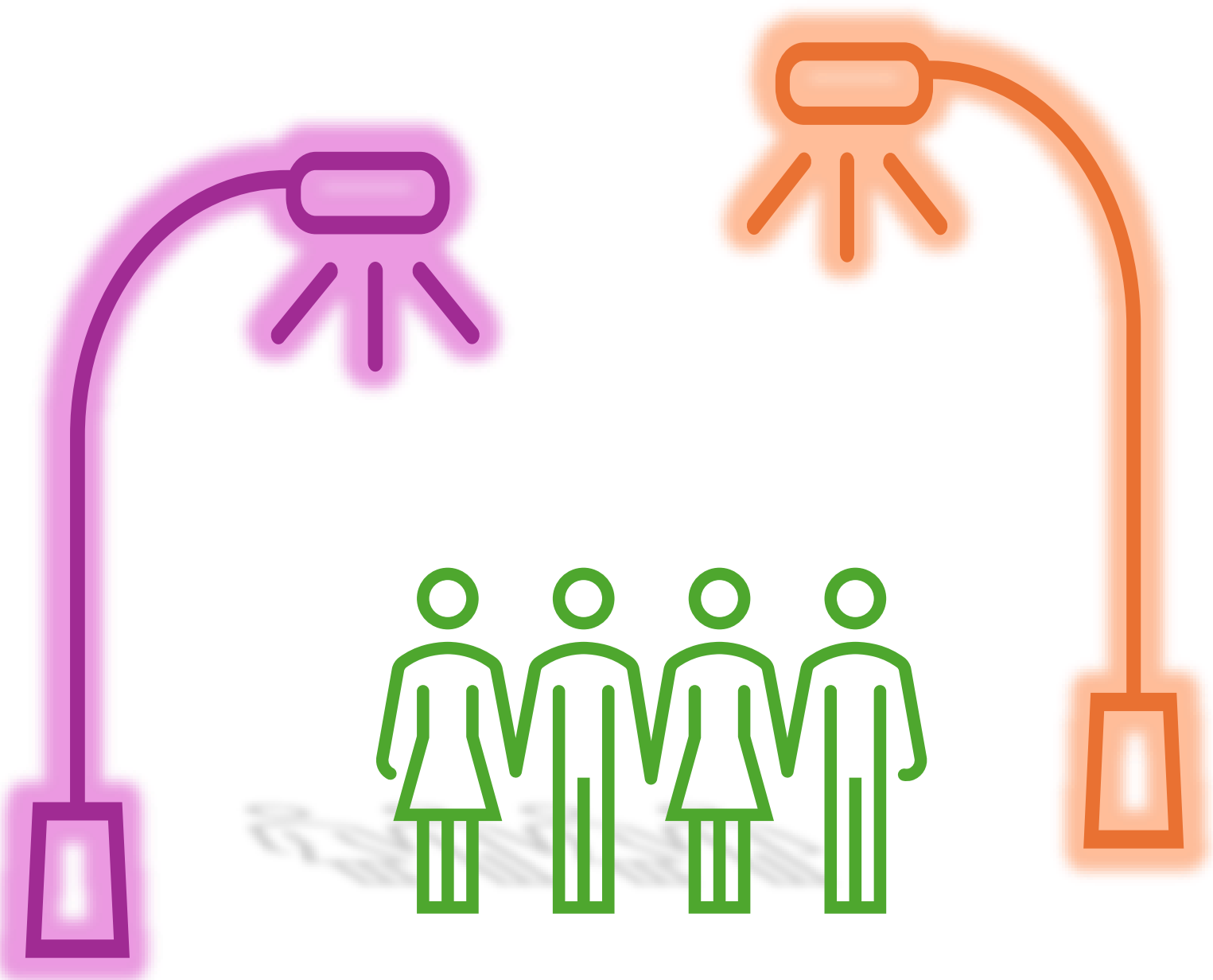


# Mid-term evaluation of the Polish Internal Security Fund Programme 2021-2027



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## List of abbreviations used

Abbreviation	Explanation
CBRNe	Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive agents
CBŚP	Central Bureau of Police Investigation
COPE	European Projects Service Centre of the Ministry of Interior and Administration
CS	Specific objective
EAV	<i>European</i> added value
EOT	European Operational Team
FBW	Internal Security Fund
HVT	<i>High-value</i> targets
IP	Intermediate Body (COPE)
IZ	Managing Authority (Department of European Funds of the Ministry of Interior and Administration)
KAS	National Tax Administration
KE	European Commission
KGP	Police Headquarters
KG SG	Border Guard Headquarters
KIG	National Border Infrastructure
KWP	Provincial Police Headquarters
MF	Ministry of Finance
MIAA	Ministry of the Interior and Administration
TCN	Third-country nationals
General Regulation	Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Fair Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the financial rules for these Funds and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy
SIENA BPL	Secure Information Exchange Network Application Basic Protection Level

SIS	Schengen Information System
SG	Border Guard
THB	<i>Trafficking in Human Beings</i>
EU	European Union

## Summary

The scope of intervention implemented under the Fund covers priority needs to be undertaken in Poland in order to ensure an appropriate level of internal security. The Fund focuses on actions aimed at both developing international cooperation and ensuring that the level of knowledge, competence and equipment of services is comparable across the EU. The Fund will fund actions to combat threats in cyberspace, hybrid attacks, terrorism and organised crime, among others. The Fund also responds to the internal security challenges posed by the recent massive influx of refugees as a result of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and the associated threats of, inter alia, criminal groups infiltrating the country, smuggling of migrants, weapons, drugs, human trafficking. The evaluation shows that the provisions of the programme allow for the implementation of projects that result from the current needs of the individual stakeholders to whom support has been dedicated.

The analysis of the support logic confirmed that the support has been designed correctly and ensures that the individual objectives of the Fund can be realised. From the analysis of the Fund's logic and the interviews conducted as part of the evaluation, it appears that the main objective of the Fund is to increase international cooperation in the various aspects of internal security. Despite the separate specific objective (CS2) to contribute to increasing cross-border cooperation, the other specific objectives also focus on the implementation of international activities related to enhancing internal security.

New requirements related to the General Regulation introduced by the EU, resulted in the introduction of a new system for monitoring, reporting and evaluation - CST2021 - within the Security and Migration Funds. The currently identified biggest shortcoming of the CST2021 system is that it is not a system that is tailored to the needs of the Fund, rather it is the Fund that has to adapt to the technical possibilities that CST2021 offers. Additionally, in terms of the indicator system, one can also consider whether it is worth reporting result indicators in a more descriptive form e.g. as part of the beneficiaries' own indicators defined within their projects. It is also worth bearing in mind that the CSF is in the initial phase of implementation, so the good points as well as the shortcomings of its monitoring and evaluation system may also become apparent at a later stage of its implementation.

The activities financed from the CSF under the Polish Programme are consistent with the activities carried out under the Thematic Instrument, i.e. an additional pool of funds allocated by the EC to finance projects aimed at supporting activities in Member States and third countries, in particular to contribute to the fight against and prevention of crime and to combat cross-border criminal networks involved in smuggling. To date, there has been one call under the EMPACT specific action. Two projects implemented by the Police Headquarters, concerning the development and implementation of an investigative and operational strategy against major criminal organisations and the fight against the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs, have been selected for funding. Coherence with the intervention of the FBW is also demonstrated by initiatives funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 under the Home Affairs Programme. The projects implemented aim to strengthen law enforcement cooperation, including the prevention and detection of organised crime. In addition, the activities financed from the FBW are consistent with the activities carried out by Europol and with the activities financed from the state budget carried out under the statutory



obligation by the Police, the CBI, the Border Guard and the National Fiscal Administration. These activities relate primarily to the identification, prevention and combating of various types of crime and the protection of public security and order.

## Introduction

The main objective of the mid-term evaluation was to confirm that the implementation system and the Fund are adequate to meet the objectives and will deliver:

- their achievement at a reasonable cost,
- adequate support to meet changing needs,
- the added value of EU-level intervention, consistent with other sources and modes of funding.

The purpose of conducting the evaluation was to improve the quality of planning and implementation of the Fund. Given the early stage of the implementation of the 2021-2027 Polish FBW Programme, the mid-term evaluation focused on procedural issues, assessing the continued relevance of the Fund and improving the implementation process. Nevertheless, the task of the mid-term evaluation was also to prepare the ground for the ex-post evaluation, in particular by checking whether the current monitoring and evaluation arrangements would allow to collect and generate sufficient information to measure the impact of the programmes until June 2029 in the context of the preparation of the future multiannual financial framework.

The scope of the evaluation study carried out is the same as the scope of activities to be implemented in Poland with the support of FBW funds. These have been defined in the Polish RFC Programme. The following specific objectives have been specified therein:

- I. *Exchange of information*
- II. *Cross-border cooperation*
- III. *Prevention of and fight against crime*

The scope of the evaluation covers the activities related to the programming and implementation of the Fund from the beginning of the programming period until December 2023, therefore the study covers data recorded up to 31 December 2023 and reported to the European Commission by 31 January 2024.

The evaluation was based on five evaluation criteria:

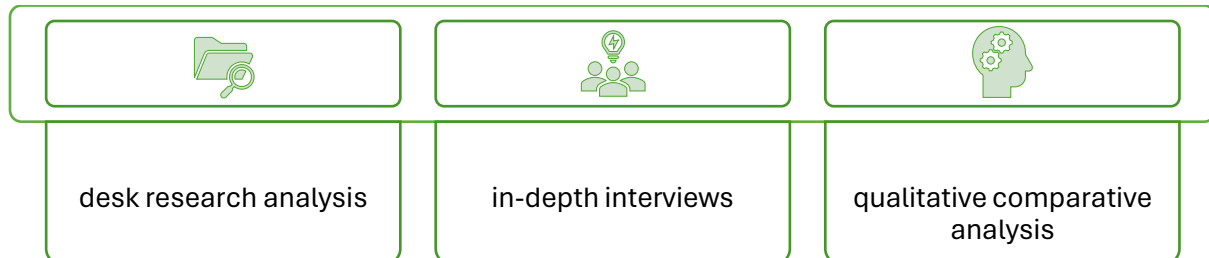
A. Relevance	B. Effectiveness	C. Efficiency	D. Coherence	E. EU added value
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These criteria are reflected by adopting a five-part structure for this report presenting the results of the evaluation.



## Description of the methodology used

The contractor used a diverse methodological instrumentation in the execution of this contract, including both information gathering and analysis methods:



Source: own work ECORYS Polska sp. z o.o.

The desk research analysis included:

- **FBW programme document:**
  - Polish Homeland Security Fund Programme 2021-2027;
- **Guidelines related to the implementation of FBW:**
  - Homeland Security Fund Project Beneficiary Handbook;
  - Manual of Implementation Procedures for MA and IB;
- **FBW implementation reports:**
  - Annual implementation report for financial year 2022;
- **Documents relating to the area covered by FBW support:**
  - Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund;
  - Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the financial rules for these Funds and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy;
  - Draft Background Note - April 2023, Webinar of 19 April 2023 on the key elements of the mid-term evaluation and evaluation plans Home Affairs Programmes 2021-2027.
- Previous FBW evaluation reports;
- Information on FBW is available at <https://www.gov.pl/web/dfe-mswia/wdrazane-fundusze-europejskie>;
- Information on FBW is available at [www.copemswia.gov.pl](http://www.copemswia.gov.pl).

Given that the IFBW is currently at an early stage of implementation, this method was the primary source of data analysed and evaluated. Nevertheless, the Research Team also undertook in-depth interviews with the implementers of the IFBW and the entities that constitute the beneficiaries of the Fund. A total of 8 in-depth interviews were conducted as part of the study, including:

- Individual in-depth interviews with staff of institutions involved in the implementation of the CDF, including representatives of:
  - Ministry of Interior and Administration (Department of European Funds) - 1 interview;
  - Centre for European Projects of the Ministry of Interior and Administration -1 interview;
- Individual in-depth interviews with staff of organisations that have been and are beneficiaries of projects funded by the CDF:
  - Police Headquarters -1 interview;
  - Central Bureau of Police Investigation -1 interview;
  - Provincial Police Headquarters -1 interview;
  - Border Guard Headquarters -1 interview;
  - Ministry of Finance - National Tax Administration -1 interview;
  - at least 1 provincial office -1 interview.

In addition, a qualitative benchmarking exercise was carried out to highlight best practices at the level of both the Fund and the projects it supports.

## Reconstructing and describing the intervention logic

The Internal Security Fund was established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund. Its objective is to contribute to ensuring a high level of security, primarily by preventing terrorism, radicalisation, organised crime and cybercrime. The Polish Programme of the FBW was approved by the EC on 8 December 2022.

The CSF includes three specific objectives, which are **information exchange, cross-border cooperation and preventing and combating crime**. Underlying these objectives are challenges and threats, which are also defined in the Programme. They were defined on the basis of the strategic documents of the Republic of Poland and the ongoing work at the level of the EU on changes concerning SIS, VIS, Eurodac and the implementation of new systems: EES, ETIAS and their interoperability.

For the FBW, a significant challenge is to combat crime in all its dimensions (organised, cross-border, cybercrime, terrorism). The potential threats that may affect Poland in this context (human trafficking, drug smuggling, arms trafficking) are very serious and are based not only on the domestic component but have their origin outside Poland. In addition, mention should be made of the threat posed by the Russian Federation's attack on Ukrainian territory on 24.02.2022. The ongoing armed conflict since then has resulted in a large influx of refugees, among whom there may also be persons wishing to exploit the situation for their own unlawful purposes (e.g. smuggling of weapons, drugs). In addition, the ongoing armed conflict poses an increased threat to the country's critical infrastructure, which may also be vulnerable to attacks.

Due to the cross-border nature of the threats described above and reflected in the programme, it becomes a significant challenge to **ensure the exchange of information** by the Polish Police and their counterparts in other European countries. In this context, the importance of standardising the information system allowing for the collection, search and transfer of data should be emphasised. Importantly, access to this information should be properly secured and dedicated only to authorised persons.

The second issue is the **fight against organised crime, including cross-border organised crime**. The free movement of people and goods within the Schengen area creates the conditions for the development of such crime. It is therefore important to place particular emphasis on prevention and detection (e.g. by ensuring effective control procedures at airports). Equally important is the detection of potential crime hotspots, which makes it possible to eradicate criminal activity even before its effects have a chance to damage the security and finances of the state. Linked to this is the **problem of cybercrime**. The development of the Internet means that the virtual world can also be used for criminal purposes, e.g. for contact between criminals, for recruiting members of criminal groups or for committing crimes (e.g. recruiting unaware potential victims of illegal activities). In this context, too, effective countermeasures are needed, related both to raising the competence of the services responsible for detecting threats and to modernising/extending the ICT facilities of the services in order to detect cybercrime.

Other threats are also linked to the issue of cybercrime, including **terrorism**, which can be defined as the use of force by unauthorised actors to coerce representatives of the authorities or the public to do

or not to do a specific action. Another element is **radicalisation and hate crimes, as well** as attempts to **attack the critical infrastructure of the state**. It should be mentioned that Poland has experienced all of the phenomena mentioned above: an attempted attack on the Polish Sejm with a homemade bomb in 2012 (terrorism), the celebration of the birthday of Nazi criminal A. Hitler in 2017 (radicalisation), attack on an MP's office in 2010, politically motivated assassination of the Mayor of Gdansk Paweł Adamowicz in 2019 (hate crimes), a cyber-attack on the radio frequency of the Polish State Railways in 2023 (attack on critical infrastructure). While these events were not externally motivated, similar events in the future may be externally inspired, which should be kept in mind.

Poland also faces the **problem of corruption**. According to data from the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, in 2018, 1,229 pre-trial proceedings were initiated in corruption offences, while in 2019 there were already 1,366 such offences<sup>1</sup>. Data from the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau indicated that material benefits were also accepted from TCNs, e.g. those wishing to obtain, for a fee, statements of intent to entrust work on the territory of Poland (which formed the basis for applying for national visas)<sup>2</sup>.

The scale and scope of the problems and challenges described dictate that they are serious. It is therefore becoming necessary to improve the competences of the services and authorities responsible for ensuring security and detecting crime, as well as to establish close cooperation with entities from other countries for the purposes of detecting crime. In addition, mention should be made of the victims of crime, whose support is also becoming a challenge and an indispensable need for internal security.

All of this makes Poland face the need for the following:

- Expansion/modernisation of ICT systems and ICT facilities;
- Detecting and combating organised crime, including cross-border crime;
- Detecting and combating cybercrime;
- Detecting and combating corruption;
- The fight against terrorist financing;
- Cooperation with actors from other countries in terms of competence enhancement, training and law enforcement;
- Protection of citizens and state infrastructure;
- Countering radicalisation and hate crimes;
- Supporting victims of crime.

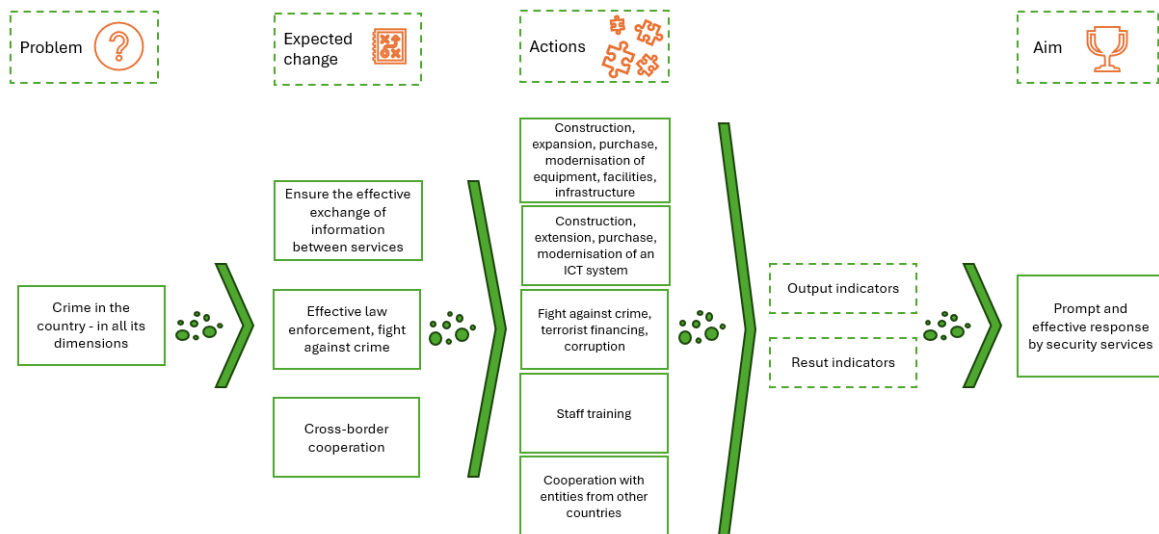
These actions are intended to increase the level of internal security of the country, as well as to ensure the effectiveness of Polish services and bodies responsible for this security. A diagram of the intervention logic is presented below.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cba.gov.pl/pl/antykorupc/publikacje/publikacje-w-jezyku-po/4387,Obszary-przestepczosci-korupcyjnej-w-Polsce-w-latach-20182019.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

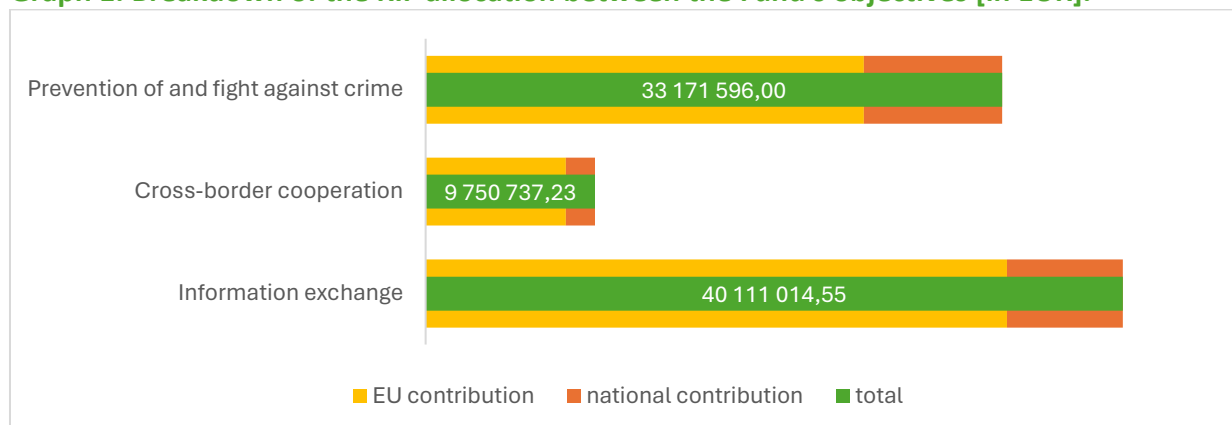
### Scheme 1. Intervention logic



Source: own study.

A total of EUR 87 038 385.04 is planned for the implementation of the measures, of which EUR 70 755 658.31 is the EU contribution and EUR 16 282 726.73 is the national contribution. Different amounts have been allocated to different objectives. The largest amount was allocated to the exchange of information objective. Prevention of and fight against crime was second. The smallest amount was allocated to cross-border cooperation, with only 11.7% of the allocation. The varying amounts may be due to the fact that information exchange requires the implementation of software and an ICT system, which is extremely expensive to set up. The fight against organised crime also requires a high level of resources; while, as interviews have shown, cross-border cooperation in the fight against crime is often an accompanying element that needs to be strengthened through additional funding.

Graph 1. Breakdown of the RIF allocation between the Fund's objectives [in EUR].



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

The objectives set and achieved are measured by indicators, which are divided into output indicators and result indicators. Due to the fact that the **first call under the CDF was only announced in autumn 2023**, it is not reasonable to present the achieved values of the indicators so far. Given the period of

preparation of this evaluation, the cognitive value associated with presenting the current status of the implementation of the indicators may be residual - as the activities are only in the initial phase of implementation. Instead, the research team decided to analyse the indicators - both output and result indicators - in order to examine whether they are adequate in terms of the objectives set for the FBW.

The Fund selected the following **product indicators**:

Objective 1 Information exchange:

- Number of trainees;
- Number of expert meetings/workshops/studies visits;
- Number of ICT systems created/adapted/maintained;
- Number of pieces of equipment purchased;

Objective 2 Cross-border cooperation:

- Number of cross-border operations, including number of joint investigation teams;
- Number of cross-border operations, of which the number of operational activities under the EU/EMPACT policy cycle;
- Number of expert meetings/workshops/study visits/community exercises;
- Number of pieces of equipment purchased;
- Number of means of transport purchased for cross-border operations;

Objective 3 Preventing and combating crime:

- Number of trainees;
- Number of exchange programmes/workshops/study visits;
- Number of pieces of equipment purchased;
- Number of means of transport purchased;
- Number of security-related infrastructure elements or facilities/tools/mechanisms created/purchased/upgraded;
- Number of projects aimed at crime prevention;
- Number of projects aimed at assisting victims of crime;
- Number of victims of crime assisted.

In addition, the following **result indicators** were selected in the Fund :

Objective 1 Information exchange:

- Number of ICT systems that have become interoperable across Member States/EU and decentralised security-related information systems/international databases;
- Number of administrative units that have created new or adapted existing mechanisms/procedures/tools/guidelines for exchanging information with other Member States/EU bodies or agencies/international organisations/third countries;
- Number of participants who find the training useful in their work;
- Number of trainees who, three months after the training, confirm that they are using the skills and competences acquired during the training;

Objective 2 Cross-border cooperation:

- Estimated value of assets frozen in cross-border operations;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - cannabis;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - opioids, including heroin;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - cocaine;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - synthetic drugs, including amphetamine-type stimulants (including amphetamine and methamphetamine) and MDMA;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - new psychoactive substances;
- Quantity of illicit drugs seized in cross-border operations - other illicit drugs;
- Number of weapons confiscated in cross-border operations - military weapons: self-propelled firearms and heavy weapons (anti-tank, rocket launcher, mortar, etc.);
- Number of weapons confiscated in cross-border operations - other small firearms: revolvers and pistols (including salute and acoustic weapons);
- Number of weapons confiscated in cross-border operations - other long firearms: shotguns and rifles (including salute and acoustic weapons);
- Number of administrative units that have developed or adapted existing mechanisms/procedures/tools/guidelines for cooperation with other countries; member states/EU agencies/international organisations/third countries;
- Number of staff involved in cross-border operations;
- Number of implemented recommendations issued as a result of the evaluation of the application of the Schengen acquis;

Objective 3 Prevent and combat crime:

- Number of initiatives developed/advanced to prevent radicalisation;
- Number of initiatives developed/ advanced to protect/support witnesses and whistleblowers;
- Number of new/adapted critical infrastructure/public space facilities to protect against security risks;
- Number of participants who find the training useful in their work;
- Number of trainees who, three months after the training, confirm that they are using the skills and competences acquired during the training.

The analysis carried out confirms that there is a link between the actions identified and the objectives and challenges to which the Fund aims to respond. In addition, the identified output indicators are in correlation with the result indicators and follow logically from the actions that are planned in the FBW. Therefore, it should be assessed that the **intervention logic has been drawn up correctly.**



## State of play (progress of implementation of Fund operations from a procedural, financial and practical point of view)

As mentioned earlier, the Polish Programme FBW was only approved at the end of 2022, which makes it difficult to observe implementation progress at this stage. As indicated in the annual report on the implementation of the programme, *due to the approval of the FBW Programme on 8 December 2022, it is not possible to indicate concrete progress in the implementation of the Programme and the achievement of the defined milestones and end goals. The above also applies to the implementation measures, indicative actions and desired outcomes set out in the Programme*<sup>3</sup>.

To date, one call for proposals has been carried out under the EMPACT specific action (CS 2 - Cross-border cooperation). Under it, **two projects implemented by the Police Headquarters were co-financed: EUROPEAN OPERATIONAL TEAM (EOT) Costa del Sol and CRYSTAL PALACE - Strengthening the Activities of the EMPACT NPS and Synthetic Drugs Platform under EMPACT 2022+**. These actions were selected for implementation in Q4 2023. The first one was funded with PLN 399,456.00 (total project value: PLN 443,840.00). The second one was co-financed with the amount of PLN 4,445,751.60 and its total value is PLN 4,939,724. The subsidy accounted for 90% of the eligible costs of both projects. It should be noted that the co-financing value is usually 79%; the co-financing value given in the previous sentence is only for Specific Action type measures.

The first project, **Costa del Sol**, is being carried out in cooperation with the Kingdom of Spain, with Poland as one of the partners. It envisages creation of a European Operations Team in the Spanish Costa del Sol region to develop and implement a joint investigative and operational strategy against major criminal organisations and related high-value targets affecting EU Member States.

In the case of the **Crystal Palace** project, Poland is the leader, while the partnership includes the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Italian Republic. The aim of the project is to combat the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs in a coordinated way at EU and international level by identifying and dismantling criminal groups.

To date, therefore, only one CS has been disbursed, with the value of the funds disbursed indicating that **it was only 12.8 per cent of the funds allocated to the objective of combating organised crime and 6.5 per cent of the funds allocated to all the objectives pursued by the Fund.**

In addition, a call under CS 3 - fighting organised crime was launched in early 2024. However, its adjudication goes beyond the period of preparation of this analysis - it was originally planned for 8 March 2024, after which it was extended to 22 March 2024 r. In this call, authorities and units competent in preventing and combating crime could apply for funding, and the budget of the call amounted to approximately 26,8 million PLN.

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<sup>3</sup> Annual Implementation Report referred to in Article 30 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1149, submitted by the Member States to the Commission and concerning the Internal Security Fund, financial year 1 January 2021-30 June 2022, p. 1.

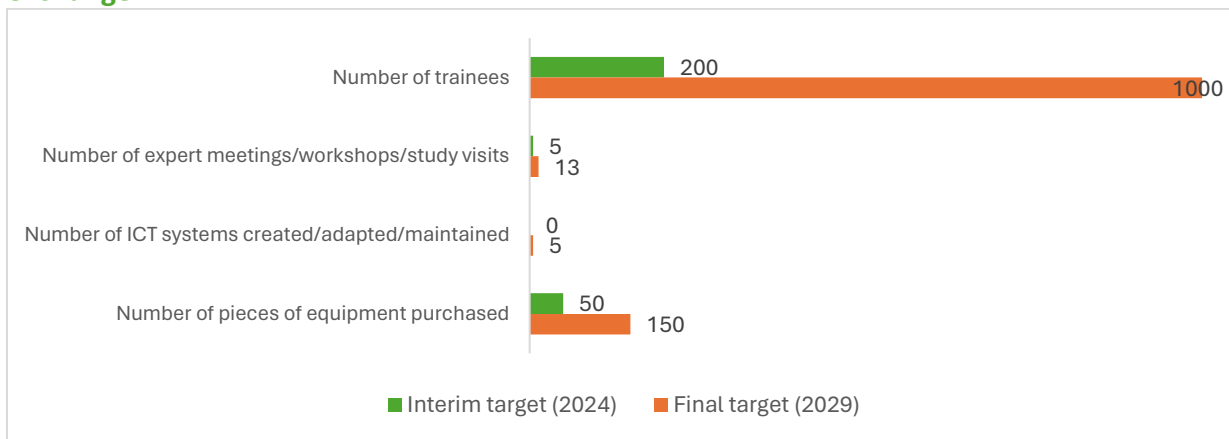


According to the schedule of calls for proposals for the Fund for 2024, the organisation of 4 calls is planned, in which the available allocation is approximately PLN 99 million. Under these calls, the KGP, KG Border Guard and authorities and units competent in preventing and combating crime will be able to be beneficiaries. The calls planned for 2024 cover all three objectives of the FBW.

The intermediate and target values of the output indicators, by specific objectives of the Fund, are presented below. Due to the initial stage of implementation of the CDF, it is difficult to assess the extent to which they have been achieved, so the Research Team has chosen to base the values on those planned to be achieved rather than those actually achieved to date.

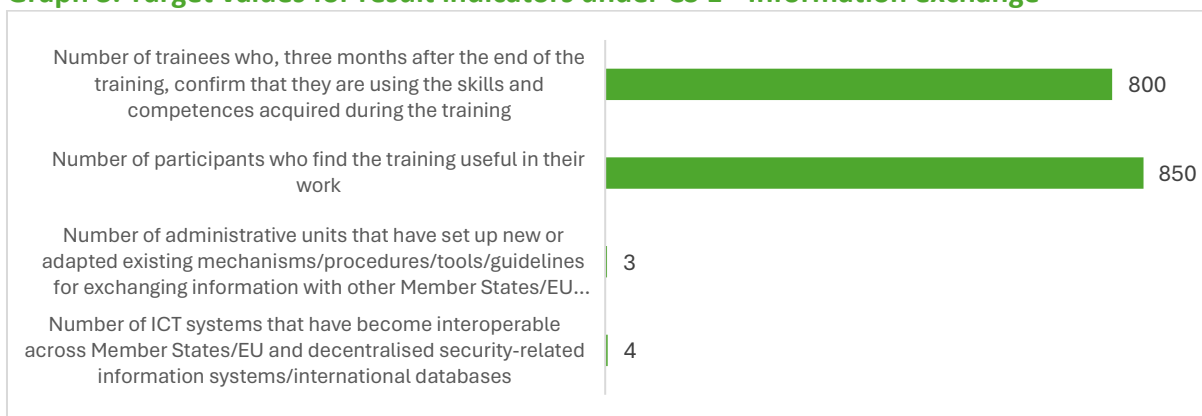
The charts below show the intermediate and target values of the output indicators and the target values of the result indicators for CS 1 - information exchange.

### Graph 2. Intermediate and target values for output indicators under CS 1 - information exchange



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

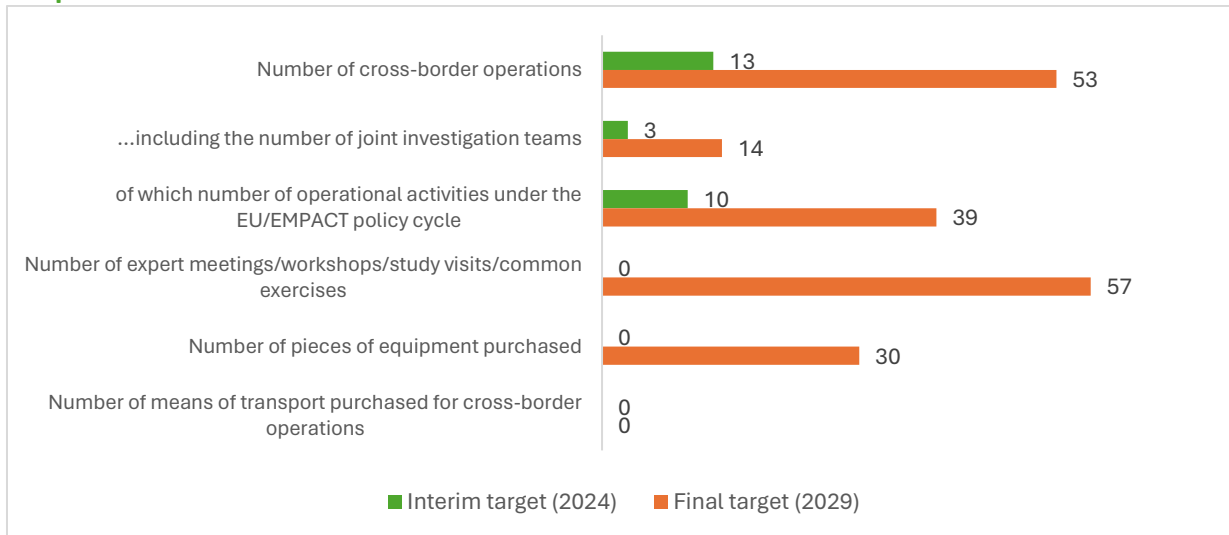
### Graph 3. Target values for result indicators under CS 1 - Information exchange



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

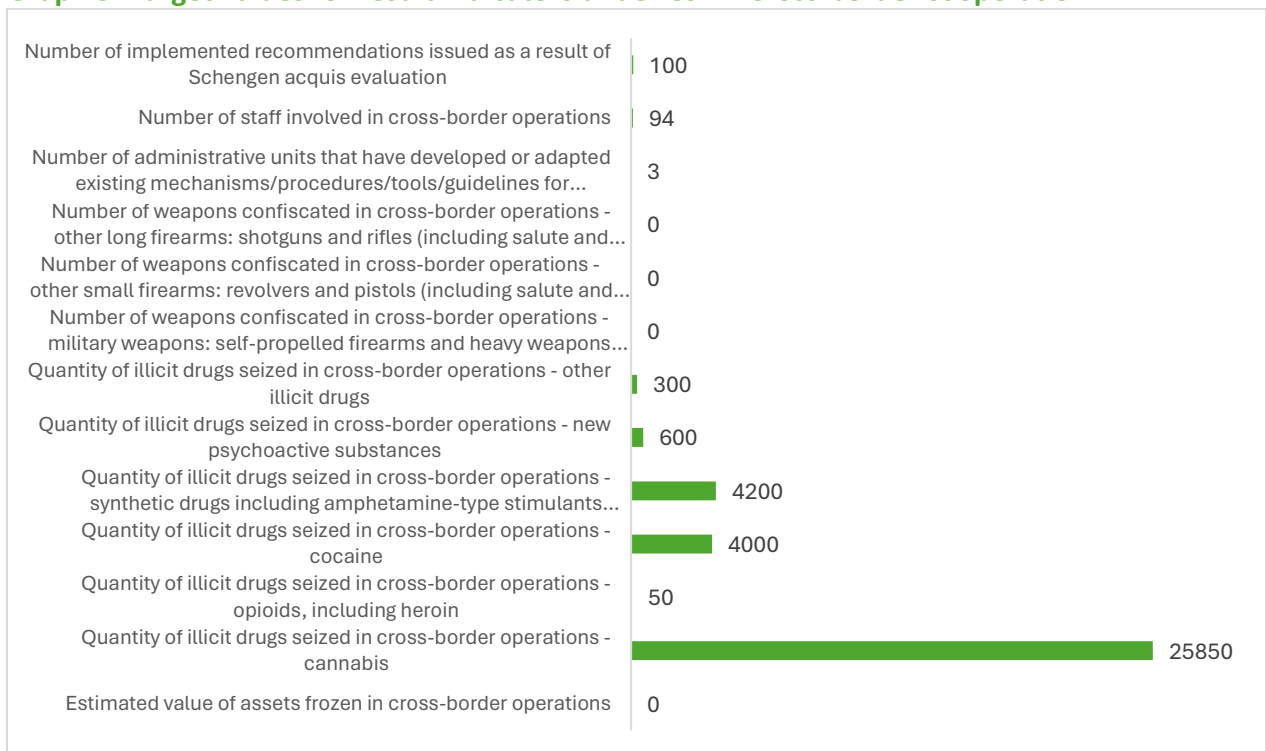
The charts below show intermediate and target values for output indicators and target values for result indicators for CS 2 - Cross-border cooperation.

**Graph 4. Intermediate and target values for output indicators under CS 2 - Cross-border cooperation**



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

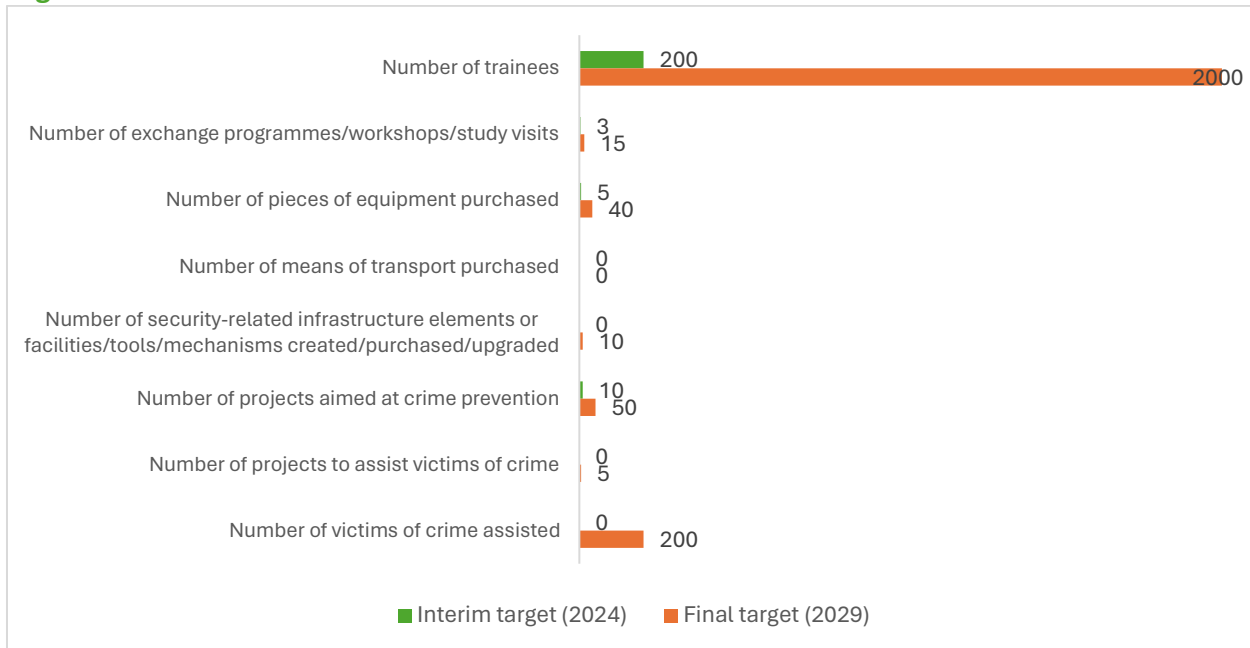
**Graph 5. Target values for result indicators under CS 2 - Cross-border cooperation**



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

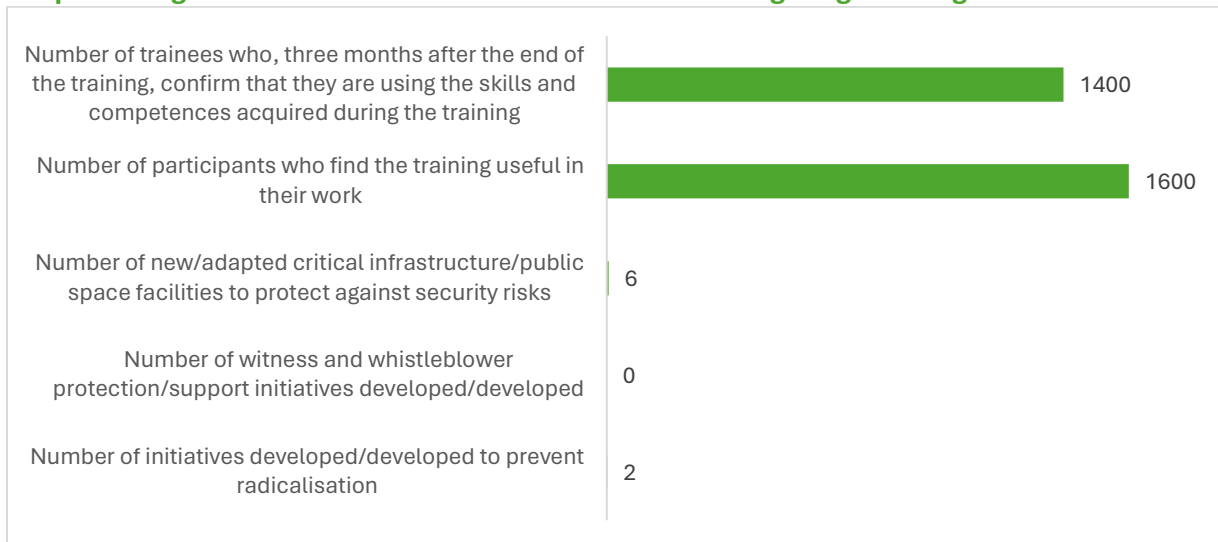
The charts below show the intermediate and target values of the output indicators and the target values of the result indicators for CS 3 - Fight against organised crime.

**Graph 6. Intermediate and target values for output indicators under CS 3 - Fight against organised crime**



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

**Graph 7. Target values for result indicators under CS 3 - Fight against organised crime**



Source: own compilation based on the FBW programme document.

With regard to the state of implementation, it should be mentioned that, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund, in the event that individual countries manage to spend 10% of the basic allocation by the end of 2024, they may receive additional funds. However, if this level is not reached, the country in question is excluded from applying for these funds. Given that FBW programmes have started later in many countries, few countries have the chance to meet the condition necessary to apply for

additional funds. Therefore, discussions are underway with the EC to consider the amounts contracted for projects as an eligibility condition rather than certified expenditure.

*(...) these programmes started later in all EU countries. Few countries have the chance to meet this 10% condition. These talks are about the European Commission recognising the projects that have been approved, the amounts that have been approved up to the end of this year, as sufficient amounts to mobilise this reserve. I think there is a good chance of that.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW implementer.*

## Evaluation results according to criteria, questions and specific objectives

### A. Suitability

#### 1. To what extent is the Fund responsive to changing needs?

The 2021-2027 CSF is focused on projects to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and other relevant institutions in preventing and combating serious, organised crime with a cross-border dimension. The Fund will finance actions to combat threats in cyberspace, hybrid attacks, terrorism and organised crime, among others. The Fund also responds to the internal security challenges of the recent massive influx of refugees as a result of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and the associated threats of criminal groups infiltrating the country, smuggling of migrants, weapons, drugs, human trafficking, among others.

The actions possible to be financed under the Fund are the result of extensive consultations with relevant institutions at the national level, including stakeholders, adapting the scope of intervention to the requirements arising from national and EU strategic documents. The highest financial allocation of the CSF was earmarked for the specific objective on information exchange (inter alia, due to the costliness of IT systems), followed by activities related to the fight against organised crime together with crisis management and cross-border cooperation.

During the in-depth interviews conducted for the purposes of evaluation with implementers as well as beneficiaries of the Fund, the adequacy of the CSF with regard to key challenges and needs to ensure an adequate level of internal security was highlighted. An issue highlighted was the insufficient limit of support (35% of the allocation) under the CSF for the purchase of equipment, means of transport<sup>4</sup>, which is often outdated or insufficient for Polish services. Limitations in the allocation result in the fact that, due to the lack of own contribution, some undertakings will not be able to be implemented.

*With FBW there should be more opportunity to buy equipment. The previous perspective was only training, and now we have a new perspective. There is 35%, e.g. now we have such a call, where 35% of just this value can be used to buy equipment (...).*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

*(...) 35%, but I still think it is too low especially in the current situation where we have such a high migration pressure (...)*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

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<sup>4</sup> REGULATION (EU) 2021/1149 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 7 July 2021 establishing an Internal Security Fund. Article 13, p.7. A maximum of 35% of a Member State's programme allocation may be used for the purchase of equipment, means of transport or the construction of security-relevant facilities. This ceiling may only be exceeded in duly justified cases.

At the same time, interviews with FBW beneficiaries indicate that the needs of the Fund may be increasing due to the development of additional circumstances resulting from the war in Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens are stockpiling ammunition, weapons they have acquired from areas where fighting has taken place. Weapons are illegally collected in homes, disassembled into parts and then sold to citizens of other countries. An additional problem facing the services will be the illegal immigration of Russian soldiers, who will fear returning to the country and try to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

## 2. To what extent can the Fund adapt to changing needs?

In general, the activities implemented under the FBW are the result of consultations with various stakeholder groups. The problems and needs realised under the Fund are among the priority actions that must be taken in Poland to ensure an adequate level of internal security. The Fund focuses on actions aimed at both developing international cooperation and ensuring that the level of knowledge, competence and equipment of services is comparable across the EU.

*(...) the provisions found there, in this Polish programme, are, I would say, very universal. They are so general that they actually cover everything important in terms of national security. So whatever new threats emerge, they can be fitted into the framework outlined in the programme.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.

The programme's provisions are quite flexible and allow for the implementation of projects that arise from the current needs of the individual stakeholders to whom support is dedicated.

## B. Effectiveness

### 3. To what extent is the Fund on track to achieve its objectives?

The Internal Security Fund 2021-2027 pursues three specific objectives: **Specific objective 1: Information sharing, Specific objective 2: Cross-border cooperation, Specific objective 3: Preventing and combating crime.**

The individual thematic objectives implement actions to respond to emerging challenges in their respective areas and, in doing so, are also intended to contribute to the Fund's main objective - to contribute to a high level of security in the Union.

Due to the fact that the **first call under the CDF was announced recently - in autumn 2023**, the activities carried out under the Programme are only in the initial phase of implementation, so it is not reasonable to show the values of individual indicators. **However**, as part of the answer to the research question posed above, **it is reasonable to carry out an analysis of the logic of the support offered under the CSF 2021-2027** in order to verify whether the actions assumed under the individual specific objectives enable the achievement of the objectives planned under them.

Within the framework of the three above-mentioned thematic objectives, the implementation of measures was planned, which were to contribute to the levelling of barriers identified in particular areas. Specific Objective 1 was to **increase the exchange of information within the public**

**administration in the country and between Poland and services of other countries.** Thus, within the framework of CS1, the implementation of a number of measures was planned, including:

- Adaptation and maintenance of ICT systems, training, testing, improvement of components ensuring data quality in the systems, interoperability e.g. through the development of SIS, Europol Information System.
- Modernisation of PNR NSI and ICT resources to support criminal analysis, cyber reconnaissance and protection against cyber-attacks, cooperation with national and foreign entities for effective use of ICT systems.
- Improving the flow of information on criminal cases, maximising the speed of exchange of information between entities detecting, prosecuting offenders and preventing and combating crime and governmental and local administration bodies.
- Streamlining the process of registering and performing background checks on persons suspected of being linked to a terrorist event.
- Improve the AML/CFT regime by upgrading ICT systems and direct access to SIENA by relevant authorities.
- Improve the exchange of police information, including international information, in order to rapidly detect threats, respond to crimes committed and effectively prosecute perpetrators.
- Implementation of recommendations following Schengen evaluations.
- Purchase of equipment, communication systems.
- Operational support.

The analysis of the logic of support offered under CS1 shows that the activities envisaged within the framework of increasing and improving information exchange between services cover a wide range. All the above-mentioned activities can be implemented **through the purchase, replacement and modernisation of ICT equipment and software, as well as training and the development of relevant procedures, system documents**, which significantly influences the fact that the support envisaged within CS1 can be assessed as well-planned. CS1 also envisages the implementation of **operational support, the** main beneficiaries of which will be the police and border guards, i.e. services that are particularly important from the point of view of achieving the Fund's specific objective. The possibility of simultaneous implementation of various types of activities (i.e. infrastructural, training) influences comprehensive levelling of individual barriers identified under CS1.

A key action that can be implemented under CS1 is to **improve the exchange of police information, including international information**. This action aims to detect threats quickly, improve the response to crimes committed and increase the effectiveness of the prosecution of perpetrators. Important for the implementation of the specific objective is to increase the exchange of information not only at national level, but also at international level. Another key action to be implemented from the point of view of achieving the specific objective is to **improve the flow of information on criminal cases by maximising the speed of exchange of information between entities detecting, prosecuting perpetrators and preventing and combating crime, and governmental and local administration bodies**. In addition, other streamlining activities, i.e. improving the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing system by upgrading ICT systems and direct access to SIENA of relevant authorities and improving the process of registration and background checks of persons suspected of being linked

to a terrorist event, are also envisaged under Specific Objective 1. Improvement activities carried out in various forms (through training activities, infrastructural activities) are particularly likely to contribute to the objective set for CS1.

In order to improve the exchange of information, it is also reasonable to **improve and increase the effectiveness of all ICT systems** supporting, inter alia, criminal analysis, cyber reconnaissance, protection against cyber-attacks, cooperation with national and foreign entities. It is important not only to improve them, but also to adapt them to changing needs, test new solutions, and provide training in their use. All the above-mentioned activities have been envisaged for implementation within the framework of specific objective No. 1. Their implementation will particularly contribute to increasing the quality of the use of individual ICT systems, and this will positively influence the implementation of the objective set for CS1.

From the analysis of the support logic, it can be concluded that it has been designed correctly. The measures assumed within its framework will contribute to increasing information exchange within the public administration in the country and between Poland and services of other countries, as they are extensive and cover key aspects from the point of view of achieving the objective. It can be regarded as a good practice that within the framework of all activities planned for implementation it is possible to implement both training activities and infrastructural activities, as well as activities aimed at the development of procedures, system documents, which causes that the offered support comprehensively supports the implementation of the specific objective.

Specific objective 2 was to **increase cross-border cooperation between Poland and services of other countries**. Therefore, within the framework of CS2, it was planned to implement activities including:

- Maintain engagement with EMPACT in line with the EU policy cycle. Support national coordination of EMPACT within the services involved (e.g. Police, SG, CBA, KAS).
- Improving cooperation between law enforcement agencies in carrying out joint operations, e.g. carrying out joint operations in the border region.
- Improving the use of joint patrols, chases.
- Improving methods and tools for preventing and prosecuting drug offences, including combating trafficking in narcotics and their precursors by improving operational cooperation between officers of EU Member States as well as Europol.
- Increase efficiency in the fight against corruption through direct electronic access to data sources, especially financial and economic data, and the exchange of information between states, law enforcement agencies and local government units.
- Operational support.

Actions assumed for implementation within the framework of specific objective 2 include: **training activities**, i.e. training in foreign languages for officers and **improvement activities**, i.e. improving the use of joint patrols, cross-border pursuits and improving methods and tools for preventing and prosecuting drug-related crime, including combating trafficking in narcotic drugs and their precursors. From the point of view of achieving the objective, it is particularly important to increase cooperation between officers from the European Union Member States, and the measures assumed for implementation within the framework of Specific Objective 2 also cover this aspect.



Also important from the point of view of achieving the specific objective is **increasing the effectiveness of cooperation between relevant services, both Polish and foreign**. Activities from this aspect have been assumed for realisation under CS2, they can be realised by e.g. receiving support for improving cooperation between law enforcement agencies in conducting joint operations. CS2 also assumes in this aspect maintaining the involvement of Polish services in EMPACT, in line with the EU policy cycle. It is also important to **increase electronic access to a variety of data sources**, as this will have a positive impact on increasing the effectiveness of operations, e.g. in the fight against corruption. Activities covering this aspect have also been assumed for implementation under CS2.

Additionally, within the framework of specific objective 2, the implementation of **operational support** is envisaged, addressed it to police officers. Funds within the framework of the aforementioned support may be allocated both for additional salaries of police officers and possible maintenance of the necessary technical equipment. So far, there have been no effective methods of financing this type of activities from the EU budget, therefore it is reasonable to make it possible within CS2 FBW to finance them by reimbursement of incurred costs.

Thus, from the analysis of the logic of support, it can be concluded that the specific objective no. 2 provides the possibility of realisation of a comprehensive series of activities supporting the increase of cross-border cooperation, as it offers extensive support realised by means of various implementing measures. In addition, it is worth pointing out that at the stage of the conducted evaluation it is known that within the framework of the implemented intervention under the specific objective no. 2, Poland will be involved in two projects conducted within the framework of specific activities and concerning EMPACT - **the project titled "CRYSTAL PALACE - a project for the development of cross-border cooperation"**. **"CRYSTAL PALACE - Strengthening the Activities of the EMPACT NPS and Synthetic Drugs Platform under the EMPACT 2022+ Facility"** and **the project entitled "EUROPEAN OPERATIONAL TEAM (EOT) Costa del Sol"**. These interventions are specifically intended to contribute to the main objective of CS2 and, inter alia, to increase cross-border cooperation between the services of the different countries involved in the two projects in order to prevent criminal activities occurring in their territories.

The activities carried out under specific objective No. 3 were intended to **prevent and combat crime in the field of internal security**. Thus, in the framework of the implementation of the aforementioned specific objective, it was planned to carry out a number of activities, including:

- Increase the effectiveness of law enforcement and other relevant institutions in preventing and combating terrorism and radicalisation.
- Combating serious and organised crime, corruption and cybercrime, as well as managing security incidents, risks and crises.
- Increase the effectiveness and competence development (training and education) of officers, staff of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other relevant institutions implementing activities aimed at preventing and combating various forms of crime.
- Preventing and countering radicalisation. Support for existing and the creation of new networks addressing radicalisation and working more closely with societal actors in line with the guidelines set out in the EU counter-terrorism agenda.

- Countering extremism and terrorist propaganda on the Internet. Strengthening the capacity to detect and respond to terrorist, extremist content in cooperation between the secret services, inter alia, with Europol.
- To develop procedures and actions to support and protect victims of crime and whistleblowers. To raise public awareness of the above-mentioned topic, in particular of those who are particularly at risk of it, including women and vulnerable children. To increase knowledge on early identification of victims of trafficking in human beings in public administration entities and in business.
- Countering hate crime.
- Support efforts to combat child sexual abuse more effectively, including prevention, investigation and victim support.
- Increase activities in support of an effective and coordinated response to emergencies and the pooling of existing capacities across sectors, including civil protection, counter-terrorism and cybercrime.
- Protection of public spaces: strengthening cooperation between public authorities and other sectors to increase the level of security in public spaces and critical infrastructure, purchase of CBRN threat detection equipment. Increasing the equipment capacity of services and institutions involved in crisis management, civil protection and the protection of public spaces and critical infrastructure.
- Crisis management and protection of critical infrastructure from security incidents through detection, assessment and elimination of vulnerabilities.
- Funding for equipment, specialised vehicles, communication systems and security-relevant facilities.

Under the third specific objective of the Programme, projects will be implemented, among others, to prevent and counteract radicalisation, prevent cybercrime, improve security and resilience of critical infrastructure. The activities assumed and possible to be implemented under CS3 include **support for key areas from the point of view of ensuring internal security**. Beneficiaries may implement, as part of their interventions, actions in the field of protection of public space, counteracting corruption, actions supporting effective and coordinated response to crisis situations, actions for a more effective fight against child abuse, actions against hate crimes or terrorism, including terrorism on the Internet, etc. From the point of view of ensuring qualitative and long-lasting effects of interventions, it is important to **increase intersectoral cooperation** (cooperation of public authorities with other sectors) in the field of internal security. In addition, it is crucial to **enter into cooperation also with entities fighting crime at the international level**, i.e. EUROPOL. Such activities are also envisaged by the implementation of specific objective no. 3.

The **development of procedures and measures to support and protect victims of crime** will also contribute to the qualitative achievement of the objective. Key to ensuring comprehensive support outcomes is not only the prevention of crime, but also the support of victims affected by it.

CS3 also assumes **training activities** to be implemented, enhancing the effectiveness and developing the competence of officers, law enforcement personnel, the judiciary and other relevant institutions. Under specific objective 3, actions may also be implemented to manage a crisis by, inter alia, protecting

critical infrastructure from threats by carrying out activities to detect, assess and eliminate vulnerabilities.

Specific objective 3 may also include **infrastructure activities** to finance equipment, specialised vehicles, communication systems and safety-relevant facilities.

The logic of support therefore implies comprehensive activities contributing to the specific objective. Within the framework of CS3, it is possible to carry out training activities, infrastructure activities, but most importantly support activities in key areas for ensuring internal security. The support logic has been formulated correctly, so it will help achieve the objective set for CS3.

It can also be concluded from the analysis that, despite the separate specific objective (CS2) to contribute to enhancing cross-border cooperation, the other specific objectives also focus on the implementation of international activities related to enhancing internal security and improving information exchange. A similar conclusion also resounded during the in-depth interviews. Respondents indicated **that the essence of FBW 2021-2027 is to increase international cooperation**. Respondents also emphasised that two projects - the project entitled 'CRYSTAL PALACE - Strengthening the activities of the EMPACT NPS and Synthetic Drugs Platform under the EMPACT 2022+ Facility ' and the project entitled ' EUROPEAN OPERATIONAL TEAM (EOT) Costa del Sol ', in which Poland will be involved in the coming years, will significantly contribute to increasing international cooperation, and therefore to the realisation of the objective which, in their view, is key from the Fund's point of view.

*These projects meet the criteria to a very large extent, because they are precisely under this specific objective number 2, namely cross-border cooperation. That is, what the Commission considers to be the essence of this programme, so that all these problems are solved at international level. (...) In my opinion, this cross-border cooperation in both projects is genuine. The 'Costa del Sol' project is simply sending officers from Poland to Spain to fight organised crime groups on the ground in an international task force. The second project 'Crystal Palace' is much more complex. It involves a dozen or so different types of activities, but a great many of these activities involve very direct cooperation between officers from Poland and other EU countries.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.*

The fund, according to the beneficiaries, fulfils its objectives, in particular, in terms of training. The logic of the support according to the beneficiaries is adequate. In addition, the Fund, in their opinion, will contribute to the qualitative realisation of its specific objectives, in particular it enables them to establish international cooperation.

*Here, the Internal Security Fund facilitates, it does not close the way for us to have foreign partners and here, yes, if we have partners from other countries, then yes, it influences, it will certainly influence.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

FBW 2021-2027 also meets the expectations of beneficiaries with regard to the purchase of fixed assets, however beneficiaries indicated that they face some difficulties in this aspect. They pointed to

the fact that in order for equipment that can be purchased under the Fund to be eligible for financing under infrastructure measures, it must meet specific criteria. While it is possible to purchase, among other things, equipment for surveillance of the border area, or equipment, specialised vehicles, communication systems and facilities which are important from the point of view of security, it was sometimes problematic to demonstrate that the equipment needed for the qualitative implementation of the project for a given beneficiary meets these criteria. Sometimes the equipment relevant to the implemented intervention is not directly the equipment that fits the particular criteria, however, it is the equipment necessary for the qualitative implementation of the given investment. For example, a vehicle is not directly equipment e.g. for surveillance of a border area, but it is equipment necessary for this surveillance.

*The fund, in terms of equipment, suits us just fine, but its scope is limited a little bit, or at least it seems to be limited, because vehicles have to have certain characteristics in order to be recognised as control equipment really. And control and vehicle are inherently such a continuous activity.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW beneficiary.*

In addition, it is worth highlighting that, according to the beneficiaries, the Fund focuses mainly on training activities, which they consider to be its great added value. However, in order to carry out effective and qualitative training it is important to invest in appropriate and useful equipment for it, and the purchase of the necessary assets is often more costly than the cost of the training itself.

*Here, as it were, the fund focuses mainly on training, and I agree, I am glad, only that the main emphasis is on training, and sometimes these purchases are quite expensive. Let's say we are training a pyrotechnician, and here we do not have such training planned, I do not recall, but there may be something there indirectly. However, the suit itself for such a pyrotechnician, which is sometimes used several or a dozen times, may cost more than the cost of training.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

In conclusion, the analysis of the support logic confirmed that the support has been designed correctly and ensures that the individual objectives of the Fund can be implemented in a qualitative way. The individual actions planned under the three specific objectives are comprehensive and developed, and therefore able to address the barriers identified in cross-border cooperation, internal security and information exchange. From the analysis of the logic and interviews, it appears that the main objective of the fund is to increase international cooperation in various aspects. Although there is a specific objective (CS2) to increase cross-border cooperation, the other specific objectives also focus on implementing international activities related to increasing internal security and improving information exchange. Beneficiaries also confirmed that the fund enables them to achieve the objectives set under the individual interventions. They only identified barriers, hindering them from achieving qualitative results, related to the criteria of investment activities possible under the Fund.

#### 4. To what extent is the monitoring and evaluation system adequate to provide information on progress towards achieving the Fund's objectives?

The description of the management and control system drawn up for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Financial Support Instrument for Border Management and Visa Policy for the period 2021-2027 specifies that all information exchange between beneficiaries and the Managing Authorities of the Programmes should take place through the **Central ICT System - CST2021**.<sup>5</sup> CST2021 is a new system, the successor of the ICT system SL2014, which was not used in the management of the FBW in the previous financial perspective 2014-2020.

CST2021 is dedicated to two groups of users: the first group - **external** users e.g. beneficiaries, applicants, advertisers or bidders, and the second group of **institutional users** - i.e. Implementing Authorities, Programme Managing and Intermediate Bodies, but also Audit and Coordination Bodies.

The CST2021 includes several modules, among others, the **application "CST2021 - Projects", the European Social Fund Monitoring System "SM ESF", the application "WOD2021 - Grant Application", "SZT2021", i.e. the Identity Management System for CST2021, the Competitiveness Database "BK2021", the "LSI", i.e. the Local Information System, the CST2021 Certification, e-Controls, the "SR2021" Reporting System, etc.** Institutional users have rights to **all applications** included in CST2021. External users, on the other hand, have access to only **four of its modules, i.e. the "CST2021 - Projects" application, the "SM ESF" European Social Fund Monitoring System, the "WOD2021 - Grant Application" application and the "BK2021" Competitiveness Database.**

The individual CST2021 modules that beneficiaries are given access to perform specific functions:

- **The "CST2021 - Projects" application** enables the handling of the project settlement and control process in electronic form. It also provides the possibility of full communication between the beneficiary and the institution supervising the project implementation. This application is used to conclude subsidy agreements and annexes to agreements, and to submit payment applications.
- **The European Social Fund Monitoring System** is used to support the process of collecting and monitoring data of entities and participants receiving support under projects implemented with the European Social Fund Plus for the financial perspective 2021-2027. The main objectives of the ESF SM are: (1) monitoring of entities and participants receiving support under projects; (2) management of users involved in the implementation of projects; (3) communication and exchange of information.
- **The application "WOD2021 - Grant Application"** enables the preparation of a grant application template, the management of the call, the preparation and submission of the grant application, the registration of the assessment of the application documentation. In addition, it ensures automatic transfer of data from the grant application to CST2021 Projects.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of European Home Affairs Funds, Description of the management and control system Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, Instrument for financial support for border management and visa policy, Internal Security Fund 2021-2027, September 2023, Warsaw

- **The competitiveness database "BK2021"** supports the implementation of the principle of competitiveness through the publication of an announcement as well as a search, within which bidders have the opportunity to ask questions, get answers from advertisers and also submit their offer.

In case of any problems with the operation of the CST2021 system, both the external user, that is, for example, the beneficiary, and the institutional user, namely, for example, the Managing Authority of a given Programme, have access to interactive educational materials for CST2021, created by the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and published on the website: <https://instrukcje.cst2021.gov.pl/>. Instructions for the applications included in the CST2021, i.e. WOD2021 or BK2021, among others, are published on the quoted website. Additional system instructions for CST2021 are also published, inter alia, on the website of the Centre for EU Transport Projects: <https://www.cupt.gov.pl/strefa-beneficjenta/cst2021/>.

The logic of the new monitoring and evaluation system (CST2021) is therefore transparently presented to all interested parties, and information about it can be found, inter alia, on the gov.pl portal. In the event of any problems, beneficiaries or institutions involved in the coordination and monitoring of individual Programmes may use the Programme Manual for CST2021, which is available online. CST2021 also provides the possibility of performing all functions important for the monitoring and evaluation of individual Programmes, i.e. recording data on programmes along with the required dimensions, e.g. objectives, indicators, categories of regions, codes of intervention types; carrying out the procedure of selecting projects and their subsequent settlement; handling project controls; implementing certification processes, including the creation of applications for payment to the EC; it also provides the possibility of reporting.

The CST2021 system is a **completely new thing for both the implementing institutions and beneficiaries of the CSF 2021-2027**. Therefore, in order to be able to assess in more depth the adequacy of the CST2021 system for providing information on the progress in achieving the objectives of the fund, it is also important to know the perspective of the entities directly using the above mentioned system. **Thus, during the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the evaluation, beneficiaries and institutions involved in the implementation, implementation, coordination of the CDF 2021-2027 were asked whether the monitoring and evaluation system was, in their opinion, adequate.** The following conclusions can therefore be drawn from the analysis of the interviews.

During the in-depth interviews, respondents emphasised that they currently do not have much experience with the new CST2021 system. Up to the time of the evaluation, they had not had the opportunity to make use of the reporting and reporting functions offered by the system at all. Some of the respondents had only had the opportunity to submit a grant application in it. Thus, at the very beginning it is worth emphasising that the good points and further shortcomings of the CST2021 system will come to light, to a greater extent, at a later stage of the CDF implementation, and a large part of the currently occurring difficulties is due to the fact that it is a new system, with which both the beneficiaries and the CDF implementers are not yet fully acquainted. A significant advantage **of CST2021 is its ability to gather all necessary data and documents including those required for audits.** However, due to limited experience with this system, it is unclear if it fully meets the needs of both beneficiaries and the institutions implementing the CSF, especially regarding this functionality.



*(...) I understand what the aim is, for everything to be transparent, for everything to be in one place, so that we don't have to ask for various documents from us or others when we come to inspect them or from the beneficiaries. All these documents, the whole process of creating calls for proposals, implementation, approval of projects and then implementation of projects will be in one place. How will it work? Nobody knows, because we don't have any experience yet. As I say, all systems are difficult at the beginning. Perhaps in a dozen or so months, when both we and the beneficiaries have entered all the data into the system, when we have gone through the whole path until the end of the project and the issuing of the last certificate, and we will be repeating this regularly on a daily basis, it will turn out that the system is fine.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.*

During the interviews, respondents also emphasised that the CST2021 system is more tailored to the needs of the Structural Funds, and they differ significantly in their specifics from the FBW 2021-2027. For example, the system dictionaries are strictly prepared for the Structural Funds. For this reason, it was necessary to adjust the reporting system, among other things, to adapt the project reporting requirements to the capabilities of the newly introduced system, and this operation was time-consuming. Training on the new system was necessary and, despite this, **its operation can still pose problems and difficulties**. In addition, the system is something new both for the beneficiaries of the CSF and for the Managing Authority of the Fund, so beneficiaries reporting to the MA were often unable to obtain full information on the reported difficulties. Trainings on the operation of the CST2021 system were only conducted internally, **therefore it would be reasonable to realise trainings that could address any emerging difficulties with the operation of CST2021 e.g. by an external entity for beneficiaries or institutions implementing the Fund that would express such a need**.

*We all trained ourselves on the training version from the owner of the system, he didn't train anyone, we only had a manual, so everyone went through the training version from the announcement of the call, submission of the application through the assessment and approval of the project, then there is the control, there is the reporting and all this awaits us, so the system is difficult and we have to cope on our own with the problems we encounter there, the beneficiaries also have problems and they also ask us what to do, and we are not quite able to answer.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.*

As part of the familiarisation of beneficiaries with the new system, a number of training activities should be carried out, as mentioned above, the FBW implementing institution committed, to the best of its ability, to assist FBW beneficiaries with the new system.

*These first 2 projects, I make no secret of the fact that we had to get very involved in helping our clients to get these projects prepared as such, in a reasonably logical and coherent manner.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.*

Interestingly, however, not every beneficiary had the opportunity to attend such a training. In addition, as already shown above, the system is new for both beneficiaries and institutions implementing the CDF, so the training should have been conducted by an external entity that has comprehensive knowledge and would have been able to answer any difficulties related to, for example, submitting grant applications to the CST. Some actors had to spend extra time familiarising themselves with the programme, and it was quite a challenge for them to cope with this task without external support. Thus, it is worth mentioning again that it **would make sense to implement training courses that could address any difficulties arising with the operation of CST2021, e.g. by an external entity, both for beneficiaries and for institutions implementing the Fund that would express such a need.**

*(...) no system training was implemented, not even online. Yes, there were presentations available on the CST website, how to log in, how to... what else is there, how to register an institution, how to sign in. But no one has taught anyone how to... and what is missing, in my opinion, is a presentation on how to assign these roles, what these roles mean, how to submit these applications.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

In addition, in the opinion of beneficiaries of FBW, **the SL2014 system, which was used in the previous financial perspective, was more user-friendly and offered more convenient technical solutions** regarding data input, specifically the ability to upload a batch of data into the system, such as in ZIP format. CST2021 does not have such an option, so the time of adding relevant documents to the system may be prolonged.

*(...) it's the 2014 system, it's friendlier than this 2021 system. I haven't worked on that one, but from what I've heard it's friendlier in terms of data entry. You can't enter a bunch of data into the new system, for example.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

It is also not very intuitive to register users in the system and give them appropriate roles. Beneficiaries reported difficulties in that even if an additional person was registered in the CST they were not able to see the same documents at the same time.

*The most problematic thing is connecting the project with the people who want to register for this system and giving them the right roles. (...) So to put it maybe again so simply, if there is a call and someone writes a project, how do you get someone who is from outside the organisation... that is, from the organisation but generally not sitting next to you, how do you attach him to that project, how does he register. Alternatively, he registers and then what? We don't see him, his application. He does not see our application. It is quite difficult. For the time being, so to speak, we are trying to organise it ourselves.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

During the in-depth interviews it was also mentioned that the logic of presenting projects in the CST2021 system is not clear and intuitive. The system also does not offer the possibility to present



project objectives, and the possibility to include such information would be needed from the point of view of the institution implementing the CDF.

*As for the logic, for example of presenting the project itself (...) there is no logic there. There it breaks off by important information, because projects break off in the middle. There it is that at the beginning it is a description of the project. Then there are the indicators, then there is a description of the pictures, then there is the budget, and things like the objectives of the project are not there at all.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.

In addition, the new system was prepared and implemented top-down by the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy without cooperation with individual entities involved in the implementation of the CSF and its beneficiaries. **Thus**, according to the respondents of the in-depth interviews, the production of the new reporting system **lacked specific cooperation with the entities involved in the implementation of the Fund and its beneficiaries. As a result, it is not a system perfectly tailored to their needs**, including those of the CDF beneficiaries, such as the need for project controls. On the other hand, due to the lack of the above-mentioned cooperation, some of the functions of the CST and the formulations used in it may cause difficulties, e.g. when defining particular formulations used in the system. Respondents to the in-depth interviews pointed to the fact that some of the specialised formulations used in the CST can be understood in two ways and that in order to enter data correctly, one needs to get to know the specifics of the system and the detailed definitions of the terms used in it.

*(...) the system is OK by design, it is just that certain data is entered in such a way that it causes problems, because, for example, the name 'limits' appears in this system. The first time someone encounters the system, a light immediately goes on. If it is still someone who works in finance, then for them a limit, for state budgetary units it is a limit allocated somewhere in the budget. Here the limit actually means a target set somewhere in the funds so generally speaking. (...)*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

During the in-depth interviews, respondents also underlined that the Managing Authority of the CSF has recently significantly reduced the bureaucratic requirements for reporting, which has definitely improved efficiency by saving time and freeing up staff resources dedicated to reporting tasks. In addition, the **simplified system facilitated the preparation of documents for the beneficiaries**, so that the preparation of the necessary documentation does not cause problems for them.

*(...) they've minimised the bureaucracy a lot lately, because what it was in the beginning, when we started Swiss or Norwegian, we were just drowning in paperwork, and amendments to amendments, and annexes to annexes. And at the moment these reports really, in the last one at least, didn't cause any trouble, because they were incremental and they were actually after the implementation.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

Most of the respondents of the in-depth interviews **did not indicate any major problems related to the system of indicators created within the FBW** e.g. problems related to incomprehensibility of indicator definitions. Some of the respondents only pointed to the fact that within the framework of the projects they run, e.g. in the field of training delivery, they have to obtain sensitive data, i.e. documentation related to personal data protection, which sometimes causes difficulties for them. However, respondents indicated that they manage to obtain sensitive information, i.e. personal data of training participants, and this data is not processed by them.

During the in-depth interviews, there was also a proposal to improve the above-mentioned system, i.e. a proposal for a change to be made in terms of result indicators. Currently, these indicators are supposed to show exact numbers, e.g. of illegally transported products seized during project implementation (for example indicator R.2.6.1 Quantity of illegal drugs seized in cross-border operations - marijuana). On the other hand, the activities of the services in the area of increasing security are mainly aimed at preventing criminal activities, so their task is to reduce the occurrence of situations in which illegal products are smuggled into our country at all. On the other hand, in order to demonstrate that the project implemented by the beneficiary was effective, he/she has to intercept a specific quantity of illegal products, in which case any crime prevention activities carried out by a given beneficiary lose their value, as he/she needs a given crime to happen in order to demonstrate that his/her project had the expected effect. In addition, the services now have other techniques and tools at their disposal to detect, for example, illegally laced products, so detection does not only increase during the implementation of one project, thanks, for example, to the purchase of additional equipment in this project. It would therefore make sense for **result indicators to take into account the preventive function of the measure, to be more flexible and tailored to the specific interventions carried out and less focused on showing exact quantitative data**. In the opinion of respondents, it would make sense that the achievement of individual result indicators could be presented in a more descriptive form.

*As far as the results of the projects are concerned. I keep saying, and I have been saying this for many years now to everyone out there, to those creating these projects, that our function is, very importantly, a preventive function. We want to prevent something from happening. So, you can't expect us to put up an X-ray machine or buy equipment to detect how many kilos of cigarettes or drugs or something, because we have no influence on that. We have no influence on that indicator, and the aim is to eliminate that indicator.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

Therefore, the analysis of the in-depth interviews shows that due to the fact that the CST2021 system is a new tool both for beneficiaries and institutions implementing the CDF 2021-2027, it is reasonable that they have the **opportunity to participate in training provided by an external entity**, which will familiarise them with the possibilities and respond to any identified difficulties related to the operation of the system, which is new for them. It is worth bearing in mind that the FBW is in the initial phase of implementation, so the good points and shortcomings of its monitoring and evaluation system (including the CST2021 system) will also become apparent at a later stage of its implementation. On the other hand, the currently identified biggest shortcoming of the CST2021 system is that its logic and

capabilities have been designed without consultation with the FBW implementers and its beneficiaries, making **it not a system that is tailored to the needs of the Fund, rather the Fund has to adapt to the technical possibilities that CST2021 offers**. In terms of the indicator system, consideration could be given to whether it is worthwhile to report result indicators in a more descriptive form e.g. as part of the beneficiaries' own indicators defined during their projects.

## 5. How is it ensured that relevant partners are involved at all stages of programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

The draft Programme was mainly developed by the **Department of European Funds of the Ministry of Interior and Administration with the participation of numerous stakeholders**.

The draft Programme was consulted **with beneficiaries of the previous financial perspective**, including the Police, Border Guard, State Fire Service, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, Voivodes, Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, Internal Security Agency and others.

In order to remain **participatory**, the MA also published the draft Programme on the ministerial funds website, so that potential applicants could also refer to the draft FBW Programme.

The final stages of programming were **intra- and inter-ministerial consultations**, and also the referral of the draft Programme to the Inter-Ministerial Team for European Home Affairs Funds for approval.

A joint **Monitoring Committee for the FAMI, MA and FBW 2021-2027 funds** has been established, which will ensure complementarity between the different funding mechanisms. The Committee is tasked with supporting MA at every stage from programming, implementation, monitoring to evaluation. Representatives of interested third sector organisations have also been invited to participate in the work of the Monitoring Committee, so that the partnership principle can be effectively implemented. An invitation to nominate representatives to become members of the Monitoring Committee was received from: - Joint Government and Local Government Commission, Social Dialogue Council, Public Benefit Activity Council, International Organisations - IOM Poland, UNHCR - Representation in Poland, Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled Persons' Affairs, Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, Central Council of Research Institutes.

By the time of the survey (February 2024), the Monitoring Committee had met twice, allowing it to adopt the Committee's rules of procedure and select the methodology and criteria for project selection. The work of the Committee was assessed positively in the qualitative study.

Effective management of European funds requires experience, appropriate involvement of human resources and definition of procedures. Taking into account the experience from of the 2014-2020 financial perspective, the **MA has delegated part of the tasks to the COPE of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration**, which has the corresponding experience in the following areas: assessment of applications, conclusion of agreements with beneficiaries, supervision of the implementation of projects co-financed from external funds, settlement and monitoring/control and recovery of amounts incorrectly paid.

## 6. To what extent are horizontal principles respected and promoted within the Fund?

The beneficiaries of the Homeland Security Fund 2021-2027 are obliged in their projects to comply with the so-called horizontal principles in the following three areas:

1. **sustainable development** (activities should protect the environment and biodiversity),
2. **equal opportunities and non-discrimination** (actions assume equality of all social groups, i.e. ethnic, national, religious or persons with disabilities),
3. **gender equality** (activities assume equal access and development opportunities for women and men).

Beneficiaries of the CSF emphasise that the undertakings they undertake in the framework of the supported projects are neutral or in compliance with the above principles. The neutrality of projects appears mainly in terms of the implementation of principles related to sustainable development and equal opportunities and non-discrimination. The lack of positive impact on the **principle of sustainable development** is due to the low contact, according to the interviewees, with the ecosphere and natural diversity and the lack of possibilities (mainly financial) in giving up the given equipment necessary for the implementation of the programme objectives (i.e., cars and other vehicles). In the **principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination**, the problem of the implementation of the horizontal policy stems, according to the interviews conducted, from the specificity of the activities mainly oriented towards the prevention and fight against crime and the related high number of field activities in which physical fitness plays an important role. On the other hand, the evaluation did not notice any problems with meeting the **principle of gender equality**. Women and men have equal access to the resources provided.

## 7. To what extent does the Fund contribute to the communication and dissemination of the opportunities and achievements created?

Applicants agree that they do not find it difficult to obtain information about current calls for proposals. The Ministry's websites, which contain announcements about the possibility of obtaining subsidies, are clear and understandable. An additional advantage is that the Ministry of the Interior and Administration sends letters (written information) to individual beneficiaries with an invitation to participate in a dedicated (non-competitive) call for proposals.

On the other hand, the information and promotion activities carried out in the projects must, as pointed out by the interviewees, comply with the guidelines enshrined in the 'Handbook for the Beneficiary of a Project Funded under the Homeland Security Fund for 2021-2027'. In this document, beneficiaries are obliged to place information boards at the project site or posters/electronic displays informing about the activities undertaken (samples of boards and posters are included in the aforementioned manual). In addition, beneficiaries are obliged to appropriately mark with stickers the equipment, means of transport, etc. which were purchased under the Internal Security Fund. The funds from the FBW can also be used by applicants to purchase and finance such things as:

- press articles,
- films,
- publications, brochures, leaflets, stands,

- conference/workshop materials,
- invitations/programmes/agendas for meetings/conferences organised by the Beneficiary,
- attendance lists,
- certificates/diplomas attesting to the training/course,
- presentations prepared for the meetings,
- promotional material (pens, pads of paper, etc.).

The communication and visibility rules described in the handbook did not cause problems for the respondents. Beneficiaries comply with putting up signs, displaying posters and appropriately labelling purchased materials and equipment. In addition to the above-mentioned activities, they place information about the projects and the source of their funding on their websites (often multilingual) and on the official profiles of the institutions in social media (e.g. Facebook). They are also mindful to ensure that the promotional brochures or gadgets they issue about project activities have the appropriate signage and logo. Funds were also used to film advertising spots or implement a radio campaign.

Despite the clear description of the promotion rules in the beneficiary handbook, interviewees point out several inconveniences. The first one they mention is the excessive number of signs and stickers. They believe that the current system of labelling project sites or purchased equipment results in an unnecessary accumulation of signs and labels. The second problem, on the other hand, is the lack of understanding of the specifics of projects implemented under the CSF and the emphasis on promoting activities which, for reasons of internal state security, should not always be made public.

## C. Performance

### 8. To what extent does the Fund support cost-effective measures?

Cost-effectiveness is one of the **basic elements of assessing the eligibility of expenditure** under the Programme and is listed in the 'Beneficiary Handbook' alongside conditions such as being in line with the objectives of the fund or the necessity of the expenditure to implement the activities. This makes potential beneficiaries aware of the importance of cost-effectiveness from the outset.

The cost-effectiveness of each grant application is assessed by two experts. In the case of a non-competitive selection procedure (monopolists in certain fields of activity such as the police or border guards) where the experts are unsure of the reasonableness of the costs or their magnitude, these issues are refined with the applicant until **satisfactory cost-effectiveness** is obtained.

The aforementioned manual for beneficiaries also informs potential beneficiaries about the impossibility of settling costs related to transport, travel and subsistence which exceed the rates specified in the regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 29 January 2013 on receivables to which an employee working in a state or local government unit of the budgetary sphere is entitled on account of business travel (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 167, as amended). This makes potential beneficiaries obliged to follow certain maximum rates and **avoids cost increases in projects**.

The cost-effectiveness of individual projects is verified already at the level of the evaluation of grant applications. As part of the substantive appraisal form, the fulfilment of three sub-points related to cost-effectiveness is assessed:

- Are the individual expenses (including their amount) necessary and appropriate for the implementation of the activities foreseen in the project?
- Is the overall relationship between estimated costs and expected results satisfactory?
- Has expenditure been allocated to the appropriate cost categories?

Source: Substantive evaluation form of call FBWP.02.01-IZ.00-001/23.

## 9. To what extent is the Fund's management and control system efficient?

Article 71(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Fair Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the financial rules for these Funds and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ.OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, pp. 159-706) (hereinafter: General Regulation) requires Poland to fulfil the management, control and audit requirements of the Funds.

The aforementioned regulation defines the institutions that should operate in the national management, control and audit system for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI), the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy (FGV). They are:

- Managing Authority (Article 71(1) of the General Regulation);
- Audit Authority being a public authority (Article 71(2) of the General Regulation);
- Intermediate Body designated by the Managing Authority (Article 71(3) of the General Regulation);
- Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the programmes (Article 38(1) of the General Regulation);
- FAMI Funds Officer, IZGW and FBW for monitoring the fulfilment of the horizontal basic conditions listed in Annex III of the General Regulation.

On the basis of Resolution No. 126/2022 of the Council of Ministers of 7 June 2022 on the designation of the competent authorities operating within the management and control system of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy under the Integrated Border Management Fund for 2021-2027, the Department of European Funds of the Ministry of Interior and Administration (DFE) was appointed as the **Managing Authority (MA)**.

The DFE is an organisational unit of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. The DFE, as MA, is responsible for all issues related to the management of the CSF. The Managing Authority (with the support of the Intermediate Body) is at the same time the Body which performs the tasks of expenditure accounting.

**The Intermediate Body (IP)** was the European Project Service Centre of the Ministry of Interior and Administration (COPE MSWiA).



The Head of the National Fiscal Administration is the Audit Institution for the FBW. The tasks of the Audit Institution are carried out through the Public Funds Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance and the 16 Chambers of Fiscal Administration.

There is also an important role in the management and control system:

- **Monitoring Committee**, established by Order No. 4 of the Minister of Interior and Administration of 3 March 2023 on the establishment of the Monitoring Committee for the European Funds for Migration, Borders and Security 2021-2027,
- **Plenipotentiary of the Minister of the Interior and Administration for European Funds for Migration, Borders and Security at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration** (Order No. 33 of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of 13 December 2022).

This structure of the management and control system ensures that the **principle of separation of functions** between and within the programme institutions is respected.

In the document *Description of the management and control system. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Financial Support Facility for Border Management and Visa Policy. Internal Security Fund 2021-2027*<sup>6</sup> details the organisation and procedures for the functions of the different institutions, the division of tasks and responsibilities between MA and IB, as well as a description of the electronic system, the Central Information and Communication System (CST2021).

The organisational structure of the management and control system of the CSF is **clear to the beneficiaries**. They are knowledgeable about the rules of application, implementation of support as well as the institutions of the Programme. In none of the interviews was there a negative opinion regarding these aspects of the management and control system.

When assessing the efficiency of the FFF management and control system, it is impossible to overlook information and promotional activities.

The very system of information on opportunities, measures and calls for proposals is assessed positively. At the same time, beneficiaries emphasise that it is important to use as many different channels as possible to inform about available funds, the possibilities to obtain them or the activities that can be carried out:

*the catalogue or range of these access channels must be as broad as possible, it should in no way be limited or dedicated, and there should be no hierarchy of these channels, that this one is the main channel, some auxiliary channels (...) all of them should perhaps not answer all the questions, but each of them should provide information on where to look for details (...) all of them should maybe not answer all questions, but each of them should contain information on where to look for details, each of them should refer us (...) whether to the programme website or to the website (...) of the Project Service Centre, where this information was very clear, I used it and what I wanted I found.*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/934471bc-c1f5-42dd-8f4d-a7e389c6ad53> (dostęp: 26.02.2024 r.).

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

On the other hand, minor shortcomings in the area of communication were perceived by the beneficiaries of the CSF with regard to agreeing the introduced solutions. While the assumptions of the CSF were consulted with the beneficiaries, the solutions related to the implementation of the Fund were not subject to such consultations. In this context, the beneficiaries pointed first of all to the new ICT system:

*I expected that there would be some kind of working team that would also involve the beneficiary. I am not saying that we should have full influence, but that they should listen to our suggestions. In fact, what the supervising institution or the audit institution wants to see, I completely agree with, but it would be necessary to talk it through in some sensible way so that all parties are satisfied.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.

For the implementation of the Structural Funds in Poland in the financial perspective 2021-2027, the ICT system CST 2021 is used, which includes several applications (including WOD2021, SL2021, SM ESF and BK2021)<sup>7</sup>.

FBW beneficiaries make limited use of it, mainly when preparing applications and applying for project funds. The reporting system is of most concern, although it is rated ambivalently.

On the one hand, SL2021, according to the beneficiaries of the CSF, takes some of the burden off them - for example, the documents prepared for the audit will be made available through the system, there will be no need to scan and send them to the audit institution.

On the other hand, however, the system is primarily new, it uses specific, not always intuitive nomenclature, and beneficiaries are not yet familiar with the scope of powers, the possibilities of individual roles in the system.

Beneficiaries' concerns for now are mainly due to unfamiliarity with the system, different from the one used previously. Beneficiaries assess the 2014-2020 system as more user-friendly. Here, meanwhile, they expect difficulties in use, the need to recognise new functionalities, learn new paths for preparing documents, etc. As the representative of the Fund implementer emphasises:

*All systems are difficult at the beginning. Perhaps in a dozen or so months, when both we and the beneficiaries have entered all this data into the system, when we have gone through the whole path to the end of the project and the issuing of the last certificate, and are repeating this regularly on a daily basis, it will turn out that the system is fine.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.

For the assessment of the management and control system, the cooperation between MA/IP and the beneficiary is also important. In this respect, the beneficiaries of the CSF assess the system very well,

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/popcwsparcie/system-teleinformatyczny-w-perspektywie-finansowej-2021-2027-w-ramach-obsługi-funduszu-europejskiego-na-rozwoj-cyfrowy-2021-2027-ferc> (accessed 27.02.2024).



emphasising above all that this cooperation is improving from year to year. This is reflected, inter alia, in the re-education of the administrative burden:

*They have minimised the bureaucracy a lot lately, because what was at the beginning(...), we were just drowning in paperwork, and changes to changes, and annexes to annexes.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary.*

In interviews, beneficiaries also indicate that at each stage they have support from the MA/IP, which not only controls, but also advises, answers questions, clarifies doubtful issues. This translates into good contacts, but also into smooth implementation of activities.

At the same time, it was pointed out that extensive bureaucracy, especially at the stage of control of, for example, realised expenditures in the case of beneficiaries who also operate in the sphere of public finances, does not make much sense, as they have multi-level control systems anyway.

An element that raises questions for some institutions is the construction of indicators:

*(...) our function is (...) a preventive function. We want to prevent something from happening. So, you can't expect us to put up an X-ray machine or buy equipment to detect how many kilos of cigarettes or drugs or something(...). We have no influence on this indicator, and the aim is to eliminate this indicator (...)I would steer towards (...) the descriptiveness of the indicators.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW beneficiary*

The quote from the beneficiary of the CSF refers to mandatory indicators imposed by the European Commission. Concerns in this regard expressed by the respondents are mainly due to the experience from the previous perspective. In the framework of the financial perspective 2021-2027, in the period of implementation of the study, there is still no reporting information on the implementation of projects, so it is impossible to assess the degree of implementation of the assumed indicators, as well as - the level of use of funds. As indicated in the Annual Performance Report on the Internal Security Fund for the 2021-2027 programming period, concerning the year 2023: "Due to the approval of the FBW Programme on 8 December 2022, it is not possible to indicate concrete progress in the implementation of the Programme and the achievement of the stated milestones and end goals."

**The assessment of the management and control system on the part of the beneficiaries of the CSF is positive**, the system is efficient, however there are elements that reduce its efficiency. Taking into account the opinions of the beneficiaries, it should be indicated that these are, first of all, the ICT solutions, which are not agreed upon with them, and the construction of indicators, that are not aligned with the expected changes from the Fund's support. At the same time, it is worth emphasising that the indicators about which the beneficiaries raise doubts are the indicators imposed by the European Commission, the MA and IB do not have any influence on them, similarly to the decision on including FBW in the CST system.

## **10. To what extent is there scope for further simplification in the implementation of the Fund? In what way?**

Further simplification in the implementation of the Fund may mainly concern changes in the construction of indicators, which will allow beneficiaries to report effectively and IPs to monitor effectively (although this is an issue beyond the influence of the MA/IP).

The representatives of the IPs have potential simplifications in mind, but, as they stress, at this stage of implementation it is difficult to point to any element that could be changed:

(...)we have one manual for all funds. (...)It seems to me that we have tried to find such a golden mean (...). If we could simplify something, we would. We will monitor this on an ongoing basis (...) [currently] I don't see anything that we could simplify, but I don't rule out that there will be some.

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW implementer*

Concrete proposals for possible simplifications can only be identified at a later stage of the Fund's implementation, i.e. the implementation and reporting of projects in the current financial perspective.

## **D. Coherence**

### **11. To what extent is the Fund coherent with initiatives supported in its policy area, in particular under the Thematic Instrument, using different implementation modalities.**

The actions financed by the CDF under the Country Programme are consistent with those implemented under the **Thematic Instrument**, i.e. an additional envelope of funds allocated by the European Commission to finance projects aimed at supporting actions in or concerning third countries, in particular to contribute to the fight against and prevention of crime (including illicit drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings) and to combat cross-border criminal networks involved in smuggling. To date, one call has been made under the **EMPACT Specific Action** (Specific Objective 2 - Cross-border cooperation). Two projects implemented by the Police Headquarters were selected for funding: "EUROPEAN OPERATIONAL TEAM (EOT) Costa del Sol " and "CRYSTAL PALACE - Strengthening the activities of the EMPACT NPS and synthetic drugs platform under EMPACT 2022+ ".

The 'Costa del Sol' project consists of the creation of a European Operations Team (EOT) in the Spanish 'Costa del Sol' region to develop and implement a joint investigative and operational strategy against major criminal organisations and associated high-value targets (HVTs) affecting EU Member States. The Team's activities will focus on identifying, investigating and dismantling HVTs and related organised crime networks. As part of the project, the Polish side has established cooperation with the Kingdom of Spain in order to jointly carry out tasks in the field of internal security. The aim of the conducted activities will be to increase the competence and skills of the CBŚP officers in counteracting organised criminal groups<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Project application.

The Crystal Palace project, in partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Italian Republic, on the other hand, is about coordinating the fight against the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs at EU and international level by identifying and dismantling organised crime groups and facilitators. The project aims to strengthen the EU's operational and capacity-building capabilities, law enforcement, as well as strategic cooperation and exchange of experience and knowledge in this field. The project will result in an increase in the competence and skills of CBŚP officers and services cooperating with the Bureau in conducting a coordinated EU-international fight against the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs<sup>9</sup>.

Both projects are in line with the **specific objectives of the CDF (information exchange, cross-border cooperation, prevention of and fight against crime)** and are coherent with the activities envisaged for implementation under the Programme.

Coherence with the intervention of the CSF is also demonstrated by initiatives funded by the **Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021** under the Home Affairs Programme for thematic area 20 'International police cooperation and combating crime'.

The aim of the Programme was to strengthen law enforcement cooperation, including the prevention and detection of organised crime through:

- ensuring that law enforcement officers have access to new technologies and appropriate training;
- strengthening cooperation between national and international law enforcement agencies such as Eurojust, Europol, Interpol or Frontex.

The projects implemented under the Programme in the period 2021-2024 include 'Improving the process of collecting, analysing and evaluating evidence in combating cross-border computer crime using the network of computer forensics laboratories of the Polish Police Forensic Laboratories' and 'International police cooperation in searching for the most dangerous criminals in Europe', implemented by the Polish Police Headquarters, and the project 'Strengthening Security in CBRNE - Coordination and Standardisation', implemented by the Internal Security Agency.

Projects consistent with the activities financed from the FBW were also projects implemented under the **Bilateral Cooperation Fund (FWD)** for the Home Affairs Programme, including the project 'Police and non-police international cooperation in the search for Europe's most dangerous criminals', implemented in partnership with the Norwegian National Investigation Centre. These activities are complementary to the intervention undertaken under the FBW<sup>10</sup>.

It is to be expected that projects implemented under the FFF **will also be coherent with activities financed from the next edition of the NMF**, which will be launched in 2024. From the interviews conducted, it appears that the final scope of support has not yet been approved.

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<sup>9</sup> Project application.

<sup>10</sup> [Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 - Police.pl - Portal of the Polish Police](#), (accessed 27.02.2024).

In addition, the activities funded by the CSF are consistent with those carried out by **Europol, including the use of the SIS** (Schengen Information System) and the use of the Secure Information Exchange Network Application Basic Protection Level (SIENA BPL) tool.

The support from the FBW is also consistent with the **activities financed from the state budget**, carried out under statutory obligation by the Police, the CBŚP, the Border Guard and the National Fiscal Administration. These activities primarily concern the identification, prevention and combating of various types of crime and the protection of public security and order. In addition, additional funds supporting the Polish services are also made available under the **Programme for Modernisation of the Police, Border Guard, State Fire Service and State Protection Service in the years 2022-2025** (inter alia, expenditure on equipment and personal equipment of officers, construction investments, strengthening of the full-time staff of uniformed services, strengthening of the motivational system of officers' emoluments).

## 12. To what extent is the Fund consistent with other sources of EU funding (including other home affairs funds) and in particular with EU external action?

The assessment of the coherence of the activities undertaken under the CSF with other EU-funded initiatives included primarily an analysis of home affairs funds and programmes co-financed under cohesion policy, but also other sources of EU funding, such as the Neighbourhood Instrument and Horizon Europe.

It is assessed that there is coherence between the **CSF and FAMI and IZGW** due to a proper delimitation and differentiation at the level of objectives, needs, project types, beneficiaries and support instruments. All three Funds should be considered as a broad coherent mechanism for supporting activities carried out by public institutions and NGOs in the field of migration, internal security and border management.

At the level of ongoing (or future planned) projects, in particular, strong links can be seen between the FBW and **the Financial Support Instrument for Border Management and Visa Policy (FIG)**. Amongst the challenges enshrined from the IZGW, it was pointed out that *'the proper implementation of a modern visa policy is one of the key elements in addressing these issues and, together with the creation of a new architecture for large-scale EU information systems, fits into the need to optimise the migration management sphere'*. In addition, it is pointed out that it is necessary to update the EU IT systems, which are a continuation of the FBW activities from 2014-2020 (SIS, VIS, Eurodac) and to build new large-scale information systems: EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN and the implementation of the interoperability of these systems. These activities are implemented under implementing measure 1.e, support scope 3.d, which assumes the continuation of FBW 2014-2020 activities related to the modernisation of server and hardware and software infrastructure. On the other hand, in the area of implementation of implementing measure 2.e, scope of support 3.d of the IZGW, further development of VIS and tools introducing full interoperability of large-scale information systems is planned. These activities are consistent with the CS 1 (Information Exchange) activities implemented with FBW 2021-2027 funds.

For **FAMI**, coherence has been identified in actions that will aim to protect migrant children, counter-trafficking, protect victims of trafficking, prevent and smuggle migrants, and radicalise them.

Also coherence can be referred to in relation to the link between the CSF measures and the operational programmes implemented under the **EU Cohesion Policy**. In this relationship, coherence consists primarily in ensuring complementarity at the level of objectives and scopes of support of these funding sources. The Cohesion Policy programmes support the uniformed services in terms of infrastructure and equipment to fulfil their tasks in the following areas:

- ➔ under Priority Objective 2 (A greener, low-carbon, transition towards a zero-carbon economy and a resilient Europe through (...) risk prevention and management (...)) – for carrying out activities related to protection against emergency situations related to environmental risks,
- ➔ under Priority Objective 3 (A better connected Europe through increased mobility), in the implementation of traffic safety measures.

The coherence between the support under the Cohesion Policy and the actions of the CSF lies primarily in the comprehensive approach to support for uniformed services while targeting types of support and separating them into different funding sources. In fact, the CSF finances another type of projects targeted at services consisting in supporting the implementation of activities related to the exchange of information, cooperation between Member States' services and strengthening their capacity to prevent and combat crime, terrorism and radicalisation, by providing assistance to and protection of victims of crime, as well as the management of security incidents, risks and crises.

However, coherence between the CSF and the Cohesion Policy can also take place at project level. This applies to Specific Objective 3 of the CSF *Increasing the capacity to fight and prevent crime*, which are complementary to the measures financed in the Partnership Agreement in the area of CP1. The coherence concerns mainly projects implemented in the area of strengthening the capacity of enterprises and public administration for a modern economy, including support for the development of innovative solutions in the area of cyber security in various sectors of the economy, development of tools for collecting, analysing and exchanging information on threats, vulnerabilities and incidents, development of infrastructure for increasing the level of resilience to cyber threats, ensuring cyber security in communication networks, construction and development of a national certification system. Also, Specific Objective 1 of the CSF can complement the activities financed by the European Regional Development Fund in terms of strengthening the capacity to fight cybercrime, e.g. by building an IT system for authorities and entities involved in the fight against cybercrime, increasing the number of specialised training courses on combating cybercrime and access to platforms for electronic reporting of crimes committed on the Internet.

Another initiative financed from EU funds, which at the level of activities is coherent with the CSF, is the **Interreg Next Programme Poland - Ukraine 2021-2027**. First of all, it is worth pointing out that within the framework of the envisaged support there is Priority 4 - Cooperation, which aims to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the functioning of public administration in the area of support. The Programme will support activities related to, inter alia, the promotion of legal and administrative cooperation between institutions. This is consistent with Specific Objective 2: Cross-border cooperation of the CDF. In addition, it is envisaged that one of the types of beneficiaries of

Priority 4 of the Interreg PL-UA Programme will be NGOs and public institutions working for the benefit of migrants and refugees. Coherence can also be expected with Priority 5 - Borders, which is complementary to the CDF both at the level of needs, objectives and types of support. This includes e.g. actions related to combating cross-border crime and improving the operation of services. Among the projects that can potentially be complementary with the CEF are activities related to joint training of border services and co-financing of their equipment. The necessity of linking the Poland-Ukraine programme with the CSF was emphasised in the very content of the Programme, where it was stated that *"the complementarity of the above mentioned possibilities of financing from the European Union funds, due to the border character of the Programme area, is crucial for the possibility of achieving the assumed specific objectives within the scope of the Borders and Cooperation priorities of the Programme"*<sup>11</sup>. More than EUR 13 million are planned for the implementation of projects under Priority 5.

Potential coherence may also occur between HEF-funded activities and **Horizon Europe** projects. It is desirable that the results of ongoing research and innovations developed (funded under HE) are also used for law enforcement in terms of enhancing law enforcement capabilities.

Complementarity can also be identified between actions financed under the CSF and projects implemented under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (**IPA**) and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (**NDICI**). The linkage may consist in supporting activities aimed at improving and intensifying cross-border cooperation, including joint actions of competent public authorities, related to terrorism and serious and organised crime with a cross-border dimension.

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<sup>11</sup> Interreg Next Programme Poland - Ukraine 2021-2027, p.27



## E. EU added value

### 13. To what extent does the Fund generate EU added value?

*European* added value (EAV) is an increasingly important criterion for assessing the soundness of actions funded by the EU budget. EAV refers to the additional value created by the fact that an action has been financed by the EU budget rather than by the budgets of individual Member States. The additional value is generated by having a single framework for the action, which leads to pursuing the same objective and can also create economies of scale. EAV is also defined in a similar way in the annual report: *EU added value means generating results beyond what would be achieved by Member States if acting alone*<sup>12</sup>.

EAV is generated at several levels, taking into account, inter alia, the impact on reducing social inequalities, the sharing of the costs of actions between the EU and Member States, or a coherent approach to achieving EU objectives. At the same time, it is an ambiguous value, difficult to examine due to its interdependence (it is not known what scale of effects would occur if EU Member States were to implement the actions in question alone). Analysing the available studies on EAV, the Study Team concluded that, within the FBW, the most relevant issues to be investigated when assessing the generation of added value are:

1. Implementation of EU legislation into the Polish legal order;
2. The occurrence of economies of scale;
3. Cross-border cooperation to learn about best practices and decision-making processes in other countries;
4. Addressing cross-border threats and challenges;
5. Networking of cooperation within the Fund - both at national and international level.

The following section describes the added value for the final recipients of the Fund's activities (who were defined as the general population of the EU, primarily those living in Poland) and, separately, for the beneficiaries of the support. Given the early period of implementation of the CDF, the assessment of EAV can therefore be made by referring to the expertise of the members of the Research Team and their assessment of the potential impact of the Fund on the various aspects included in EAV.

#### EAV from the perspective of the beneficiary

From the beneficiaries' point of view, it is important to mention that EAVs create enhanced competences. These mainly relate to the ability to enforce laws, cooperate, establish partnerships, conduct cross-border and international cooperation. This is also due to the equipment base they have and the software they have, which can facilitate activities. All activities aimed at preventing and combating crime should be assessed as having a positive impact on the potential costs (social, health, financial) incurred in dealing with the consequences of crime.

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<sup>12</sup> Annual Implementation Report referred to in Article 30 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1149, submitted by the Member States to the Commission and concerning the Internal Security Fund, financial year 1 January 2021-30 June 2022, p. 4.



## Scheme 2. EAV from the perspective of the beneficiary



Source: own study.

From the beneficiaries' point of view, it is also important that the projects implemented under the CEF are complementary to others. This results in a two-way exchange of experience, benefiting both projects implemented under the CSF and other projects affected by the CSF.

*(...) within the framework of this project, through these activities at Europol, through these training and networking activities, this will then be translated into cooperation within the framework of this EMPACT cooperation, which also creates operational and task forces, operational and investigative groups of various types, with various themes.*

Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW implementer.

### EAV from the point of view of the end user

The second level at which EAV should be considered is the level of the final recipients. They are defined in the CSF as all EU residents with an emphasis on those living in Poland. The programme is implemented on the territory of Poland, so naturally the direct recipients are the residents of our country, but due to the cross-border effect of threats and responses to them, the indirect recipients of the effects of actions in the form of reduction of the scale of threats and improvement of safety are all EU citizens. The EAV created and observed at the level of the final recipient include: an increase in the sense of security, a reduction in the scale of threats, an increase in the sense of the importance of security issues for residents, a reduction in the costs of the effects of eliminating undesirable phenomena related to threats to internal security, which are financed from the public budget, as well as support for victims of crime.

### Scheme 3. EAV from the point of view of the end user



Source: own study.

The added value of cooperation results in projects that are often pioneering on a national scale. Collaborating with other actors makes it possible to realise projects that would have no chance of success in the absence of a partnership. This is due to the capacity of the individual entity, but also to the possibility of reaching for additional funding.

*We were also able to 'pull in' the Government Security Centre in two activities. (...) we were building from scratch a new digital communications system based on new equipment, with new coding, digital communications. After the project, it turned out that we were one of the first voivodeships to connect crisis management communication in digital form, we abandoned analogue equipment, and we are now after two inspections by the Supreme Audit Office, after an audit of operations on both projects. After these four years, we can say that we have succeeded.*

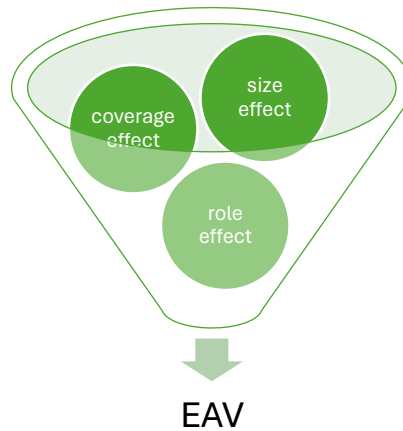
Source: individual in-depth interview with FBW implementer.

As shown above, added value in projects is generated primarily through the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practice. While establishing cooperation in itself is not a problem, it would be impossible without additional funding. Without it, cooperation would not take place, as internal security activities would take on a minimal - mainly reactive - character.

#### EAV levels

EAV can also be considered through the lens of the three levels at which the implemented activities have an impact. This is measured by **size effect, reach effect and role effect**.

#### Scheme 4. EAV components within the FBW



Source: own study.

**The size effect** describes the additional activities that can be undertaken as a result of an intervention, without which implementation would be impossible or significantly hindered. It is reasonable to assume that without the additional funding provided through the CDF, the actions implemented would have been of a much smaller, more narrowly focused nature. It is possible that the actions taken by the services and authorities responsible for security would have been largely reactive in nature.

**The outreach effect** relates to the range of people who benefit through the intervention. In the case of FBW, it is not only the final recipients who benefit, but also the security services, primarily the Police. Furthermore, the effect that is recorded for the final recipients thanks to the intervention may be greater than in the absence of the intervention.

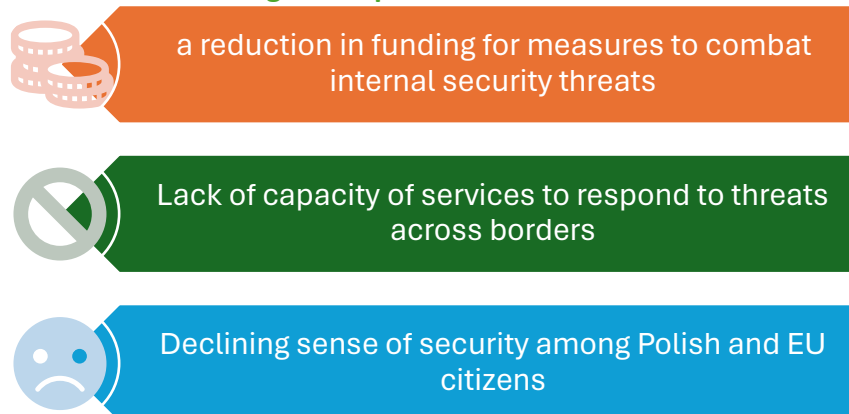
**The role effect**, on the other hand, determines the way in which the intervention affects the beneficiaries. In the case of the CSF, the impact is very broad, primarily concerned with building capacity to form partnerships and respond to threats across borders. Security threats, by their nature and diversity, affect not one country, but many countries. Hence the need for a comprehensive response to threats.

FBW relates to all three levels, with the greatest fit with the effect of size. This is because it allows top-down coherent actions that were previously fragmented. These include both "soft" measures, such as language courses, which are a prerequisite for effective cross-border cooperation, and investment measures. Previous initiatives in this area (e.g. from funds earmarked for cross-border cooperation, i.e. Interreg programme funds) were piecemeal and did not have the same impact on security issues as the fund being evaluated.

#### Summary

Furthermore, if it were not for the support described, the activities carried out would, through their scope, have had less of an impact on safety. Without the FBW funds, the assistance would have been at a basic level.

### Scheme 5. Effects of discontinuing the implementation of FBW



Source: own study.

As proven in this chapter, the role of the FFF for Poland, as well as for the EU as a whole, is invaluable. The CSF creates added value on three levels. Security threats are of a cross-border nature, which is especially noticeable in today's globalised world (planning attacks on border infrastructure may be carried out in another country, a drug distribution centre may also be based outside Poland; also threats that affect other countries may originate in Poland - e.g. drugs may be produced on our territory, which are then smuggled to other countries). Hence, the added value of FBW should be assessed very highly.

## Conclusions, suggestions and recommendations

The FBW was implemented with a long delay, as it was only at the end of 2022 that the Polish Programme was approved. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the degree to which the objectives have been achieved. Due to the fact that the delay affected not only Poland, but all countries, it is recommended that Poland participate in talks with the EC on removing the obligation to make 10% of certified expenditure under the programme by the end of 2024 in order to receive additional funds from the Facility Reserve and replacing it with the obligation to contract 10% of the funds within the basic allocation.

The support offered by the Fund has been designed correctly and ensures that the individual objectives of the Fund can be implemented in a qualitative way. The main objective of the Fund is to increase international cooperation in various aspects. Despite the separate specific objective (CS2) to contribute to increasing cross-border cooperation, the other specific objectives also focus on the implementation of international activities related to enhancing internal security and improving information exchange. The achievement of the Fund's objectives can only be hampered by the criteria for the investment activities that can be implemented under the Fund.

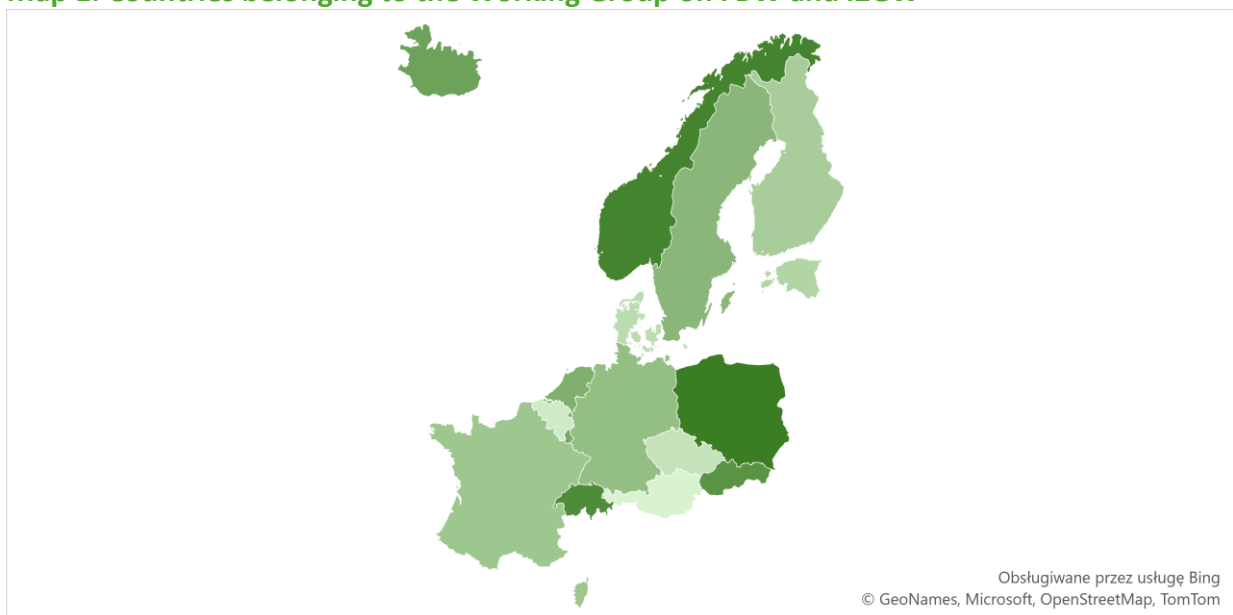
The CST2021 evaluation and monitoring system is a new tool for both beneficiaries and institutions implementing the CDF 2021-2027, so it is reasonable that they should have the opportunity to participate in training provided by an external entity that will familiarise them with the possibilities and respond to any identified difficulties in operating a system that is new to them. Currently, the most important identified shortcoming of the CST2021 system is that its logic and capabilities have been designed without consultation with the entities implementing the CDF and its beneficiaries, making it not a system that is tailored to the needs of the Fund, rather the Fund has to adapt to the technical possibilities that CST2021 offers. In addition, in terms of the indicator system, it may be considered whether it would not be worthwhile to report result indicators in a more descriptive form e.g. as part of the own indicators defined by the beneficiaries during their projects.

## Examples of good practice

Good practices include cooperation with other entities – the beneficiaries of the fund – to implement innovative projects. An example is the project implemented by the Voivodeship Office in Szczecin in cooperation with the Government Security Centre. It also resulted in cooperation with the Ministry of State Assets – this was an unplanned effect of the activities undertaken by the beneficiary. As part of the project, a digital communications system was built from scratch. It was based on new equipment and new coding. The result was the implementation of a pioneering solution in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, in which emergency management was fully digitised. This is a practice that was identified as part of the 2014-2020 perspective programme, but the successful experience suggests that the established partnership will continue in the current CDF, allowing for further innovative projects.

Good practice within the FBW furthermore includes the existence of an informal working group that meets once or twice a year. This group is common to the two funds: FBW and IZGW. The existence of the group allows lobbying on behalf of the participating countries before the EC, which strengthens the voting power of the individual countries involved. The group includes – apart from Poland – 16 countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Germany, Norway, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden. These countries are shown on the map below.

**Map 1. Countries belonging to the Working Group on FBW and IZGW**



*Source: own compilation based on individual in-depth interviews with implementers.*

Although the group's meetings occur relatively infrequently, only twice a year, Programme implementers expressed satisfaction with its existence, as reflected in the in-depth interviews.

*We have a very intense exchange of experiences, opinions and it is very interesting.*

*Source: individual in-depth interview with an FBW implementer.*