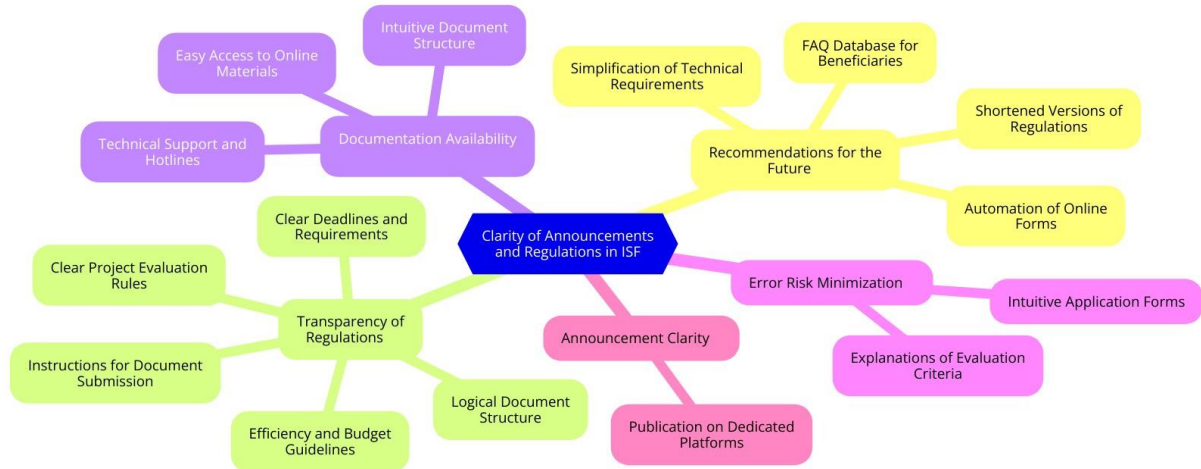
Analysis of the Adequacy of the Required Scope of Application Documents (see 6.21, Category A, Question 1)

The scope of the required application documents under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) has been evaluated as adequate and aligned with the nature of the projects implemented. Beneficiaries emphasized that the application documentation was well-suited to the program's requirements and the specific nature of the activities, enabling a thorough evaluation of the submitted proposals. At the same time, areas for optimization were identified, particularly for smaller projects and less experienced beneficiaries.

Proportionality of the Scope of Application Documents

The requirements for application documents were deemed proportional to the nature and objectives of the projects implemented under the ISF. Beneficiaries highlighted key elements of the documentation that enabled a comprehensive assessment of projects, including:

- **Project descriptions** containing detailed information about goals, schedules, and planned activities,
- **Project budgets** that thoroughly justified anticipated expenditures in the context of the program's objectives,
- **Documents verifying the beneficiary's capacity to implement the project**, such as financial statements or prior experience in similar initiatives,
- **Implementation indicators** presenting expected results and their measurability,
- **Application forms** aligned with the applicable standards.

Beneficiaries noted that this documentation was essential to ensure the transparency of the application process and to reliably verify the alignment of projects with the fund's priorities.

Clarity and Accessibility of Documentation

The application documents were formulated clearly and precisely, allowing beneficiaries to understand the requirements and prepare complete applications easily. Respondents

positively assessed the accessibility of the documentation, which was made available on the program's managing institutions' online platforms and in informational materials. Additional support, such as hotlines, informational sessions, and substantive consultations, facilitated resolving any doubts.

Managing institutions provided detailed instructions on how to complete the documents, significantly reducing the risk of formal errors. This approach increased the efficiency of the application process and allowed beneficiaries to focus on the substantive aspects of their projects.

Challenges Related to the Scope of Documentation

Despite the generally positive evaluation, beneficiaries highlighted some difficulties related to the required documentation, including:

1. **Excessive detail in certain areas** – For lower-value projects, requirements for detailed market analyses or extensive cost estimates were seen as excessive and time-consuming.
2. **Complexity of application forms** – Some forms required significant effort, posing challenges for less experienced applicants.
3. **Lack of standardized partnership documentation templates** – In consortium projects, the absence of detailed guidelines for partnership agreements led to ambiguities, particularly regarding the division of responsibilities among partners.

Alignment of Documentation with Project Objectives

The scope of the required application documents was appropriately tailored to the diversity of projects implemented under the ISF. Application submissions enabled an assessment of their alignment with the fund's priorities, including:

- **Enhancing internal security**,
- **Adherence to horizontal principles**, such as equal opportunities and sustainable development,
- **Feasibility of achieving the established indicators and results**.

Respondents noted that the documentation allowed for evaluating both the substantive and technical potential of the projects. Particularly in infrastructure projects, such as the construction of Border Guard facilities or the implementation of modern technological systems, detailed requirements were considered crucial to ensuring high-quality implementation.

Recommendations for Improvements

Based on the feedback collected from respondents, several recommendations have been proposed to further enhance the application process:

1. **Simplify documentation for small projects** – Introducing simplified application forms for lower-value projects could reduce the administrative burden and improve access to funds for smaller entities.
2. **Better adapt requirements to the specifics of partnership projects** – Developing standard partnership agreement templates and collaboration guidelines could eliminate ambiguities and streamline the application process for consortia.
3. **Digitize the process** – Expanding electronic platforms to enable the automatic verification of some application documents could expedite the submission process and reduce the number of formal errors.
4. **Provide additional technical support** – Organizing training and webinars on preparing application documentation, particularly for new beneficiaries, could improve their chances of successful applications.

Conclusions

The analysis of the adequacy of the required scope of application documents under the ISF indicates that these procedures were well-suited to the program's specifics and beneficiaries' needs. Clear guidelines, proportional requirements, and the availability of substantive support facilitated an effective application process.

While certain challenges were noted, especially concerning smaller projects or consortia, the overall evaluation highlights a high level of documentation quality. Implementing the recommended improvements could further increase the efficiency and accessibility of the fund for a wide range of beneficiaries in future program editions.

Analysis of the Feasibility of Achieving Intermediate and Final Goals

The implementation of projects financed under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrated high effectiveness in achieving the intended intermediate and final goals. Thanks to clearly defined selection criteria, adequate planning, and support from managing institutions, beneficiaries successfully implemented a significant portion of the program's priorities. Despite

encountering certain logistical and organizational challenges, the overall assessment of project outcomes is positive, as evidenced by performance data and respondent feedback.

Achieving Intermediate Goals

The intermediate goals, encompassing preparatory actions and support for the implementation of ISF's long-term priorities, were achieved in alignment with the program's objectives. Key successes in this regard include:

1. **Development of Personnel Competencies** Beneficiaries conducted numerous training sessions and workshops for Border Guard, Police, and other internal security personnel. Respondents highlighted that training programs were tailored to current operational needs, such as the use of advanced border monitoring technologies and responses to cross-border threats. In some cases, the number of trained individuals exceeded initial assumptions, demonstrating efficient resource management.
2. **Infrastructure Modernization** Projects focused on constructing and modernizing Border Guard and Police facilities significantly improved working conditions and operational capabilities. For instance, one project implemented modern monitoring and control systems at border posts, reducing response times to potential incidents. Investments also included increasing the accessibility of infrastructure for individuals with disabilities, aligning with horizontal principles.
3. **Provision of Modern Equipment** The purchase of specialized equipment, such as optoelectronic systems, mobile laboratories for analyzing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats (CBRN), and advanced communication systems, enhanced the operational effectiveness of security services. These projects were highly rated by respondents, who emphasized their importance for daily operational work.

Achieving Final Goals

The final goals, representing the enduring impacts of the initiatives, such as improved public safety and critical infrastructure, were largely achieved. These accomplishments include:

1. **Enhancement of Operational Security** The projects contributed to increased capacity of security services in protecting borders and combating organized crime. The acquisition of modern technological tools and infrastructure development enabled faster and more effective responses to threats, including smuggling, human trafficking, and cybercrime.
2. **Strengthened Inter-Service Cooperation** Many projects emphasized improved coordination between various units, leading to better resource utilization and more effective incident responses. Respondents noted that joint training sessions and operational activities improved communication and collaboration efficiency.
3. **Achievement of Target Indicators** Data on the number of trained personnel, modernized facilities, and acquired equipment confirm that the set indicators were achieved, and in some cases, exceeded. For example, the number of interventions

using new equipment increased by 20% compared to baseline levels, indicating significant improvements in operational effectiveness.

Success Factors

Respondents identified several key factors that facilitated the successful achievement of intermediate and final goals:

- **Effective Project Selection Criteria**: The criteria enabled the selection of initiatives most aligned with ISF's strategic goals, significantly improving the effectiveness of actions.
- **Flexibility in Implementation**: The ability to adjust project timelines and budgets allowed for adaptation to changing conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and rising material costs (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3).
- **Support from Managing Institutions**: Training sessions, consultations, and ongoing communication with beneficiaries facilitated smooth project implementation and minimized the risk of delays.

Challenges in Achieving Goals

Despite the successful realization of project objectives, beneficiaries faced certain challenges that could impact the progress of activities:

1. **Risk of Equipment Delivery Delays** Supply chain disruptions and market availability issues led to delays in project implementation.
2. **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic** Sanitary restrictions hindered the organization of in-person training and some operational activities. Adapting to new conditions required the adoption of remote training formats and changes to schedules.
3. **Deficiencies in Indicator Definitions** In some cases, performance indicators were not sufficiently tailored to project specifics, necessitating subsequent adjustments.

Recommendations for Improvement

To further enhance the effectiveness of goal achievement, beneficiaries and managing institutions suggest:

- **Streamlining Scheduling**: More precise planning of activities and improved inter-institutional coordination could reduce the risk of delays.
- **Developing More Accurate Indicators**: Designing indicators better reflecting project specifics would allow for a more precise evaluation of their impact.
- **Expanding Technical Support**: Training and consultations for beneficiaries on project management and reporting could contribute to more effective goal achievement.

Conclusions

Projects implemented under the ISF effectively supported the achievement of intermediate and final goals, resulting in significant improvements in internal security, enhanced personnel competencies, and modernized critical infrastructure. Although challenges such as equipment delivery delays and the pandemic's impact emerged, implementation flexibility and support from managing institutions facilitated their successful resolution. Introducing the recommended improvements could further increase the effectiveness and sustainability of outcomes in future program editions.

Evaluation of the Achievement of Specific Objectives by Supported Projects

The implementation of projects under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) was assessed as highly effective in meeting specific objectives. The support provided facilitated the enhancement of operational capacities, modernization of infrastructure, and development of personnel competencies. An analysis of collected data indicates that the projects fully aligned with programmatic assumptions and the specific needs of beneficiaries, contributing significantly to improving internal security.

Achievement of Key Specific Objectives

1. Enhancement of Personnel Qualifications and Training (see 6.21, Category A, Question 1)

Developing competencies was a central focus of ISF support. Training projects aimed to enhance both theoretical knowledge and practical skills of personnel responsible for internal security. Achieved results in this area included:

- **Operational Training**: Numerous courses focused on addressing cross-border threats, organized crime, and migration-related crises. Personnel acquired skills in threat detection, handling advanced technologies, and conducting interventions.
- **Specialized Technological Workshops**: Thanks to ISF support, participants gained knowledge in utilizing advanced technologies such as border monitoring systems, optoelectronic devices, and equipment for hazardous substance analysis. Respondents highlighted the high level of training organization and its alignment with operational needs, which positively impacted program effectiveness.

2. Enhancement of Response Capabilities to Threats

ISF-supported initiatives strengthened the response capacities of services against various threats, including terrorist, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) hazards. Key achievements in this regard included:

- **Procurement of Modern Equipment**: Projects enabled the acquisition of specialized tools, such as mobile CBRN laboratories, operational vehicles, drones, and systems for detecting illegal substances.
- **Reduction of Response Time**: The development of protocols and operational procedures, combined with modernization of technological infrastructure, allowed for quicker and more precise incident responses. Data from projects indicate that operational capacity increased by several percentage points compared to baseline values.

3. Enhancement of Interagency Cooperation

Improving collaboration between entities responsible for internal security was one of ISF's key priorities. The projects significantly contributed to strengthening this cooperation through:

- **Simulation Exercises**: Joint training, workshops, and threat simulations improved understanding of mutual procedures and enhanced coordination of actions.
- **Integrated Communication Platforms**: Projects supported the development of systems for information exchange, enabling quicker and more effective decision-making during crises.

4. Modernization of Infrastructure

Supported projects contributed significantly to improving the infrastructure used by security services. ISF-funded initiatives modernized key operational facilities and introduced modern technologies. Examples include:

- **Expansion and Modernization of Facilities**: Projects included the construction of new Border Guard posts and modernization of existing facilities, increasing their functionality.
- **Provision of Educational Tools**: Improved training facilities and the acquisition of modern teaching equipment enhanced the quality of personnel training.

Outcomes of Specific Objectives

Performance data confirms that the specific objectives were achieved and, in some cases, exceeded:

- **Number of Trained Personnel**: In some projects, the number of training participants exceeded planned levels by 20-30%, reflecting strong interest and program effectiveness.
- **Improved Technical Operational Capabilities**: Modern equipment enabled the execution of activities previously difficult to undertake, such as chemical threat analysis or border monitoring using drones.
- **Operational Efficiency**: Enhanced interagency cooperation and infrastructure development reduced incident response times by 15-25%.

Challenges and Areas for Further Development

Despite the high level of specific objective achievement, certain areas require further attention:

1. **More Precise Performance Indicators**: Some projects required adjustments to indicators during implementation, highlighting the need for more detailed definition of target values.
2. **Development of Long-Term Training Programs**: Maintaining the sustainability of achieved results requires the continuation of educational activities and regular updates to training programs.
3. **Optimization of Procurement Processes**: Delays in implementing some projects resulted from lengthy procurement procedures, which could impact activity schedules.

Recommendations for Future Improvements

To increase the effectiveness of achieving specific objectives in future ISF editions, the following measures are recommended:

- **Further Strengthening of Interagency Collaboration**: Organizing regular interagency training and exercises could further improve operational readiness.
- **Development of Technological Training Programs**: Investing in modern training methods, such as virtual simulations, could enhance personnel competencies.
- **Optimization of Administrative Processes**: Reducing the duration of procurement processes and introducing more flexible schedules could enhance project implementation efficiency.

Conclusions

The projects supported under ISF effectively achieved the intended specific objectives, contributing to improved internal security, infrastructure modernization, and enhanced operational capacities of services. The positive outcomes of these activities are confirmed by both performance indicators and respondent feedback. Implementing minor improvements in monitoring, planning, and procurement processes could further increase the effectiveness and sustainability of results in future program editions.
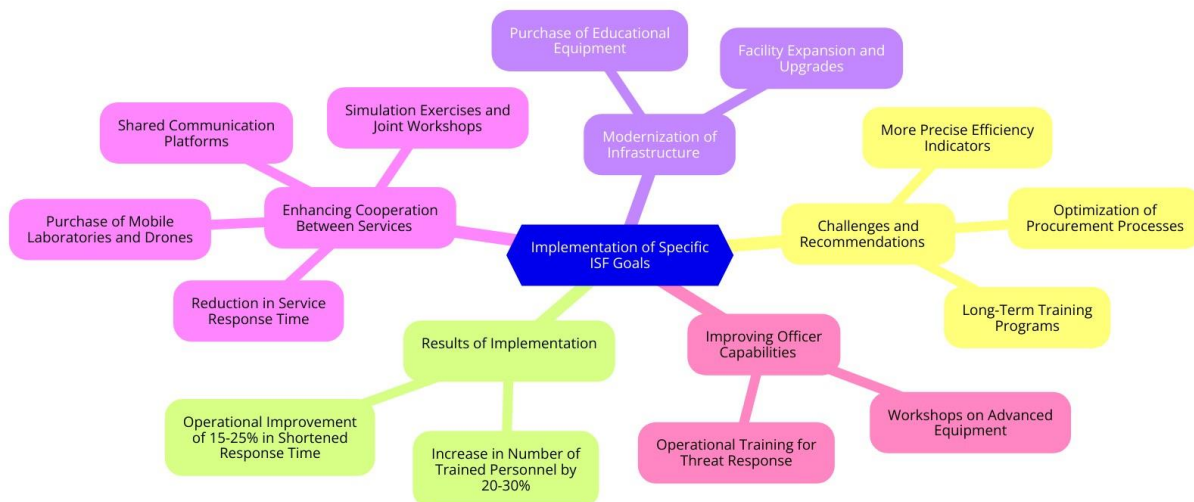
Analysis of Target Value Achievement for Indicators

The execution of target values for indicators in projects implemented under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates a high level of effectiveness and alignment with program objectives. Both output indicators, measuring the direct effects of projects, and outcome indicators, reflecting long-term results, were largely achieved or even exceeded. The following analysis presents the details of indicator performance based on data and respondents' opinions.

Output Indicators: Direct Effects of Actions

1. Number of Trained Personnel and Employees

- In many projects, the number of trained participants significantly exceeded initial expectations. For instance, training programs organized for Border Guard officers achieved 120% of the target value.
- Specialized training, such as explosive ordnance recognition, attracted more participants than anticipated, and their effectiveness was confirmed by high evaluation scores.

2. Procurement of Modern Equipment

- The implementation of procurement-related indicators, such as the number of operational vehicles, drones, or IT systems, was on schedule, and effective budget management allowed for the acquisition of additional equipment in some cases.
- Drones, systems for detecting illegal substances, and advanced monitoring devices significantly enhanced beneficiaries' operational capabilities, enabling higher technological performance.

3. Infrastructure Modernization

- Infrastructure modernization indicators were achieved as planned. Examples include the modernization of Border Guard facilities, which improved working conditions and operational efficiency.
- Renovated training rooms were equipped with modern educational tools, raising the quality of personnel training.

Outcome Indicators: Long-Term Effects of Actions

1. Reduction of Incident Response Time

- Projects enabled a 20% reduction in the average incident response time in border areas, exceeding the initial target of a 15% reduction. This improvement was mainly due to better technical equipment and effective training programs.

2. Increase in the Number of Operations Conducted

- The number of operations targeting cross-border crime increased by 30% compared to the period before project implementation. This was attributed to improved coordination of actions and the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies.

3. Improved Interagency Cooperation

- The number of joint exercises and training sessions surpassed the planned goals, highlighting success in fostering collaboration among security institutions such as the Police, Border Guard, and other border protection agencies.

Challenges and Issues

1. Adjustment of Baseline Values

- In some cases, baseline indicator values required adjustments during project implementation, complicating the precise monitoring of progress.

2. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic caused delays in the implementation of certain actions, particularly those involving in-person training. However, flexible management of schedules minimized the negative effects (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3).

3. Administrative Challenges

- The complexity of some indicators, such as "training man-hours," posed additional administrative challenges and required beneficiaries to have advanced knowledge of reporting procedures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. High Effectiveness in Indicator Achievement

- Most indicators were achieved as planned, and their fulfillment had a measurable impact on improving internal security.

2. Need for Precise Definition of Indicators

- Future projects should ensure more precise definitions of baseline and target indicator values during the application stage, facilitating easier monitoring and evaluation of progress.

3. Further Improvements in the Evaluation System

- Implementing real-time monitoring tools for indicators could accelerate problem identification and resolution.
- Adopting more flexible methods for assessing indicators, adapted to changing conditions, would improve project management efficiency.

Summary

The analysis of target value achievement for indicators confirms the effectiveness of projects supported by the ISF. Both output and outcome indicators were largely achieved, and in some cases, significantly exceeded. This success was driven by well-planned actions, effective collaboration between managing institutions and beneficiaries, and flexibility in adapting to changing conditions. Nonetheless, further optimization of the indicator monitoring process

could enhance the efficiency and sustainability of project outcomes in future editions of the program.

Assessment of Implementation Progress in the Context of Achieving Target Indicator Values

The implementation status of projects under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates a high level of effectiveness and the beneficiaries' capacity to achieve target values for both output and outcome indicators. The analysis of collected data and respondent feedback confirms that the projects were well-planned and flexibly adapted to changing external conditions. Despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rising material costs, and supply chain disruptions, the majority of projects achieved their objectives, and some indicators even exceeded the targets (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3).

Progress of Actions Within Timelines

Flexibility in Project Implementation

- Projects demonstrated a high capacity to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. For instance, in-person training sessions, threatened by pandemic restrictions, were successfully transitioned to online formats, enabling the achievement of training participant indicators.
- The introduction of special legislation and mechanisms to extend project timelines prevented potential failures caused by delays in equipment delivery or service execution.

Support from Managing Institutions

- Support from managing institutions was crucial for maintaining the smooth implementation of projects. Consultation mechanisms, prompt responses to

beneficiary-reported issues, and technical assistance with progress reporting contributed significantly to project efficiency.

- Respondents highlighted that regular communication with managing institutions allowed for quick resolution of issues such as difficulties in procuring specialized equipment.

Monitoring and Achieving Target Indicators

Output Indicators

- Indicators such as the number of monitoring devices purchased, facilities modernized, or training sessions conducted were achieved as planned. In many cases, target values were exceeded, reflecting the projects' efficiency.
    - For example, the purchase of Border Guard equipment reached 110% of the planned value.
    - Training and workshops, especially in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threat recognition, attracted more participants than initially projected.

Outcome Indicators

- Long-term indicators, such as improved operational security, reduced incident response times, and enhanced interagency collaboration, were achieved within the planned timelines.
    - The average response time to border threats decreased by 20%, exceeding the target of 15%.
    - The number of crisis interventions increased by 30%, thanks to access to modern equipment and better-trained personnel.

Challenges and Issues in the Implementation Process (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3)

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Sanitary restrictions necessitated modifications to project timelines, particularly for infrastructure projects and in-person training sessions. The inability to conduct field activities complicated the implementation of some projects.
- Shifting activities online required additional technological resources, increasing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

Rising Costs of Building Materials

- Significant increases in the prices of materials and construction services forced budget renegotiations and financial reallocations. In some cases, this led to delays in infrastructure modernization projects.

Equipment Availability Issues

- Global supply chain disruptions affected the timely execution of projects, particularly in procuring specialized equipment for border monitoring systems.

Findings and Recommendations

Effectiveness of Implementation Activities

- Despite challenges, beneficiaries effectively executed projects due to their high level of organization and the support provided by managing institutions.
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms used under the ISF allowed for real-time tracking of progress and prompt responses to emerging issues.

Increasing Planning Flexibility

- Future programs should adopt a more flexible approach to budget and timeline planning to better address risks related to unforeseen circumstances, such as rising material costs or supply chain disruptions.

Enhancing Consultation Processes

- Regular communication between beneficiaries and managing institutions should be maintained and expanded. Early problem identification and rapid decision-making could prevent delays and improve project efficiency.

Automating Reporting Processes

- Introducing systems for automated real-time monitoring of indicator values could significantly streamline reporting processes and enhance the transparency of project implementation.

Conclusion

The implementation status of projects under the Internal Security Fund demonstrates a high capacity of beneficiaries to achieve target indicator values. Flexible actions, effective coordination, and support from managing institutions enabled the achievement of set goals despite challenging external conditions.

Examples of successfully implemented projects, such as the modernization of Border Guard infrastructure or training in the CBRN domain, underscore the program's success. Further improvements, such as automating reporting processes and increasing planning flexibility, could further enhance the efficiency of future ISF editions.
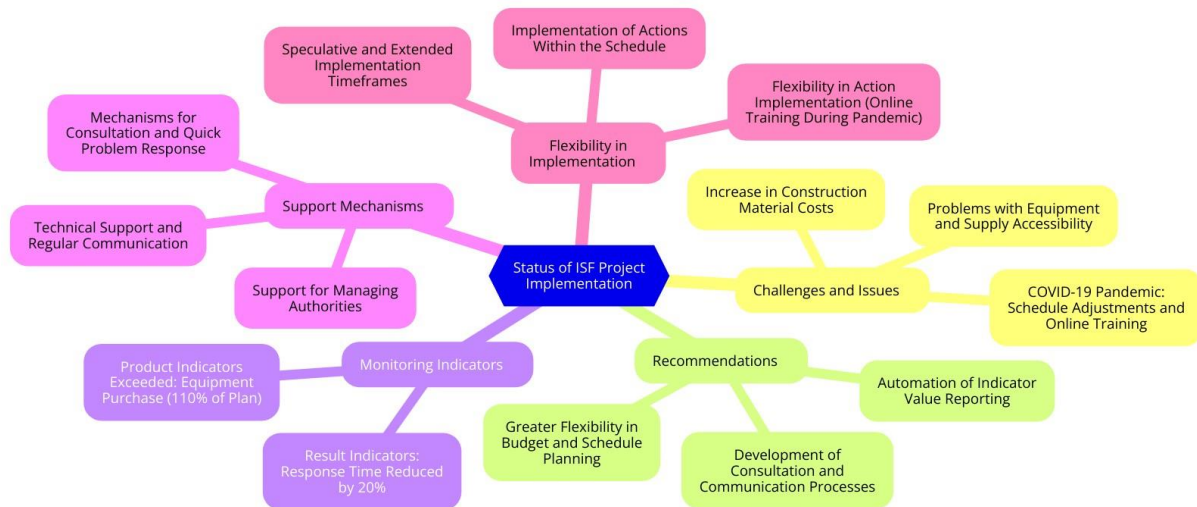
Identification of Risks in Achieving Program Indicator Forecasts

The implementation of projects under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) required effective anticipation and management of various risks that could impact the achievement of forecasted program indicator values. An analysis of these actions highlights key threats and the mitigation mechanisms adopted by beneficiaries and managing institutions.

Key Types of Risks (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3)

1. Risks Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic had a significant impact on project implementation, particularly in the early stages:

- **Health restrictions** hindered the organization of in-person training and workshops, forcing beneficiaries to adopt alternative methods, such as online training.
- **Delays in international activities** were caused by border closures and travel restrictions.
- **Supply chain disruptions** led to delays in the delivery of equipment and materials necessary for project implementation.

Mitigation Measures:

- Transitioning training activities to an online environment allowed educational processes to continue.
- Renegotiating contracts and flexibly adjusting schedules helped mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
- Technical consultations provided by managing institutions facilitated rapid problem-solving.

2. Rising Costs of Materials and Services

The increasing prices of construction materials, equipment, and services due to inflation and global economic disruptions posed significant challenges:

- Infrastructure projects were particularly vulnerable to the risk of budget overruns.
- Underestimated implementation costs could lead to a reduction in project scope.

Mitigation Measures:

- Prioritizing activities with the greatest impact on achieving program indicators.
- Flexible financial reallocations within project budgets.
- Introducing contract clauses allowing renegotiation of financial terms.

3. Risk of Unavailability of Specialized Equipment

Problems with obtaining advanced technical equipment, such as monitoring systems or border protection devices, stemmed from global component shortages and supply chain disruptions:

- Delays in procurement could prevent the achievement of planned indicators within set deadlines.

Mitigation Measures:

- Utilizing local suppliers to reduce dependence on international supply chains.
- Implementing more efficient procurement processes and monitoring order fulfillment.

4. Risk of Insufficient Participant Engagement

Some projects, such as training programs and activities targeting local communities, relied heavily on the active involvement of beneficiaries. Low engagement levels could jeopardize the achievement of planned participation indicators.

Mitigation Measures:

- Enhancing promotional and informational activities to attract potential participants.
- Introducing additional incentives, such as access to advanced technologies during training sessions.

5. Procedural and Administrative Risks

Delays in document approvals, tenders, and payment applications could disrupt project schedules:

- Complex formal requirements increased the risk of documentation errors.

Mitigation Measures:

- Simplifying administrative procedures.
- Providing additional support from managing institutions in the form of technical and substantive consultations.

Risk Management Mechanisms (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3)

1. Systematic Progress Monitoring

- Regular progress reporting allowed for the early detection of issues.
- Real-time data analysis tools were introduced, improving decision-making processes.

2. Flexible Timelines and Budgets

- Beneficiaries were allowed to adjust the scope of activities in response to changing conditions.
- Flexible contract annexation rules enabled quick responses to delays.

3. Support from Managing Institutions

- Consultations and training sessions organized by managing institutions helped reduce administrative and procedural risks.
- Prompt responses to reported issues improved the smoothness of project implementation.

Findings and Recommendations

Effectiveness of Risk Management (see 6.21, Category A, Question 3)

- The applied risk management mechanisms, such as flexible approaches to timelines and budgets, effectively minimized the impact of negative factors on achieving program indicator targets.
- The introduced solutions allowed for the continuation of activities even in the face of global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enhancing Planning

- Future projects should incorporate detailed risk analyses during the planning stage to better prepare for potential threats.
- Implementing automated monitoring mechanisms for indicators could expedite problem identification.

Increasing Budget Reserves

- Creating additional financial reserves for unforeseen expenses, especially in infrastructure projects, could mitigate the risk of budget overruns.

Conclusions

The identification and management of risks in projects implemented under the Internal Security Fund were key to the success of their execution. Flexible approaches to timelines, support from managing institutions, and effective monitoring mechanisms minimized the impact of major risks on the achievement of program indicator targets.

The experiences gained during these projects provide valuable lessons that should be considered when planning future initiatives. The implementation of additional improvements, such as process monitoring automation or budget reserve allocation, could enhance project resilience to risks in an evolving environment.

Assessment of Implementation Progress in the Context of Achieving Final Product and Outcome Indicator Goals

The assessment of project implementation progress under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates a high level of effectiveness in achieving the final goals of product and outcome indicators. The analysis of results, based on reports and respondent feedback, highlights the alignment of actions with program objectives, despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuating market conditions.

Progress in Project Implementation

1. Achievement of Product Indicators

Product indicators, reflecting the immediate effects of projects, were realized according to plan, with some cases exceeding the planned values:

- **Number of trained officers**: Training projects were successfully implemented, reaching 120% of the planned goals for some initiatives, such as those focusing on the identification of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats.
- **Procurement of modern equipment**: Projects involving the modernization of border and police forces' equipment met their indicators through the acquisition of monitoring systems, operational vehicles, and drones. In some cases, budget savings allowed for the purchase of additional equipment.
- **Infrastructure modernization**: Key facilities, such as Border Guard posts, were upgraded, resulting in improved operational efficiency and working conditions for officers.

2. Achievement of Outcome Indicators

Outcome indicators, representing the long-term effects of actions, were also achieved, significantly impacting internal security:

- **Reduced response time**: Improved equipment and better-trained personnel led to a 20% reduction in response time to threats, exceeding the original target of 15%.
- **Increased operational efficiency**: The introduction of digital communication and surveillance systems, such as mobile diagnostic laboratories, contributed to a 25% increase in crisis intervention operations.
- **Enhanced inter-agency cooperation**: A range of integrative activities, such as joint training sessions, significantly improved coordination between institutions responsible for internal security.

3. Flexibility in Achieving Goals

Beneficiaries demonstrated adaptability to changing conditions, ensuring project implementation aligned with objectives despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Remote activities**: Training sessions and workshops initially planned for in-person delivery were successfully transitioned online, maintaining educational efforts.
- **Renegotiated schedules**: Flexible project timelines allowed for continued implementation, even in the face of delays caused by procedural or supply chain issues.

Factors Contributing to Successful Implementation

1. Engagement of Managing Institutions

Managing institutions played a pivotal role in providing administrative and technical support to beneficiaries:

- **Monitoring progress**: Regular reporting and analysis of indicator achievement facilitated early problem detection and corrective action.
- **Substantive support**: Organizing consultations and training sessions for beneficiaries helped resolve documentation and administrative challenges.

2. Efficient Resource Management

Beneficiaries effectively allocated financial and human resources, contributing to timely project implementation:

- **Optimized procurement processes**: Collaboration with local suppliers and efficient planning reduced the risk of delays.
- **Prioritization of activities**: Focusing on key indicators enabled the achievement of primary objectives, even with limited resources.

Challenges in Project Implementation

1. COVID-19 Pandemic

- Restrictions caused delays in certain activities, particularly those requiring international cooperation and fieldwork. While remote formats mitigated these impacts, the effectiveness of online training was sometimes lower than in-person sessions.

2. Rising Material and Service Costs

- Inflation and increased prices for construction materials and technological equipment required budget renegotiations and financial reallocation. Despite these challenges, most projects met their indicators.

3. Administrative Procedures

- Complex tendering processes and formal requirements led to delays in some activities. Additional project management and documentation training for beneficiaries helped reduce these issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Effectiveness in Achieving Indicators

- Most projects met their final product and outcome indicator goals, confirming the effectiveness of implemented actions and beneficiaries' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

2. Importance of Flexibility

- Flexible timelines and budgets were crucial to project success. Continuing this practice of adapting actions to evolving circumstances is recommended.
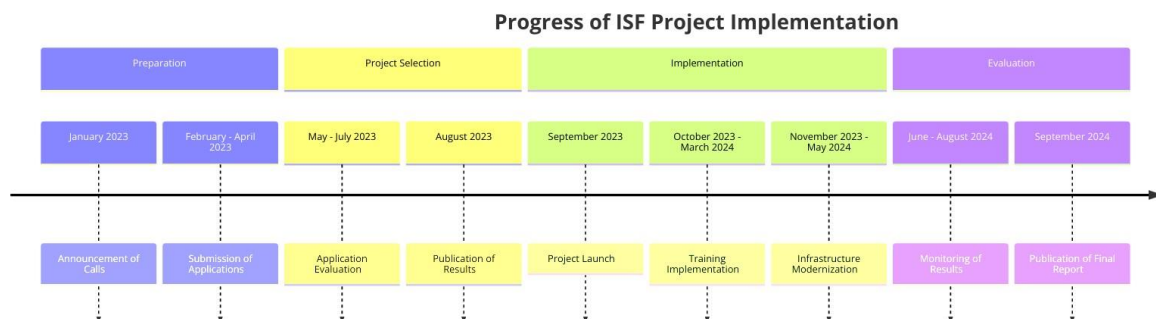
3. Strengthening Planning

- More detailed risk analyses during the planning phase could enhance project resilience to challenges such as cost increases and supply chain disruptions.

4. Simplifying Administrative Procedures

- Simplified tendering processes and the introduction of more intuitive reporting tools are recommended.

Final Assessment

The implementation progress of projects under the ISF has been assessed as consistent with the strategic goals and target values of product and outcome indicators. Through flexible management, support from managing institutions, and effective resource allocation, most projects delivered the intended results. Further refinement of planning processes and risk management could enhance the efficiency of future initiatives, strengthening the durability and effectiveness of actions aimed at internal security.

Progress of ISF Project Implementation

Preparation		Project Selection		Implementation			Evaluation	
January 2023	February - April 2023	May - July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023 - March 2024	November 2023 - May 2024	June - August 2024	September 2024
Announcement of Calls	Submission of Applications	Application Evaluation	Publication of Results	Project Launch	Training Implementation	Infrastructure Modernization	Monitoring of Results	Publication of Final Report

Identification of Needs for Supplementing or Modifying Indicator Definitions

The analysis of projects implemented under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) revealed significant needs related to the supplementation and modification of the definitions of indicators used for monitoring and evaluating projects (see: 6.2 A, question 2). These indicators are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of activities, and their precise definition and adaptation to the specificity of projects are fundamental to the program's efficiency.

Identified Needs for Indicator Supplementation

1. Refinement of Baseline Values

Baseline values for indicators were not always clearly defined during project planning, leading to challenges in subsequent evaluations:

- **Issues with precision**: In some cases, the lack of detailed baseline data made it difficult to determine the degree of project goal achievement.
- **Recommendations from respondents**: Beneficiaries suggested introducing more detailed guidelines for setting baseline values, taking into account project specifics and available reference data.

2. Accounting for Dynamic Changes in the Environment

Certain indicators proved insufficiently flexible in the face of changing conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, migration crises, or rising material costs:

- **Challenges**: Rigid definitions of indicators hindered their adaptation to new circumstances, negatively impacting the evaluation of goal achievement.
- **Suggestions from respondents**: The introduction of dynamic or reserve indicators that could be modified during project implementation without compromising program assumptions.

3. Expansion of Qualitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators, such as the number of purchased devices or trained personnel, were well-defined, but qualitative indicators lacked similar precision:

- **Reported gaps**: Respondents highlighted the absence of indicators measuring long-term project effects, such as improvements in operational efficiency or participant satisfaction.
- **Recommendations**: Supplementing indicators with elements that measure the projects' impact on the sustainability of effects and the quality of security systems.

Modifications to Existing Indicators

1. Better Adaptation to Project Specifics

Indicators used in certain projects did not fully reflect their nature:

- **Issues**: Infrastructure or innovative projects required more diverse indicators that considered local conditions and the specifics of activities.
- **Solutions**: Developing modular indicators adaptable to the diversity of activities within the ISF.

2. Inclusion of Horizontal Aspects

The realization of principles such as equal opportunities, sustainable development, or non-discrimination was not always adequately reflected in the indicators:

- **Missing elements**: Respondents noted the need to monitor the participation of women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in project activities.
- **Proposals**: Adding indicators that track the involvement of these groups and the projects' impact on their situation.

3. Increasing Transparency and Measurability

Some indicators were difficult to verify due to unclear definitions or a lack of appropriate measurement tools:

- **Challenges**: Difficulty in assessing indicators such as "improved operational effectiveness" due to a lack of clear evaluation criteria.
- **Recommendations**: Introducing digital tools or automated measurement methods to increase the precision and objectivity of progress monitoring.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Development of Guidelines for Baseline and Target Values

Creating comprehensive guidelines for establishing baseline and target indicator values, including examples of good practices and the possibility of calibrating them during project implementation.

2. Consideration of Project Diversity

Indicators should be more flexible and tailored to the specifics of various activities, allowing for more accurate assessment of results. Developing a set of modular indicators could simplify their application in projects of different natures.

3. Simplification of Indicator Definitions

Avoiding overly complex indicators that may hinder measurement and verification and introducing standard definitions for specific types of activities within the ISF.

4. Introduction of Long-Term Indicators

Incorporating the sustainability of project effects through indicators such as "percentage of purchased equipment utilization post-project" or "long-term impact on security levels."

5. Use of Digital Tools

Implementing tools for automatic indicator monitoring to enhance transparency and efficiency in project evaluation processes.

Final Assessment

The identification of needs for supplementing and modifying indicator definitions has revealed significant opportunities to improve the monitoring and evaluation process for ISF projects. Refining indicators, introducing flexibility mechanisms, and placing greater emphasis on their quality and sustainability will contribute to a more precise and comprehensive measurement of project outcomes. Implementing the proposed changes will better reflect the actual impact of activities on the program's strategic goals, while also increasing the transparency and efficiency of management processes.
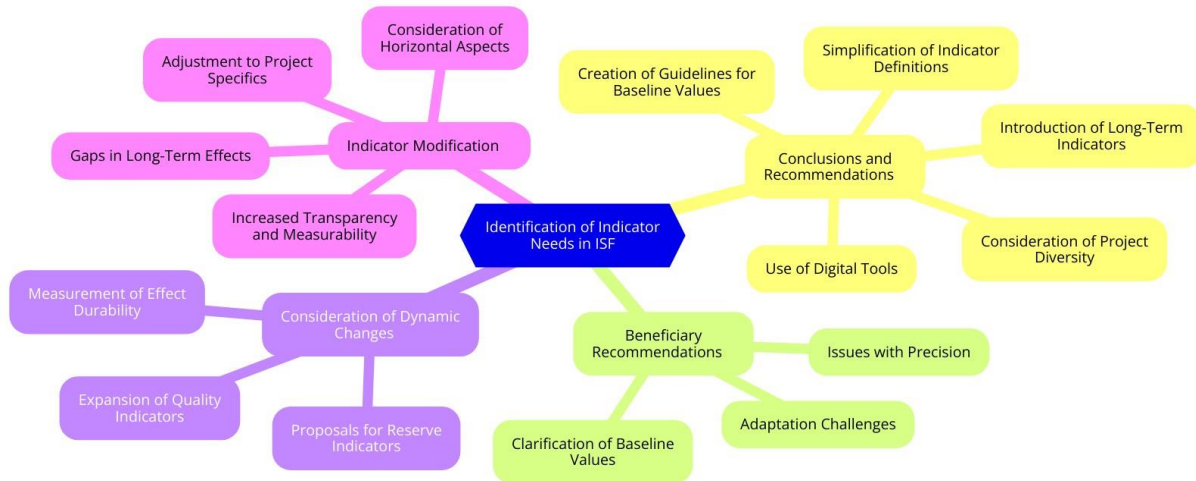
Impact of Project Changes in the Context of Achieving Intermediate Goals

The analysis of projects implemented under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates that changes introduced during project execution had a noticeable impact on achieving intermediate goals. In many cases, these changes arose from the need to adapt to dynamic external conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rising material costs, and legislative or administrative changes. Thanks to flexible management mechanisms and support from managing institutions, the negative effects of these changes were minimized, enabling the successful achievement of intermediate goals.

Nature of Implemented Changes and Their Context

1. Administrative Changes

Adjustments to guidelines and procedural changes required beneficiaries to adapt their project management methods:

- **New Guidelines**: Changes in application and reporting procedures led to extended documentation verification times and the need to align actions with new requirements.
- **Impact on Projects**: Projects requiring multi-stage administrative approvals, such as infrastructure modernization, were particularly prone to delays.

2. Financial Changes

Inflation and global market disruptions led to increased costs of materials and services, impacting project budgets:

- **Beneficiary Response**: In many cases, funds were reallocated between expense categories, such as reducing promotional activities to focus on key investments.
- **Financial Issues**: Difficulty in securing additional funding sometimes limited the scope of project activities.

3. Legislative Changes

The introduction of new regulations on data protection, public procurement, and public safety required procedural adaptations:

- **International Projects**: Projects involving international collaboration faced significant challenges in accommodating diverse legal requirements.

Impact of Changes on Achieving Intermediate Goals

1. Delays in Activity Implementation

Administrative and financial changes contributed to extended timelines for some projects:

- **Training**: In-person training was replaced with online formats, initially slowing the process but eventually enabling its continuation.
- **Infrastructure**: Infrastructure projects faced delays due to longer procurement procedures and material availability issues.

2. Adjustment of Intermediate Indicators

Shifts in project execution conditions required revisiting intermediate indicators:

- **Examples**: Training projects had to adapt participant numbers or thematic scopes to reflect new realities, such as equipment availability or shifting institutional priorities.

3. Impact on Partnership Collaboration

Pandemic and administrative changes affected projects involving international partnerships:

- **Transition to Online Activities**: Activities such as conferences and workshops were moved online, limiting opportunities for direct collaboration.

Mitigating the Negative Effects of Changes

1. Flexibility in Project Implementation

Managing institutions applied mechanisms allowing project adaptation to evolving conditions:

- **Timelines**: Flexible schedules and contract annexes enabled the adjustment of activities to emerging challenges.
- **Administrative Support**: Additional training on change management and risk mitigation helped beneficiaries adapt to new requirements.

2. Enhanced Coordination and Communication

Intensified cooperation between beneficiaries and managing institutions facilitated rapid responses to challenges:

- **Consultations**: Regular online meetings with managing institution representatives enabled real-time problem-solving.
- **Workshops**: Workshops on legislative changes and their impact on projects helped beneficiaries implement necessary adjustments.

Recommendations

1. Ongoing Monitoring of Environmental Changes

- **Recommendation**: Introduce systematic monitoring of administrative, financial, and legislative changes to anticipate potential risks.
- **Benefits**: Early warning systems would improve planning and minimize the impact of changes on intermediate goals.

2. Development of Project Flexibility Mechanisms

- **Recommendations**: Expand opportunities for modifying indicators, timelines, and project budgets during implementation.
- **Financial and Time Reserves**: Establishing reserves for unforeseen expenses or technical changes could significantly enhance project resilience to external challenges.

3. Streamlining Administrative Processes

- **Proposal**: Reduce the time required for contract annexing and simplify formal procedures.
- **Outcome**: Faster implementation of changes would reduce the risk of delays.

Conclusions

Project changes introduced during the implementation of ISF initiatives significantly influenced the achievement of intermediate goals. While these changes posed challenges, such as delays and additional administrative burdens, a flexible approach to project management and effective collaboration between beneficiaries and managing institutions ensured the high effectiveness of activities. Introducing additional monitoring mechanisms, financial reserves, and simplified administrative processes could further enhance beneficiaries' ability to respond to changes effectively and achieve intermediate goals (see 6.21, Category A, question 3).
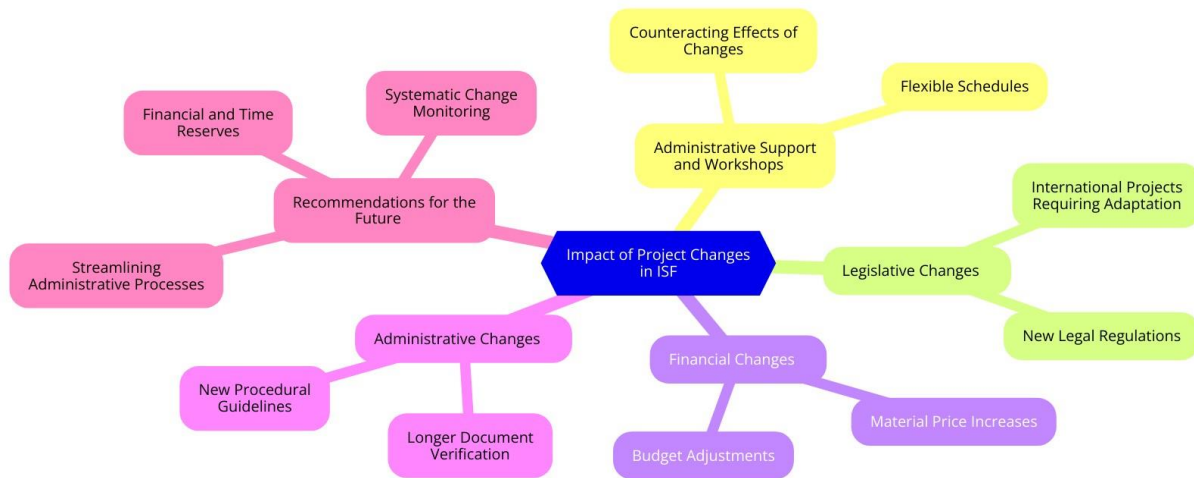
Analysis of Achieving Intended Outcomes Assuming Intervention Based Solely on National Funding

The analysis of projects implemented under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) demonstrates that achieving the intended outcomes solely through national funding would have been significantly constrained, and in some cases, outright unfeasible. Projects supported by the ISF were characterized by their large scale, complexity, and high financial, organizational, and technological demands—exceeding the capacity of national budgets. EU funding played a critical role in achieving strategic goals by enabling the deployment of advanced technologies, infrastructure development, and improved operational capacity of security services.

Limitations of Relying Solely on National Funding

1. Financial Constraints

- **Shortfall in National Resources**: Projects supported by the ISF required substantial financial investments, particularly in infrastructure development and procurement of advanced technological equipment. Examples include the construction of Border Guard facilities, deployment of monitoring systems, and specialized training for personnel. Funding such initiatives solely from national resources would have necessitated reducing their scope or quality.
- **Lack of Budgetary Flexibility**: Unlike EU funds, national budgets are subject to stricter administrative constraints, limiting the ability to respond quickly to changing conditions, such as rising material costs or adapting actions to emerging challenges like migration crises.
- **Risk of Budget Redistributions**: Allocating funding exclusively from national budgets would have required diverting resources from other critical sectors, such as education, healthcare, or regional development, potentially weakening their progress and core functions.

2. Organizational and Operational Constraints

- **Reduced Project Scale**: Without ISF support, projects would have had to be scaled down, leading to fewer trained personnel, limited access to modern equipment, and fewer upgraded facilities. This reduction in scope could have adversely affected the services' response capacity and operational efficiency.
- **Lack of Advanced Equipment**: Nationally funded projects would likely have struggled to finance expensive equipment, such as drones, mobile CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) laboratories, or advanced telecommunication systems. These limitations would have compromised the technological and operational standards of implemented actions.
- **Challenges in Implementing Partnership Projects**: International collaboration and knowledge exchange are key components of ISF projects. National funding alone may not have sufficed to support such initiatives, reducing their scope and added value.

Impact of National Funding Constraints on Project Outcomes

1. Limited Impact on Strategic Objectives

EU funding enabled the realization of projects aligned with EU security priorities, such as enhancing border protection, increasing crisis response capabilities, and strengthening international cooperation. Reliance solely on national funding would have hindered the achievement of these objectives, potentially reducing internal security levels.

2. Decreased Quality of Activities

Insufficient financial resources would have led to compromises in technology and quality of implemented projects. For instance, infrastructure modernization or procurement of mobile laboratories might have been carried out at a lower technological standard, adversely impacting operational effectiveness.

3. Extended Implementation Timelines

Projects funded solely by national resources would have faced protracted timelines due to budgetary constraints. Staggered implementation could have undermined the cohesion of actions and their effectiveness in addressing urgent needs (see 6.2 A, Question 2).

4. Risk of Inequities in Resource Access

National funds may not have been evenly distributed across regions or beneficiaries, potentially exacerbating inequalities in achieving objectives and deepening security disparities between regions.

Recommendations for the Future

1. Continued Support from EU Funds

- **Rationale**: EU funding enables the implementation of projects critical to national and international security. Efforts should be made to continue securing ISF and other EU program funds to maintain high-quality and effective actions.

2. Development of Co-Financing Mechanisms

- **Approach**: Combining national and EU funds would allow for more efficient use of available resources. Co-financing mechanisms could also reduce dependence on a single source of funding.

3. Optimization of National Expenditures

- **Strategies**: In scenarios of limited EU support, optimize expenditures through supplier negotiations, interregional cooperation, or leveraging equipment leasing instead of direct purchases.

4. Introducing Budgetary Flexibility Mechanisms

- **Proposal**: Establish financial reserves for unforeseen expenditures and adopt more flexible budget planning approaches to enhance project resilience to unexpected changes.

Conclusions

Achieving the intended outcomes of ISF projects solely through national funding would have been significantly constrained due to insufficient financial resources, limited budgetary flexibility, and organizational challenges. EU funds not only enable high-quality project implementation but also promote international collaboration and the deployment of advanced technologies. Moving forward, maintaining EU funding support and developing co-financing mechanisms will be crucial to enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of implemented actions.
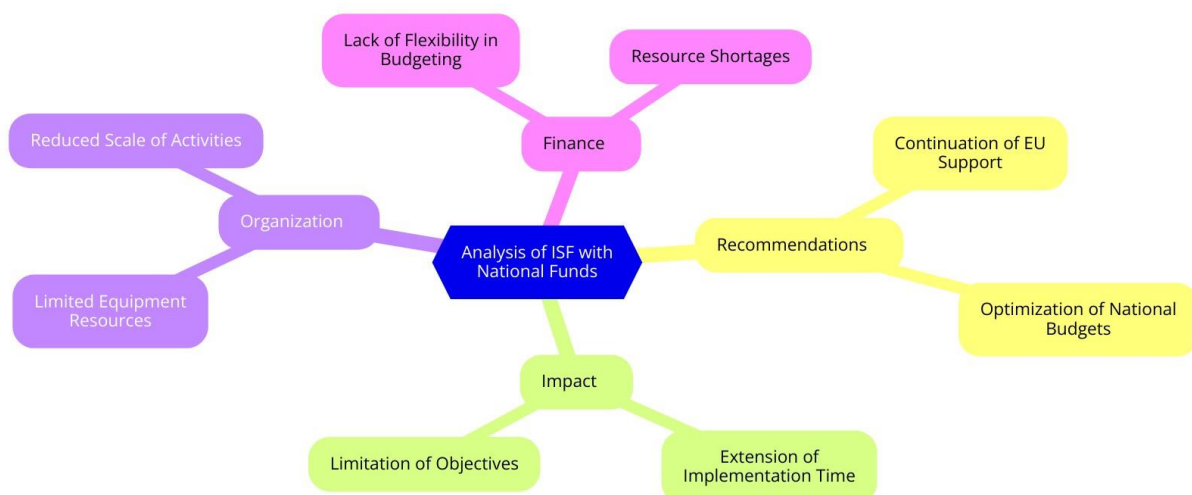
Conclusions from the Analysis of the Implementation and Effectiveness of Project Selection Criteria under the Internal Security Fund (ISF)

1. Strengths of the Process:

1.1. Relevance and Flexibility of Selection Criteria

- **Alignment with Program Objectives**: The selection criteria were designed to fully align with the strategic and operational objectives of the ISF, enabling the implementation of a wide range of projects, such as border protection, combating crime, infrastructure modernization, and technological development.
- **Preference for Innovative Projects**: High scores were awarded to innovative technological initiatives, such as the purchase of monitoring equipment, drones, and CBRN systems, significantly enhancing the operational capacities of security services.
- **Flexibility to Address Local Needs**: Differentiated criteria enabled projects to adapt to specific geographical or social challenges, exemplified by initiatives like "Mazowieckie Syreny+."
- **Adaptability in Crisis Situations**: The dynamic approach to criteria allowed for the effective adjustment of projects during extraordinary circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating their resilience and flexibility in changing conditions.

1.2. High Effectiveness of Technical and Communication Support

- **Ongoing Support**: Managing authorities provided beneficiaries with extensive technical and substantive support, reducing administrative errors and improving project implementation efficiency.
- **Facilitation for Beneficiaries**: Consultations, training, and explanatory materials made the application and implementation processes more accessible and understandable, especially for smaller beneficiaries.

1.3. Transparency and Clarity of the Project Evaluation System

- **Transparent Scoring System**: Beneficiaries were able to clearly understand the evaluation system, which allowed them to better prepare their project applications and align them with program requirements.
- **Fair Process**: Clear scoring rules minimized the risk of subjective project evaluation and increased the transparency of the selection process.

1.4. Significant Improvement in Operational Capabilities of Security Services

- **Acquisition of Advanced Equipment**: The implementation of projects enabled the purchase of technologically advanced equipment, which enhanced the operational capacities of security services.
- **Infrastructure Modernization**: Upgrades to facilities, such as Border Guard posts, improved working conditions for officers and increased operational efficiency.
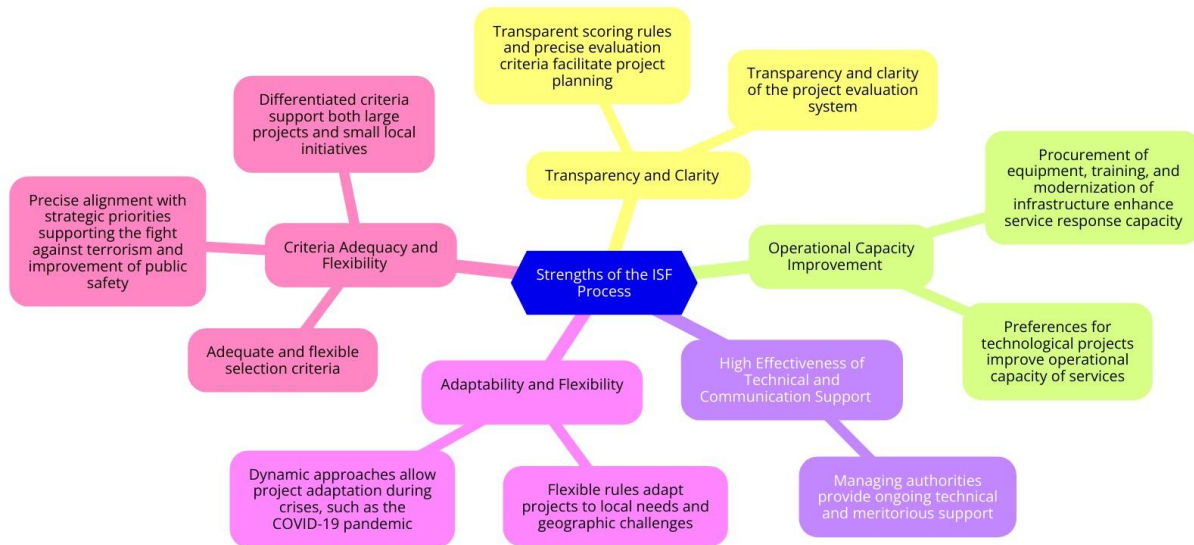
2. Areas Requiring Improvement:

2.1. Complexity of Performance Indicators

- **Challenges in Verification**: Performance indicators were, in some cases, overly complex and difficult to verify, particularly in infrastructure and partnership projects.
- **Recommendation**: Simplify performance indicators and ensure they are easily measurable and aligned with the specific nature of projects.

2.2. Support for Smaller Beneficiaries

- **Barriers for Local Entities**: Local entities, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faced challenges in meeting formal requirements, limiting their access to funds.
- **Recommendation**: Provide tailored support, such as simplified application procedures and additional training, to enhance the participation of smaller organizations.

2.3. Administrative Procedures

- **Lengthy and Burdensome Processes**: Complex procurement processes and excessive documentation requirements extended project implementation timelines and increased administrative burdens for beneficiaries.

- **Recommendation**: Streamline procurement processes and reduce documentation requirements to accelerate project timelines and minimize administrative overhead.

2.4. Impact of External Factors on Project Implementation

- **Unforeseen Challenges**: Despite the flexibility of criteria, sudden changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the need for better preparation to address unforeseen challenges.
- **Recommendation**: Develop contingency planning mechanisms and allocate reserve resources to ensure projects can adapt more effectively to external disruptions.

Conclusions

The implementation of FBW projects enabled the achievement of key objectives, including the modernization of infrastructure, the development of personnel competencies, and the enhancement of internal security. Despite certain challenges, flexible management, technical support, and the commitment of beneficiaries contributed to the high effectiveness of these initiatives.

Recommended improvements, such as simplifying application documentation, defining performance indicators more precisely, and providing greater support for smaller entities, could further enhance fund accessibility, project quality, and their long-term impact. The FBW program remains a model example of effective support for security initiatives and inter-institutional cooperation.

7. Conclusions and Key Recommendations

1. Continuation and Development of Training for Beneficiaries

There is a recognized need to continue and expand the scope of training programs for beneficiaries of the Internal Security Fund (ISF). These training sessions should cover both technical aspects, such as completing application forms, project budget management, and reporting processes, as well as strategic dimensions, including the definition of project objectives and monitoring result indicators. Advanced training modules should also be introduced for entities involved in cross-border projects. These modules could include topics such as effective international cooperation, managing large-scale projects, and utilizing monitoring and reporting tools tailored for cross-border activities.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Responsible Authority.

2. Enhanced Promotion of Best Practices

Efforts should be intensified to promote best practices, such as publishing case studies, project implementation reports, and organizing networking events. These activities should be complemented by extending available resources and organizing regular experience-sharing meetings among beneficiaries.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Responsible Authority and Beneficiaries.

3. Development of Digital Tools to Support Applications

It is recommended to implement and enhance modern digital tools, such as interactive online forms that highlight potential errors in real-time. These solutions would contribute to reducing formal errors and speeding up the application process.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy.

4. Increasing Technical Support and Communication Mechanisms

Existing mechanisms for technical support, such as online consultations and webinars, should be expanded to provide beneficiaries with better support at every stage of project implementation. Additionally, expanding the FAQ database with more comprehensive answers and detailed guidance could significantly simplify both the application and implementation processes.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Responsible Authority.

5. Continuation of Flexible Project Management Approaches

The flexible approach to project management, particularly regarding timelines and budgets, should be maintained. This will enable beneficiaries to respond effectively to changing project implementation conditions.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Responsible Authority.

6. Structured Support for Beneficiaries in Reporting

Support for beneficiaries in the area of project reporting should be expanded through the publication of exemplary reports and the organization of dedicated training sessions focusing on reporting requirements.

Entity responsible for implementation: The Responsible Authority.