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PART 1/2

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

The interim evaluation of the Single Market Programme 2021-2027

Accompanying the document

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

on the interim evaluation of the Single Market Programme 2021-2027

{COM(2025) 347 final} - {SEC(2025) 195 final}

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Glossary

Term or acronym	Meaning or definition
AAC	Administrative Assistance and Cooperation Network
AAR	Annual Activity Report
AdCos	Administrative cooperation groups
ADIS	Animal disease information system
ADNS	Animal disease notification system
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AFS	Anti-fraud strategy

AG	Action grants
AGSFS	Advisory Group on Sustainability of Food Systems
AHL	Acute haemorrhagic leukoencephalitis
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
ANEC	European consumer voice in standardisation AISBL
Annex III organisations	Organisations representing SMEs, consumers, environmental and social interests in European standardisation[1]
ASF	African swine fever
BEUC	Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (European Consumer Organisation)
BTSF	Better Training for Safer Food
CASP	Coordinated Activities for the Safety of Products
C-BSE	Classical Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
CFF	Common Financial Framework
CoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
COPA-COGECA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union and General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative in the European Union
COSME	EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
CPC	Consumer Protection Cooperation Network
CSF	Classical swine fever
CSN	Consumer Safety Network
CSRD	Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
DG	Directorate-General
DG AGRI	European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG COMP	European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition
DG FISMA	European Commission's Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union
DG GROW	European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG SANTE	European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DG TAXUD	European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union

1 Standardisation Regulation - 1025/2012 - EN - EUR-Lex

DG	Directorate-General
EBS	European business statistics
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECB	European Central Bank
ECC Net	European Consumer Centres Network
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
ECN	European Competition Network
ECOS	Environmental Coalition on Standards
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hub
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EFRAG	European Financial Reporting Advisory Group
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIE	European Innovation Ecosystems Programme
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
EOTA	European Organisation for Technical Assessment of Construction Products
EPPO	European Plant Protection Organisation
ESAC	European Statistical Advisory Committee
ESGAB	European Statistical Governance Advisory Board
ESF	European Statistical Forum
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESO	European Standardisation Organisations
ESP	European Statistical Programme
ESRS	European Sustainability Reporting Standards
ESS	European Statistical System
ESSC	European Statistical System Committee
ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards institute
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro (currency)
EU CSW-CERTEX	EU Customs Single Window Certificates Exchange System

EUFMD	European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease
EUPCN	European Union Product Compliance Network
EUR	Euro (currency)
EURC	European Union Reference Centres
EURCAWs	European Reference centres for Animal Welfare
EURL	European Union Reference Laboratories
EUROPHYT	European Phytosanitary notification and rapid alert system
EUTF	European Union Testing Facility
EYE	Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEBA	Federation of the European Food Bank
FIGARO	Full International and Global Accounts for Research in input-Output analysis
FSUG	Financial Services User Group
FSTP	Financial support to third parties
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GPSR	General Product Safety Regulation
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HaDEA	European Health and Digital Executive Agency
HAS consultants	Harmonised Standards Consultants
HPAI	highly pathogenic avian influenza
IAS	International Accounting Standards
IASB	International Accounting Standards Board
IBA	Identified beneficiaries actions
ICSMS	Information and Communication System on Market Surveillance
IESBA	International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IFRS Foundation	International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMI	Internal Market Information
IMP	Impact indicator
IMSOC	Information management system for official controls

IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ISG	Interservice steering group
ISSB	International Sustainability Standards Board
IT	Information technology
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KPIs	Key performance indicators
MEF	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS	Member States
MSA	Market surveillance authority
NCAs	National competition authorities
NCB	National central bank
NCP	National contact points
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRL	National reference laboratory
NSB	National Standardisation Body
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OG	Operation grants
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
ONA	Other national authorities
OP	Output indicator
PIOB	Public Interest Oversight Board
PMR	Planning, monitoring and reporting
RAD	Representative Actions Directive
RAPEX	European rapid alert system for dangerous products
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
RES	Result indicator
SBS	Small Business Standards
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDMX	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SMP	Single Market Programme
SWD	Staff Working Document
TB	Bovine tuberculosis

TRACES	Trade control and expert system
UN	United Nations
UECBV	European Livestock and Meat Trade Unions
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USS	Eurostat's User satisfaction survey
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
YEA	Your Europe Advice
WP	Work programme

Reading guide:

This document is the report of the interim evaluation of the Single Market Programme, covering the period of the first three years of the programme: 2021-2023. The main body of this evaluation report focuses on the assessment of the SMP at programme level. **Chapter 1** introduces the SMP and explains the purpose and scope of the evaluation. **Chapter 2** presents an overview of the expected outcomes and intervention logic of the programme. In **Chapter 3**, presents an overview of the current implementation of the programme and its pillars. **Chapter 4** presents an overview of the evaluation findings at programme level, covering the five evaluation criteria put forward in the Better Regulation Guidelines[2]: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. These criteria are applied to both general and pillar-specific objectives of the programme stated in Article 3.1 of the SMP Regulation. Additional criteria are applied to assess the design objectives of the SMP, as set out in the *ex ante* impact assessment[3]: flexibility, synergy, and simplification. **Chapter 5** summarises conclusions and lessons learned in order to inform the future implementation of the programme and the Commission's work to design future programmes and actions for the single market in the next financial period.

Annexes I-VIII present additional technical material and details about the assessment of the SMP at programme and pillar level:

- Annex I covers the procedural information of this evaluation exercise.
- Annex II gives more detail about the methodology, describing the process and various tasks undertaken by the Commission and the contractor tasked to deliver a supporting study for this evaluation. It showcases the potential challenges and limitations, and related mitigating measures taken to ensure the robustness and quality of findings.
- Annex III includes the evaluation matrix that serves as an organising framework of the evaluation work around the evaluation criteria set out in the Better Regulation guidelines, highlighting the links between the evaluation questions, indicators, and sources of data and evidence.
- Annex IV details a compiled record on the costs and benefits identified in the evaluation, as well as simplification and burden reduction.

2 European Commission, Better Regulation Guidelines.
3 European Commission, SMP Impact Assessment (2018).

- Annex V summarises stakeholder consultation activities for the purpose of this evaluation, on the basis of the consultation strategy established by the Interservice Steering Group; it also offers an analytical perspective on the results obtained.
- Annex VI offers a critical assessment of the monitoring and evaluation framework applied and, on the lessons learned specific to its pillars and includes evidence on the achievement of the output and result indicators, as established in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework[4].
- Annex VII contains additional information on the implementation of the SMP, including contribution to Sustainable Development Goals and more details about the efficiency and flexibility criteria.
- Annex VIII includes the intervention logics for each of the SMP Pillars.

Annexes IX to XIV are complementary pillar annexes, providing more detailed analytical information on the activities undertaken within each of the six constitutive pillars of the SMP.

4 Delegated Regulation, C(2023) 4993, 28 July 2023, Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Single Market Programme, here.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

Pursuant to Article 18 of the Regulation establishing the Single Market Programme[5], the Commission shall perform an interim evaluation by four years after the start of its implementation, to be used in the decision-making process and also to evaluate its design. The interim evaluation covers the period 2021-2023. The conclusions and lessons learned will inform the Commission work for the rest of the MFF and to design future programmes and actions for the single market in the next financial period post-2027.

The single market was officially launched on 1 January 1993 (Single European Act of 1986[6]) and is governed by fundamental principles: free movement of goods, services, people, and capital across the 27 Member States, along with Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, and Switzerland via sectoral treaties. For nearly three decades, the single market has been at the heart of the EU, a major contributor to growth, competitiveness, and employment. It enables citizens to live, work and travel freely within the EU, and offers enhanced consumer protection and greater choice of high-quality products and services at lower prices.

The Single Market Programme (there after referred to as 'the Programme' or 'SMP') is the EU funding programme to help the single market reach its full potential, with two **general objectives** (Article 3.1 of the SMP Regulation):

- 'to improve the functioning of the internal market, and especially to protect and empower citizens, consumers and businesses, in particular SMEs, by enforcing Union law, facilitating market access, setting standards and promoting human, animal and plant health and animal welfare, while respecting the principles of sustainable development and ensuring a high level of consumer protection, as well as by enhancing cooperation between the competent authorities of Member States and between the competent authorities of Member States and the Commission and the decentralised Union agencies;
- to develop, produce and disseminate high-quality, comparable, timely and reliable European statistics which underpin the design, monitoring and evaluation of all Union policies and help citizens, policymakers, authorities, businesses, academia and the media to make informed decisions and to actively participate in the democratic process.'

On this basis, the SMP programme pursues **specific objectives, following six pillars** (Article 3.2):

- Pillar 1: Making the internal market more effective.
- Pillar 2: Strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

5 Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/201. SMP Regulation - 2021/690 - EN - EUR-Lex.
6 Single European Act, EUR-Lex - 11986U/TXT - EN - EUR-Lex.

- Pillar 3: Ensuring effective European standards and international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards.
- Pillar 4: Promoting the interests of consumers and ensuring a high level of consumer protection and product safety.
- Pillar 5: Contributing to a high level of health and safety for humans, animals and plants in plant, animal, food and feed areas.
- Pillar 6: Developing, producing, disseminating, and communicating high-quality European statistics.'

On the basis of the general and specific objectives described above, the SMP supports a range of core **activities** across its six pillars encompassing:

- Data collection, analysis, European official statistics, studies, and evaluations to support the effective enforcement and modernisation of the EU legal framework in support of the single market.
- Support to SMEs' competitiveness and internationalisation.
- Capacity building for businesses and Member States authorities and joint actions among Member States, the Commission, and decentralised EU agencies.
- Financial support for mechanisms that enable individuals, consumers, and business representatives to engage in decision-making processes.
- Enhancing the exchange and dissemination of expertise and knowledge.
- The establishment of common European standards for products placed in the single market.

1.2. Methodology, research, and robustness and limitations

The findings of this evaluation were supported by an external study ('supporting study').

The methodology builds on the Monitoring and Evaluation framework, adopted on 28 July 2023, in accordance with Article 17(3) of the SMP Regulation, which complemented the core performance indicators laid down by the SMP Regulation by second-level indicators to satisfy the needs of information for evaluation purposes[7]. The main limitations of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework are listed below and touched upon in the conclusions, lessons learned (Section 5.1.4. and 5.2.3.) and Annex II.

The methodology for this interim evaluation rests on various methods and sources (see Annexes II, IX-XIV).

First, the evaluation assesses the Programme against both its general and specific objectives. Second, in line with Better Regulation Guidelines, the evaluation rests on the analysis of five evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value, relevance). Third, the evaluation assesses three additional criteria that pertain to the design of the Programme (flexibility, synergies, simplification).

The evaluation follows a dual-level approach, following the pillar structure of the Programme. The evaluation report synthetises at programme-level findings of the separate

7 Delegated Regulation, C(2023) 4993, 28 July 2023, Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Single Market Programme, here.

evaluation reports of the six pillars and is supplemented by analysis at programme level mostly related to the design aspects of the Programme.

An approach pillar per pillar (and by sub-pillars where appropriate) allowed to capture the broad variety of actions and fields the SMP supports. The bottom-up approach was used, first analysing the performance at pillar level, against the specific objectives for each pillar, in order to assess how each of the six pillars of the SMP contributed to the overarching priorities of the Programme. This allowed to arrive at general conclusions relevant at programme level by cross-analysing pillar-specific conclusions, to provide answers to evaluation questions at programme level and also to build the analysis of the programme design and the criteria of flexibility, simplification and synergies (see Annex II).

This approach reflects the challenge of the complex design of the Programme and aims at creating a somewhat unified overview cutting across the diverse specific objectives and activities of the Programme and the siloed implementation of its pillars.

On this basis, the following evaluation tasks have been undertaken: an inception phase, document review, analysis of programme data, a call for evidence, a public consultation, targeted surveys, interviews, and case studies. Based on these evaluation tasks, evidence was collected to substantiate adequate responses to the evaluation questions. Efforts were made to identify the most effective channels to reach stakeholders through targeted surveys and interviews. Remaining challenges and limitations in relation to data collection and analysis were overcome by mitigating actions to ensure the reliability of data used and the subsequent robustness of conclusions[8].

The main limitations of the evaluation could be summarised as follows:

- Limitations are due to the evaluation being undertaken at a mid-term stage of implementation. Results and impacts are either difficult to measure or not yet materialised. The evaluation's focus is thus more on outputs than results or impacts, i.e. on assessing the progress made so far and the potential for actions to deliver their intended effects in the future. These effects will be assessed in the final evaluation of the SMP.
- Limitations arise due to the programme's complex structure and variability of data quality and data availability across pillars, as well as the diverse nature of pillar activities, which made a synthetic and holistic analysis of the Programme challenging. This was addressed by making the best use of available evidence from monitoring data and past evaluations. Focusing on strategic actions that accounted for the majority of the budget and beneficiaries allowed also mitigated this limitation.
- Another limitation is linked with the distinct activities of the SMP. As a result, the programme-level report largely aggregates pillar-level evidence rather than presenting unique programme-wide effects. Where relevant, findings were disaggregated by sub-pillar to ensure the complexity and wide scope of the SMP is analysed. Where possible, common findings at programme level were included.
- The impacts of the SMP that have been identified cannot be isolated from the influence of other factors; in most cases, it is difficult to fully attribute observed impacts to the SMP activities. To a large extent, this reflects the policy intention: the SMP supports the wider policy processes supporting the functioning of the single market (e.g. development, implementation and enforcement of Union law, enhancing cooperation

8 See Annexes II, and IX-XIV.

between competent authorities). The report aims in the analytical sections below to clarify as possible the attribution of impacts of SMP activities.

A comprehensive reflection and critical assessment of the monitoring and evaluation framework is included in the lessons learned.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

In line with the Impact Assessment of the SMP Regulation[9], this section presents a visual representation of the rationale of the evaluation of the Programme distinguishing between content-related and design aspects. Dedicated intervention logics for each of the pillars (see Annex VIII) complement the programme-level rationale.

2.1. Description of the intervention and its objectives

The '*overarching*' priorities[10], used for the purpose of this evaluation, reflect the essence of the general objectives of the Programme[11] and constitute an 'umbrella' to categorise the pillar-specific objectives[12]. They are broadly based on the needs identified in the impact assessment of the SMP. The **'overarching priorities'** are proposed as a 'common denominator' for all SMP activities under all pillars. They serve as a starting point for the intervention logic of all pillars and as link with the specific objectives of each pillar, thereby allowing to assess different activities, outputs, and results across the pillars of the programme. They therefore serve to present the logic for grouping all predecessor programmes and budget lines under one joint SMP programme which is based on the common type of activities across all pillars.

Aside from administrative costs (e.g. executive agency funding), there are no separate budget lines for the SMP as a whole. Consequently, all funding is allocated through the pillars, and all activities, outputs, and results are associated with the specific pillars. Due to the comprehensive imperative behind the drafting of the overarching priorities, it must be noted that the assessment of the SMP's success is based on the assessment of its pillar-specific objectives. Programme activities and outputs included in the rationale and described in this section reflect the collective contributions of all six pillars to the overarching priorities, as each pillar plays an essential role in delivering parts of the Programme, and altogether they form a comprehensive and holistic contribution to its objectives. The rationale presented below draws from the one included in the impact assessment of the SMP and has been revised to highlight how the three overarching priorities relate to the constitutive pillars and activities of the SMP.

Overarching priority 1: Empower citizens, businesses (in particular SMEs) and public administrations to get full access to the opportunities offered by the single market.

This overarching priority targets the need for citizens, businesses, and public administrations to receive information and advice about the single market and their rights. It also relates to the need to provide support to remove barriers within the single market.

9 SWD(2018) 320 final: Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Programme for single market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and European statistics and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014, (EU) No 258/2014, (EU) No 652/2014 and (EU) No 2017/826.
10 'Overarching priorities' were devised for the purpose of the evaluation to better explain the intervention logic of the SMP.
11 Article 3.1 of the SMP Regulation.
12 Article 4 of the SMP Regulation. The terminology 'overarching priorities' has been developed for the purpose of this evaluation to explain the intervention logic.

All SMP pillars pursue specific objectives that contribute to this priority by supporting the following activities: capacity building, information advice and communication, support to representative organisations, and data collection and dissemination.

Tools for capacity building[13], information, advice, and communication which are designed to assist citizens, businesses, and consumers in understanding and making the most of opportunities within the single market.

These tools help users access information to assert their rights, navigate EU rules, and seek redress when buying, selling, or investing across borders. **Pillar 1** includes digital services for consumers and businesses - internal market governance tools and platforms such as Your Europe[14], which offers guidance on the internal market and links to national government portals, or the Your Europe Advice (YEA) service, which offers advice and support to citizens in exercising their rights. It also covers information campaigns like those for the EU taxonomy compass[15] in sustainable finance or to promote the SOLVIT[16] services. **Pillar 2** supports the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), an SME advice and support service, which provide capacity building to SMEs operating in the single market[17]. Support is also provided for cooperation and mentoring platforms for SMEs and entrepreneurs (EEN, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and Euroclusters) to foster the creation and implementation of mentoring and mobility schemes, and the number of business collaborations and SMEs benefiting. This aims to empower SMEs by enhancing their skills and access to effective entrepreneurial networks and helping them to capitalise on opportunities within the single market. Sector actions are also financed in areas such as the social economy sector, tourism, construction, textiles, and retail. **Pillar 4** focuses on actions like product safety (e.g. Safety Gate), consumer protection, and enhancing the participation of consumers and end users in financial services policy making. It focuses on providing consumer support services, consumer representative bodies, and collective consumer redress or private enforcement mechanisms, as well as awareness raising initiatives. It supports the European Consumer Centres (ECCs) and Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies (ADR), which assists consumers in cross-border transactions by providing free information and advice on their rights, help them in resolving cross-border consumer complaints and obtain access to appropriate dispute resolution. **Pillar 5** provides information and education to consumers, stakeholders on food safety, sustainable production and consumption initiatives, antimicrobial resistance and animal welfare through information campaigns, the website of DG SANTE, IT tools (e.g. RASFF), meetings and BTSF trainings. **Pillar 6** supports the provision and communication of European statistics by offering European official statistics available in the Eurostat database, publications, podcasts, news articles and releases and numerous other dissemination products freely accessible on the Eurostat website, Eurostat LinkedIn, Facebook, X and Instagram channels as well as Eurostat user support.

13 Financial support to strengthen the ability of citizens, businesses and consumers to tap into the potential of the Single Market.
14 Questions on your rights in the EU? Or your obligations? - Your Europe.
15 EU Taxonomy Compass. The EU Taxonomy Compass aims to make the contents of the EU Taxonomy easier to access for a variety of users. It enables users to check which activities are included in the EU Taxonomy (Taxonomy-eligible activities), to which objectives they substantially contribute and what criteria have to be met for activities to be considered Taxonomy-aligned. The EU Taxonomy Compass also aims to make it easier to integrate the criteria into business databases and other IT systems. This tool existed prior to 2021 but has been enhanced with SMP funding.
16 SOLVIT, EU rights problem solving when working, living or doing business in another EU country - European Commission.
17 Enterprise Europe Network | Enterprise Europe Network.

Grants and contribution agreements for organisations representing key interest groups are provided to ensure that SMEs, consumers and end users of financial services, workers, and environmental organisations have a voice at the EU level.

Pillar 3 supports organisations representing citizens, businesses and other interests in European standardisation, such as the support for Annex III organisations[18] (with initiatives such as Small Business Standards (SBS), the European consumer voice in standardisation (ANEC), Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS), or the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)), while **Pillar 4** funds not for profit organisations like Better Finance[19] and Finance Watch[20] representing consumers and end users in the financial services sector, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)[21], Alternative Dispute Resolutions bodies and European Consumers Centres. Under **Pillar 5** grants and contribution agreements are provided for stakeholders dealing in food waste (e.g. FEBA, stakeholders), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)[22] and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)[23].

Collection of data, research, and evaluation activities to improve the understanding of the single market and its challenges.

Pillar 1 provides funding for evidence-based policy making and monitoring, such as studies, surveys, databases, digital tools, and consultations, while **Pillar 6** supports the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. This is done through grants to members of the European Statistical System (ESS), i.e. to National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and Other National Authorities (ONAs), procurement to improve infrastructure and methodologies, and through contributions to international organisations to strengthen international statistical standards. **Pillar 4** improves the evidence base on consumer conditions in the single market, providing a basis for the development of consumer policy and for the identification of the most problematic areas for consumers. Several consumer behavioural studies and surveys were carried out to feed the Consumer Conditions Scoreboard collecting data on national conditions for consumers. Research work on important financial services topics contributes to the sector's policymaking and promotes awareness raising. **Pillar 5** provides funding in the area of antimicrobial resistance in order to obtain information on AMR monitoring results and collect data on sales and use of antimicrobials in animals which contribute to harmonised AMR monitoring and reporting at EU level.

Overarching priority 2: Support administrative cooperation, capacity building, and integration among Member States

This priority addresses the need for reinforced administrative cooperation and integration to ensure consistent and effective enforcement across the EU and to prevent barriers and limitations hindering the proper functioning of the single market. In addition to steps taken by Member State authorities to enhance consistency, cooperation and knowledge sharing, funding at EU level further strengthens this objective with training, capacity building, networks and platforms.

18 Standardisation Regulation - 1025/2012 - EN - EUR-Lex.
19 Better Finance.
20 Finance Watch.
21 BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation. The umbrella group for 44 independent consumer organisations from 31 countries, which main role is to represent them to the EU institutions and defend the interests of European consumers.
22 WOAH - World Organisation for Animal Health.
23 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Training and capacity building activities, exchanges of expertise and knowledge for EU-level or national authorities.

Activities under **Pillar 1** include such aspects as training for judges on competition law and anti-money laundering, peer reviews and mutual visits for product Market Surveillance Authorities. Under **Pillar 2,** capacity building actions and trainings are provided to businesses. It also supports public procurement actions towards making it better suited to SMEs, and supports skills development, for instance with the European Solar Academy and the Pact for skills. Under **Pillar 4,** support for collaboration is provided to consumer organisations, Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (CPC) of national authorities responsible for the enforcement of EU consumer protection laws and the Consumer Safety Network (CSN) consisting of market surveillance authorities that coordinate actions and exchange of expertise on product safety. Under **Pillar 5,** training of competent authorities in food and feed safety, animal and plant health, animal welfare domains take place through BTSF. **Pillar 6** provides support for cooperation and training to national statistical authorities to further enhance the capacity of the European Statistical System to leverage new data sources and technologies and continue delivering high-quality and timely data and statistics.

Networks and platforms that facilitate cooperation between Member States with each other and with the Commission.

Under **Pillar 1** the European Competition Network and the EU Product Compliance Network or the FIU.net platform enable secured data exchange between national Financial Intelligence Units of Member States in the area of anti-money laundering. For market surveillance, the SMP supports the meetings of the EU Product Compliance Network, the meetings of the Administrative Cooperation Groups (sectoral product groups), and joint inspection actions by national authorities fostering better cooperation between these authorities. The Internal Market Information System supports administrative cooperation aimed to implement EU rules in 20 policy areas of the single market. **Pillar 2** contributes to SME-related statistics via the SME Performance Report, insights into policymaking (e.g. SME panels caried out by the EEN) and networks that facilitate exchanges between the Member States such as the SME Envoy Network. Under **Pillar 4** the European Consumer Centres Network provides consumers with information about the opportunities and risks of the single market, and assists them in cross-border transactions, ADR/ODR network ensures access to efficient redress, while the CPC network, CSN, and Safety Gate contact point network enhance cooperation to enable effective enforcement and market surveillance**,** and partnerships within the European Statistical System under **Pillar 6**. Under **Pillar 5**, IT platforms such as Information Management System for Official Controls (IMSOC) and networks heads of EU official laboratories and centres (EU Reference Centres and EU Reference Laboratories) foster excellence and best practice exchanges in the fast-evolving areas of food, feed, animal welfare, animal and plant health. For veterinary and phytosanitary emergencies, the SMP facilitates coordinated responses to disease outbreaks, pest control, and animal welfare issues under Pillar 5.

Overarching priority 3: Support EU rulemaking, European and international standard-setting and enforcement

This priority aims to ensure that EU authorities and bodies maintain effective rulemaking, standard-setting, and enforcement standards in the face of changing circumstances, including digitalisation. The SMP allocates resources through some of its pillars for a range

of activities including data collection, studies, IT tools, provision of expertise, joint actions, and support to standard-setting.

Data collection, studies, assessments, and evaluations.

Pillar 1 includes support for data gathering, market analysis, and information dissemination activities, such as annual surveys, market reviews, or ad hoc projects. **Pillar 2** supports SME policy with initiatives such as the SME Performance Review. Pillar **4** supports data collection for consumer policy, consumer enforcement and redress, and product safety with the Consumer Scoreboard[24]. **Pillar 5** focuses on tracking progress toward the Farm to Fork objectives[25]. Lastly, **Pillar 6** supports the ongoing collection of data, reuse of data from existing sources (administrative, privately held), analysis, development, production and dissemination of statistics, including the development and modernisation of standards and methodologies.

Development and maintenance of facilities and IT tools supporting rulemaking and enforcement.

Pillar 1 funds tools for the Commission's internal use, such as tools to facilitate case management, investigations, and document storage and analysis, as well as tools that facilitate interaction with Member States. Notable examples pertain to the European Union Testing Facilities (EUTF), which increase the testing capacity of national Market Surveillance Authorities, and the Knowledge of European Legislation (KOEL) tool, which helps the Commission manage legislative acts, questions and answers, case law, and track implementation. It also supports financing of tools managing the work of external IT experts such as MICE (Monitoring of Informatics Contracts for Experts) that is a web-based interface facilitating planning, timesheet management & reports of IT experts. In terms of enforcement of competition rules, additional examples pertain to the development of digital business solutions dedicated to modernising case management (CASE@EC) and interactions with external stakeholders on competition cases. The IMI system also facilitates the enforcement of EU law by providing standardised workflows and information exchange forms for authorities in different scenarios where cross-border cooperation is required, thus ensuring the rules are applied in a single way by all participants. **Pillar 4** provides for Safety Gate, the EU's rapid alert system for the dissemination of information on dangerous non-food products and the e-surveillance web crawler tool which has been developed to strengthen authorities' ability to track dangerous products and to remove them from the market, providing one centralised solution. **Pillar 5** provides RASFF, TRACES tools which facilitate sharing information and tracing unsafe food, feed, animal by-products and animals within EU, **Pillar 6** funds improvements in IT infrastructure for delivering European statistics.

Provision of services and expertise to assist authorities in their duties.

This can be required on a regular or occasional basis, with examples including Harmonised Standards Consultants (HAS Consultants) supporting standards or conformity assessments to monitor the enforcement of EU law by Member States or the preparedness of candidate countries under **Pillar 1** and supporting scientific advisers, veterinary and phytosanitary experts in the food safety and animal and plant health sectors under **Pillar 5**.

Joint actions financed under the SMP.

24 Key consumer data - European Commission.
25 Farm to Fork Strategy - European Commission

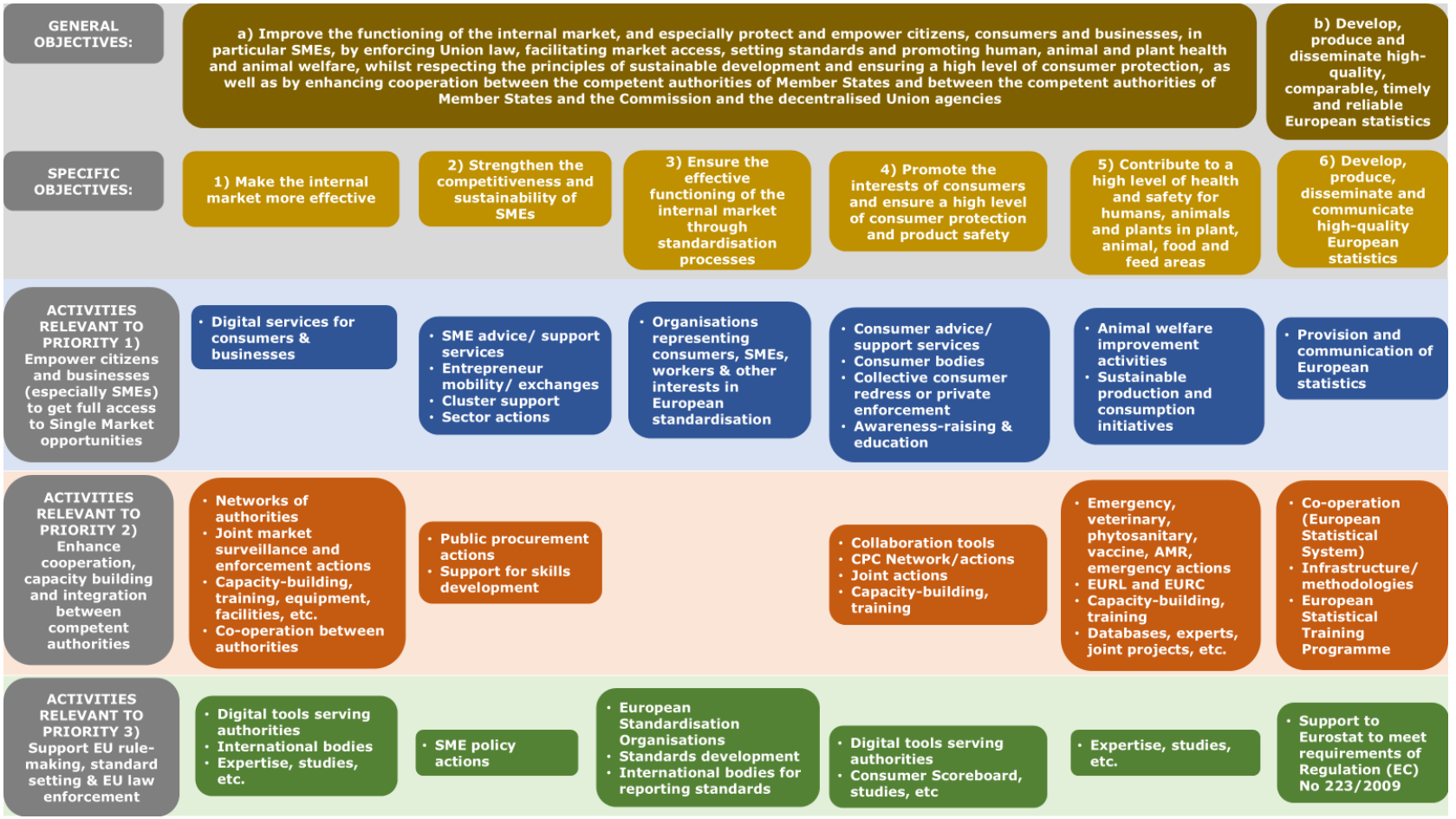
The SMP supports coordinated actions by national authorities such as joint inspections by product market surveillance authorities under **Pillar 1, to detect non-compliant products circulating on the Single Market,** and coordinated control plans on AMR under **Pillar 5**. **Pillar 4** supports joint actions of national consumer protection authorities to coordinate their investigation and enforcement actions to tackle widespread breaches of EU consumer laws. **Pillar 6** supports joint actions of the members of the European Statistical System (ESS), i.e. National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and Other National Authorities (ONAs), to improve the coverage, relevance, and timeliness of European statistics, enhance their communication and accessibility to improve statistical literacy and counter disinformation, and enhance the capacity of the ESS to utilise multiple data sources and advanced technologies for the production of high-quality European statistics.

Support to standard-setting efforts.

Pillar 3 supports standard-setting efforts by European standardisation organisations (CEN, CENELEC, ETSI[26]) and bodies involved in financial and non-financial reporting and auditing (IFRS Foundation, EFRAG, PIOB). **Pillar 5** provides support to develop international standards in animal health, plant health, food safety areas through cooperation with WOAH, FAO, and IPPC. **Pillar 6** supports the development and promotion of statistical standards that allow cost-effective development, production and dissemination of statistics among the members of the European Statistical System at European level and in cooperation with organisations like the OECD, UNECE, IMF and World Bank at international level.

26 These three ESOs develop the standards recognised as European Standards: CEN-CENELEC, ETSI.

Figure 1: 'content-specific' rationale



Source: elaboration based on the SMP Regulation and programme activities

2.2. Programme design intervention logic

Integrating previous programmes and budget lines into a single programme the SMP with its pillar structure was intended to promote flexibility and simplification and develop synergies. It also intended to preserve existing policy objectives and governance models, to avoid disruptions and to ensure continuity.

Design objective 1: flexibility

Consolidating all 14 budget lines under a single budget heading was intended to facilitate the transfer of funds between lines, improve resource allocation efficiency, and allow a more efficient spending of resources. This approach allows for better adjustment to unexpected needs in certain budget lines. For example, the competition and financial services under Pillar 1, where conditions in the single market can evolve unpredictably and potentially at a fast pace, were intended to benefit from such flexibility. Some budget lines might be able to anticipate unexpected additional budget needs, whereas others might have difficulties in consuming the whole allocated budget.

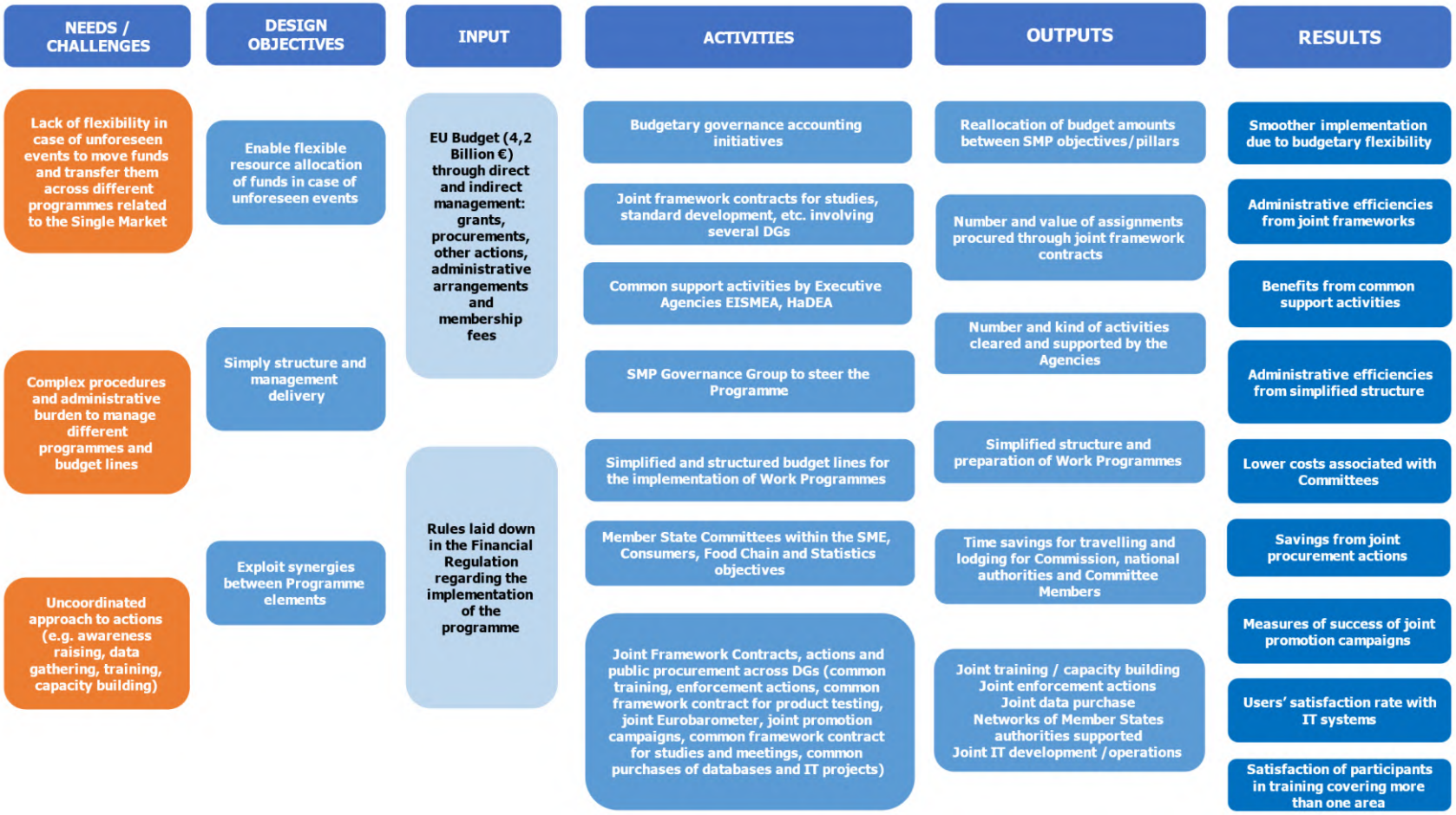
Design objective 2: simplification

By merging multiple budget lines, the Programme aimed to streamline procedures and reduce administrative complexity in a bid to simplify programme management. This included minimising duplications in costs and procedures and enabling more predictable financing for actions benefiting multiple objectives. The design featured internal governance improvements, such as overarching coordination among all DGs involved in the SMP and the preparation of a single financing decision. This would lead to savings in the time and efforts invested in programme management.

Design objective 3: synergies

Establishing a single programme rather than multiple programmes intended to reduce duplications of costs and efforts in acquiring products and services, such as access to datasets, studies, Eurobarometer surveys, and communication campaigns, which could be managed through joint actions or framework contracts. This approach was hoped lead to create and fosters synergies across the SMP pillars, thereby resulting in greater efficiency through joint initiatives, cost savings, and reduced duplications in efforts and procurement.

Figure 2: Design-specific intervention logic



Source: elaboration based on the SMP Regulation and programme activities

2.3.Points of comparison

2.3.1. Predecessor programmes and budget lines

The SMP brought together budget lines and six programmes from the previous financial period (2014-2020), outlined in Table 1. N.B. Amounts correspond to voted credits excluding administrative appropriations and excluding EEA EFTA and third-countries contributions to the SMP[27].

Table 1: SMP predecessor programmes by pillar

SMP Pillar	Current budget line under SMP	SMP funding (21-27) in EUR	Previous budget line (14-20)	Budget previous budget line (14-20) in EUR
Pillar 1	03020105 Competition policy for a stronger union in the digital age (1a)	**139.7 m**	Competition policy activities were previously financed by the Commission's administrative budget and by the **Justice Programme** (e.g. training in competition law for national judges)[28].	n/a
	03020104 Company Law (1e)	**7.5 m**	Company Law (including Anti-Money Laundering)	9.2 m
	03020102 Internal market governance tools (1c/1d)	**39.1 m**	Internal market: Governance tools	29.1 m
	03020101 Operation and development of the internal market of goods and services (1e)	**189.1**	Operation and development of the internal market for Goods, Services and Public Procurement	159.3 m
	03020107 Market surveillance (1b)	**100.2 m**		
	03020103 Taxud regulatory work support – Implementation and development of the internal market (1e)	**21.2 m**	Customs and tax policy development support budget line	22.6 m
	03020106 Implementation and development of Single Market for financial services (1e)	**37.9 m**	Implementation and Development of Single Market for Financial Services	25.9 m

[27] Voted credits are the budgetary appropriations adopted thus formally authorised every year by the European Parliament and the Council, enabling the European Commission to commit and spend within the approved limit.

28 The Regulation establishing the Justice Programme (2014-2020) allocated EUR 132.2 million (35% of the total financial envelope) to Specific Objective B to support and promote judicial training. However, training in competition policy law was only one of several policy areas covered by the training.

SMP Pillar	Current budget line under SMP	SMP funding (21-27) in EUR	Previous budget line (14-20)	Budget previous budget line (14-20) in EUR
Pillar 2	030202 Improving the competitiveness of enterprises, particularly SMEs, and supporting their access to markets	**942.9**	**COSME** (Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises) was the successor to the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP) under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) (2007-2013). The four specific objectives of COSME were: Improving access to finance for SMEs; Supporting SME access to market and internationalisation; Creating a favourable environment for enterprises and supporting their competitiveness; and Promoting entrepreneurship.	2 359 m[29]
Pillar 3	03020301 European standardisation	**158.2 m**	Additionally, **Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 (Standardisation Regulation)** has enabled the financing of ESOs and Annex III organisations for many years.	(max) 23 m per year
	03020302 International financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards	**61.5 m**	**Reporting and Auditing** programme established by **Regulation 258/2014**. with an initial budget of EUR 43 million, subsequently increased through Regulation (EU) 2017/827. The programme for 2014-20 initially covered the IFRS Foundation and PIOB, while the contribution to EFRAG was extended later.	57 m
Pillar 4	03020401 Ensuring high level of consumer protection and product safety	**171 m**	Consumer Programme 2014-2020.	188 m
	03020402 The participation of end users in financial services policy making	**10.5 m**	Union Programme to support specific activities enhancing the involvement of consumers and other financial services end users in Union policymaking in the area of financial services.	5.5 m (2017-2020)
Pillar 5	030206 Contributing to a high level of health and welfare for humans, animals and plants	**1 757 m**	**The Common Financial Framework (CFF) (otherwise known as the Food Chain Programme)** was established based on Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 provided a legal framework in the EU between 2014-2020 to promote high levels of safety necessary for ensuring the free circulation of food, animals and plants in the Single Market and for safeguarding and protecting the health of EU citizens.	1 855 m

29 of which EUR 920 m represents objectives continued under the SMP.

SMP Pillar	Current budget line under SMP	SMP funding (21-27) in EUR	Previous budget line (14-20)	Budget previous budget line (14-20) in EUR
Pillar 6	03.0205 Producing and disseminating high-quality statistics in Europe	**527.7 m**	**European Statistical Programme (ESP)**: ESP was established initially for the years 2013-2017 based on Regulation (EU) 99/2013 on the basis of the predecessor created based on Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. It was then extended by Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 to cover the remaining period of the previous EU multi-annual financial framework, i.e. 2018-2020. The general objective of the ESP was for the ESS to continue to serve as the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe.	489 m (2013-2020)

Sources: SMP performance; SMP impact assessment, Annexes IX-XIV, elaborated in the supporting study.

2.3.2. Needs and challenges

The evaluation was conducted based on several points of comparison, which are reflected by the cross-cutting needs and challenges identified in the impact assessment and the SMP Regulation, as highlighted in the rationale (see Section 2.1.):

- empower citizens, consumers, and businesses by addressing knowledge gaps and overcoming barriers to operating within and across the Single Market.
- improve administrative cooperation and integration among Member States and between Member States and the European Commission.
- ensure that rulemaking, standard-setting, and enforcement at the EU level remained effective in light of evolving circumstances.
- foster flexibility and the exploitation of synergies across EU programmes and funds, aiming to simplify procedures and reduce the administrative burden of managing different programmes concurrently.

The evaluation also examined the specificities of the pillars drawing from the experience, challenges, and assessments of predecessor programmes and prerogative budget lines the SMP integrated and the findings of the impact assessment. This evidence is described below.

For **Pillar 1**, the evaluation considered the various policy areas it covers. Competition policy faced challenges due to the complexities of an increasingly data-driven environment, requiring greater stakeholder engagement and technological adaptability. Financial services saw actions that enabled the Commission to adapt policies amidst changing circumstances, supporting major initiatives like the Capital Markets Union Action Plan. Company law presented potential synergies with anti-money laundering activities, allowing studies to cover broader policy topics. Improvements in internal market governance tools like 'Your Europe' and IMI were scrutinised for their role in aiding cross-border mobility and digitalisation. Market surveillance was assessed for its fragmented structure, resource limitations, and the need for more coordinated efforts to ensure product compliance.

For **Pillar 2**, the final evaluation of the COSME Programme analysed the programme's impacts in addressing SME challenges. The programme was deemed relevant, producing positive impacts beyond what was possible at the national level, and enhancing the international visibility of its flagship initiatives.

For **Pillar 3**, the focus was on support for standardisation activities to improve the speed of developing standards, enhance stakeholder engagement, facilitate communication within the European standardisation system and ensure that international standards are aligned with EU needs. Annual evaluations indicated that support for company reporting and auditing standards effectively achieved its objectives.

For **Pillar 4**, consumer protection activities were evaluated such as the European Consumer Centres (ECCs), Safety Gate, and BEUC support, and they were found effective, though greater emphasis was recommended for sustainable consumption, consistent consumer protection across the EU, and capacity building for consumer organisations. Additionally, financial services support through Better Finance and Finance Watch was recognised as valuable in fostering consumer advocacy considering their expertise representing the interests of consumers in the financial services sector.

For **Pillar 5,** the assessment focused on the Food Chain Programme, where the effectiveness of objectives and areas of action was confirmed. However, a greater emphasis was recommended on monitoring and preventive measures, particularly in the phytosanitary sector, to ensure robust protections for plants. Enhanced preparedness and prevention were also highlighted as critical for managing animal and plant diseases through improved early detection and surveillance.

For **Pillar 6**, the effectiveness of the ESP in delivering high-quality, harmonised European statistics was reviewed. While the delivery mechanism was functioning efficiently, there was a need to modernise statistical production, meet emerging policy demands for timely data, and leverage new technologies to enhance coverage and user satisfaction.

The SMP Regulation mandates that the programme supports the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. Evidence from the assessment of the pillars shows the contribution of SMP activities to the SDGs, see Annex VII.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

3.1. Budget implementation

The SMP funds have been allocated over the first three years of implementation (2021-2023) according to the indicated amounts in the Regulation[30]. Approximately EUR 1 909 million has been committed so far, representing 44% of the overall budget of EUR 4 353 million. Moreover, the allocation of funds across the various pillars has remained aligned with the framework established by the SMP Regulation[31]. The table in Annex VII, financial information (budget allocations and commitments), illustrates how these allocations, shown as percentages of the overall voted budget (excluding funds for administrative and technical assistance), compared to actual financial commitments. The figures indicate that the actual distribution of resources among the pillars is nearly identical to that which was initially planned, once administrative and technical expenses are accounted for. With respect to

30 Three out of seven years of the SMP have been completed, representing 42% of its duration.
31 Article 4 of the SMP Regulation indicates specific funding amounts for each pillar in euro.

administrative spending, the SMP Regulation permits up to 5% of the programme's budget to be used for technical and administrative support[32].

3.2. Programme implementation within the pillars[33]

3.2.1. Pillar 1

The SMP Regulation allocated EUR 557 million to Pillar 1, representing 13% of the total budget of the Programme. This figure differs from the table in Section 3.1. as it accounts for administrative costs. Pillar 1 focuses on the first specific objective of the SMP 'making the internal market more effective, inter alia, in the light of the digital transformation'.

Pillar 1 is divided into four sub-objectives, forming distinct sub-pillars of activity, 1a to 1e, with sub-pillars 1c and 1d grouped due to their similarity (see Section 2.1.). This breakdown into sub-objectives has been designed based on the legal basis for the purpose of the evaluation to allow for the structured analysis of the diverse activities encompassed in this multi-fold pillar. Established sub-objectives in conjunction with measurable indicators follow SMART principle. The table in Annex VII, financial information (allocation of SMP funding in Pillar 1) outlines funding allocation across these sub-pillars for 2021-2023. The discrepancy of figures with those from the table in Annex VII is due to the consideration of administrative costs.

Sub-pillar 1a: Support effective development, implementation and enforcement of EU competition policy

Sub-pillar 1a which is managed by DG COMP funds initiatives aimed at aiding both the Commission and national authorities in their competition policy duties. This includes providing essential digital tools, fostering collaboration, and building capacity. From 2021 to 2023, EUR 61 million was allocated to sub-pillar 1a. Specifically, it finances:

- **Internal Commission tools** for case management, investigations, data storage, and analysis, as well as systems to facilitate interaction with external actors such as Member States, companies, and legal representatives.
- **Various forums and working groups to enhance cooperation** between enforcement bodies, national courts, and international organisations.
- **Training and resources in competition law** for judges, alongside networking opportunities.
- **Studies, analyses and access to databases** to support policy development.

The main activities financed under this sub-pillar include:

- **Digital Tools** (EUR 44 million): These tools, in line with the European Commission Digital Strategy (ECDS)[34], include systems like CASE@EC for case management, eDiscovery for document review. Collaborative tools like SANI2[35], ECN2[36], and the Transparency Award Module (TAM)[37] enable secure communication with Member

32 Ibid. This limit has been respected during the first three years, only 4% of the total budget allocated to administrative and technical costs, comfortably staying within the regulatory cap.
33 This sub-section provides an overview of the activities and programme implementation for the SMP pillars, detailed evidence and analysis can be found in Annexes IX-XIV.
34 European Commission Digital Strategy - European Commission.
35 Forms for notifications and reporting - European Commission.
36 European Competition Network - European Commission.
37 State Aid Transparency Public Search.

States and stakeholders. Other digital solutions to collaborate with undertakings include eTrustEX (now called EU SEND)[38], eRFI[39], eConfidentiality[40] and eLeniency[41].

- **Policy Implementation/Enforcement Support** (EUR 11 million): This funding was directed to studies and consultations. For example, evaluations on the impact of State aid rules for banks in difficulty, cloud analytics, and the deterrence effects of merger and antitrust enforcement.
- **Knowledge Development and Best Practice Sharing** (EUR 5 million): This includes grants for six projects aimed at training judges in EU competition law, developing resources like a database of case notes and a manual on State aid law. Video materials and the EU visitors' scheme also promote more widely knowledge sharing with authorities from accession and other trade partner countries.

Effective competition policy enforcement is paramount for making the internal market more effective with competition policy interventions having a very high impact on GDP[42] and investments. The achievement of this sub-objective is supported by areas of intervention (specific objectives) around which the initiatives funded from the programme are centred: competition policy implementation and enforcement, enhanced cooperation with Member States authorities and third-country authorities and raising awareness of competition policy. They have been selected to allow for a better analysis of the activities performed under competition policy and their evolution is measured via SMART output indicators (noting the nature of the activities also don't enable to set specific targets).

Sub-pillar 1b: Support effective product market surveillance

Funding for this sub-objective is allocated through the 'Product Market Surveillance' sub-pillar, which operates under a single budget line managed by DG GROW. Sub-pillar 1b primarily finances initiatives that assist both the Commission and national Member States authorities (MSAs)s in carrying out their market surveillance obligations. Between 2021 and 2023, EUR 40 million was allocated to sub-pillar 1b. The activities funded are listed below[43]:

- **Operation of the European Union Product Compliance Network (EUPCN)**[44]: The network's responsibilities include identifying shared priorities for market surveillance, organising joint surveillance and testing projects, facilitating training programmes and personnel exchanges, running information campaigns, developing guidance for the Market Surveillance Regulation. Market surveillance national strategies are also evaluated. SMP funds also support the executive secretariat of EUPCN[45].
- **Administrative Secretariat for administrative cooperation groups (AdCos)**: meeting several times a year these informal groups of MSAs ensure comprehensive, efficient, and consistent surveillance within their respective sectors of competence. SMP funds cover the costs of meetings, travel, accommodation for AdCos chairs to attend Notified Bodies meetings[46], and management fees for the technical secretariat of 27 AdCos groups.

38 EU SEND - European Commission.
39 eRFI - European Commission.
40 eConfidentiality - European Commission.
41 eLeniency - European Commission.
42 See 'Modelling the macroeconomic impact of competition policy: 2023 update and further development', report prepared by the Directorate-General for Competition, the Joint Research Centre and the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, Publications Office of the European Union. The modelling suggests that the Commission's competition policy interventions can lead to a medium to long-term increase in real GDP (compared to the baseline) in the range of 0.6% - 1.1% (the equivalent of an uplift of EUR 80 - 150 billion in 2019 GDP), as well as a 0.3% - 0.7% reduction in the price level.
43 The level of expenditure for each activity is provided to the extent possible, expenditure not always neatly mapping onto the categories.
44 EU Product Compliance Network - European Commission.
45 providing technical and logistical assistance as required by Art. 33 of the Market Surveillance Regulation.
46 Once per year.

- **European Union Testing Facilities** (EUR 6 million): EUTFs assist MSAs by eliminating the need for duplicate testing facilities, especially for expensive testing. Their responsibilities include product testing, offering independent advice, conducting training, organising workshops, and participating in relevant coordination group meetings and standardisation bodies.
- **Joint Research Centre (JRC) Contributions** (EUR 3 million): The JRC contributed to partnerships supporting market surveillance, including the ICSMS database, evaluations of AdCo activities, designation of EUTFs, and peer reviews of MSAs.
- **Digital Tools** (EUR 8 million): SMP funding supports the development of legally required digital tools, such as interfaces to facilitate the exchange of electronic data between national customs systems and the ICSMS, as well as between market surveillance systems and the ICSMS. Other digital tools include Safety Gate, the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products.
- **Studies**: SMP funding has been used to conduct studies such as measuring product non-compliance in sectors covered by the Market Surveillance Regulation and evaluating Article 4 of the Market Surveillance Regulation.

Sub-pillar 1c/1d: Provide digital information and advice services for citizens, consumers, businesses and public administrations

The funding for this sub-objective is managed by DG GROW. In the years 2021-2023, a total of EUR 17 million has been allocated to sub-pillar 1c/1d. The funded initiatives focus on running and promoting digital services for citizens, businesses, and public authorities, while fostering collaboration. Funded activities include:

- **Your Europe**: a portal that provides information and guidance on the internal market, linking to relevant national government services, offering access to the Single Digital Gateway (SDG)[47].
- **Your Europe Advice** (YEA): a service that offers legal advice to citizens, helping them understand EU laws and how to exercise their rights.
- **SOLVIT**: a network of national centres staffed by national civil servants and coordinated by the Commission that helps citizens and businesses resolve issues when their EU rights are breached by public authorities in another Member State[48].
- **The Internal Market Information System** (IMI)[49]: an IT platform that facilitates communication between public authorities in different EEA countries on internal market matters.

Sub-pillar 1e: Support effective policymaking, standard-setting, and enforcement

To support this sub-objective, funding is allocated through a dedicated sub-pillar comprising four budget lines managed by DG GROW, DG TAXUD, DG JUST, and DG FISMA. Between 2021 and 2023, EUR 119 million was allocated to sub-pillar 1e. The majority of this funding (75%) was managed by DG GROW, with the remainder split between DG FISMA (14%), DG TAXUD (8%), and DG JUST (3%). Funded activities include:

- **Technical assessment and accreditation**: This cover among others the European Organisation for Technical Assessment (EOTA), the European Cooperation for Accreditation and for the operation of the peer evaluation system of National Accreditation Bodies, as well as coordination groups of Notified Bodies.

47 Single digital gateway - European Commission (europa.eu), which facilitates online access to information, administrative procedures, and assistance services that EU citizens and businesses may need in another EU country.
48 The SOLVIT network as such is not financed by SMP. A relative small budget is reserved for promotion and training.
49 Internal Market Information System (IMI) - The EU Single Market - European Commission.

- **Harmonised Standards** (HAS) Consultants: which evaluate administrative and legal compliance of documents drafted by European Standardisation Organisations.
- **Administrative arrangements with the JRC**: this includes technical support related to different aspects of market surveillance operations.
- **Studies, evaluations, and impact assessments** (e.g. studies and economic analysis concerning the internal market of goods and services).
- **Conformity assessments** of national measures transposing EU directives and evaluations of the implementation of regulations, as well as third-country legislative assessments.
- **Administrative and indirect management costs**: this includes reimbursements for experts, a fellowship programme, subscription fees, and the Competitiveness Research Network (CompNet)[50], and the OECD's[51] Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA)[52].
- Subscriptions to financial market databases to support policymaking and monitoring.
- **IT tool development and maintenance**, such as FIU.net for information exchange between national authorities[53], the EU Taxonomy Compass for citizens and businesses, MICE (Monitoring of Informatics Contracts for Experts) and KOEL for monitoring EU law implementation[54].
- **Payment of membership fees** to bodies of which the Commission is a member such as FINCONET[55], IOSCO[56] and IAIS[57]. Anti-money laundering and combating terrorist financing activities, including membership fees for the Financial Action Task Force and various related studies.

3.2.2. Pillar 2

The SMP Regulation allocated an indicative EUR 1 billion (24% of the total budget of the Programme) to Pillar 2, of which EUR 942 million is allocated to the operational budget line with the rest allocated to administrative costs. Pillar 2 focuses on 'strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs and achieving additionality at Union level' and is divided into six sub-objectives: SME growth, access to markets, entrepreneurship, a favourable business environment, digital transformation, ecosystem support, industry modernisation/sustainability. These sub-objectives have been established in conjunction with measurable indicators follow SMART principle. The six specific objectives were selected to ensure a thorough, multi-faceted analysis and they emphasise interrelated aspects of competitiveness, and address different levels from individual entrepreneurs, enterprises, business networks, sectors to business environment.

The Pillar funds a variety of activities, in particular three flagship initiatives, benefiting from the majority of funding:

- **Enterprise Europe Network** (EEN): This provides business support services, including energy efficiency audits and investments. EEN-related activities account for nearly 38% of the budget.

50 CompNet – CompNet.
51 Better policies for better lives | OECD.
52 OECD, IFCMA.
53 EU FIU Platform.
54 KOEL.
55 Finconet - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
56 IOSCO.
57 International Association of Insurance Supervisors.

- **Joint Cluster Initiative**: This aims at developing 30 Euroclusters by 2025 to enhance SME resilience and digital and green transformation. Euroclusters represent over 11% of the budget.
- **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs** (EYE): Facilitating cross-border exchanges between new and experienced entrepreneurs, including additional support for Ukrainian entrepreneurs. More than 8% of the budget is allocated to EYE.

The Pillar also supports a wide array of sectors: the social economy sector, tourism, and sectors such as construction, textiles, and retail. Moreover, financing is provided to cross-sectoral themes including public procurement, intellectual property, SME internationalisation, and skills development. Additionally, actions focus on evidence-based SME policies, including the SME Performance Review[58], the SME Assembly[59], SME Envoys[60], and the Fit for Future platform[61].

For the implementation of activities Pillar 2 employs various funding instruments such as grants, a number of which aimed at financial support to third parties (FSTP), procurement and indirect management. The European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) manage and implement most of the actions under this pillar.

3.2.3. Pillar 3

The SMP Regulation allocated EUR 221 million (5% of the total SMP budget) to Pillar 3, which focuses on 'ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market through standardisation processes.' This figure accounts for administrative costs, thus differs from the table in Section 3.1. The final amount totalled 219.7 million. Pillar 3 pursues two sub-objectives and is divided into two sub-pillars, with 72% of the funds allocated to European standardisation activities (EUR 66.7 million) and 28% (EUR 26 million) for international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards, during the period 2021-2023. These sub-pillars reflect the objectives identified in Article 3.2.(c) of the SMP Regulation and also contribute to the general objective 3.1.(a) 'to improve the functioning of the internal market […] facilitating market access, setting standards […] while respecting the principles of sustainable development […]'. Established sub-objectives in conjunction with measurable indicators follow SMART principle.

Sub-pillar 3a: European standardisation

The European standardisation sub-pillar supports the following key activities:

- **Operating grants (OGs) to European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs)[62],** enabling them to manage administrative operations and fulfil their role of producers of European standards producers.
- **Operating grants (OGs) to Annex III organisations**[63], representing SMEs, social, and societal stakeholders in the European standardisation system (ESS), to support their involvement in the standardisation process.
- **Action grants (AGs) to ESOs** to develop specific standardisation deliverables based on the Commission's requests.

58 SME Performance Review - European Commission.
59 SME Assembly - European Commission.
60 SME envoys network - European Commission.
61 Fit for Future Platform (F4F) - European Commission.
62 European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC), and European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI).
63 Small Business Standards (SBS), representing SMEs; European consumer voice in standardisation (ANEC), representing consumers, Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS), representing environmental interests, and European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), representing workers' interests.

The management of these grants is split between EISMEA, which oversees AGs and OGs for Annex III organisations, and the Commission, which directly manages OGs for ESOs.

Sub-pillar 3b: International financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards

In the international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards sub-pillar, the SMP supports the development and integration of high-quality standards through:

- **Operating grants to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation**, which promotes globally accepted accounting standards, and **to the Public Interest Oversight Board (PIOB)**, which oversees the standard-setting processes for international audit, assurance, and ethics standards.
- **Grants to EFRAG**[64], which plays a key role in shaping European views on financial reporting and advising the Commission on the endorsement of IFRS Accounting Standards. Since 2023, EFRAG has also supported the development of European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).

3.2.4. Pillar 4

The SMP Regulation allocated EUR 181.4 million to Pillar 4 representing 4% of the total budget of the Programme. This figure does not include credits for administrative and technical support which amounts up to 4% of the operational budget per year. Pillar 4 places focus on 'promoting consumer interests and ensuring high levels of consumer protection and product safety'. Pillar 4 is split into two sub-pillars: consumer protection and product safety (sub-pillar 4a), which has been allocated EUR 73.9[65], and the representation of consumers and end users of financial services (sub-pillar 4b), which has been allocated EUR 4.5 million over the same period. These sub-pillars reflect the objectives identified in Article 3(2)(d) of the SMP Regulation and contribute to the general objective of the Programme specified in Article 3(1)(a) '(…) to protect and empower citizens, consumers […] and ensuring a high level of consumer protection as well as by enhancing cooperation between the competent authorities of Member States (…). Established sub-objectives in conjunction with measurable indicators follow SMART principle.

Sub-pillar 4a: consumer protection and product safety

Sub-pillar 4a is managed by DG JUST. It funds actions aimed at strengthening consumer protection and product safety across the EU. These include support in form of grants to consumer organisations and bodies such as BEUC, ECC Net, ADR (EUR 33.7 million), CPC national authorities enforcing consumer law (EUR 1.7 million), and individual consumer policy initiatives and projects (EUR 1.2 million). Moreover, EUR 36.9 million went toward procurements for product safety, market surveillance, capacity building, consumer education, IT systems and support, studies, events and communication activities. Under indirect management, EUR 0.4 million supported international cooperation on product safety, including through partnerships with organisations like the OECD and UNCTAD. The sub-pillar 4a funds a wide range of actions by providing support to:

- **The European Consumer Centres** (ECC Net) which play a key role in supporting consumers when purchasing goods or services from other EU/EEA countries, assisting them with complains and ADR and in raising awareness of consumer rights in the single market.

64 EFRAG was previously known as the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group; its name was changed in response to its expanded mandate to work on sustainability reporting in addition to financial reporting.
65 Including contributions from EEA EFTA countries to Pillar 4a.

- **The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC),** which represents 44 independent consumer organisations from 31 countries and plays a crucial role in representing and defending the interests of consumers across Europe. **National enforcement authorities** within the **Consumer Protection Cooperation network (CPC)**, which is responsible for the enforcement of consumer protections laws and takes action to address cross-border compliance with EU laws impacting consumers[66].
- **Product safety initiatives**, such as Safety Gate the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products and the Coordinated Activities on the Safety of Products (CASP)[67]. While the later provides framework for market surveillance authorities to jointly test products and assess risks, Safety Gate enables them to exchange information on the measures taken.
- **Access to efficient redress mechanisms**, awarding action grants to ADR bodies, which provide out-of-court dispute resolution for consumers to support the modernisation of these services, ADR networks, facilitating digital infrastructure, awareness raising and capacity building.
- **Capacity building, awareness raising, and knowledge sharing initiatives** such as Consumer Law Ready[68] and Consumer PRO[69] which provide specialised training on important aspects of EU consumer law and make consumer organisations better equipped to protect consumers in their respective countries.; the e-Enforcement Academy, which aims to improve the digital investigation skills of national enforcement authorities.
- **International cooperation efforts**, such as the International Product Safety Week which brings together regulators, market surveillance authorities, businesses and civil society, and Safety Gate which is a major contributor to the OECD Global Recalls portal, both of which foster collaboration on product surveillance globally.

Sub-pillar 4b: consumer protection in financial services

Under Pillar 4b, manged by DG FISMA, activities aim to foster a more inclusive, informed, and protected financial services environment for consumers and end users of financial services. SMP grants to consumer advocacy bodies Better Finance and Finance Watch, totalling respectively over 2021-2023 EUR 1.36 million and EUR 3.13 million, with the following goals corresponding to the SMART objective in Article 3.2.(d).(ii) of the SMP.:

- **Enhancing participation of these organisations in financial services policymaking**: to ensure that consumer perspectives are integrated into EU financial services policies.
- **Promoting a better understanding of the financial sector** by consumers, end users and civil society by supporting research, communication, and educational activities.
- **Protecting consumer interests in retail financial services**: The SMP grants also enable consumer organisations to participate in working groups and consultations, enhancing protections for consumers, investors, and savers.

3.2.5. Pillar 5

Pillar 5 of the SMP, which has been allocated approximately EUR 1.68 billion, accounts for 40% of the programme's total budget. This figure differs from the table in Section 3.1. as it accounts for administrative costs. The final amount after budgetary reinforcements totals EUR 1.76 billion.

66 The European Commission's coordination role is outlined in the CPC regulation (2017/2394). An activity report has been produced every two years. Consumer Protection Cooperation Network - European Commission.
67 Safety Gate: the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products.
68 Main Portal | Consumer Law Ready.
69 Consumer PRO: Boosting professionals in consumer protection | BEUC.

The specific objective of pillar 5 focuses on 'contributing to a high level of health and safety for humans, animals and plants in the areas of plants, animals, food and feed, in particular through the prevention, detection and eradication of animal diseases and plant pests, including through emergency measures taken in the event of large-scale crisis situations and unforeseeable events affecting animal or plant health, and by supporting the improvement of animal welfare, the fight AMR and the development of sustainable food production and consumption, as well as stimulating the exchange of best practices among stakeholders in those areas**'.**

The pillar 5 specific objective is further divided into sub-objectives in order to allow structured analysis for diverse activities (see Section 2.1). Established sub-objectives in conjunction with measurable indicators follow SMART principles. The funding supports activities carried out by Member States, international organisations, and stakeholders and are financed mainly via grants. Funded activities are structured around sub-objectives include:

- **Prevent, detect and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including by means of emergency measures**
  Veterinary Programmes: These initiatives target the prevention and eradication of animal diseases and zoonoses, supporting national programmes for diseases such as African swine fever, HPAI, Salmonella infections, rabies, bovine and sheep/goat brucellosis and other diseases.
  Phytosanitary Programmes: These efforts focus on controlling pests and implementing national initiatives for the surveillance and eradication of plant pests.
  Veterinary and phytosanitary emergency measures are rapid response actions taken in the event of a significant outbreak of animal diseases or plant pest. These measures aim to prevent the spread of infections by implementing actions such as quarantine, movement restrictions, and the slaughtering and culling of affected animals, and the destruction of plants and goods.
- **Support the improvement of the welfare of animals**
  The specific objective on improving the welfare of animals responds to public concerns about animal treatment in food production. This encompasses ensuring appropriate living conditions, humane treatment, and health and welfare considerations for animals. The EU's commitment to this cause is reflected in its pursuit of stricter welfare standards and updated legislation that aligns with societal values and scientific progress. To achieve this objective, numerous activities implemented using SMP funding (e.g. supporting WOAH animal welfare activities, studies).
- **Fight against antimicrobial resistance**
  AMR initiatives focus on monitoring and reducing antimicrobial resistance in food and farmed animals, including support for coordinated control programmes and data collection efforts.
- **Developing sustainable food production and consumption**
  Initiatives promote sustainable food production and consumption, prevent food waste, combat food fraud, and support policy development related to the sustainability transition.
- **Stimulate the exchange of best practices between stakeholders**
  European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) promotes the quality, coherence and harmonisation of laboratory testing methods in various areas such as animal health, plant health, food and feed.
  European Union Reference Centres (EURCs) support activities mainly cover technical advice, scientific studies, materials on animal welfare indicators, and training aiming to

improve MS knowledge and implementation of EU animal welfare standards and facilitate a more harmonised enforcement of EU rules across the EU.
The **Better Training for Safer Food** (BTSF) programme is aimed at training staff and increasing knowledge for officials from Member States and third countries. BTSF also aims to maintain a high level of consumer protection and food safety across multiple sectors by promoting a harmonised approach to both Union and national control systems.

Additionally, the SMP provides, via procurement, services and supplies crucial for programme implementation, including cost-benefit analyses, feasibility studies, training materials, and enhanced information systems for monitoring food and feed safety. Promotion of and influence on international standards by financing international organisations such as WOAH and EUFMD/FAO.

The SMP invests in development of laboratory methods in EURLs, updates regulatory frameworks, supports international organisations, and strengthens crisis management through enhanced data and information systems.

3.2.6. Pillar 6

Pillar 6 has been allocated approximately EUR 552 million, representing 13% of the SMP's total budget of the Programme. This figure differs from the table in Section 3.1. as it accounts for administrative costs. The final allocation totalled EUR 527 million. The ESP focuses on developing, producing, and disseminating high-quality European statistics in a timely, impartial and cost-efficient manner. These statistics are created in line with the Regulation on European statistics[70]. For this pillar, the specific objective is sufficiently SMART, and it was not necessary to break it down into further sub-objectives. The activities under Pillar 6 are carried out through both grants, with and without open calls for proposals, and procurements. These include:

- **Economic and Monetary Union**, **Globalisation, and Trade**, linked with economic stability and global trade competitiveness,
- **Single Market, Innovation, Digital Transformation, and Sustainable Development**, Natural Resources, and Environment, in relation with the twin transitions,
- **Social Dimension of Europe**, targeting inequalities and social inclusion.
- **Economic, Social, and Territorial Cohesion**, to reduce territorial and economic disparities.
- **Better communication of European statistics** as a reliable tool improving the trustworthiness of EU statistics to strengthen the fight against disinformation.
- **Capitalisation on the data revolution** and creating trusted smart statistics; Expanding partnerships and statistical cooperation.
- **Support to the modernisation of administrative practices**, and finance studies, evaluations, and reporting.

Pillar 6 also funds actions implemented via indirect management and trust funds, aimed at improving administrative efficiency and coherence with other EU and international organisations. In addition, administrative arrangements with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and service agreements with the European Environmental Agency (EEA) on environmental data have also been supported.

70 Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS (ANALYTICAL PART)

4.1. To what extent was the intervention successful and why?

The overarching priorities used for the purpose of this evaluation capture the essence of the general objectives of the Programme (Article 3.1 of the Regulation) and serve as an umbrella linking the specific objectives of each pillar, at the level of which all activities and related outputs of the Programme materialise. Therefore, evaluating the overarching priorities can only rely on assessing the implementation of activities and the resulting outputs and results[71] against the specific objectives and sub-objectives of the pillars. Hence, the analysis follows a bottom-up approach, first tackling pillar-specific objectives and, on this basis, draw a synthesis of findings for overarching priorities.

4.1.1. Effectiveness

4.1.1.1. Achievement of specific objectives

4.1.1.1.1. Specific objective 1: Making the internal market more effective

The monitoring and evaluation framework's indicators for this specific objective were complemented by additional output and result indicators developed with the help of the supporting study to give a more comprehensive coverage of the four sub-pillars of Pillar 1 (see Annex VI)[72]. Pillar 1 activities show overall progress towards the specific objective (see Annex IX).

Sub-objective 1.1: Supporting the Development, Implementation, and Enforcement of EU Competition Policy (Pillar 1a)

Effective competition policy enforcement has a significant impact on customer savings and on the EU economy overall[73]. The actions financed under the programme constitute necessary spending to ensure the Commission can fulfil its enforcement activities laid down in the TFEU. All Pillar 1a actions have supported the effective development, implementation, and enforcement of EU competition policy. Notably, the Commission needs to have the necessary IT tools to support its enforcement activities, with each tool serving a unique function (case management, document review, tools that facilitate secure data exchange with stakeholders). Studies, evaluations, and consultations help identify issues and ensure that competition enforcement continues to be evidence-based and remains relevant to address the ever-changing market dynamics. Training actions, cooperative platforms and initiatives strengthen the capabilities of enforcement authorities.

First, with regard to the IT tools, they enabled effective case-handling, management of complex data and communication with key stakeholders, including Member States' authorities. Improvements in digital solutions offer opportunities for more secure and effective exchange of confidential information with Member State authorities, private companies and their law firms, including through the exploitation of cloud-like services. For instance, Case@EC is a new case management application supported by the SMP and rolled out gradually over 2021-2023. Due to the recent growth in the quantity of documents

71 This section offers an overview of the progress towards specific objectives and related sub-objectives, a complete analysis based on all collected evidence for each of the six SMP pillars is in the pillar-specific annexes. See Annexes IX-XIV.
72 It must be noted that as most output and result indicators were excluded from the Commission's monitoring and evaluation framework, baseline and target values were not set, making it impossible to quantify if the achievements met initial expectations.
73 See 'Modelling the macroeconomic impact of competition policy: 2023 update and further development', report prepared by the Directorate-General for Competition, the Joint Research Centre and the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, Publications Office of the European Union. The modelling suggests that the Commission's competition policy interventions can lead to a medium to long-term increase in real GDP (compared to the baseline) in the range of 0.6% - 1.1% (the equivalent of an uplift of EUR 80 - 150 billion in 2019 GDP), as well as a 0.3% - 0.7% reduction in the price level.

(notifications, investigations), without the combination of CASE@EC and eDiscovery, the secure management, organisation and searching of case files would become very difficult. The competition policy digital solutions have served increasing numbers of users. The number of submissions by external users in public and private organisations via DG COMP digital solutions was 91 656 in 2022, and 112 742 in 2023. The evidence suggests a high rate of satisfaction amongst users of the digital tools for competition policy. The development and support of the relevant IT tools for DG COMP is well on track. However, further developments of DG COMP's IT tools will still be necessary for the remainder of the programming period. Notably, Case@EC will need to be rolled out over all the legal instruments that DG COMP manages, allowing the phase-out of legacy case management applications. In addition, AI-powered solutions to facilitate investigations and support document review are being tested, which can further contribute substantially to effective competition policy enforcement.

Studies have also contributed to improving the impact of Commission policy and the enforcement actions. This includes the study on the *ex post* evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of antitrust remedies, a survey of practitioners on deterrence effects of merger and antitrust enforcement and the study on exploring aspects of the state of competition in the EU (see Section 3.1.1 of the annex on Pillar 1).

The expert meetings and working groups of the European Competition Network (ECN), have improved national competition authorities' capabilities to enforce competition rules[74]. This was underlined by the national competition authorities in their response to the survey. The SMP has offered also important support to national courts' capabilities to enforce competition rules. The rationale for the training of judges is that structures in the judicial system vary among Member States, however despite this, competition policy should be applied consistently to ensure harmonised enforcement.

Sub-objective 1.2: Enhancing Product Market Surveillance (sub-pillar 1b)

Actions under Pillar 1b have demonstrated strong progress, particularly in encouraging collaboration between Member State authorities (MSAs) to improve market surveillance.

Joint enforcement actions have been particularly effective, with 28 out of 34 MSAs[75] agreeing that these initiatives foster cooperation and harmonise working methods. Additionally, 27 MSAs agreed that the actions help exchange best practices. Horizontal activities have also been effective, with 22 out of 32 MSAs noting improvements to a great or reasonable extent in market surveillance across the EU[76] and 15 out 32 reporting improvements within their own countries to a reasonable extent[77].

The European Union Product Compliance Network (EUPCN) has played a pivotal role in making market surveillance more uniform and enhancing the capabilities of MSAs. Most MSAs (29 out of 32) found the EUPCN meetings valuable for discussing common concerns, exchanging information, knowledge, and experience, and aligning approaches to surveillance. Similarly, the AdCos have contributed to more effective market surveillance at both the EU and national levels, with 25 out of 32 MSAs acknowledging their effectiveness at the EU level and 22 out of 32 MSAs reporting improvements in their respective countries.

74 Targeted survey of national competition authorities participating in the ECN. NCAs (22 out of 23, 96%) reported that the European Competition Network (ECN) improved their capacity and skills in enforcing competition rules, and all 23 NCAs confirmed the platform's benefits for implementing competition policies nationally.
75 Targeted survey of Member States authorities, for further details see synopsis report in annex V and annex VII.
76 3 out of 32 to a slight extent.
77 9 out of 32 to a slight extent.

The European Union Testing Facilities (EUTFs) are expected to further strengthen market surveillance once fully operational. Of the MSAs surveyed, 11 out of 19 see the EUTFs as crucial for EU-level activities, and 12 out of 19 view them as significant for their own national efforts. MSAs believe the EUTFs will support harmonised and new testing methods, joint control actions, and improved risk assessments. Each EUTF is appointed to cover a specific product sector (e.g. Toys).

Digital solutions, including existing platforms like ICSMS, have been widely regarded as effective, with 24 out of 31 and 23 out of 31 MSAs, respectively, confirming their usefulness. However, ICSMS is underused by MSA inspectors, who do not report all product inspection results, due to lack of time.

Digital tools and platforms, such as the Proactive Web Crawler and the document digitalisation tool, are seen as valuable resources for improving market surveillance by most MSAs – 22 out of 32 for the former, 19 out of 32 for the latter. The WebCrawler will especially be useful for MSA inspectors, in order to spot non-compliant products sold online, as e-commerce is a major issue for market surveillance. These tools will be in production in 2025.

Sub-objective 1.3: Delivering Digital Information and Advice Services (Pillar 1c/1d)

Pillar 1c/1d are considered together in this section. The financed tools and platforms have shown progress in offering enhanced digital information services to citizens, businesses, consumers, and public authorities.

The Your Europe portal has seen improvements in functionality and user engagement since 2021 has remained high. In 2021, it recorded 58.3 million visits, in 2022 42 million, and in 2023 it was the most visited EU website with 32 million[78] visitors. The Your Europe Advice (YEA) service has maintained high levels of effectiveness, handling 20 071 queries in 2022, and 25 560 in 2023, up from 19 002 in 2021, although slightly fewer than the 25 281 handled in 2020[79]. Nearly all replies, 94.1% (24 057 out of 25 560) were delivered timely within the deadlines for reply during 2023[80], and with a high average quality[81], demonstrating strong adherence to performance targets. The Internal Market Information System (IMI) has further supported the exchange of information on rules of operating of the Single Market between public authorities. Information exchanges rose from 81 980 in 2021 to 112 550 in 2023[82]. The number of policy areas covered by IMI increased from 17 to 20 by December 2023, meaning that eight additional administrative cooperation procedures were covered by IMI, bringing the number of total procedures to 97.

Sub-objective 1.4: Supporting Effective Policymaking, Standard-Setting, and Enforcement (Pillar 1e)

In terms of outputs, in the area of internal market services, the Commission has contracted technical secretariats to coordinate notified body groups and has engaged in administrative arrangements fostering the effective development of legislation and technical standards. This is evidenced for instance by the establishment of EOTA, whereby SMP funding has resulted

78 In 2019 35.9 million, and in 2020 32.7 million. DG GROW Annual Activity Reports 20219 to 2023.
79 YEA Annual Trends Reports 2019 to 2023, ECAS Activity Reports 2017 and 2018.
80 It must be noted that only 1.9% of all replies were provided more than one day late.
81 93.6% of average quality in 2023. *Ex post* quality control is assessed for a random sample of cases based on nine quality criteria: relevant, accurate, complete, legal reference, enabling (signposting), formal (user-friendliness), expression, focus, structure, personal.
82 Internal Market Information System (IMI) | Single Market Scoreboard

increased effectiveness; in 2021-2023 a minimum of 1 300 harmonised technical specifications were produced each year, more than the 1 210 in 2020[83].

In company law, the studies procured by the Commission supported implementation and enforcement of EU law[84]. Similarly, regarding taxation and customs, the Commission has procured various studies, databases, and consultations, which have supported legal enforcement, while also funding the OECD's Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA). Similarly, in company law, studies have been commissioned to assess the transposition of EU directives, conduct impact assessments, and undertake legal analysis studies.

In the financial services sector, the SMP has supported the development and maintenance of several IT tools, including FIU.net, the EU Taxonomy Compass, and the Knowledge of European Legislation (KOEL) tool. It has also supported the commissioning of studies, surveys, assessments, and evaluations, the implementation of a communication strategy, as well as covering the membership fees for participation in international organisations and bodies such as the International Organisation of Securities Commission (IOSCO), International Financial Consumer Protection Organisation (FinCoNet), the International Association for Insurance Supervisors (IAIS) and the Financial Action Task Force.

Work undertaken with funding from the Pillar has also contributed to the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The financing provided by the SMP for the FIU.net platform represents a pivotal contribution to the EU's efforts in enhancing cross-border collaboration among the Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) of Member States. The budgetary contribution provided from the SMP for the Commission to be able to take over maintenance of FIU.net from Europol has allowed the Commission to significantly enhance its development which has amplified the effectiveness of FIUs across borders by leveraging on the EU funding to ultimately strengthen the EU's collective response to financial crimes. The number of datacentre interventions for FIU.net has also decreased substantially from 2022 to 2024 which shows a substantial improvement in reliability. The number of support incidents for FIU.net decreased from 384 in 2021 to 228 in 2023, reflecting the system's growing efficiency[85].

The EU Taxonomy Navigator has also gained traction, attracting 431 745 unique visitors (953 720 total visits) since its launch in June 2021 and seeing an increase in daily visits from 800 in 2021 to 1 300 by mid-2024. The KOEL tool has also been increasingly used by other DGs during the SMP period.

4.1.1.1.2. Specific objective 2: strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs

The SMP has continued to build on effective SME support measures provided under the COSME programme. By 2023, Pillar 2 supported 266 448 SMEs, clusters, and business networks, focusing on growth, internationalisation, digitalisation, and sustainability. To date the EEN has helped thousands of SMEs access markets, serving over 290 000 businesses and having gained over 16 000 unique clients to date and exceeding client engagement targets[86]. By end of 2023, the EEN produced 6 700 achievements[87]. Although the annual

83 EOTA annual reports
84 Interviews with EU commission services. This concerns studies related to the transposition of EU Directive, an impact assessment, and legal analysis.
85 European Commission, DG FISMA internal data.
86 These figures represent over 50% of the numbers expected by EEN partners in their proposals for the entire action period.
87 A completed service that resulted in concrete impact for SMEs.

target of 2 700 has not been met for the conclusion of business partnerships (1 724 partnerships finalised), 89% of SMEs (2 130 out of 2 400 surveyed) responded that the EEN meets their needs 'extremely well' or 'very well', and 75% consider the EEN services to be of high quality and customised.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) programme has been on track in terms of realised exchanges and maintains high satisfaction rates among participants[88]. Nevertheless, the 1 043 exchanges completed by the end of 2023 involving 2 086 entrepreneurs, is below the target of 3 000 annually (see Annex VI).

The Euroclusters initiative has significantly bolstered the competitiveness of industrial ecosystems, providing financial support via FSTP to 1 281 companies as of May 2024 through a budget of EUR 22 million, and with a high level of satisfaction as evidenced by the responses to the survey, 79% considering the initiative effective. With 149 partners from 24 countries, Euroclusters cover 14 industrial ecosystems, contributing to digitalisation, sustainability, and the scale-up of SMEs.

Other actions, such as the IP Helpdesks covering China, India, Latin America, and South-East Asia, supported 14 414 SMEs between 2020 and 2024, with satisfaction rates reaching 96%. Tourism-related actions supported the growth and scale-up of SMEs, funding 16 projects involving 115 partners across 25 countries. Beneficiaries of these tourism initiatives reported high satisfaction rates, with 24 out of 26 stating the support was very or reasonably effective. The social economy sector also saw support through six projects under the 2021 RESILIENCE call, benefiting 727 SMEs and organisations. 11 out of 15 respondents rated these actions as highly effective. Additionally, studies and forums under Pillar 2 have contributed to a more favourable business environment and regulatory framework, with 80% of surveyed EU-level business organisations finding studies useful for policymaking.

The following table provides an overview of how major activities supported under this Pillar contribute to the key objective of the Pillar, i.e. on different dimensions of competitiveness of SMEs:

Table 2: Overview of impacts on competitiveness of SMEs

Action	Impact
EEN	Helps SMEs to access and do business on new markets Helps SMEs to introduce new products and do business with new products Facilitates access to finance for SMEs Contributes to growth of turnover and jobs
Euroclusters	Helps SMEs to increase resilience Helps SMEs to develop new processes and products Helps SMEs to upskill and/or reskill the workforce Helps SMEs to access new markets Helps SMEs to increase digitalisation
EYE	Enhances skills of new and existing entrepreneurs and can make them more successful on the market

88 97% of host entrepreneurs and 97% of new entrepreneurs reported the objectives of the exchanges were met, with a sample size of 500 for each group.

	Contributes to boosting entrepreneurial spirit and motivation Contributes to creation of new businesses
Other internationalisation support, including IP Helpdesks	Helps SMEs to access new markets and export Helps SMEs to translate their IP into revenues
SME policy	Contributes to shaping a conducive business environment for SMEs Contributes to reducing costs (red tape) of doing business Contributes to seizing business opportunities
Ecosystem support	Helps SMEs with greening and digitalisation, which strengthens ecosystem transitions

Source: elaboration for the supporting study.

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) was initially set up in 2008 and operated as a pilot under the EIP (2007-2013). COSME provided follow-up funding to the EEN during 2014-2020, building on the success of the network during the CIP and EIP.

Based on the 2021 call for proposals, the EEN action has created or maintained a network of more than 450 business support service providers throughout Europe. The network covers 35 countries, with EU financial resources invested into the network being relatively evenly distributed across the countries.

Data from EISMEA show that, under the SMP, the EEN has already reached over 290 000 companies (KPI 1)[89] and acquired over 16 000 unique clients (KPI 2), each of which received dedicated personal business support services. These figures represent well over 50% of the numbers expected by Network partners in their proposals for the entire action period (3.5 years) as stated in the monitoring fiche.

By the end of 2023, the Network has also registered approximately 6 700 'achievements' (KPI 3), which stand for a completed service or series of services that have led to a concrete impact on the company (for example a new business partnership, introduction of an innovation or a new technology, entry into a new market, etc.). This is in line with previous years, as shown in the final evaluation of COSME, which shows e.g. that EEN business cooperation services have led in 2015-2016 to 5 019, 2017-2018 to 5 700, 2019 to 2 945 and in 2020-2021 to more than 5 000 international partnership agreements. By June 2023, almost 2 400 unique clients with an impact-assessed client journey have been reported, which corresponds to more than 50% of the targets set by the applicants in their proposals.

Table 3: Achievements of mandatory KPIs of EEN

Indicator	Achieved (end of 2023)	% of target to be achieved by mid-2025*
KPI 1: SMEs served by EEN	292 045	> 50
KPI 2: Unique clients in the Network client journey	16 000	> 50
KPI 3: Achievements	6 767	> 50
KPI 3a Advisory Achievements (AAs)	4 719	
KPI 3b Partnering Achievements (PAs)	2 048	
KPI 4: Unique clients with an impact assessed in their client journey	2 392**	51

89 Beneficiaries set those targets in their proposals.

** Beneficiaries have set targets for the entire contract period in their proposals; current achievement percentages according to monitoring report*

*** data from the first reporting period (until June 2023)*

Source: EISMEA, reference period January 2022- December 2023.

As the following Table displays, the impact of EEN services is rated by the surveyed EEN members to be most significant in terms of access to markets. There is also a noticeable impact on turnover growth, but to a lesser extent on employment growth. This means that additional turnover does not always translate into additional jobs in a proportionate way.

Table 4: What is the impact of EEN services on the following aspects of performance of SMEs? Assessment by EEN member organisations, shares in %

	strong impact	reasonable impact	minor or no impact	don't know
Turnover growth	32%	60%	5%	3%
Employment growth	10%	57%	26%	6%
Access to markets	58%	36%	3%	3%
Product innovation	27%	48%	19%	6%
Process innovation	20%	52%	17%	11%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey among EEN member organisations; sample size: 117 organisations.

The following Table shows that – according to the surveyed EEN members – the services in relation to business partnerships and access to finance and EU funding are regarded as most impactful with a view to contributing to the growth of SMEs. EEN services in relation to resilience and resolving single market issues are seen to have a somewhat lower but still very solid impact on SME growth.

Table 5: What is the degree of impact of different EEN services on the growth of SMEs (turnover, jobs)? Assessment by EEN member organisations, shares in %

	strong impact	reasonable impact	minor or no impact	don't know
Internationalisation advice	37%	51%	5%	7%
Innovation advice	25%	54%	11%	10%
EU single market (legislation, obstacles)	19%	49%	19%	14%
Business partnerships (matching)	44%	40%	14%	3%
Access to finance (finding sources, preparing)	44%	41%	11%	3%
Access to EU funding opportunities	43%	41%	9%	8%
Digitalisation	24%	44%	15%	17%
Sustainability / sustainable business models	26%	53%	14%	8%
Resilience (analysis, solutions)	13%	44%	26%	18%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey among EEN member organisations; sample size: 117 organisations.

EYE is the main action of the SMP addressing the specific objective of promoting entrepreneurship and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. The first-level result indicator most relevant to EYE is 'Number of entrepreneurs benefiting from mobility scheme (OP 6)'. Looking at EYE over time and considering this indicator, as expected, the progress has been growing over the lifetime of the action. While the action only facilitated 54 exchanges in its first year (2009) under the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, the overall number of exchanges has now surpassed the mark of 12 000 exchanges with the participation of 45 countries, with some years accounting for 1 200 exchanges alone. The number of exchanges (one exchange involving one New Entrepreneur and one Host Entrepreneur) under the SMP stood at 1 169 (data as of June 2024). Thus, the number of entrepreneurs that have benefited from the mobility schemes under the SMP was 2 338 by June 2024 according to data from the EYE IT tool at DG GROW.

According to the monitoring fiche for the action[90], the indicators to be achieved by January 2027 using funding from this Multiannual Financial Framework period are as follows:

- **Circa 12 000 entrepreneurs matched**. So far, the above-mentioned 2 338 entrepreneurs have been matched by June 2024 out of 9 300 entrepreneurs to be matched. There will be two more calls under the SMP to select additional intermediary organisations, so the target of 12 000 is likely to be reached.
- **Circa 14 000 entrepreneurs newly registered**. So far 5 308 entrepreneurs were newly registered between February 2023 and June 2024.
- **70-100 Intermediary Organisations involved in the implementation of EYE**. The 137 Intermediary Organisations involved between February 2023 and June 2024 already outperforms that target.
- **At least 30 countries covered.** The current projects already cover 33 countries which outperforms the target.

In order to be able to systematically evaluate the long-term impact on participants and the value of the EYE, the Commission introduced in September 2024 long-term feedback questionnaires one, three, and five years after the exchange. The feedback allows to gather long-term data and conclude on the long-term impact of the action on New and Host Entrepreneurs. Overview of results after one year is provided below.

Naturally, there is currently only a very small number of New Entrepreneurs under Cycle 13 (i.e. exchanges in 2023, where EYE is under the SMP) that have completed their exchange for at least one year. More specifically, there was feedback to the survey from 10 New Entrepreneurs having completed their exchange in 2023. The validity of the findings will increase with time and a bigger group of New Entrepreneurs. Three out of ten have established a business and become an entrepreneur within one year of the exchange, i.e. by September 2024. Another five are in the planning phase of becoming an entrepreneur, while two have cancelled their intentions of establishing a business. Seven of the ten New Entrepreneurs are still in contact with their Host Entrepreneur after one year.

As far as Host Entrepreneurs are concerned, there are responses to the long-term feedback survey from 53 entrepreneurs that have started being a Host in 2023 or later (registration may have been prior to 2023). 50 of 53 (94%) are still in contact with the entrepreneurs they

90 SME Pillar Monitoring Fiche – Financial year 2021. Action: GRO/SME/21/12196- Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs – SMP-COSME-2021-EYE.

have hosted[91]. The following table provides an overview of the impacts of the exchanges as reported by the 53 Host Entrepreneurs. The most frequent impact refers to an extension of the service or product portfolio as was mentioned by 58% of the Host Entrepreneurs. More than one third reported job creation. The number of jobs created was indicated by broad categories, but based on the answers it can be estimated that on average 0.6 jobs have been created (including those with no jobs created).

Table 6: Impacts of EYE exchanges for Host Entrepreneurs

Type of impact	% of Host Entrepreneurs reporting the impact
Increased turnover	28%
New jobs created	34% (estimated average number of jobs per HE: 0.6)
Extended service/product portfolio	58%
Improved business model	30%
Expanded business to new international markets	43%

Source: DG GROW, Long-term feedback survey, September 2024; data based on responses of 53 Host Entrepreneurs with their first exchange in 2023 or 2024.

Euroclusters foster partnerships of cluster organisations which team up with other types of organisations. The aim is to develop and implement supporting measures for companies in and beyond their industrial ecosystem, and by doing this, create and reinforce vital collaboration networks at EU level with a view to improving the resilience of the European industrial ecosystems and boost their green and digital transformation.

The first Euroclusters call resulted in 30 projects being selected with a total budget of EUR 42 million. Euroclusters projects have launched a network of cross-sectoral initiatives, aiming to strengthen Europe's resilience by connecting actors across countries, sectors and industrial ecosystems to implement the EU Industrial Strategy. The consortia have developed partnerships between companies of different kinds and sizes (with an emphasis on SMEs), and other organisations such as research and knowledge institutions, science and technology parks, business support organisations, financial service providers, non-profit organisations and related public bodies in EU Member States.

Consortia of cluster and other partners teamed up to develop and implement supporting measures for companies. Thanks to a range of FSTP calls Euroclusters have been able to: i) network by developing value chains in the single market; ii) innovate to build capacity in critical supplies and technologies; iii) adopt processes and technologies; iv) train the workforce; v) and boost access to international markets.

The KPI data presented in the table below are based on data of 30 Euroclusters.

Table 7: Achievements of mandatory KPIs based on data from 30 Euroclusters

Indicators	Achieved to date	Target
1. Number of resilience preparedness/ business continuity plans	100	593
2. Number of new-to-firm products/ services identified	480	822

91 Note that all HE that started hosting in 2023 or 2024 have been surveyed regardless of when the exchange was completed.

3. Number of SMEs supported which undertook business process innovation tied to technological adoption leading to higher sustainability and digitalisation	529	1 166
4a. Number of employees in cluster organisations which received trainings	547	1 155
4b. Number of SMEs investing in skill development of their employees in the scope of the project	831	~~1~~1 944
5a. Number of collaboration agreements signed with entities in third countries.	18	207
5b. Number of SMEs that benefited from internationalisation services	576	3 092
6a. Number of Social Media followers (per Social Media channel used).	39 689	20 695
6b. Number of SMEs directly supported and coming from regions and countries different from those of individual Euroclusters' partners	612	1 405

Source: EISMEA Project Reports.

4.1.1.1.3. Specific objective 3: ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market through standardisation processes

Sub-objective 3.1: Enabling the financing of European standardisation and the participation of all relevant stakeholders in setting up European standards

Pillar 3 has made progress in ensuring stable financing of European standardisation and increasing stakeholder participation in standard-setting processes (see in Annex XI Table 7: Outputs for 2021-2023 for data on grants and stakeholder participation metrics). There has been notable progress in expanding the involvement of groups representing SMEs, consumers, workers, and environmental interests, which has been demonstrated by the growing number of experts contributing to Technical Committees (TCs). This can be evidenced by the increase of the number of experts representing environmental interests from 40 in 2019 to 63 by 2022, while SME representation increased from 63 in 2021 to 67 in 2022 (see in Annex XI Table 7: Outputs for 2021-2023 for participation data). The number of TCs and Working Groups (WGs) covered by these organisations increased from 220 in 2021 to 233 in 2022 (see in Annex XI Table 7: Outputs for 2021-2023 for TC/WG data). The implementation rate of European standards as national standards increased significantly, from 71.23% in 2021 to 86.03% in 2023, but remains below the 90% target (see Annex VI and in Annex SMP Indicator for European Standards for adoption rates across ESOs)[92]. ETSI continues to face challenges, with only 36.99% of its standards adopted nationally in 2023, partly due to voluntary reporting and issues with national information exchange[93] (see in Annex XI Data for the calculation of the KPI for detailed ETSI implementation rates).

Participation by certain interest groups has remained limited, and in some cases, has decreased. For instance, environmental interests remain under-represented in ESOs technical bodies, with only 51.8% participation in CEN and 45.6% in CENELEC in 2022 (see in Annex XI SMP Indicator for European Standards for environmental participation breakdown). Consumer representation in ETSI at technical level[94] also dropped to 65.8% in 2022, down from 71.7% in 2019 (see in Annex XI Data for the calculation of the KPI for trends in consumer participation). For consumers, the participation in CEN and CENELEC

92 European Commission, MFF Performance Results Reports.
93 ETSI supports the development and testing of global technical standards for ICT-enabled systems, applications and services.
94 As percentage of NSOs where environmental interests were represented in national Technical Bodies.

technical bodies hovered around 60%, while it reached 76% in ETSI in 2022 (see in Annex XI Data for the calculation of the KPI for ESO-specific consumer participation data)[95].

In terms of grant-funded initiatives, the alignment between the topics of the calls and EU standardisation priorities was strong, but only around 51% of the calls received responses from European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs), with 65% being awarded (see in Annex XI Table 7: Outputs for 2021-2023 for grant response and award rates)[96].

Sub-objective 3.2: Supporting the development of high-quality international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards, facilitate their integration into the Union law, and promote the innovation and development of best practices in corporate reporting

Pillar 3 has also made significant progress in supporting the development of international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards and their integration into Union law (see Annex XI).

In the field of international financial reporting, the IFRS Accounting Standards have seen widespread application within the EU, with almost all standards adopted (16 out of 17 IFRS and all International Accounting Standards)[97]. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of countries using IFRS Accounting Standards increased from 140 to 168[98], reflecting broader international adoption. A previous evaluation of the IAS Regulation (which regulates the incorporation of IFRS Accounting Standards into EU law) already concluded that IFRS Accounting Standards had made EU capital markets more efficient by making companies' financial statements more transparent and easier to compare. Additionally, the Public Interest Oversight Board (PIOB) has maintained its role in ensuring multi-stakeholder representation in global standard-setting bodies, with consistent outputs over the years. Stakeholders consulted confirmed the effectiveness of the work of the IFRS Foundation: 78.2% (18/23)[99]. Respondents to the public consultation agreed or strongly agreed that the work of the IFRS Foundation has been instrumental to the development of high-quality standards aligned with stakeholders' interests and needs. Respondents to the survey to stakeholders in the financial sector agreed upon the importance of the work of IFRS Foundation for improving the functioning of the single market[100].

EFRAG has successfully fulfilled its twofold mandate by advising the Commission on IFRS Accounting Standards and drafting European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)[101]. It drafted the first set of 12 ESRS, which the Commission adopted by delegated act on 31 July 2023. While these represent only the first step, stakeholders consulted at this stage confirmed the importance of this milestone, as ESRS constitute the most advanced framework for sustainability reporting available at global level[102]. The volume of publications and other related materials has seen a substantial increase as well, with EFRAG's output rising from 47 publications in 2019 to 130 in 2022[103]. Moreover, outreach activities increased from 3 in 2019 to 7 in 2022, and the number of videos and webinars

95 Reports to the European Commission on CEN, CENELEC and ETSI implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 on European Standardisation.
96 Calculations on EISMEA data made by the contractor in the supporting study.
97 IFRS - View Jurisdiction
98 IFRS website IFRS - Why global accounting standards?.
99 The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
100 68% (17/25) replied either 'effective' or 'very effective'. The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
101 European Sustainability Reporting Standards - European Commission. These are the standards to use for companies subject to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).
102 75% (18/24) replied either 'effective' or 'very effective'. The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
103 Data for 2022 include both financial reporting and sustainability reporting. (Source: EFRAG Annual Reports).

published did the same, going from 7 in 2019 to 29 in 2022[104].The responses to the public consultation confirmed the importance of the work of EFRAG for stakeholders, as 93% of respondents agreed that its work is instrumental to develop high-quality standards aligned with the interests of EU stakeholders[105]. Stakeholders from the finance sector consulted through the online survey confirmed the importance and effectiveness of EFRAG's work, in particular regarding the successful integration of financial reporting and accounting standards into Union law[106], increasing trust of consumers and investors[107].

The PIOB continued to oversee the auditing standard setting process. The PIOB oversight over IAASB and IESBA activities was successfully implemented, as all projects listed in the 2021 Oversight Plan with approvals scheduled in 2021[108] and early 2022 received PIOB approval as expected[109]. It also started implementing its mission to reduce the weight of audit practitioners in boards (going from 9 out of 18 members, to 5 out of 16), to ensure more multi-stakeholder representation bringing diverse perspectives and experience. While the work of the PIOB is not very much known, 85% (12 out of 14) of respondents to the public consultation indicated the importance of the work of the PIOB.

4.1.1.1.4. Specific objective 4: promoting the interests of consumers and ensuring a high level of consumer protection and product safety

Pillar 4 demonstrates progress with some indicators achieved and others only partially met but on track (see Annex VI). However, some indicators have proved difficult to assess or interpret due to changes in methodology or lack of qualitative description (see Annex XII)[110]. The monitoring and evaluation framework has therefore been supplemented with additional indicators (see Annex VI).

Sub-objective 4.1: Empowering, educating and assisting consumers and relevant stakeholders about consumer rights and promoting sustainable consumption (Pillar 4a).

Pillar 4a has been effective in empowering, educating, and assisting consumers and relevant stakeholders about consumer rights and promoting sustainable consumption**.** Initiatives such as Consumer Law Ready and Consumer PRO have successfully raised awareness of consumer rights among SMEs and strengthen the capacity of consumer professionals. For instance, Consumer Law Ready trained 1 069 people between July 2021 and March 2023, with SME trainers (i.e. multipliers) representing 49% and SMEs representing 51% of the total participants[111]. Moreover, all training materials are available free of charge in form of e-modules on EU Academy portal[112]. The website has been visited by nearly 24 000 visitors and online resources have been downloaded more than 2 100 times. These figures demonstrate that there is a need for such training and that the activity was successful.

104 Data for 2022 include both financial reporting and sustainability reporting (Source: EFRAG Annual Reports).
105 93.1% of respondents to the question (27/29). The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
106 78% (18/23) replied either 'effective' or 'very effective'. The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
107 75% (18/24) replied either 'effective' or 'very effective'. The figures reported do not include respondents who replied 'Do not know' or left no reply to the question.
108 PIOB, IAASB and IESBA 2021 Oversight Plan (link).
109 PIOB, 17th and 18th Public Reports.
110 Examples of such challenging indicators relate to the Consumer Condition Index and the trend of unsafe products.
111 SME homepage | Consumer Law Ready; interviews with Eurochambres.
112 https://academy.europa.eu/.

Additionally, Consumer PRO hosted 52 national and European training events and trained over 900 consumer professionals across the EU between July 2021 between July 2021[113]July 2023 with a high satisfaction rate of 98%, highlighting the success of the initiative in enhancing consumer protection knowledge and skills. Furthermore, multiple theoretical documents have been developed and tailored to accommodate national specificities in three main areas: general consumer law, digital rights, and collective redress. They were translated into the EU official languages and are available online.

Pillar 4a has also supported debt advice activities, funding 24 projects in 13 targeted countries aimed at setting up personalised advice and guidance services to help over-indebted consumers to maintain, or regain to, a stable financial situation. The action grants were designed to enhance the operational efficiency of debt advice services, improve service quality and accessibility for consumers, and promote knowledge exchange among debt advisers.

BEUC's funding in the form of operating grants significantly strengthens its capacity to effectively advocate for consumer rights, conduct in-depth research on emerging issues, influence EU policies, and support enforcement actions against unfair practices. It enables the organisation to collaborate with member associations, raise public awareness, and drive impactful initiatives that protect and empower consumers across Europe. BEUC is participating in over 200 public events annually, issuing over 50 position papers and around 10 000 quotes in written press per year[114]. Support to BEUC was rated as effective or highly effective by 85% of stakeholders and they see BEUC as a very proactive and influential organisation, committed to enhancing consumer protection and promoting fair market practices throughout Europe.

The Pillar 4a has also been successful in assisting and empowering consumers in cross-border trade through its support to European Consumer Centres. More than 150 legal experts from the ECCs reply to over 120 000 consumer requests and complaints per year. In 2023, the ECC Net website was visited almost 120 000 times. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the ECCs have been helping consumers confronted with cancellations of flights and package travel, problems related to online shopping and the increase in the number of scams. ECC's communication activities reach citizens via press, the network websites, conferences, fair stands, and other online campaigns. The ECC Net also publishes guidance and advice on common consumer problems. 92.6% of respondents to the consumer survey agreed that the ECC Net has been very effective and often instrumental in helping consumers make informed choices, resolve complain and promote consumer rights across the Single Market. The data gathered by ECCs is key for policy making and help to detect unfair practices by rogue traders. Although the number of visitors to the ECC Net website saw an increase in 2023, their visibility could be increased, according to consultation with the ECCs. The visibility of ECCs does vary by MS and could be improved further.

Other educational initiative supported by the SMP is also seen to be effective in assisting and educating young consumers. In 2022, a new platform Better Internet for Kids was created aimed at creating a safer online environment for children and youth and empowering them in the digital world. Latest figures suggest that the platform reaches over 30 million people annually providing tools, information, guidance, resources, and good practices as

113 BEUC Consumer Pro, final report, 2023. Not yet publicly available.
114 BEUC annual reports.

well as raising awareness. Positive views were expressed during the interviews on the platform, noting that the platform should continue to be developed. Moreover, the Consumer Education Hub[115] platform (managed by BEUC) developed after the research work funded under Pillar 4s, assist consumers in navigating various markets more effectively. It offers a comprehensive collection of over 500 consumer education initiatives from across Europe covering topics such as e-commerce, energy, sustainable consumption, financial literacy, product safety, and general consumer rights, serving as a valuable resource for individuals and organisations aiming to enhance consumer knowledge about their rights, helping them to make informed choice and to navigate markets safely and confidently.

Special annual events, such as the European Consumer Summit**,** were found to be effective with 82% of survey respondents, bringing together more than 2 200 stakeholders from all EU Member States since 2021, with high satisfaction rates[116]. The stakeholders interviewed for this mid-term evaluation indicated that Consumer Summits played an important role in enhancing consumer protection and were considered successful in fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, including policymakers, enforcement authorities, academia, businesses, consumer organisations and representatives from civil society. These summits provide a unique opportunity for diverse stakeholders to engage in dialogue, share insights, and collaboratively shape future strategies. Workshops and breakout sessions during the events allow for in-depth discussions on topics such as sustainable consumption, digital advancements, socio-economic inclusion, and international consumer policy dimensions.

Sustainable consumption is one of the key priorities of the New Consumer Agenda[117], which aims to empower consumers to make sustainable choices and playing an active role in the green transition. This topic was also one of the key agenda point of the 2023 Consumer Summit, supported by SMP, that included the Sustainable Consumption Pledge (in 2021 and 2022 respectively) aimed at encouraging businesses to voluntarily commit to actions promoting more sustainable consumption and production practices[118]. The SMP also funded a specific study to address the link between sustainable production with product safety and supported the representation of consumer interests by funding the work of its beneficiaries in the area of green transition (such as the work of BEUC on green claims and the right to repair).

Sub-objective 4.2: Ensuring that the interests of consumers in the digital world, are duly taken into consideration (Pillar 4a).

Pillar 4a has enabled progress in ensuring that the interests of consumers, particularly in the digital world, are considered. This covers three studies financed by Pillar 4a including the fitness check to assess digital fairness in the key EU consumer Directives. The study analysed consumer detriment based on the prevalence unfair commercial practice in e-commerce[119]. Another study examined the impact of online marketing on children. It highlighted that many online services have addictive designs which can exploit children's vulnerabilities and lead to excessive screen time. Another important study, related to the

115 Study of consumer education initiatives in the EU.
116 Information from EISMEA and targeted consultation of pillar 4a beneficiaries. Events like the Annual Digital Consumer Event and Consumer Summits were considered effective or very effective by 82% of respondents to the survey.
117 New Consumer Agenda.
118 Sustainable Consumption Pledge.
119 Such as dark patterns, certain personalisation practices often based on profiling, hidden advertising, fraud, false or misleading information and manipulated consumer reviews.

interests of consumer in the digital world focused on the implementation of the General Product Safety Regulation (entered into force in June 2023).

Furthermore, the operating grants provided by Pillar 4a to BEUC has enabled the latter to play a vital role in addressing consumers' digital concerns and guaranteeing their rights are respected when shopping online. For example, BEUC's complaints in 2021 led to reforms in Amazon's cancellation processes to make it easier for consumers to unsubscribe from Prime. BEUC coordinated also complaints against companies like Google and WhatsApp for violating GDPR rules, particularly regarding unclear terms, and excessive data collection practices. Moreover, in June 2023, BEUC with national consumer authorities filed a complaint against major social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter for breaching EU laws in promoting misleading crypto asset and calling for stricter advertising policies and enforcement[120]. Furthermore, BEUC organises campaigns to inform consumers about online scams, data protection, and their rights in the digital space, empowering them to make informed decisions.

The CPC Network, supported by the SMP, carried out six 'sweeps,' which are coordinated investigations across Member States. During these sweeps national authorities assessed websites and online marketplaces to ensure compliance with consumer protection laws. For example, in 2021 the CPC conducted s a sweep focusing on manipulative online practices, commonly known as 'dark patterns', to mislead or coerce consumers into making unintended decisions. The sweep aimed to identify and address such practices to enhance consumer protection in the digital marketplace. Additionally, a major sweep was done on 576 social media posts to verify whether influencers disclose their advertising activities as required under EU consumer law. The results revealed that 97% of those influencers published posts which contained commercial content but only 20% systematically indicated it. This sweep resulted into developing the Influencer Legal Hub[121] where influencers can find practical information and video trainings to become familiar with the EU consumer protection law that need to be applied in advertising, selling goods and providing services.

The e-Enforcement Academy project has further strengthened the national enforcement authorities (CPC network) and the Consumer Safety Network (CSN) in digital investigation skills, for example in using digital tools like eLab[122] to conduct more effective online investigations into mass-scale breaches of consumer law. In 2022-2023 period, e-Enforcement Academy generated 12 new e-learning modules, 10 tutorials, 12 webinars, 15 local training sessions for 317 enforcement officials, and 3 CPC workshops[123]. Currently the e-Enforcement community is made of 865 users. The Academy has provided high-quality training and up-to-date learning materials, enabling authorities to effectively tackle challenges in e-commerce and mobile commerce. Through these training, and networking, the Academy has fostered coordinated approaches to common problems, direct contacts between authorities from different countries, and the exchange of good practices.

Moreover, the Annual Digital Event fostered discussions among stakeholders and consumer law experts on the latest developments and emerging needs in consumer protection within the digital era. The 2023 edition of this event saw 11 online marketplaces[124] signing the

120 Hype or Harm? The great social media crypto con | BEUC.
121 https://commission.europa.eu/live-work-travel-eu/consumer-rights-and-complaints/influencer-legal-hub_en.
122 eLab tool is funded by the Digital Europe Programme, the SMP has supported the workshops and trainings of national eLab experts and financed the preparations and testing of eLab components.
123 Information provided by EISMEA and Reports on e-enforcement academy Phase 1 and Phase 2.
124 These traders include Allegro, AliExpress, Amazon, Bol.com, Cdiscount, eBay, EMAG, Etsy, Joom, Rakuten France, and Wish (Consumer Protection Pledge - European Commission).

Consumer Protection Pledges , consisting of an extended Product Safety Pledge+ and the Digital Consumer Rights Commitments which include voluntary commitments regarding the transparency of consumer reviews and influencer marketing, as well as to leverage the power of marketplaces to facilitate the exercise of certain EU consumer rights, and to offer training and advice to sellers operating on the marketplaces [125].

Sub-objective 4.3: Ensuring access to effective redress mechanisms for consumers (Pillar 4a).

SMP funding under Pillar 4a has led to the development of more effective redress mechanisms for consumers. The ADR bodies and ECCs facilitated consumers access to effective redress mechanisms and have been supported by the Pillar 4a.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies play a critical role in in addressing cross-border disputes and providing consumers with accessible, efficient, and fair means to resolve disputes outside the judicial system. ADR mechanisms, such as arbitration or mediation, provide quicker and cost-effective solutions compared to court proceedings. The financial envelope available for ADR grants increased between 2021 and 2023 from EUR 0.5 million to EUR 1 million, as well as the co-financing rate. In total, 46 grants were awarded to support ADR entities in digitalisation, to make them better known and more accessible to consumers, to improve their operational capacity in resolving consumer disputes, to promote monitoring tools and networking activities. The evaluation of the ADR Directive[126],financed by the SMP, concluded that ADR have been successful in handling consumer issues with traders, although there were differences between Member States in setting up ADR entities and differences in outcomes. Moreover, cross-border ADR, according to the evaluation, is still underused in many countries due several factors such as cost, low awareness, complex procedures, language, and applicable law[127].

The ECC Net has proven highly effective in mediating cross-border disputes[128]. ECCs helped consumers to recover over EUR 8.8 million in 2023 (EUR 9.9 million in 2022) and resolve more than 120 000 inquiries per year[129]. The ECC Net was rated as very effective by 92.6% of respondents to the targeted consultation[130] in providing advice and helping consumers resolve cross-border disputes with traders and guiding consumers toward appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms when direct mediation with businesses is unsuccessful. The respondents of the survey noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, ECCs played a critical role in mediating disputes related to cross-border transactions, such as cancelled flights and unfulfilled online orders.

125 EC (2023): Report 3rd Annual Digital Consumer Event, available at: 3rd Annual Digital Consumer Event - European Commission (europa.eu).
126 Alternative dispute resolution for consumers.
127 There are ongoing interinstitutional negotiations on the revision of Alternative Dispute Resolution framework to modernise it in view of online intermediaries, pre-contractual information and non-EU traders, as well as improve consumer awareness.
128 ECCs offer free, impartial, and expert guidance to consumers on their rights under EU law, including rules on purchases, contracts, refunds, and returns for cross-border transactions. This support ensures consumers understand their legal standing and options for dispute resolution.
129 ECC-Net Annual Reports.
130 Targeted consultation on beneficiaries of Pillar 4a actions.

Sub-objective 4.4: Ensuring high level of consumer protection including vulnerable consumer and product safety (Pillar 4a).

Pillar 4a has successfully helped to increase the participation of market surveillance authorities in joint activities aimed at ensuring a high level of consumer protection and product safety. The Coordinated Activities on the Safety of Products (CASP) involve Member States collaboratively testing products, serving as an effective tool to ensure the safety of goods in the Single Market. Between 2021-2022 CASP has achieved several key milestones in enhancing consumer protection and product safety. The most important include:

1) Improved cross-border market surveillance and strengthened cooperation between national market surveillance authorities across the EU. CASP saw an increase in participating countries from 19 in 2021 to 22 in 2022[131].

2) Harmonised testing protocols which allow for more efficient product monitoring with fewer resources. Testing is conducted in a coordinated and standardised manner across EU countries, ensuring consistency and comparability while preventing duplication of efforts. Joint actions for product safety enabled the testing of 1 058 products.

3) Detection and removal of unsafe products. Testing performed has led to 573 corrective measures[132], which include imposing penalties, issuing warnings, or banning the sale of products. Moreover, 120 products were subject to Safety Gate notifications[133], so the relevant information was shared with other MSAs, consumers and economic operators, with follow-up actions to ensure they are withdrawn or recalled.

4) Guidelines on different horizontal topics and research on relevant safety topics: CASP has developed co-authored guidance materials and tools to help businesses, manufacturers, and retailers better understand their obligations regarding product safety.

The online survey stated that actions such CASP are being effective or very effective increasing consumer safety by 80% of respondents.

The EU Safety Gate rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products, operated by the Commission and financed by the SMP, enabled rapid exchange of alert information and follow-up about dangerous non-food products in EU and the European Economic Area countries. This is a main tool for corrective action when it comes to the safety of products and for effective communication among the market surveillance authorities (MSAs). Between 2021 and 2023, the number of alerts on dangerous non-food products amounted to 7 671 leading to 21 000[134] preventative or restrictive measures taken in response to notifications under the Safety Gate system by economic operators or market surveillance authorities. Furthermore, to streamline the detection of products that are still online after being flagged as dangerous in Safety Gate, the system has been equipped with a powerful instrument e-Surveillance web crawler, which is able to scan up to 200 000 online offers per day on various online platforms and detects offers of unsafe products with above 90% accuracy. Moreover, Safety Gate has been instrumental in international cooperation of the EU with respect to product safety. Safety Gate is a major contributor to the OECD Global Recalls portal[135] and to Health Canada's RADAR136. Moreover, as China is the main country of origin for non-food products that are subject to notification (52%), a specific module has been developed (EU Safety Gate China)[137] that facilitate regular transmission of

131 To note, no CASP activities have been conducted in 2023.
132 Corrective measures can include imposing penalties, recall from the user, withdrawal from the market, request to improve the product, request to mark the product with the appropriate warnings, or ban on the sale of the product.
133 Safety Gate: the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products (europa.eu).
134 Safety Gate, Safe Products, Safe Consumers, 2023. European Commission, 2024.
135 OECD, Global Product Recall
136 European Commission, Bilateral Cooperation.
137 Safety Gate 2023 report Safety Gate: the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products (europa.eu).

data between the EU and China on dangerous products of Chinese origin found on the EU markets and notified on the Safety Gate. This cooperation helps align safety regulations and standards, thereby contributing to improving global product safety mechanisms. Safety Gate continues to play a critical role in consumer safety, with 94.1% of stakeholders rating the system as effective in its management of dangerous non-food products.

Sub-objective 4.5: Enhancing cooperation between competent enforcement authorities and consumer representative organisations (Pillar 4a).

Financial support from the Pillar 4a enabled the Commission to successfully steer the activities and strengthen operational capacities of the national consumer protection enforcement authorities of the EU and the European Economic Area countries, the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) network, when addressing cross-border and widespread breaches of EU consumer law and carrying out coordinated enforcement actions.

During the period from 2020 to 2023, the CPC authorities cooperated on 752 mutual requests including 514 which required enforcement measures and issued 182 alerts of suspected business practices suspected to breach of consumer law. mostly concerned a lack of price transparency, misleading advertisements, and misleading labelling of commercial content, unclear or missing pre-contractual information, geo-blocking, warranty issues and greenwashing practices mostly concerned dark patterns, automatic renewals, misleading 'green claims' and the unfair promotion of crypto investments[138]

Furthermore, between 2021-2023 the CPC authorities, supported by Pillar 4a, carried out over 20 joint enforcement actions against leading market players (e.g. Airbnb, Booking, WhatsApp, Google, TikTok, Amazon etc.) which have been successfully finalised and agreements on improvements reached with companies. For instance, as a result of the coordinated action, 16 airlines committing in 2021 to refund unused vouchers that they had issued to consumers for cancelled flights during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, more than 500 000 consumers received their money back. The impact of coordinated actions is significant across the internal market. Targeting big online platforms and traders, these ensure the respect of consumer rights for millions of citizens, creating a level playing field across different sectors. Other high-profile activity of the CPC is coordinated screening of websites 'sweeps' to identify breaches of consumer law in specific sectors. Between 2021-2023, the CPC network carries out six sweeps were conducted on consumer scams related to consumer credit, online consumer reviews, car rental intermediaries, Black Friday sales, dark patterns and social media influencers. The support provided by Pillar 4a to CPC Network has contributed to visibly consolidate and expand its activities during the evaluation period. Both the mutual assistance mechanism in the form of exchange of information and enforcement requests between national competent authorities as well as sweeps and joint enforcement actions have seen improvement in terms of effectiveness. The responses on the public consultation show that sweeps, facilitated by the SMP and carried out by the CPCs, are rated to be highly effective according to 87% of respondents. Moreover, the Pillar 4a effectively supported development of operational capacities of the CPC authorities, notably by providing a digital environment in form of CPC knowledge exchange platform to support collaborative work and share results, as well as the eLab which is an internet laboratory for mass-scale investigations and sweeps on the online market. In 2023, 200 users from 25 countries were using this free of charge service to perform investigations adapted to their specific needs and exchange best practices.

138 SWD(2022) 108 final and SWD(2024) 186 final on consumer protection cooperation.

Sub-objective 4.6: Improving evidence-based policymaking

The Pillar 4a has been successful in gathering the evidence to support the development of consumer policy. From 2021 to 2023, the programme financed 17 studies aimed at informing policy, supporting the development of targeted regulations, identifying market failures and changes in consumer behaviour and needs. For example, the study supporting the Fitness Check of EU consumer law on digital fairness addressed consumer issues in the digital marketplace and will feed into the future Digital Fairness Act; the study on the revision of the ADR framework, resulting in a new proposal to amend the ADR Directive to create a more robust, efficient, and user-friendly ADR framework; the foresight study on consumers' behaviour in the context of green and digital transition and the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour and consumption patterns; or the study to evaluate the safety issues related to products re-entering the market through circular business models, examines consumer attitudes towards such products and assess the existing legal rules and standards in safeguarding consumer safety within circular business models.

Moreover, a regular data gathering with the Consumer Condition Survey feed into the Consumer Condition Scoreboard (CCS) which is a biennial reporting exercise to monitor consumer sentiment across the EU, as well as in Iceland and Norway. It collects data on national conditions for consumers with regards to three areas: knowledge and trust, compliance and enforcement; and complaints and dispute resolution. The CCS pays special attention to the challenges faced by vulnerable consumer groups, such as older people, low-income households, and those with limited digital skills. It identifies disparities in access to services and markets, and the need for tailored policies that address specific challenges. Evidence gathered by the CCS helps also to monitor consumers' engagement in the sustainable consumption and circular economy. The CCS has been instrumental in identifying discrepancies between Member States and helping national policymakers to benchmark their national situation against the other EU countries. leading to more harmonised consumer protection standards across the EU.

Sub-objective 4.7: Enhancing consumer and financial services end-user participation in policymaking (Pillar 4b)

Pillar 4b has effectively enhanced consumer and financial services end-user participation in policymaking. Better Finance and Finance Watch, have both directly and indirectly benefited consumers and end users of financial services. They allowed to ensure a more balanced stakeholder representation in the policymaking process for financial services in a context (of technical legislation and industry lobbying) where the interests of consumers and end users of financial services could be under-represented. During the period under evaluation the beneficiaries have met their targets for press releases, events, and meetings with EU policymakers. During the period 2021 to 2023 the two beneficiaries have produced significant policy and advocacy outputs input to several public consultations of the European Commission and the ESAs and produced a significant number of position papers[139]. The effectiveness of the advocacy work of the beneficiaries was confirmed by the responses to the survey conducted as part of the external study[140] the majority of respondents that expressed an opinion found the activities of the organisations very useful and effective[141]. The interviews with stakeholders, industry, and consumer organisations,

139 For a more detailed analysis and the analysis of effectiveness of each beneficiary see Annex XII on Pillar 4 section on effectiveness of Pillar 4b.
140 See Pillar 4b Online survey summary report.
141 For a more detailed analysis and the analysis of effectiveness of each beneficiary see Annex XII on Pillar 4 section on effectiveness of Pillar 4b.

concluded that the beneficiaries have been effective in representing the voice of consumers and end users of financial services in policymaking[142].

Sub-objective 4.8: Promoting a better understanding of the financial sector (Pillar 4b).

The funding of Pillar 4b of Better Finance and Finance Watch has allowed to effectively promote a better understanding of the financial sector and its products, with publications and communication activities directed to different types of stakeholders including members, policy makers and the public. The beneficiaries produced a number of research reports on financial services' related topics focusing on current issues. The reports and publications were also used in lobbying and advocacy work, where the findings were used as evidence base and during discussions with policy makers and industry. The survey and interviews conducted as part of the study confirm the overall effectiveness of the beneficiaries' research[143].

Feedback from stakeholders has been positive, particularly among consumer organisations, associations representing financial services users, and individuals, with many finding policy papers and research outputs highly valuable[144].The beneficiaries addressed the objective of promoting a better understanding also through the communication activities such as events and press releases. The beneficiaries were also mentioned in numerous press articles and met the relevant indicator targets for social media presence[145].

Sub-objective 4.9: Ensuring that the interests of consumers in the area of retail financial services are protected (Pillar 4b).

The activities under Pillar 4b have also **effectively contributed in ensuring that the interests of consumers in the area of retail financial services are protected** through the active participating of the beneficiaries in consultations and policy discussions. The beneficiaries continued to actively participate and provide input to expert group discussions and Committees[146]. The beneficiaries have also been focusing on meetings with policy makers such as Members of the European Parliament, representatives from the European Economic and Social Committee, the College of the Regions etc.[147]. Feedback on actions of both beneficiaries show that they have been effective in ensuring the protection of consumer interests in this sector[148].

A more detailed analysis on the effectiveness of each of the beneficiaries is presented in Annex XII on Pillar 4.

142 For a more detailed analysis and the analysis of effectiveness of each beneficiary see Annex XII on Pillar 4 section on effectiveness of Pillar 4b.
143 For a more detailed analysis and the analysis of effectiveness of each beneficiary see Annex XII on Pillar 4 section on effectiveness of Pillar 4b.
144 Targeted consultation of pillar 4b stakeholders in the field of finance.
145 For a more detailed analysis and the analysis of effectiveness of each beneficiary see Annex XII on Pillar 4 section on effectiveness of Pillar 4b.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.

4.1.1.1.5. **Specific objective 5**

Sub-objective 5.1: Prevent, detect, and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including through emergency measures

Effective progress towards this sub-objective has been made, as reflected in the DG SANTE Annual Activity Reports 2021-2023, which data is used in this section[149], data from DG SANTE and HaDEA, and available performance indicators (See Annex XIII).

It is worth indicating that for veterinary and phytosanitary programmes, as well as for emergency measures, there are strong indications, mainly based on available data on outbreaks and Member States and stakeholders feedback[150], that SMP funds contributed to effectively eradicate and contain animal diseases and plant pest outbreaks.

Emergency veterinary measures were implemented in response to outbreaks such as ASF and HPAI. Regarding ASF 8 Member States applied for EU funding in 2021, 7 Member States in 2022 and 11 Member States in 2023. For HPAI 16 Member States applied for EU funding for emergency measures in 2021, 17 in 2022 and 20 in 2023. The financing of these measures has been essential to limit the spread of these diseases and to reduce the impact on unaffected areas (in particular, the continuity of trade).

Overall, HPAI showed a downward trend of outbreaks in 2021 – 1 847, 2022 – 2 636, 2023 – 619 (poultry and captive birds), and between 2 December 2023 and 15 March 2024, outbreaks of HPAI A(H5) were reported in domestic (227) in 26 countries in Europe[151].

ASF experienced an increase in the number of outbreaks (1 810 in 2021, 377 in 2022 and 1 929 in 2023), and cases were reported in three new Member States in 2023 compared to the geographical spread in 2022. The number of reported outbreaks of ASF in domestic pigs in Member States was five times higher in 2023 than in 2022, which corresponds to the levels observed in 2019. These outbreaks were mainly attributed to new outbreaks in Croatia (1 124 outbreaks) and a resurgence in Romania (736 outbreaks), both contributing 96% of EU ASF outbreaks in 2023[152]. Despite the spread of ASF to previously unaffected countries and an increase in outbreaks, in particular in domestic pigs, the designated restricted zones across the EU have remained relatively constant.

Special ASF control measures and emergency measures for HPAI have been implemented and regularly reviewed to contain the spread of the disease while minimising the impact on non-affected regions.

Regarding some other diseases, the situation varied depending on the specific disease. Some diseases, such as lumpy skin disease, peste des petits ruminants (in December 2023, present only in Bulgaria) and Classical swine fever (CSF) have been successfully eradicated or were not present in the EU[153].

The number of cases of bovine brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*) has steadily decreased, with 4 cases reported in 2021, 6 in 2022 and 2 cases in 2023. Similarly, cases of *Brucella melitensis* (affecting sheep and goats) decreased, with 11 cases reported in 2021, 4 in 2022 and 2 in 2023. These reductions highlight the effectiveness of monitoring, reporting by Member

149 European Commission, DG SANTE, Annual activity reports.
150 Information from the supporting study.
151 Information from ADNS/ADIS system.
152 Information from ADNS/ADIS system.
153 Certified by WAHIS-WOAH.

States and control measures. In addition, the number of Member States declared brucellosis-free has increased and has stabilised at 20 since 2021, compared to 19 in 2020, demonstrating sustained success in eradication efforts[154].

The number of bovine tuberculosis cases has been stable over the period of 2021-2023 ranging between 130-150 outbreaks annually[155]. In total 17 EU countries are currently free from *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex (*Mycobacterium bovis, M. caprae and M.tuberculosis*) thanks to specific EU investments for many years, including under the SMP. Three EU countries have obtained this status in part of their territory[156]. This gradual reduction since 2020 is a sign of the effectiveness of eradication measures in controlling this disease across the EU. In addition to SMP, funding national efforts have also played an important role.

In addition, after many years of EU support, EU co-financing for bovine tuberculosis and bovine, ovine and caprine brucellosis ceased as of 2023, after a gradual phase-out over several years.

Continued efforts to control classical bovine spongiform encephalopathy (C-BSE) have also proved effective. There were no cases of C-BSE in 2021 and 2022 (the last case of C-BSE in the EU was in 2016). The only few cases found were of atypical form which are considered as spontaneous (6 in 2021, 1 in 2022, 5 in 2023)[157].

Efforts were made to reduce the number of index cases of classical scrapie in ovine and caprine animals, compared to the 2020 baseline of 132 cases. In 2021, the number of cases decreased to 110, but in 2022 it increased to 135[158]. Despite the slight increase in 2022, the overall programme remained on track and control measures were considered effective.

The EU's success in managing diseases is further underlined by its efforts to combat rabies. The number of infections with rabies virus decreased from 103 in 2021 to 45 in 2022 and to 36 in 2023[159].

Over 80% of poultry populations under EU co-financed salmonella programmes were reported to have incidence below the EU target, with the specific figures being 83.3% in 2021 and 84.5% in 2022[160]. These figures demonstrate a coherent and effective effort to reduce the prevalence of salmonella in different poultry categories and therefore contributing to the wider success of national control programmes across the EU.

As regards emergency phytosanitary measures, four applications were implemented in 2021, two in 2022 and three in 2023[161]. However, it is important to mention that the number of applications depends on the new outbreaks for which Member States request co-financing. In the period 2021-2023, EU co-financing supported measures to eradicate *Xylella fastidiosa* outbreaks in France, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Portugal that received SMP co-funding has been able to eradicate the outbreak in the Algarve region in Tavira by applying the measures

154 Information from ADNS/ADIS system.
155 Information from ADNS/ADIS system.
156 Bovine tuberculosis - European Commission (europa.eu).
157 EFSA The European Union summary report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies 2021, 2022.
158 EFSA The European Union summary report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies 2021, 2022.
159 Information from ADNS/ADIS system.
160 EFSA zoonosis report 2021-2022
161 DG SANTE information.

provided for in Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1201[162]. Several outbreaks of potato pests in the EU have also been eradicated. After continued EU financial support for several years, Germany and France have also been able to close several outbreaks of Asian longhorn beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*).

The applications for eradication measures are part of the phytosanitary programme, covering from the second year of the outbreak, and maintained consistent performance with the eradication/containment measures for 12 pests included in both 2021 and 2022, followed by a slight increase to 13 in 2023[163]. All these measures led to three countries completely eradicating at least one pest from their territory in 2021, according to EPPO reporting services. Austria and Finland eradicated *Anoplophora glabripennis*. However, as eradication is a complex and long-term process, no country has eradicated (officially declared: absent, the pest eradicated) any pest present in its territory in 2022 and 2023. However, where eradication was not possible, the spread in new countries was controlled. Nineteen of the twenty priority pests did not spread in new Member States in 2021, and no pests spread to new countries in 2022 and nineteen out of twenty again did not spread to new Member States in 2023.

Climate change has a significant impact on the movement and establishment of plant pests, making it difficult for the EU to manage these threats. Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns create favourable conditions for the extension of the range of harmful organisms and their reproductive rate. For example, warmer climate allow pests to spread more easily in southern Europe and even spread more in northern Europe, threatening crops such as olive trees. The interaction between climate change and pest dynamics complicates the effectiveness of current phytosanitary measures, which requires adaptation strategies.

BTSF provided flexible tailored training on demand for animal disease outbreaks/epidemics during this period through 3 workshops and 2 sustained training missions (STM) on ASF, with additional training taking place from 2024 onwards on ASF, sheep and goat pox, rabies and classical swine fever in addition to 14 workshops dedicated to animal disease preparedness. In addition, SMP co-financed measures in the area of plant health have helped Member States to eradicate or contain outbreaks of plant pests.

It has to be indicated that the co-financing of phytosanitary programmes has contributed to the functioning of the single market and global agri-food competitiveness. For example, the EU co-funded 4 MS for the eradication or containment of *Anoplophora glabripennis* in 2021 and 3 MS in 2022164. This invasive pest attacks and destroy wide range of broadleaf trees, including economically important species like maple, birch, and poplar, creating massive destruction. It should be mentioned that 4 MS received co-funding for eradication or containment of *Xylella fastidiosa* in 2021 and the same number of MS in 2022. If *Xylella fastidiosa* were to fully spread across the EU, it could affect over 70% of the Union's production value of olive trees older than 30 years and 35% of younger trees. This could put nearly 300 000 jobs involved in olive, citrus, almond, and grape production at risk. The outbreaks of priority pests would put agricultural exports at risk. This would also mean lower calorie, protein and fat supply[165]. The establishment and spread of (new) plant pests and diseases also puts additional pressure on food production. Therefore, it should be underlined that the successful implementation of the co-funded phytosanitary programmes is important

162 Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1201 of 14 August 2020 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of Xylella fastidiosa, OJ L 269, 17.8.2020, p. 2.
163 Information provided by HaDEA.
164 Information provided by HaDEA.
165 European Commission SWD Drivers of food security.

- not only for preventing economic losses - but also for maintaining the viability and sustainability of Europe's single market and its competitive stance in the global agri-food sector.

The flexibility provided for in the emergency measures, veterinary and phytosanitary work programmes has contributed to their effectiveness, which has made it possible to focus on urgent challenges (e.g. focusing in dealing with large number of outbreaks of HPAI). The reduction of co-financing by 60% in 2022 showed a proactive approach through reallocation of funds in response to evolving needs. This flexibility in the work programmes was important in addressing unforeseen disease outbreaks, but this reduction of co-financing rates has put pressure on Member States competent authorities when faced with numerous epidemics.

Sub-objective 5.2: Support the improvement of animal welfare

Pillar 5 has effectively financed initiative supporting the improvement of animal welfare. The Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme hosted 11 sessions on animal welfare during transport, engaging over 320 participants[166].

The SMP co-financed the WOAH Animal welfare Platform's for Europe action plans. The EU co-finances concrete activities under the three-year action plans of the WOAH Platform. The three priority themes for EU funding are welfare during transport, welfare at slaughter and management of the dog population. In addition, the EU co-finances the governance of the WOAH platform. In the period 2021-2023, a total of 9 activities of the WOAH Regional Platform on Animal Welfare and 7 WOAH workshops were carried out[167]. This financial support has helped to implement the WOAH international animal welfare standards in 53 countries of the European region.

The European Reference Centres on Animal Welfare (EURCAWs) have significantly contributed towards this sub-objective by producing educational materials, offering training sessions, and holding webinars aimed at sharing and streamlining welfare practices across Member States. These efforts have been valuable in improving welfare for various species, including, pigs, ruminants, poultry, and equines.

The EURCAWs focused on training and resources to support welfare monitoring across the EU. They produced a series of training videos covering a range of topics, from the preparation of inspections to communication on animal welfare, which are essential for inspectors and farm staff. The EURCAW also created numerous factsheets on indicators initially available in four languages and expanded translations into three additional languages to meet various language needs across the EU. In addition, their roadshows in different EU countries facilitate direct dialogue with inspectors, discussing relevant animal welfare issues and fostering a collaborative approach to animal welfare. For example, a 37.6% increase in page views of the EURCAW Pigs analytics dashboard[168] indicates a growing engagement by stakeholders. Additionally, collaboration between EURCAWs and stakeholders has been fostered through workshops and meetings that promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

The EURCAWs work contributes significantly to improving animal welfare in Europe. Nevertheless, EURCAW do not have concrete figures to measure their direct impact and

166 BTSF reports and beneficiary dissemination materials.
167 Information provided by WOAH.
168 European Commission, DG SANTE internal data.

monitor progress. The WOAH Animal Welfare Platform for Europe, supported through SMP funding, continues to prove vital for advancing welfare standards in the EU Member States and neighbouring countries. Public support for these initiatives is reflected in Eurobarometer data from 2023 showing that 84% of Europeans believe farm animal welfare needs stronger protection in their countries[169].

Overall, all these activities funded by the SMP have contributed to improving animal welfare inside and outside the EU. These actions have enabled to increase awareness, to improve cooperation with third countries on animal welfare and to facilitate the exchange of information in case of incidents during transport and to improve enforcement.

Sub-objective 5.3: Fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Pillar 5 actions have played an important role in the fight against AMR. Through SMP funds, the EU has actively supported Member States in strengthening national systems for collecting and reporting data on the sale and use of antimicrobials in animals and implementing coordinated control programmes to monitor antimicrobial resistance in certain food and food-producing animals. Both supported activities contribute to the harmonisation of AMR monitoring and reporting, ensuring that all Member States apply uniform methodologies for the collection and testing of AMR data. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/1729[170] lays down rules for this monitoring for the period 2021-2027. In accordance with Article 9 of Directive 2003/99/EC[171], the EFSA shall examine annually the submitted national reports of the MSs and publish a summary report on the trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and AMR in the EU. These actions conducted by Member States allow to be informed on the development and spread of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria and supports decision-making on AMR. Since 2021, Commission provided financial support to Member States in the form of co-financing for the monitoring of AMR in certain food and food-producing animals such as pigs, bovines and poultry (sampling and testing).

In the period 2021-2023 24 Member States applied for EU-funded coordinated control programmes to monitor AMR in certain food and food-producing animals in 2021, 26 for both 2022 and 2023. Coordinated control programmes cover several essential components aimed at harmonising the monitoring and reporting of AMR across EU Member States. These programmes start with sampling activities, where samples are collected from various points in the food production chain, including slaughterhouses, border control posts, and retail outlets. Samples from animals are a primary focus, and the costs for the staff involved in collecting these samples are reimbursed, ensuring that labour is adequately compensated. These samples are then subjected to laboratory testing, which includes antimicrobial susceptibility testing to identify resistance in bacteria such as Salmonella, Campylobacter, and E. coli. More advanced testing, such as whole genome sequencing, is also performed to provide a deeper understanding of resistance patterns. The costs for laboratory personnel, reagents, and testing kits are included in the financial reimbursement provided by the programme.

169 Attitudes of Europeans towards animal welfare - October 2023 - Eurobarometer survey.
170 Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/1729 of 17 November 2020 on the monitoring and reporting of antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic and commensal bacteria and repealing Implementing Decision 2013/652/EU, OJ L 387, 19.11.2020, p. 8.
171 Directive 2003/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents, amending Council Decision 90/424/EEC and repealing Council Directive 92/117/EEC, OJ L 325, 12.12.2003, p. 31.

By 2023, 18 grant agreements for the collection of antimicrobial sales and use data had been signed[172].

BTSF provided 17 workshops to competent authorities on AMR for EU and global participants through videoconferencing and face-to-face training between 2021 to 2023.

EFSA for its risk assessment mainly uses data from coordinated control plan for monitoring of AMR in certain food and food-producing animals. In 2024 EFSA published EU report on AMR in zoonotic and indicator bacteria from humas, animals and food 2021-2022[173]. According to EFSA the temporal trend analyses in both key outcome indicators (rate of complete susceptibility and prevalence of ESBL- /AmpC- producers in *E. coli*) showed an encouraging progress in reducing AMR in food- producing animals in several EU MSs over the last years.

The activity regarding coordinated control plan for monitoring of AMR in certain food and food-producing animals is effective in providing necessary harmonised data to risk assessment and risk management authorities. This is especially the case on informing on the development and spread of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria and supporting decision-making on AMR.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the action supporting national antimicrobial sales and use data collection systems is too early to perform at this stage.

Sub-objective 5.4: Develop sustainable food production and consumption

The SMP funds in the area of food waste reduction have supported actions in this field by Member States, stakeholders and food banks.

At Member States' level, the grants awarded between 2021-2023 helped Member States in their efforts to measure and monitor food waste levels at different stages of the food supply chain. It is important to monitor the food waste reduction in MSs in order to see the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3. This support helped refine measurement methodologies and improve data collection (e.g. through development of IT tools), often in collaboration with stakeholders. Beyond the requirement to reduce food waste at each stage of the food supply chain, monitor food waste levels and report back regarding progress made, the revised Waste Framework Directive (Directive (EU) 2018/851)[174] adopted on 30 May 2018 also requires Member States to prepare food waste prevention programmes. Thus, the scope of the grants has been modified as of 2024 to cover actions to prevent food waste taken as part of national programmes. The target value for 2024, as reported in the 2021 report, is 27 (all EU Member States would have national level strategies and programmes), and the value for 2021 was 18 (66.6%). The 2022 report found that 23 countries (85.2%) had food waste prevention strategies in place; the same number of 23 countries was observed in 2023[175].

FEBA grants support data collection and capacity building. These grants allowed FEBA to strengthen the activities of food banks in the Member States and to collect consistent and reliable data on a regular basis. The grant facilitated the creation and maintenance of a tailor-made online observatory for food donations, a platform where food banks can report data

172 European Commission, DG SANTE, Annual activity reports.
173 The European Union summary report on antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic and indicator bacteria from humans, animals and food in 2021–2022 | EFSA (europa.eu).
174 Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109-140, revised Waste Framework Directive.
175 DG SANTE information.

each year and continuously improve its user-friendliness. This platform allows FEBA to collect information on 99 indicators, including 10 Key Performance Indicators. These indicators cover basic parameters, such as the number of food banks and charitable organisations served, as well as specific operational details such as square metres of warehouses, number of vehicles, refrigerated vehicles and cold rooms.

The grants intended to help stakeholders measure food waste and implement prevention initiatives are still in the implementation phase and the evaluation of results and effectiveness could be carried out as part of the next evaluation of the SMP.

Other initiatives funded through the SMP under this sub-objective included support for DG SANTE in a range of studies underpinning policy development for food system sustainability (development of a monitoring framework of the Farm to Fork Strategy; development of criteria for sustainable food procurement; studies to support the impact assessments for initiatives on a framework for a sustainable EU food system).

Sub-objective 5.5: Encourage the exchange of best practices among stakeholders

The funding under **Pillar 5** has effectively fostered the exchange of best practices and contributed towards consolidating the capacity of Member States and stakeholders in the field of food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health protection. Pillar 5 funded EURLs activities which facilitated the organisation of 163 inter-laboratory proficiency tests for National Reference Laboratories by EURLs, with 41 comparative tests conducted. In addition, EURLs held 63 workshops and 37 meetings in conjunction with these tests. Number of diagnostic methods for which details and guidance are available on the EURLs websites increased from 334 in 2021 to 342 in 2022[176]. Based on the results of the EURL survey[177] of the interim evaluation study the overall perception of the effectiveness of the coordination efforts undertaken by NRLs, the majority of respondents considered these efforts to be positive. These results, collected from a total of 34 respondents, indicate that most people perceive coordination between EURLs and NRLs as a success[178]. Nevertheless, feedback from the survey on collaboration between EURLs reveals important communication and collaboration challenges, in particular because the main communication is limited to annual meetings of the European Commission, which are insufficient for effective continuous collaboration on technical level. The organisation of technical meetings focusing on training and workshops could improve methodological exchanges.

The EURCAWs have contributed to knowledge and sharing of expertise and experience to implement in an effective and coherent manner EU's animal welfare standards welfare standard. Between 2021 and 2022 EURC on animal welfare (EURCAW) produced 3 scientific studies, 1 technical and scientific studies, 4 scientific documents and 8 reports. In addition, EURCAW initiatives produced 70 factsheets, with 42 updates of existing versions, as well as 13 comprehensive animal welfare reviews. On training and collaboration, 3 workshops, 28 meetings, 6 webinars, 5 training guides and 2 training toolkits were[179] developed, alongside multiple collaborative events with national and EU bodies. The total

176 HaDEA and DG SANTE data.
177 Support study.
178 With a strong focus on standardisation of methods, effectiveness of communication, responsiveness to NRLs' needs and overall management of collaborative processes.
179 Training toolkits for CAs and support organisations to organise cascading courses in their respective Member State (factsheets, training programme, ppt presentations, video lessons, final evaluation test).

number of requests for support and advice from national networks and authorities addressed to the three EURCAW amounted to 37 for the period 2021-2023.

The BTSF programme has ongoing training contracts and delivered nine training sessions on the Animal Health Law and animal disease preparedness in 2022, involving over 250 participants from both EU and non-EU countries.

The effectiveness of the BTSF initiatives measured by participants was very high (89%)[180]. In the past three years, the participants considered that the programme remained effective thanks to various tools and methods used, such as workshops, sustained training missions, e-learning, and improved dissemination possibilities using the multilingual training material within the BTSF Academy.

It has to be indicated that BTSF Academy was introduced in May 2022 which allowed the broader audience to access the BTSF ACADEMY Library contents of over 120 thematic courses in the BTSF initiative. This expansion strengthened the commitment to reach out to more users on BTSF training material and in that regard increase knowledge of participants such as control officials in MS.

BTSF initiatives have improved inspection protocols and compliance with food safety standards, with 71.1% of respondents acknowledging their contribution to the harmonisation of control systems across the EU[181]. Similarly, BTSF was acknowledged as a training SANTE framework for future training deployment in the Council recommendation on AMR.

4.1.1.1.6. Specific objective 6: Developing, producing, disseminating and communicating high-quality European statistics

Pillar 6 has made effective progress in achieving its specific objective, and targets are already achieved or on track to be achieved (See Annex XIV). Trust in European statistics remains high, with 95% of 1 675 respondents in the 2024 User Satisfaction Survey (USS)[182] expressing confidence in the impartiality and reliability of the data. Despite this trust, there remains a slight gap between the perceptions of producers and users when it comes to the accessibility and clarity of the data provided. According to the results of the targeted consultations of producers and users of statistics, where 71.5% of producers judged that the ESP was to a great or moderate extent successful in introducing improvements in accessibility and clarity, with another 8.5% to a small extent, while the corresponding shares of users where 75% and 18.7% respectively. The vast majority of surveyed producers and users had a predominantly positive opinion on observed quality improvements also for relevance (producers 73.5%, users 87.6%), accuracy and reliability (producers 71.5%, users 88.3%), coherence and comparability (producers 77.2%, users 87.6%).

The statistical coverage has expanded significantly. Eurostat increased the number of indicators, sub-indicators, and data breakdowns from 446 million in 2020 to 718 million in 2022. Although the figure dropped to 705 million in 2023, the overall growth since 2020 indicates substantial progress[183]. Efforts to make Eurostat's website more user-friendly and improve the availability and accessibility of metadata have yielded positive results.

The USS 2024 also supports the conclusion about some improvements in statistical coverage. When asked whether the completeness of data was better or worse (comparison to

180 Commission data (DG SANTE). Data provided by BTSF academy team.
181 Supporting study.
182 User Satisfaction Survey 2024 indicatively planned for publication end of 2024.
183 Source Eurostat's reference database.

the previous USS conducted in 2022), 52% of 1 675 respondents replied that it was the same or better, with only around 2% saying it was worse.

In the targeted surveys, users and producers provided suggestions to improve data availability, such as enhancing it through increased financial contributions, adopting best practices and advanced technology, enhancing flexibility and timeliness, investing in NSIs, providing diverse tools and visual presentations, making data more user-friendly and accessible, ensuring data openness, and utilising innovative data sources and privately held data. Other suggestions included improving Eurostat's communication and dissemination channels, simplifying metadata sections, making the data browser and dissemination database more user-friendly, enhancing database access with centralised query tools, and adding visualisations and cross-topic data on dedicated web pages.

The timeliness of the statistics has improved in the evaluation period as expected according to the relevant monitoring indicator, reflecting the effectiveness of the programme in responding quickly to emerging needs. Quarterly statistics timeliness improved from 82.5 day in 2021 to 81.7 days in 2023, and monthly statistics improved from 32.5 days in 2021 to 29.2 days in 2023[184].

The ESP has noticeably improved the timeliness of European statistics, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. This responsiveness ensured that policymakers had access to up-to-date information, critical for decision-making in these challenging times. Key areas of improvement included transport statistics to monitor mobility, environmental and energy statistics to support the European Green Deal and RePowerEU, and social statistics to track excess mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic, income, living conditions, and labour market trends. Eurostat's annual activity reports (AAR) highlight several instances in which timeliness improvements are visible as a result of the ESP implementation.

The ESP introduced several quality improvements in statistical production, including advancements in methodologies, integration of new data sources, and enhanced data validation processes. These improvements were reflected in user feedback and peer reviews.

The third round of ESS peer reviews in 2021-2023[185] gives an indication of the evolution of quality improvements in statistical production during the evaluation period. Peer reviews are an integral component of the ESS' strategy for overseeing the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice[186] (CoP). The final report on the third round of ESS peer reviews[187] identified strengths and innovative practices in the ESS, provided a summary of the recommendations on compliance with the CoP or for forward looking improvements, highlighted the lessons learned and identified ESS-level actions.

The European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) exceeded its participation targets early, with the 2024 goal reached in 2022 and the 2027 target (seven courses) achieved by 2023 (see Annex VI). This success underscores the programme's effectiveness in training and capacity building within the European Statistical System (ESS).

184 Measured on new releases of a set of quarterly and monthly statistics, being calculated from the release day of the news releases published by Eurostat as the number of days between the last day of the statistics' reference period and the release day of the related news release.
185 The first round was conducted in the period 2006-2008, while the second round took place during the 2013-2015 period.
186 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-quality-standards/european-statistics-code-of-practice.
187 SWD (2024) 136 final - COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Final report on the third round of the European Statistical System peer reviews, https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2024)136&lang=en.

In terms of international collaboration, significant progress was made in negotiating new administrative arrangements with international organisations like the United Nations Economic Commission and the OECD. This has strengthened the cooperation between Eurostat and other global bodies, fostering alignment on statistical standards. Eurostat has also seen an increase in research project proposals requesting access to European microdata, serving as an indication for the level of engagement with the research community. While further growth is needed to reach the 2027 target of 5 000 projects, the submission of 386 new research requests in 2022 and 406 in 2023 marks a positive trajectory, with a growth rate of 5.2%[188].

The effectiveness of the ESP is furthermore demonstrated by the extensive use of Eurostat's data in the development, monitoring, and evaluation of EU policies, providing a robust evidence base for informed decision-making. Eurostat's data was crucial in supporting major strategies, including the NextGenerationEU, the European Industrial Strategy, the EU Digital Strategy, the EU Green Deal, RePowerEU and Sustainable Development Goals usage of modern information technology.

In its opinion on the draft Work Programme 2023, ESAC, which represents users, appreciated that Eurostat had acted to introduce more statistics in support of policymaking, by producing statistics for the Recovery and Resilience Facility[189].

Results from the USS 2024 show that users find statistics important for monitoring or formulating policy and for preparing legislation. 52% and 59% (respectively) of respondents thought that statistics are essential for these purposes, 88% and 91% (respectively) believed that statistics are either essential or important.

Additionally, surveys and interviews confirmed that Eurostat's data, especially GDP, inflation, and employment statistics, plays a critical role in evidence-based policymaking.

The surveyed producers predominantly agree that Eurostat data were used for creating, monitoring, and evaluating EU policies. Replies from the surveyed users differ noticeably regarding how useful these statistics are for policymaking on different regional levels. Share of 'To a great extent' and 'To a moderate extent' answers notably drop at the expense of 'To a small extent' and 'Not at all' answers the lower the level is. This could indicate a potentially insufficient breakdown of data on lower levels.

4.1.1.2. Achievement of activities linked with overarching priorities

In line with the rationale at programme level in Section 2.1, the table below summarise the achievements of the main activities related to the overarching priorities.

Table 8: Achievements of main activities related to overarching priorities

Pillar	Activities	Main effects
Overarching Priority 1: Empower citizens and businesses (especially SMEs) to get full access to Single Market opportunities		
1	• Digital services for consumers & businesses	• Your Europe: 132 million visits (2021-23)

188 Source Eurostat.
189 ESAC Opinion on the draft Work Programme 2023, p. 3

Pillar	Activities	Main effects
		• Your Europe portal users redirected to national websites and services: 42 million (2023) • Your Europe Advice queries: +64 633 • YEA replies within the deadline: 94.1%(2023) • YEA replies provided >1 day late: 1.9%(2023) • YEA average quality of replies:93.6% • EU Taxonomy Compass: 431 745 visitors; 953 720 visits
2	• SME advice/ support services • Entrepreneur exchanges • Cluster support • Sector action	• SMEs receiving support by the EEN: 292 000 • EEN client satisfaction: 99% (2023) • International partnerships for SMEs established by EEN: 2 048 • Entrepreneurs involved in EYE exchanges: 2 086 • SMEs benefiting from Euroclusters: 3 087 • SMEs benefiting from financial support to third parties: 1 747 • SME digital tools (EEN, EYE, YEB, ECCP): 21.5 million users • IPR Helpdesks: 14 414 SMEs supported • EU SME Centre in China: 2 682 SMEs supported • EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation: 7 732 SMEs supported
• 3	• Organisations representing consumers, SMEs, workers & other interests in European standardisation	• Better representation in the standardisation process: • BEUC: +500 meetings with the Commission; +30 consumer associations represented and taking part in consultations • Better Finance: 4 million consumers represented through 40 organisations in 25 countries; 60 responses to public consultations, 15 position papers; 5 open letters • Finance Watch: includes +110 civil society organisations or experts; 41 responses to consultations; 23 policy/position papers • ANEC: increased number of experts from 158 to 185, participating in 225 committees • ECOS: increased number of experts: 40 to 55 • ETUC: experts active in 20 committees; submitted 86 comments / contributions
• 4	• Consumer advice/ support services • Consumer bodies • Collective consumer redress or private enforcement • Awareness raising & education	• European Consumer Centres (ECCs): 120 000 responses to consumer requests p.a. • ECC Net website: 120 000 visits (2023) • Consumer savings recovered by ECCs: EUR 26 million (2021-23) • 300 000 cases handled by ADRs p.a. (national resolution rates of 17% to 100%)

Pillar	Activities	Main effects
• 5	• Animal welfare improvement activities • Sustainable production and consumption initiatives	• Increased awareness and approximation with the Union's animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health policy since 2020 • Improved animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health standards in neighbouring countries and throughout the region of Europe since 2020 • Member States that have put in place national food waste prevention strategies: 23 (2023) • Number of presentations in events and other communication activities (e.g. posts on the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub): 1 (2023) • Tested and improved national/regional food waste measurement methods: 4 (2023)
• 6	• Provision and communication of European statistics	• Number of indicators, sub-indicators and their breakdowns: 705 (2023) • User-friendliness of Eurostat's website: 88 (2024) • Database sessions made by external users from Eurostat reference database via the Eurostat website: 3.2 million (2023) • Timeliness of statistics, measured on news releases: 81.7 days (Quarterly), 29.2 days (Monthly) • New experimental statistics dataset published: 7 (2023) • User trust in European statistics: 95% (2024) • Research projects requesting access to European microdata in the Eurostat database: 3 895 (2023) • Web mentions and positive/negative opinions: 931 300 (2023) • X followers: 252 000 (2023) • Facebook followers: 150 000 (2023) • Instagram followers: 116 000 (2023)
• **Overarching Priority 2: Enhance cooperation, capacity building and integration between competent authorities**		
• 1	• Networks of authorities • Joint market surveillance and enforcement actions • Capacity building, training, equipment, facilities, etc. • Cooperation between authorities	• NCAs reporting: • More efficient case-handling and speedier investigations (22/23) • Improved capacities, skills, knowledge (22/23) • Improved capabilities to enforce competition rules (22/23) • Better implementation and enforcement of competition policy in their country (22/23 • • New/enhanced training courses in competition law for judges + supporting materials: 6

Pillar	Activities	Main effects
		• National officials to be trained in competition law: 343 • 20 joint market surveillance campaigns (2021-2022) • New EU Testing Facilities: 2 (toys, radio equipment) • MSAs reporting: • More effective market surveillance across the EU due to horizontal activities (22/32) • Greater homogeneity of market surveillance and increased capacity due to EUPCN (29/32)
• 2	• Public procurement actions • Support for skills development	• Pact for Skills • European Solar Academy
• 4	• Collaboration tools • CPC Network/actions • Joint actions • Capacity building, training	• Consumer Law Ready and Consumer PRO: 24 000 website visits; 1 069 SME trainers and SMEs trained • Train-the-Trainer: +900 consumer professionals trained • Consumer Summits: 2 200 attendees
• 5	• Emergency, veterinary, phytosanitary, vaccine, AMR, emergency actions • EURL and EURC • Capacity building, training • Databases, experts, joint projects, etc.	• Successfully implemented national veterinary programmes: 94.2% (2021-2022), 99% (2023) • Successfully implemented national phytosanitary programmes: 100% (2021-2023) • 163 proficiency tests and 41 comparative tests undertaken by EURLs for NRLs • Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF): 27 400 staff trained (2021-2023)
• 6	• Cooperation (European Statistical System) • Infrastructure/ methodologies • European Statistical Training Programme	• Participants in ESTP courses on innovative sources and methods for official statistics: 1 769 (2021-2023) • Administrative arrangements with key partners: 2 (2023) • IT Infrastructure and Methodological Advancements • Improved governance and resource management via ESS Peer Reviews • Enhanced capacity, skills and methodologies through knowledge sharing and partnerships within the European Statistical System (ESS
• **Overarching Priority 3: Support EU rulemaking, standard setting & EU law enforcement**		
• 1	• Digital tools serving authorities • International bodies • Expertise, studies, etc.	• External users/visitors of DG COMP IT tools: 178 521 (2023) • Documents submitted by external users on DG COMP IT tools: 112 742 (2023)

Pillar	Activities	Main effects
		• NCAs expressing a positive view of DG COMP IT tools: 23/25 • IMI: 112 550 exchanges; 12 500 users, (2023) • IMI: Member States performing at green level: 21 (2023) • Studies or consultations in the field of competition policy: 17 • Studies or consultations in the field of market surveillance: 3
• 2	• SME policy actions	• SME Assembly • SME Envoys • SME studies and monitoring exercises • Fit for Future platform • SME Performance Review
• 3	• European Standardisation Organisations • Standards development • International bodies for reporting standards	• Active European standards: 23 229 (2023) • Active European standards (ETSI): 4 898 (2023) • International financial reporting and auditing standards endorsed by the Union: 98.4% (2022) • Share of implementation of European standards as national standards by Member States in total amount of active European standards: 80.29% (2022)
• 4	• Digital tools serving authorities • Consumer Scoreboard, studies, etc.	• 7 671 alerts on Safety Gate • 9 184 follow-up actions (2021-2023) • 752 requests exchanged via CPC Network (2020-2024)
• 5	• Expertise, studies, etc.	• Cost-benefit analyses and feasibility studies • Training materials (BTSF) • Supplying vaccine and antigen banks • Enhanced information management systems for monitoring and management of food and feed safety. • EU Emergency Veterinary Team • Investments in research and development, • Updated regulatory frameworks • Support for international organisations (Food banks, EPPO, IPPC, WOAH, FAO EU FMD)
• 6	• Support to Eurostat to meet requirements of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009	• Eurostat satisfying the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009

Source: Elaboration for the supporting study.

4.1.1.3. Limitations to effectiveness and unintended effects

No evidence of unintended effects of the SMP have been identified.

There are however some potentially unintended effects mostly due to the 'integrated structure' of the SMP that have been early identified in the design stage and mitigated[190]. The decision to maintain distinct pillars respects the legal and institutional needs specific to the Programme and the budget lines. This has allowed for the smooth continuation of activities from previous programmes while ensuring uninterrupted governance and delivery.

Retaining the branding of long-established actions which has been beneficial for recognition and trust among target groups. Digital tools like the Your Europe portal, Your Europe Advice, and the EU Taxonomy Compass kept their original names, fostering trust and recognition. The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) programme has benefited from retaining its association with the widely recognised Erasmus brand, enhancing its reputation. Likewise, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) kept its name from the COSME programme, maintaining its established identity. Though SMEs' awareness that the EU supports EEN services may be improved, as noted in the COSME final evaluation[191].

In terms of factors limiting the effectiveness, the COVID-19 pandemic had varying impacts on the effectiveness of different pillars and activities. While some activities, such as Pillar 1 digital tools and platforms (e.g. competition policy and financial services), continued relatively smoothly due to the online nature of their activities, others experienced more disruption. For example, EYE exchanges under Pillar 2 faced delays due to travel restrictions and reliance on in-person interactions, leading to extended contracts to enable intermediary organisations to use unspent budgets. Similarly, within Pillar 5, BTSF training experienced some initial disruption in 2020, but the transition to online training in 2021 mitigated further delays. Pillar 6 was largely effective in responding to new data demands triggered by the pandemic, although some Eurostat stakeholders did report financial challenges in modernising statistical production.

Limitations have been identified for some of the SMP pillars specifically and tackled as possible.

For Pillar 1, some challenges were faced. In general, the nature of some of the expenditure financed did not allow to exactly quantify results or impacts (e.g. low procurement expenditure, IT running costs) so that the evaluation of this part is mostly focused on outputs having supported Commission's activities in the various areas covered by this pillar.

Within Pillar 1a, while the availability of quantitative data enabled a good analysis, some challenges were encountered due to limited availability of qualitative data. For example, feedback from users of digital tools financed from the SMP is not routinely collected by DG COMP. Some useful insights into stakeholder satisfaction were obtained through interviews and targeted consultations, but for certain IT tools results cannot be considered conclusive, due to the fact that respondents were differently involved with the tools or due to different degrees of implementation of the said tools. However, the usability of the tools is proved by the increasing number of users/views and the indirect feedback obtained through requests for additional features.

Due to the nature of some type of expenditure financed under Pillar 1 (e.g. costs for IT tools running activities) progress was assessed in certain cases based on the delivery of outputs and impact is harder to quantify. Nonetheless, this evidence shows that the actions have effectively supported the Commission in ensuring a well-functioning of the single market in

190 See Annexes IX-XIV.
191 COSME, Programming, monitoring and evaluation - European Commission.

an efficient way. Collecting user feedback on a more regular basis for certain tools, where relevant and if not already collected, would provide more comprehensive evidence of their full impact.

For Pillar 2, the research for this evaluation faced several challenges. The SME Pillar consists of three big flagship actions with multi-annual contracts[70] and a high number of other actions. It was not possible to analyse in-depth every single action. A focus was put on the flagship actions and specific sectoral actions (based on the amount of allocated budget). For actions with a long tradition such as the EEN, identified effects cannot be exactly attributed to the programme period evaluated (2021-2023), as client support normally has long-term or recurrent character and SMEs often have used the services already in previous programme periods. Nevertheless, there is limited impact on the robustness and validity of findings.

Concerning the targeted consultations, the response rate was comparable with other similar evaluations such as to those of the consultations carried out for the COSME final evaluation[71].

Some stakeholder groups such as EU-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee members were sometimes only able to assess specific actions of the Pillar. This may be partly explained by the character of their involvement in the Pillar actions.

A more detailed overview of methodology is provided in sub-annex III to the Annex X.

For **Pillar 3**, the evaluation of effectiveness in the SMP reveals key limitations for Pillar 3a, however for Pillar 3b the analysis did not point show evidence of unintended effects.

As regards European standards, the reliance on a single KPI – adoption rates of European standards – fails to capture broader impacts, such as alignment with policy objectives such as support to innovation, green and digital transition. Data inconsistencies, particularly for ETSI, and a lack of output indicators hinder accurate assessment. Metrics for stakeholder participation focus on quantity rather than the quality or influence of contributions. Lastly, the absence of long-term impact analysis and international benchmarking limits the ability to fully gauge the programme's success.

For Pillar 4, several limitations were identified. As regards the Pillar 4a at the time of the evaluation, most of the financed actions were still in the early phase of implementation, providing limited data on real results and the overall impact of the actions. Consequently, the analysis of the evaluation mostly relied on outputs of actions financed under SMP between 2021 and 2023. Moreover, the response rate to the online consultation (despite the extension of the response time) has been low for Pillar 4a, which has prevented its use in certain cases because of low representativeness. The findings were supplemented (whenever possible) by evidence gathered through the interviews and the literature.

The specialised focus of the beneficiaries' activities of Pillar 4b and the dependence of the activities to a certain extent to the policy developments and policy cycle of the EU institutions creates challenges in measuring the quality or impact of the activities in quantitative indicators. Nevertheless, it remains important to have KPIs in place in order to measure the quantitative outputs of the beneficiaries so there could be a benefit in revising the KPIs of their programme in order to improve their relevance to the action. Given the nature of the funded activities (e.g. policy and advocacy work) and considering the low amount of funding under pillar 4b it is also difficult to measure and quantify results and

direct impacts on consumers so that the evaluation of this specific area of intervention is mainly focused on the progress of outputs delivered by the beneficiaries.

For Pillar 5, several challenges were detected. The increased number of animal disease outbreaks such as ASF, HPAI have shown weakness of the programme to adequately co-fund eradication measures. As a result of increased outbreaks, the co-funding rates had to be reduced by 60%. This had an impact on national budgets and could have led to less effective eradication measures. In this regard it would be useful to have actual access to an emergency reserve fund.

The monitoring framework has limitations. The availability of quantitative data (e.g. for cost-efficiency analysis) is a challenge though some data was available and used in the report. In order to address this issue requests will be made to HaDEA to provide information for the final SMP evaluation.

For Pillar 6, barriers to fulfilling ESP's objectives were encountered. Resource constraints and the rapid pace of technological change were significant challenges for the ESP during the evaluation period 2021-2023. Continuous investment in people and technology was essential to maintain the ESP's efficiency and effectiveness.

In the interviews, many stakeholder groups identified resource constraints and resource allocation as significant barriers, particularly in the face of evolving statistical demands and the rapid pace of technological change. Other challenges mentioned were (i) the need to adapt skills to technological advancements (ii) gaps in the ESP's ability to keep pace with rapid developments in data use and governance; (iii) the need for better prioritisation and resource allocation; (iv) the lengthy legislative process within the ESS that could slow down responsiveness and (v) the increased workload on national statistical institutes due to rising demands for new statistical products.

Suggestions to overcome the identified challenges were: (i) continuous investment in human resources and technology; (ii) dedicated budget allocations for statistics within the SMP to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the ESP; (iii) further simplifying grant processes; (iv) integrating the ESP within broader European data policies to keep pace with rapid technological developments in data use and governance; (v) greater consideration to users' feedback in the legislative process; and (vi) improving user engagement and feedback to provide more timely and relevant outputs.

4.1.2. Efficiency

Considering the diversity of activities across its six pillars, in order to draw conclusions on the Programme's efficiency, it is necessary to focus on cross-cutting efficiency factors affecting multiple areas of the Programme, such as the administrative burden faced by beneficiaries, and on the overarching management and implementation of the SMP[192].

The tables below summarise the main benefits and costs for stakeholders.

Table 9: main benefits for stakeholders

Main benefits for citizens and consumers	Pillar

192 Therefore, detailed analysis of efficiency specific to each pillar are tackled in Annexes VII-XII.

Access to information and advice services	
• Your Europe visits: 132 million (2021-2023) • Your Europe Advice queries: +64 633 • Your Europe portal users redirected to national websites and services: 42 million (2023) • Your Europe Advice queries: +64 633 • YEA replies within the deadline: 94.1% (2023) • YEA replies provided >1 day late: 1.9% (2023) • YEA average quality of replies:93.6%	1
• European Consumer Centres: 120 000 responses to consumer requests p.a. • ECC Net website: 120 000 visits (2023)	4
• Eurostat users: 12 million database sessions (2021-2023); social media followers (2023): +252 000 (Twitter); +150 000 (Facebook) followers (2023); +116 000 Instagram followers (2023); 3 895 requests for access to European microdata • Number of indicators, sub-indicators and their breakdowns: 705 (2023) • User-friendliness of Eurostat's website: 88 (2024) • Database sessions made by external users from Eurostat reference database via the Eurostat website: 3.2 million (2023)	6
Consumer savings	
• Consumers' money recovered by European Consumer Centres: EUR 26 million (2021-2023) • 300 000 cases handled by ADRs p.a. (with resolution rates ranging from 17% to 100%, depending on the Member State)	4
Better capacity of providers of services to consumers	
• Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) network • Consumer Law Ready: 24 000 website visits; 1 069 SME trainers and SMEs trained • Consumer PRO: +900 consumer professionals trained Consumer Summits: 2 200 attendees • e-Enforcement Academy: +860 national officials trained	4
Better representation in policymaking	
• European Consumer voice in standardisation (ANEC, financed by the SMP): represents consumers in the standardisation process; increased the number of experts from 158 to 185 participating in 225 committees • Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS, representing environmental interests in the standardisation process) grew from 40 to 55 experts • European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC, representing workers in the standardisation process): experts were active in 20 committees and submitted 86 comments and contributions to standardisation	3

• European Consumer Organisation (BEUC): advocated for consumers in +500 meetings with the Commission on a range of consumer-related topics • +44 independent consumer associations represented by BEUC and taking part in consultations • Better Finance represents 4 million financial services users through 40 organisations in 25 countries; 60 responses to public consultations, 15 position papers and 5 open letters; rated as effective or very effective by 32/34 members • Finance Watch (financed by the SMP): membership includes +110 civil society organisations and experts; provided 41 responses to consultations and 23 policy/position papers; rated as effective or very effective by 18/28 members	4
Increased health and safety	
• Fewer unsafe and non-compliant products on the market due to joint market surveillance actions and coordinated activities on the safety of products (1 058 samples tested in 2021-2022)	1
• Better standards which are produced with greater participation of representatives of consumers, workers and environmental interests • Increased awareness of environmental issues: ECOS (representing environmental interests) operated 13 awareness raising campaigns and produced 23 publications in 2023	3
• Quicker and more effective circulation of information on measures taken against non-food dangerous products (7 671 alerts on Safety Gate and 9 184 follow-up actions in 2021-2023. 752 requests exchanged between CPC in 2020-2024)	4
• Increased awareness of healthy and sustainable consumption practices • Safer food, higher food standards, fewer and less severe disease outbreaks (achievement of targets for Salmonella in poultry populations, Rabies, Bruceliosis, TSE, C-BSE; partial achievement of targets for African swine fever, Avian influenza; improved national/regional food waste measurement methods; improved animal welfare and testing, laboratory testing, genetic evaluation data)	5
Main benefits for businesses	**Pillar**
Access to information and advice services	
• EU Taxonomy Compass: 431 745 visitors; 953 720 visits	1
• Enterprise Europe Network clients: 292 000 SMEs • SME digital tools (EEN, EYE, YEB, ECCP): 21.5 million users • IPR Helpdesks: 14 414 SMEs supported • EU SME Centre in China: 2 682 SMEs supported • EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation: 7 732 SMEs supported	2
Secure and effective exchange of confidential information with the Commission in the context of competition policy	
• 204 398 external users of DG COMP IT tools (2022-2023)	1

Enhanced skills, capacity, networks, etc.	
• Entrepreneurs involved in EYE exchanges: 2 086 • International partnerships for SMEs established by EEN: 2 048 • Supported companies concluding business partnerships: 1 724 • SMEs benefiting from Euroclusters: 3 087 • SMEs benefiting from financial support to third parties: 1 747 • Knowledge transfer in tourism and social economy actions	2
• SMEs benefiting from training in consumer law: +500	4
Compensation payments for lost crops, culled animals, etc.	
• Compensations to stakeholders under emergency measures (EUR 230.7 million) • Culled birds/eggs due to AI in Czechia: EUR 5.5 million	5
Better representation in policymaking	
• SME Assembly • SME Envoys	2
• SBS: increased number of experts, from 63 to 67, covering 233 technical committees and working groups); increased number of social media followers by 38%	3
Main benefits for standardisation organisations	**Pillar**
Core funding for activities	
• Direct support received by European Standardisation Organisations as actions grants to fund calls for standardisation requests (EUR 34.1 allocated between 2021 and 2023): 117 calls launched by EISMEA and 39 projects signed, under preparation or complete between 2021 and 2023. • Direct support received by Annex III organisations to participate in the standardisation process: SBS received EUR 5.3 million, ANEC received EUR 4.5 million, ECOS received EUR 3.8 million and ETUC received EUR 1.5 million between 2021 and 2023.	3
Enhanced capacity to develop standards	
• Direct support to European Standardisation Organisations (CEN, CENELEC and ETSI) to conduct administrative tasks (EUR 10.595 million between 2021 and 2023). • Direct support to EFRAG for the implementation of its double mandate: EUR 13.1 million were received between 2021 and 2023, and the first set of 12 European Sustainability Reporting Standards produced to support EU legislation. • Direct support to International Financial Reporting Standards: EUR 11.4 million received from the Commission between 2021 and 2023 for the functioning of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB)	3

Communication and promotion of European standardisation	
• Funding for communication and promotion of the European standardisation system (EUR 21 793) by the Commission	3
Main benefits for national authorities	**Pillar**
Increased capacities, skills and knowledge to implement and enforce EU competition law	
• Secure and effective exchange of confidential information with the Commission via ECN2: 1 136 external users (2023); 4 055 documents submitted by external users (2023) • More efficient case-handling and speedier investigations (reported by 22/23 NCAs) • NCAs with improved capacities, skills, knowledge (22/23) • NCAs with improved capabilities to enforce competition rules due to the ECN (22/23) • NCAs reporting better implementation and enforcement of competition policy in their country due to the ECN (22/23)) • Better cooperation (e.g. through ECN, State Aid Modernisation Working Group, Working group on Foreign Subsidies Regulation, Economic Advisory Group on Competition Policy and Transparency Award Module Steering Group) • Judges to be trained in competition law: 343 • Better cooperation and coordination of activities between national enforcement authorities within the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) network	1 4
Increased capacities, skills and knowledge to undertake market surveillance	
• Better interface between national customs systems and the ICSMS • Better cooperation (e.g. through EUPCN, AdCos) • MSAs reporting more effective market surveillance across the EU due to horizontal activities (22/32) • MSAs reporting greater homogeneity of market surveillance and increased capacity due to the EUPCN (29/32) • Access to two new testing facilities (radio equipment, toys) • Market surveillance authorities participating in CASP activities	1 4
Increased capacities to help remove barriers to operating in the single market	
• Competent authorities using IMI: 12 500 (2023) • IMI exchanges in total: 112 550 (2023)	1
Increased capacities, skills and knowledge to enforce consumer protection laws	
• 38 authorities participating in Coordinated Actions on the Safety of Products (CASP) • Enhanced ability of the CPC network and the Consumer Safety Network (CSN) to conduct online investigations through the e-Enforcement Academy: 12 new e-	4

learning modules on different topics and sectors, 10 tutorials, 12 webinars,15 local training sessions for 317 enforcement officials, and 3 CPC workshops	
Increased capacities, skills and knowledge to ensure a high level of food safety	
• Enhanced capacity to implement WOAH's animal welfare standards (53 countries) • Enhanced national systems for data collection and reporting on antimicrobial sales and usage in animals (18 Member States) • National food waste prevention strategies (23 Member States) • Enhanced staff competence through BTSF (27 400 individuals) • Improved inspection protocols and compliance with food safety regulations (72% of survey respondents)	5
Increased capacities, skills and knowledge to produce statistics	
• Increased number of participants in European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) courses (7) leading to increased skills and skills and knowledge required for emerging data demands • Enhanced pool of resources available for production and development of new statistics at national level (26/35 MS agree) • Investments in IT infrastructure and automation, supporting enhanced data validation, quality management, and the use of new technologies like web-scraping, GIS systems, and AI. • Improved governance, resource management and quality management, facilitated by enhanced staff competencies and resource allocation. (confirmed by 3rd round of ESS Peer Reviews).	6

Elaboration for the supporting study.

Table 10: main costs for the stakeholders

Type of cost	Cost
Citizens and consumers	
Direct compliance costs	• None (no compliance requirements are imposed on consumers)
Enforcement costs	• None (no enforcement requirements are imposed on consumers)
Indirect costs	• None (participation in, use of, or engagement with SMP activities is entirely voluntary and imposes no costs on consumers.
Businesses	
Direct compliance costs	• None (no compliance requirements are imposed on businesses)
Enforcement costs	• None (no enforcement requirements are imposed on businesses)

Indirect costs	• Administration burden associated with (voluntary) participation in SMP actions supporting SMEs (Pillar 2): • 5-20 days per beneficiary per participation • Rated as 'reasonable' by the majority of beneficiaries
Standardisation organisations	
Direct compliance costs	• None (no compliance requirements are imposed on consumers)
Enforcement costs	• None (no enforcement requirements are imposed on consumers)
Indirect costs	• Administration burden associated with EU grant funding received by beneficiaries
National authorities	
Direct compliance costs	• None (no compliance requirements are imposed on national authorities)
Enforcement costs	• None (no enforcement requirements are imposed on national authorities)
Indirect costs	• Provision of co-financing (where relevant, e.g. grant-funded projects) • Administration burden associated with receiving EU grant funding
European Commission	
Direct compliance costs	• No compliance costs are imposed by the SMP (except in respect of managing and accounting for SMP funds) • Costs of programme management are covered by the SMP budget
Enforcement costs	• No enforcement costs are imposed by the SMP (except in respect of managing and accounting for SMP funds) • Costs of programme management are covered by the SMP budget
Indirect costs	• None

Elaboration for the supporting study.

4.1.2.1. Benefits for stakeholders

The SMP actions directly strengthen the Commission's capacity to develop, implement, and enforce EU law, as well as support its policymaking role through services procurement (Pillars 1, 2, 4 or 5). Moreover, it also strengthens capacity in the Member States, as national authorities (e.g. judges, enforcement bodies, market surveillance, competent authorities for e.g. food safety, animal and plant health, and national producers of statistics) have also benefited from the SMP activities, which includes capacity building, skill development, and knowledge enhancement, as well as enhanced collaboration with other national authorities, the Commission, and stakeholders (Pillars 1, 2, 4, 5 or 6).

Standardisation organisations have received essential funding from the SMP to continue their operations and increase their capacity (Pillar 1 and Pillar 3). Organisations such as

consumer advocacy groups, industry associations, and business networks have been supported by the SMP either through direct operational funding (e.g. grants to consumer organisations under Pillar 4) or through capacity building initiatives, such as Euroclusters and actions supporting tourism and the social economy, which also allowed improved collaboration between entities (Pillar 2).

SMEs and entrepreneurs have both directly benefited from various services, such as the EEN, Intellectual Property SME Helpdesks, YEA, and IMI (Pillars 1 and 2). They also benefited from the overall reduction of barriers to operating in the single market linked with all SMP pillars. SMEs have gained indirectly through improvements in framework conditions supported by strategic initiatives like Euroclusters, tourism, and social economy actions, as well as the reduction of internal market barriers addressed by all pillars. Entrepreneurs also gained valuable knowledge and experience through the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) mobility programme.

Consumers have directly benefited from information and advice services provided by European Consumer Centres (Pillar 4) and by platforms like Your Europe, Your Europe Advice, Safety Gate, as well as Eurostat[193] (all pillars). They have indirectly benefited from better representation by consumer organisations (Pillar 4) and broader actions aimed at improving several areas of the single market, such as stronger enforcement of competition policy, enhanced market surveillance, improved standards, namely of food safety and plant health and more effective response to disease outbreaks (Pillar 5).

Due to the diversity of the SMP pillars, more information specific to each SMP pillar is included below.

For Pillar 1, an efficient use of resources has been facilitated by the fact that Pillar 1 of the SMP has not required the setting up of new procedures or structures for programme management. The efficient use of resources within Pillar 1 of the SMP has been primarily driven by leveraging the Commission's existing budgetary procedures, this approach allowed the streamlined allocation of resources without establishing new processes and management frameworks.

The majority of SMP funding supports the Commission's own mandate to develop, implement, and enforce Union law, and has been allocated to procurement activities managed via the Commission's standard tendering process.

By way of example, the entire budget allocation for Internal Market Governance Tools has been directed towards procuring digital tools (e.g. the Single Digital Gateway, Your Europe Advice, IMI) and their related communication campaigns. The cost-efficiency of such procurement has been particularly pronounced, such as in the case of Your Europe Advice, where external expert contracting has proven significantly more economical than using Commission staff. This efficiency was underscored by the high demand from other DGs to retain this service, with co-financing from alternative budget lines confirmed from 2024 onward.

In relation to digital tools, the Commission tries to focus on reusing existing, open-source, solutions, and only when a suitable existing solution is unavailable it considers adopting off-the-shelf products or developing new platforms. This ensures that resources are used efficiently. Nonetheless, IMI is an excellent example of avoiding developing new systems for different policy areas: due to its reusable workflows and easy to customise (almost

193 Users of statistics have benefited from improved timeliness, impartiality and coverage of EU statistics.

without any additional IT development) structured forms it can be easily and quickly adapted to various administrative cooperation procedures between national authorities in different areas; IMI has removed the need to build at least 20 different IT systems. Some of the tools created by DG COMP have attracted interest from external entities, such as national competition authorities (NCAs), who are exploring options for reuse, for instance the eRFI tool. Similarly for DG FISMA several IT tools are developed/maintained at a relatively low cost which are instrumental to the achievement of key policy objectives and of very high interest for business or citizens (for example FIU.net). This approach aims to maximise resource efficiency and promote broader use of digital solutions across the EU.

The use of procurement also allowed the Commission to adapt and focus the requested services to its actual needs and therefore using its resources in a targeted and efficient way. For example, by purchasing access to well-defined datasets for monitoring the financial market or by procuring a study when evidence-based information required to develop a new political initiative or monitor the well-functioning of an existing one.

For the activities of Pillar 1 linked to Company Law, cost-efficiency in programme management has been achieved by sharing the budget between different Commission services. With an annual funding of approximately EUR 1 million, an equal split arrangement was established between DG FISMA and DG JUST. This shared approach not only optimises resource allocation but also streamlines management responsibilities.

While there is limited evidence of joint activities being undertaken, the SMP has for example contributed to the introduction of a framework contract which both DG FISMA and DG COMP may use (with Case@EC, being also used by DG GROW and DG SANTE). The framework contract concerns assessments of the legislation of third countries aspiring to EU accession. The SMP provided a forum for the DGs to discuss their common needs, which led to the launch of the joint framework contract with a greater financial ceiling than would have been possible in a framework solely led by DG FISMA.

Table 11: main benefits of Pillar 1 activities

Benefits	Activities
European Commission	All the consulted European Commission units report: • Enhanced ability to fulfil role in developing, implementing and enforcing Union law • Enhanced ability to monitor market developments (access to data) • Enhanced ability to influence and participate as a member in international forums (e.g. membership fees) • Reduced administrative burden associated with implementing and enforcing Union law (e.g. through easier and more secure document transfer and exchange of information with national authorities, secure storage of 1 million documents in eDiscovery, increased use of KOEL by Commission services)
National authorities (NCAs, MSAs, courts, etc.)	Benefits reported by NCAs: • more efficient case-handling and speedier investigations (22/23) • improved capabilities to enforce competition rules (22/23) • better implementation and enforcement of competition policy in their country (22/23)

	Benefits reported by MSAs: • satisfaction with joint enforcement actions (27/34) • more effective market surveillance across the EU due to horizontal activities (22/32) • greater homogeneity and increased capacity due to the EUPCN (29/32). • Reduced administrative burden associated with implementing and enforcing Union law through easier and more secure communication, document transfer and exchange of information, e.g. using SANI2, SARI2, ECN2, FIU.net, IMI • Secure digital information exchanges between public authorities via the IMI: 301 821 • Reduced administrative burden offered by DG COMP tools: • 1 136 external users of ECN2 • 4 055 documents submitted by external users of ECN2 (2023) • 432 565 downloads of documents vis ENC2 (up to April 2024) • 8 557 external users of SANI2 (2023) • 6 177 notifications submitted via SANI2 (2023) • 5 186 external users of SARI2 (2023) More effective service offered by FIU.net by reductions in: • support and maintenance incidents: 384 in 2021 to 228 in 2023 • data centre interventions: from 59 (2022) to 12 (2023)
Project beneficiaries	• Greater knowledge of/expertise in EU competition law • 6 new/enhanced training courses in competition law for judges • 343 judges to be trained in EU competition law
Companies, law firms or third parties involved in competition policy cases	• Reduced administrative burden associated with competition law (e.g. through easier and more secure document transfer). • +112 000 documents securely transferred via DG COMP digital tools • +178 000 users of DG COMP digital tools (2023) • 36 558 registered users of the eRFI digital tool (2023) • 5 986 responses submitted by external users to DG COMP via eRFI (2023) • 308 external parties using the eConfidentiality digital tool (2023) • 1 864 visits/views of e-learning materials on eConfidentiality (2023) • 419 external users of eLeniency (2023) • 193 submissions made by external users via eLeniency (2023) • 5.7 million page views of COMP Cases Open Data and Search Engine (from launch in June 2023) • 207 000 unique visitors of COMP Cases Open Data and Search Engine (from launch in June 2023) • 5 402 external users of Transparency Award Module (2023)
Citizens and businesses (in general)	• Increased knowledge and awareness of rights and opportunities in the single market through receiving digital information and advice services, e.g. Your Europe Advice, EU taxonomy Compass. • Your Europe: 32 million visitors (2023) • YEA: 64 633 queries received • EU Taxonomy Navigator 431 745 unique visitors and 953 720 visits)

Elaboration for the supporting study.

For **Pillar 2**, benefits have been observed. EEN member organisations, mostly regional/national business associations, business support organisations, innovation agencies or regional development organisations, usually also provide other services outside the EEN. The survey among the member organisations shows that these entities strongly benefit in various ways from participating in the EEN network (see Table below).

In particular, there is a strong positive effect on the organisations' skills and competencies and on improved reputation. This is also confirmed in the interviews. Being a network partner increases the overall credibility of the organisation. The provision of other services outside the EEN is beneficial as well. For example, EEN clients can be referred to training schemes offered beyond the scope of EEN services. However, cross-fertilisation between EEN and non-EEN services works the other way as well: 37% (43 out of 117 respondents) say that their activities outside the EEN support the implementation and success of EEN services to a 'great extent' and for 50% this is true to at least 'some extent'.

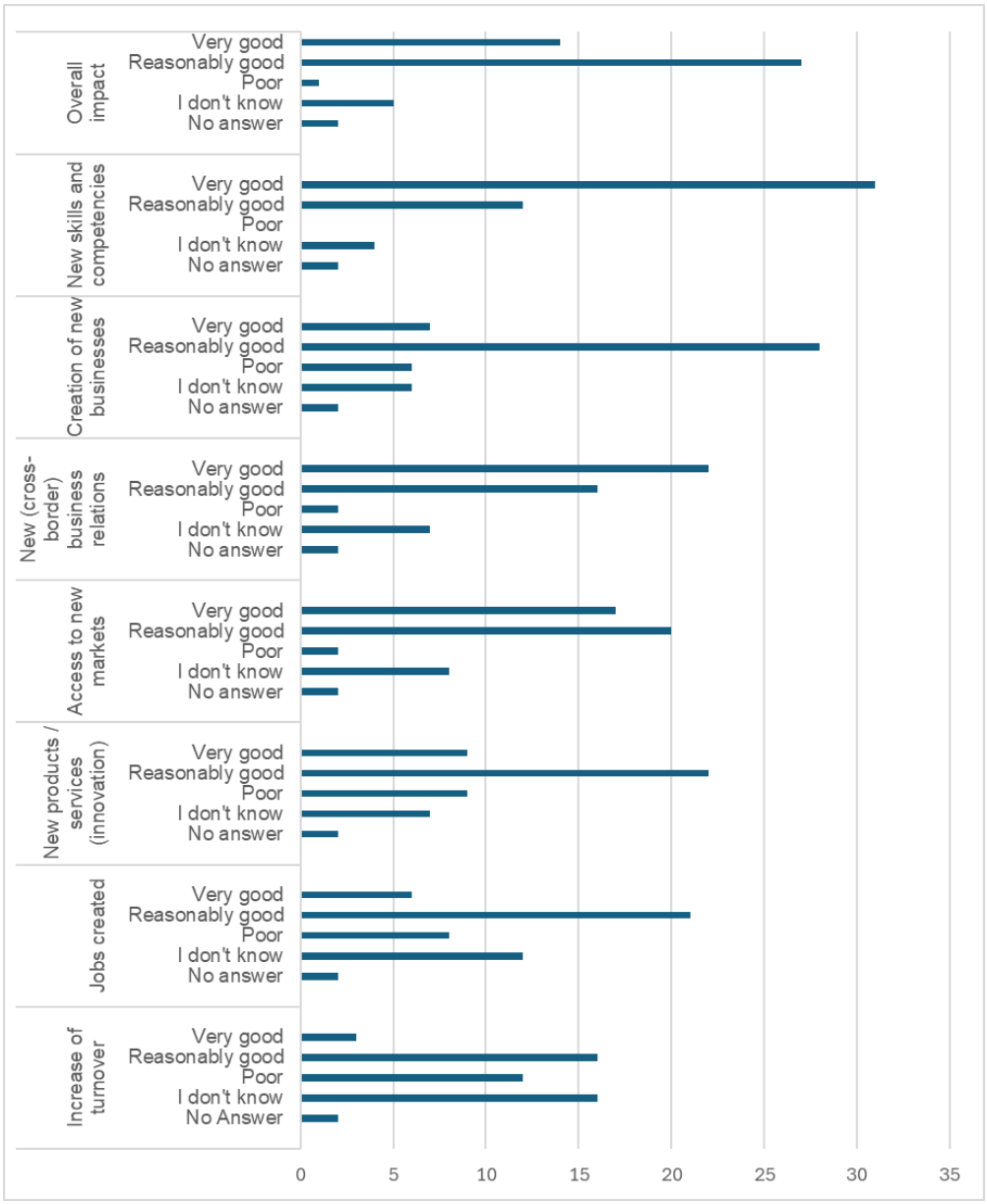
Table 12: Benefits of participation in the EEN Network for EEN member organisations; share of EEN members in %

	strong effect	some effect	no effect	don't know
improved reputation	58%	32%	9%	1%
facilitates the provision of other services	55%	39%	6%	0%
facilitates access to national funding	19%	36%	41%	4%
facilitates participation in other EU programmes	39%	39%	18%	3%
facilitates finding partners for other projects	47%	45%	5%	3%
increases our skills and competencies	62%	32%	5%	0%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

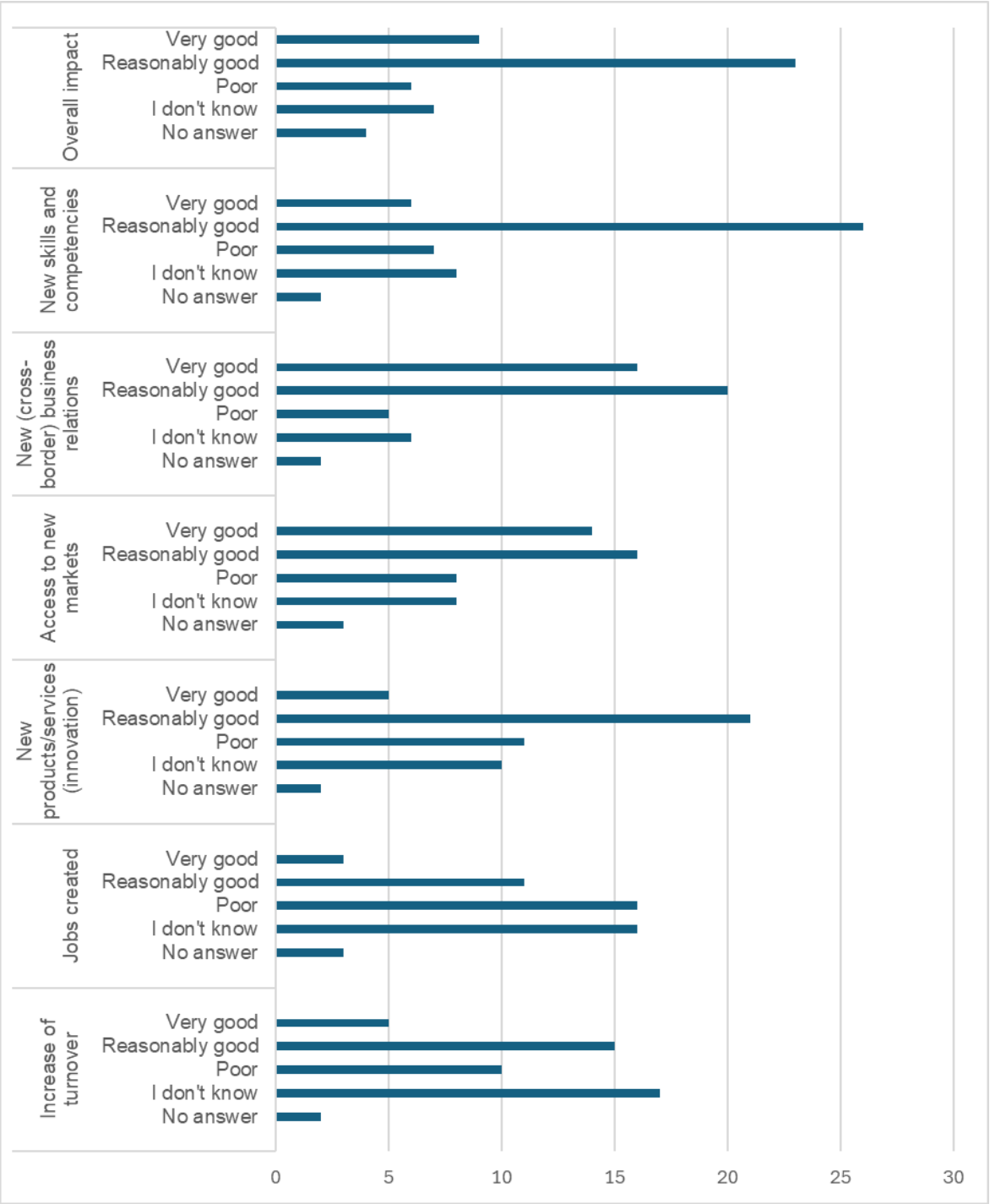
Source: Survey among EEN member organisations; sample size: 117 organisations.

Figure 3: Results of completed exchanges for New Entrepreneurs (as rated by Intermediary Organisations)



Source: Survey among 133 Intermediary Organisations run between May 14-30, 2024 in which 49 Intermediary Organisations participated and were asked the question 'In your opinion, how would you rate the results of the completed exchanges for New Entrepreneurs in the following domains?'.

Figure 4: Results of completed exchanges for Host Entrepreneurs (as rated by Intermediary Organisations)



Source: Survey among 133 Intermediary Organisations run between May 14-30, 2024 in which 49 Intermediary Organisations participated and were asked the question 'In your opinion, how would you rate the results of the completed exchanges for Host Entrepreneurs in the following domains?'.

As can be seen from the Table below, the participation of beneficiaries in tourism-related actions has various positive effects on the beneficiary organisation itself. The strongest effects relate to increasing skills in the organisation (67% of beneficiaries reporting a strong effect) and an improved reputation (64% with a strong effect of that kind).

Table 13: Effects of participation in tourism actions on beneficiaries' organisation, % of beneficiaries

	strong effect	some effect	no effect	don't know

improved reputation/visibility	64%	36%	0%	0%
facilitates access to regional/national funding	33%	42%	24%	0%
facilitates participation in other EU programmes	33%	61%	0%	6%
facilitates finding partners for other projects	52%	42%	6%	0%
increases our skills and competencies	67%	21%	9%	3%
attracts new members to our network	58%	39%	3%	0%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of actions TOURSME 2021 and TOURSME 2022; sample size: 33 beneficiaries.

For **Pillar 3** several benefits were identified.

For **Pillar 3a**, concerning European standards., efficiency gains for stakeholders in European Standardisation were noted. The efficiency of European standardisation processes, particularly under the Single Market Programme (SMP), brings significant benefits to stakeholders. Key areas of impact include the management of Technical Committees (TCs), participation of industry experts, responsiveness to grant calls, and effective project monitoring. Then, **enhancing operations and stakeholder inclusivity** Efficient management of TCs has stabilised their number within European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs), supporting resilience, the green transition, and digital advancements. For instance, CEN maintained 377 TCs in 2021 and 2023, while CENELEC added one TC over the same period (Source: CEN, CENELEC Annual Reports). These committees develop standards essential for EU priorities, such as Ecodesign and energy labelling regulations. SMP funding has improved inclusivity by enabling diverse stakeholder participation, particularly from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and consumer groups. Annex III organisations confirm that their involvement in ESOs and International Standardisation Organisations (ISOs) has increased due to SMP grants, enhancing the relevance of European standards (Source: Consultations with ESOs and Annex III Organisations). And, **improving responsiveness and reducing burdens**. ESO responsiveness to action grant (AG) calls has been variable. Between 2021 and 2023, data from EISMEA (the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency) reveals that the number of proposals submitted for AG calls varied significantly–e.g. 57 calls launched in 2022 received 29 proposals, of which 23 were accepted. However, no proposals were received for critical topics like hydrogen, cybersecurity, and space (Source: EISMEA Grant Call Data). Beneficiaries noted improved timelines from submission to contract signing in the SMP's later years, with contracts typically finalised before grant periods began (Source: EISMEA Monitoring Reports). Last, **addressing administrative challenges**. While administrative procedures, including the transition to the eGrant system, have increased workloads for smaller organisations, stakeholders propose improvements such as multi-annual grants and lump-sum budgets to reduce burdens (Source: Stakeholder Feedback via EISMEA Surveys). These adjustments could enhance capacity and efficiency, especially for smaller National Standardisation Bodies (NSBs).

In summary, the SMP fosters inclusivity, ensures better resource allocation, and aligns efforts with EU objectives. Further optimisations in administrative processes and grant

design would amplify these benefits, solidifying the programme's role in supporting stakeholders across Europe.

For **Pillar 3b**, the main benefits, as reported by stakeholders, are the following. First, to create a context that allows companies, investors, consumers, and financial markets in general to operate in a harmonised and clearly defined setting, with clear norms and standards that regulate financial and non-financial reporting. Then, related to EFRAG's activities, the influence of EU views and needs brought to the international financial reporting standard-setting process, aimed at providing the best possible norms that take into account needs and priorities of EU stakeholders. Furthermore, related to PIOB's activities, to ensure that (auditing) standards are set taking into account the public interest and the views of all relevant stakeholders, making the process more transparent and trustworthy. And, to build consensus and provide representation to the key stakeholders in the standard setting process and the EU and international level. On this topic, however, stakeholders underlined how there is still room for improvement in terms of representation and participation: for instance, regarding EFRAG's membership, the further inclusion of representatives of investors, innovative companies and ethical banks might increase the representation of relevant interests in the sustainability reporting pillar[194].

Pillar 4

With regards to **Pillar 4a**, the main group benefiting from actions carried out are consumers who are intended to be the ultimate beneficiaries of all actions, even though they do not incur any direct costs for most of them. Overall expenditures under the Pillar 4a of less than 5 Eurocents per consumer and year are small compared to the benefits achieved but also compared to the challenges posed by the goal of reaching a high level of consumer protection in the single market of more than 450 million citizens. Examples of the benefits they receive include actions supporting ADRs and ECCs which are expected to result in savings for consumers. ADRs are normally free of charge for consumers (although in some MS ADRs can charge a fee) and they are cheaper than court procedures. ECCs are free of charge and help consumers on cross-border disputes. They intervene also on behalf of the consumers to resolve disputes amicably, respond to consumer enquiries and help them make informed decisions. Actions such as the enforcement of consumer law and cooperation in product safety provide immediate benefits to consumers by ensuring safer products, protecting them from fraud and unfair commercial practices, preventing injuries and health risks, and minimising financial losses. Moreover, consumer education and communication actions are also expected to impact consumers positively by improving their knowledge and awareness about their rights, which can in turn reinforce the impacts from actions concerning redress in the single market. In addition, actions supporting organisations representing consumers have positive effects in ensuring that their interests are protected, including the protection of vulnerable consumers.

Moreover, there are public and private non-profit organisations, such as grants beneficiaries namely ECCs, BEUC, ADRs, debt advice services and CPCs that directly benefit from Pillar 4a funding which enhance their ability to protect and support consumers across the EU. Key benefits include increased capacity and resources, improved cooperation, and knowledge sharing, enhanced enforcement capabilities, data sharing, and provision of IT tools and collaborative platforms.

The table below summarises the main benefits of Consumer pillar activities per stakeholder.

194 Interview feedback from five representatives of the financial sector and civil society at the EU level.

Table 14: Overview of main benefits of Pillar 4a activities

Stakeholders	Benefits
EU	• Beter functioning of Single Market • Greater public trust in EU institutions • Enhanced capacity to tackle cross-border issues • Enhanced ability to ensure consumer protection and product safety • Smarter regulatory actions • Improved enforcement of consumer law
National authorities	• Enhanced capacity in implementing and enforcing consumer law • Increased trust in national authorities • Strengthened cooperation/exchange of best practices among authorities • Provision of IT tools, collaborative platforms, evidence, and data
Consumer organisations and bodies	• Increased capacity • Improved representation of consumer interests • Better cooperation/exchange of best practices among organisation • Provision of IT tools, collaborative platforms, evidence, and data
Businesses	• More level playing field across the EU • Reduction of reputational risks • Improved awareness of consumer law • Increased number of B2C cross-border transactions
Consumers	• Increased awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities • Better representation in policy making • Better information, advice and redress • Greater protection of consumer rights • Safer non-food products • Reduced consumer detriment • Increased consumer welfare

Source: elaboration for the supporting study.

With regards to **Pillar 4b**, the beneficiaries have demonstrated efficiency, as shown by their level of outputs, comparison with similar organisations and the results of the survey and interviews conducted as part of the study[195]. The *benefits* that the work of the beneficiaries have produced consist mainly of qualitative benefits such as their policy and advocacy representation by highlighting gaps in the market and advocating for better financial products and promoting consumer interest in policy making. The beneficiaries have contributed significantly to raising awareness in consumer issues in financial services policy making and have been representing consumers' voice on the opposite side of industry stakeholders. Better Finance has been in particular promoting retail investor-friendly practices and legislation, while Finance Watch has been contributing to shaping EU-wide policies that promote long-term consumer protection. The beneficiaries have also supported national advocacy through their research reports offering insights that might not be possible for national organisations to produce independently. Additional benefits can be observed when looking at the initiatives of Better Finance with regards to financial education where the outputs have been recognised by stakeholders for their importance in promoting transparency and improving consumer understanding of financial products.

For Pillar 5 the following benefits have been observed. EURLs make a substantial contribution to pooling resources and excellence, skills and knowledge across the EU. As regards EURLs 163 proficiency and 41 comparative tests were organised for NRLs. During the interviews and surveys, stakeholders indicated that Member States alone could find it difficult to maintain the high standards and collaborative efforts needed to effectively implement food safety and health standards and practices without EU co-financing and

195 For more detailed information on efficiency see Annex XII for Pillar 4.

support. The EURL and NRLs collaboration and standardisation in the SMP framework influenced the development and improvement of national food safety standards through developed laboratory methods. According to a survey of EURLs, 75.8% of respondents indicated that, if NRLs could carry out high-quality and uniform tests comparable to those provided for in the EURL guidelines, to achieve this, NRLs would have to bear significant additional costs.

BTSF is the initiative bringing together experts and stakeholders from all Member States to share knowledge and best practices. EU standards through BTSF events are being distributed also in third countries. This collaboration between experts in specific field is beneficial which facilitates exchange of views and supports establishing different expert networks between BTSF participants. According to the interviews and surveys, BTSF national contact points 71.1% of participants consider that BTSF training to a large extent promotes a harmonised approach to the functioning of the control systems of the Union and the Member States. In addition, 89.5% of respondents to the survey agree that BTSF training significantly improves networking and collaboration between competent authorities in different Member States. In total 27 400 staff were trained using BTSF programme.

In relation to animal and plant eradication and containment measures national authorities benefited through established EU vaccine banks (e.g. classical swine fever, foot-and-mouth disease), as its stocks are immediately available in the event of an animal health crisis occurring in any of the Member States. Also, Member State national authorities benefited through co-financing of their measures which provided relief to the national budgets.

International organisations have also seen benefits through SMP funding, particularly in their efforts to establish international standards and organise different networking events to facilitate cooperation between participating countries.

For **Pillar 6**, the ESP has demonstrated a strong commitment to efficient resource allocation. The cost-benefit analysis indicates that stakeholders generally perceive the benefits of the ESP as proportionate to the costs, highlighting its cost-effectiveness.

The ESP allowed Eurostat to implement appropriate measures to successfully reduce administrative burden through legislative simplification and the adoption of electronic tools.

Interviewees noted that efficiency gains have been achieved through collaboration and competition for resources, leading to streamlined processes and shared best practices among NSIs. Also, the shift towards using administrative registers to produce statistics was mentioned as a positive step towards improving efficiency. The ongoing investments in new technologies and methodologies had improved efficiency. Interviewees stressed substantial benefits in the form of reduced administrative budget from streamlining different pieces of statistical legislation into bigger homogenous frameworks, e.g. in the field of social statistics, agricultural and business statistics.

Over the implementation period, 100% of Eurostat's proposed legislative revisions included measures to concretely reduce administrative burden. This fulfils the target of a positive trend compared to the baseline (75% of Eurostat's proposed legislative revisions include burden reduction measures).

4.1.2.2. Costs for stakeholders

The primary cost for the EU is the financial commitment to the SMP budget as approved in the SMP Regulation. The Commission, i.e. its relevant services, faces administrative costs,

particularly in terms of staff time dedicated to managing the programme and implementing specific activities. For executive agencies, the costs associated with programme management are covered through budget allocated from the programme itself.

Competent national authorities participate in various SMP activities, such as joint enforcement actions or participation in networks and forums. While this involvement brings opportunities, it also comes with costs, primarily staff time, and may also include co-financing obligations for EU-grant funded project[196].

Organisations receiving SMP grants, such as national or regional authorities, international organisations, industry associations, and businesses, incur costs related to preparing applications and managing the administrative requirements for receiving the grants. These costs are not covered by the grant financing. It is important to note that some organisations receiving operating grants, may heavily rely on SMP funding for their existence (e.g. EOTA, ESOs, and BEUC), or to ensure the same operational level (e.g. IFRS Foundation and PIOB,).

4.1.2.2.1. Grants

Grant beneficiaries have faced challenges, especially during the initial stages of the SMP due to changes in granting arrangements. A new system appliable to all EU funding has led to increased administrative costs for certain stakeholders, especially under Pillars 1, 3 and 5. The adaptation required of beneficiaries to new funding systems resulted in delays and inefficiencies. Interviews showed that certain IT systems such as eGrants for activities under Pillars 1, 3 and 5 have been singled out for their inefficiency, requiring beneficiaries to go through many steps[197].

In Pillar 1, grants constituting a minor share of the budget allocation, assessing the administrative burden is less distinct than for other pillars. Less than 7% of the 2021-2023 budget was allocated via grants. Interviews with three beneficiaries implementing EU competition law training did not highlight major administrative burdens. Most of the reimbursements are now calculated based on unit costs.

In Pillar 2, the perception of the administrative burden varied across different activities and among beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries involved in tourism and social economy actions were generally more positive, with 72% considering the burden reasonable, 5% as low, while 27% still found it to be high[198].

A majority of EEN members, 59% (69 out of 117) rated the administrative burden as reasonable, 3% as low, and 40% reported it as high[199]. The administrative burden for EEN beneficiaries mainly concerns the application process and reporting requirements. In terms of person days, the interviewed coordinators indicate a minimum of 20 days and up to 50 days in some cases for the application process, and 10 to 20 days for the reporting. Partners invest around 10 days for application and 5 days for reporting. The COSME final evaluation does not include a comparable figure, but interviewed EEN member organisations indicated that the cited person days basically compare to applications and projects they carry out in other EU programmes. EEN member organisations perceive mostly a reasonable

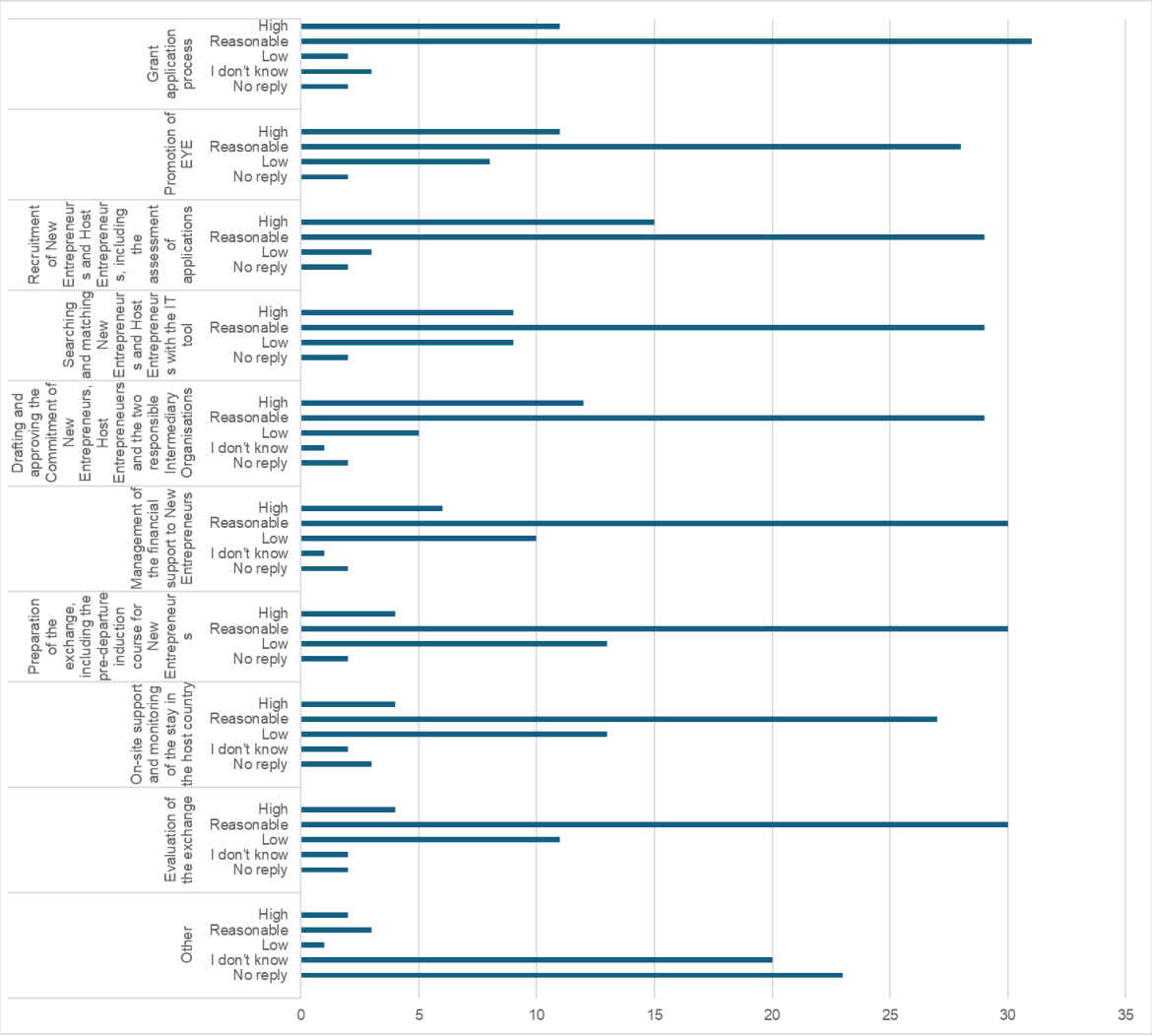
196 Some participation is mandatory under EU legislation, e.g. MSAs are required by Article 11 of the Market Surveillance Regulation to participate in AdCos.
197 Interviews with grant beneficiaries of Pillars 1, 3 and 5.
198 Targeted consultation of beneficiaries of other actions within Pillar 2.
199 Targeted consultation of EEN beneficiaries.

administrative burden associated with their EEN activities. The survey among member organisations reveals that 47 out of 117 respondents (40%) indicate a 'high' burden and 66 (56%) indicate a 'reasonable' or 'low' administrative burden.

Intermediary organisations engaged in the EYE programme found the administrative burden to be reasonable for both new entrepreneurs (31 out of 41) and host entrepreneurs (28 out of 29). Although new entrepreneurs faced more obligations due to the financial support provided to them[200]. The administrative costs incurred by intermediary organisations in the EYE programme were seen as reasonable, estimated at EUR 1 939 during the application process and EUR 1 385 during the implementation phase[201].

The administrative burden of participating in EYE is overall reasonable (see figure below). The most time-intensive activity for Intermediary Organisations is the recruitment of New Entrepreneurs and Host Entrepreneurs, including the assessment of applications (15 mentions of 'High' out of 49 survey participants). However, this cannot be regarded as an administrative activity in the strict sense.

Figure 5: Administrative burden for Intermediary Organisations per activity



Source: Survey among 133 Intermediary Organisations run between May 14-30, 2024 in which 49 Intermediary Organisations participated and were asked the question 'How do you rate the

200 Targeted consultation of EYE beneficiaries.
201 The burden of different administrative activities was rated as reasonable by 55% (27/49) to 63% (31/49) of respondents. Targeted consultation of intermediary organisations.

administrative burden associated with your following activities as an EYE Intermediary Organisation?'.

In Pillar 3, some beneficiaries reported a higher administrative burden compared to pre-2021 funding mechanisms[202]. This increase stemmed from changes in contractual arrangements, such as the introduction of eGrants and the introduction of the new Corporate Model Grant Agreement which included such changes as a shift to unit costs for travel and accommodation[203]. Interviewed Annex III organisations recipient of operating grants, reported that these changes required additional resources.

In Pillar 4a, beneficiaries generally acknowledged simplifications in reporting and application processes compared to previous programmes, resulting from having simplified templates and a less frequent reporting by certain beneficiaries like ECCs which receive funding every two years instead of yearly. The action grants under the Consumer pillar requires co-finding. Consultation with ADRs and ECCs emphasised that the capacities of ECCs, national authorities and ADRs vary considerably by country, including in their abilities to raise co-financing. Some co-financing rates have increased, enabling Consumer Pillar funding to reach the critical mass necessary to support the planned activities effectively. Efforts were also made to simplify the application process especially for smaller ADR bodies, leading to an increase in the number of grant applications.

In addition, for Pillar 4b, the grants received by the beneficiaries amount to up to 60% of their costs and the beneficiaries are required to provide co-financing. The budget allocated as part of the SMP for the grants has not followed the changes in inflation resulting in a decrease of budget in terms of real value[204]. The organisations are dependent on EU funding with a significant portion of their income coming from the SMP[205].

In Pillar 5, administrative and reporting burden varies. The new Corporate Model Grant Agreement was intended to lessen administrative burdens and emphasise outcome-focused efforts. However, grant beneficiary organisations (NCAs) explained that the time it took to sign the Grant Agreements was rather long. Additionally, the integration of the corporate eGrants IT tool, aimed at simplifying grant management, introduced inefficiencies with unnecessary steps for the submission of information, particularly for Identified Beneficiary Actions (IBAs). Grant beneficiaries found the system complex, with reporting requirements proving difficult to manage. To mitigate these challenges, HaDEA initially offered direct support through calls and info days, which helped ease the administrative burden. The use of unit costs, lump sums and multi-annual grants provides simplification and burden reduction. Nevertheless, shift to unit costs for travel and accommodation remains problematic. The actions of the SMP Food programme have been integrated into the corporate eGrant IT tool. This shift also placed the burden of preparing the proposals from the awarding institution to the beneficiary. This integration reveals the potential to automate grant management processes, improve efficiency and rationalise operations.

However, concerns were raised about the limited applicability of the eGrant system for the identified beneficiary actions. This tool targets grant management with competitive elements, but it does not take into account the specific nature of IBAs, creating

202 Although a lack of comprehensive data prevented quantification of this increase. See Annex VIII.
203 To note that these changes apply to all EU financial instruments.
204 See Annex XII for Pillar 4, efficiency section.
205 See Annex XII for Pillar 4 Section 4.2 'Nearly 50% of the total income of Better Finance and 40% of the total income of Finance Watch come from the Single Market Programme. In the absence of EU funding Finance Watch and Better Finance would be unable to provide the same level of support for the interests of users of financial services. Attracting additional funding for consumer topics remains difficult.

administrative burdens through unnecessary measures. As almost all grants under Pillar 5 IBAs, beneficiaries and Commission services face an additional administrative burden by providing information that does not benefit the process. The complexity and limited user-friendliness of the tool is also a concern. However, the stakeholders interviewed welcomed the overall efforts to move from the physical submission of grant applications. A process for IBA excluding unnecessary steps for designed specifically for non-competitive grants, was mentioned as a potential solution.

Several grant beneficiaries also indicated that the preparation of grant proposals was very limited in time. This was further aggravated by the fact that it fell in a period when many staff members were on holiday.

In Pillar 6 according to feedback from stakeholders, the ESP has achieved moderate to high success in reducing administrative burdens in the period 2021-2023, suggesting some room for improvement. The success of the programme in reducing administrative burden for beneficiaries of grants: 17 out of 35 of the respondents reported that the ESP had been either highly successful (4 respondents) or moderately successful (13) in alleviating administrative burdens[206]. As regards factors contributing to reduce the burden, interviewees mentioned simplified grant processes (like unit costs for personnel and flat rate financing for indirect costs), and electronic tools, such as e-grant submission and management systems, to streamline the entire lifecycle of grant management. These innovative tools are considered to have significantly reduced administrative burden on NSIs and errors. However, there were calls for more investment in statistical infrastructure and a greater acknowledgement of the costs involved in producing new statistics, highlighting the need for a deeper analysis of the cost-benefit balance. Additionally, national factors such as resource availability and the administrative capacity of NSIs may impact the capacity to benefit from collaborative efforts.

The ESP's reliance on multiple sources of financing, including substantial amounts of subdelegated funds, has facilitated the development of specific statistics tailored to EU needs. However, this has raised concerns about Eurostat's financial autonomy. Recommendations from stakeholders suggest moving towards a more streamlined and autonomous funding structure to enhance control and efficiency. However, they did not provide any output on the feasibility of such funding.

4.1.2.2.2. Other types of expenditures: procurement and administrative arrangements.

For other types of expenditure, such as procurement and administrative arrangements, the Commission faces the standard administrative and reporting burdens tied to its spending activities. Notably, in Pillar 1, much of the funding is used to procure services from external providers, and this procurement follows the Commission's standard procedures without introducing additional requirements. For most of this expenditure, resource efficiency has been supported by directing SMP funding through the Commission's existing budgetary processes and standard procedures, which did not necessitate the creation of new programme management systems.

Changing from grants to procurement in parts of Pillars 1 and 4 (e.g. support to CPC authorities) has given the Commission more control over the activities conducted, aligning

206 The remainder of the respondent reported only minor success (10), no success (1), or were unsure (7). Targeted consultation of producers of European statistics.

them more closely with evolving needs, and reducing the time required to initiate actions within the operational year[207].

Cascade funding under Pillar 2, such as through the Euroclusters initiative, was noted as a positive efficiency driver for SMEs due to its simplicity compared to traditional calls for proposals[208].

Moreover, the SMP does not impose direct regulatory costs incumbent upon stakeholders as it does not introduce any new requirements on stakeholders. In many instances, SMP activities help stakeholders comply with regulatory requirements set by other EU legislation. For example, MSA benefit from capacity building and cooperation activities to meet their legal obligations, while SMEs receive guidance from the EEN to navigate compliance with EU regulations like labour law and product standards.

4.1.2.2.3. Proportionality of costs

The evaluation of whether the benefits of the SMP were achieved at a reasonable cost involves analysing both direct and indirect costs across the diverse activities of the Programme.

In **Pillar 1**, the cost proportionality is largely ensured by the fact that most of the funding is directed via procurement, mainly to buy services. This approach following standard procedures guarantees that services are acquired based on the best price-quality ratio and that cost overruns are avoided. The decision to maintain and upgrade existing digital tools, such as CASE@EC, YEA, and the IMI, rather than developing entirely new platforms, has further helped in managing costs. Moreover, investments in training courses, like the national judges' training in EU competition law, show potential for better future cost-efficiency, with unit costs of EUR 2 425 per person trained and further reductions expected as training materials and curricula are reused[209].

In **Pillar 2**, for EUR 1 million of funding respectively the EEN has supported 3 244 SMEs and created 31.5 jobs, EYE has engaged 209 entrepreneurs, while Euroclusters provided support to 103 SMEs in general and financial support (FSTP) to 58 SMEs[210]. This points to an overall progress in terms of cost-effectiveness under the SMP (see Annex X).

The assessment of the cost-benefit ratio (results per amount invested) of Pillar actions follows the approach used in the final COSME evaluation by calculating cost-effectiveness indicators (CEA indicators). These indicators represent achieved benefits per million EUR of costs and are shown in the table below. A methodological challenge in calculating these indicators is the imperfect congruence of reference periods of benefits and costs, which is inherent to an interim evaluation. More specifically, the share of commitments or budgeted costs of multi-annual actions actually invested (i.e. spent by beneficiaries) up to 2023 had to be estimated. So, for the EEN it is assumed that approximately half of the total commitments have been invested in services by 2023. For EYE it is assumed that approximately a quarter of the total commitments have been invested in exchanges, and for Euroclusters it is assumed that approximately 70% of the committed budget have been invested by mid of 2024 (based

207 Interviews with Commission officials confirmed that this shift enhanced flexibility and efficiency.
208 Cascade funding, also known as Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP), is a mechanism to distribute EU funding to beneficiaries such as SMEs or entrepreneurs. This funding method aims at simplifying the administrative procedures, creating a light, SME-friendly application scheme, by allowing that EU-funded projects may issue, in turn, open calls for further funding.
209 With a budget of EUR 832 000, and 343 judges trained.
210 These figures are likely underestimated due to methodological factors at this interim stage of the programme.

on the committed FSTP budget). Costs other than EU funding consist mainly of beneficiaries' own contributions.

However, the cost values applied are presumably still overestimated and indicator values thus underestimated. For example, the COSME final evaluation – having fully congruent data - calculated 258 entrepreneurs benefiting from EYE per million euro of EU funding (compared to 209 calculated in the table below) and 5 337 SMEs supported by the EEN per million euro of EU funding (compared to 3 244 calculated in the table below).

The COSME interim evaluation covering COSME's first three years (2014-2016), which might be a more valid point of comparison, calculated only 98 entrepreneurs per million euro invested in EYE. This speaks in favour of a significant improvement in cost-effectiveness of EYE under the SMP. The estimated number of jobs created by host entrepreneurs[117] amounts to approximately 54 per million euro of total costs under the SMP so far, while the COSME interim evaluation for the period of 2014-2016 reported 58 jobs per million euro created by both host and new entrepreneurs together. Again, this points to a positive efficiency performance of EYE under the SMP.

As far as the EEN under the SMP is concerned, the number of SMEs supported per million euro of total costs is estimated at 1 825. This is significantly less when compared to the number calculated in the final COSME evaluation for the period 2014-2020, which was 2 960 SMEs. However, the COSME interim evaluation for 2014-2016, again a presumably better point of comparison, determined a number of only 991 EEN-supported SMEs per million euro of total costs invested. This indicates a positive development of cost-effectiveness of the EEN under the SMP.

For Euroclusters, a comparison to the cost-effectiveness indicator in the COSME interim evaluation does not seem to be valid as the form of support to SMEs has significantly changed since then.

In general, the cost-benefit ratios calculated in the Table below will improve as the programme progresses over time.

Table 15: Efficiency indicators for Pillar actions

Indicator	Benefits (units)	EU funding (EUR m)	Other costs (EUR m)	Benefits per EUR m EU funding	Benefits per EUR m total costs
EEN					
Number of SMEs supported	292 000	90	70	3 244	1 825
Number of partnership agreements concluded	2 048	-	-	-	-
Number of jobs created by supported SMEs (according to EEN impact survey)	2 836	90	70	31.5	18
EYE					
Number of entrepreneurs engaged (host and new)	2 086	10	1.5	209	181

Number of jobs created by Host Entrepreneurs (see section on effectiveness)	626	10	1.5	62.6	54.4
Euroclusters					
Number of SMEs supported/benefiting	3 087	30	1	103	100
Number of SMEs receiving FSTP	1 281	22	-	58	-

Source: SME Pillar monitoring data; estimates for costs; 'other costs' represent mainly beneficiaries' own contributions.

In **Pillar 3**, the proportionality of costs varies depending on the recipient. Some organisations, like the IFRS Foundation, have maintained operations despite reduced EU funding by securing alternative funding sources. This reduction facilitated a shift in EU funding towards EFRAG, so that it could implement its enhanced mandate linked to sustainability reporting. The development of the first set of 12 draft ESRS costed approximately EUR 3 million to EFRAG, that appears thus having provided good value for the Commission especially in comparison with costs incurred by other organisations for similar activates (see Annex), Despite this shift in funding, EFRAG reported insufficient resources to meet their expanded mandates, even with the increased SMP funding. As mentioned in the detailed evaluation of the pillar 3b in Annex, the combination of these factors indicates that the resources available to EFRAG are not proportionate to those of other standard-setting bodies, which, moreover, would not have the dual mandate that EFRAG has been given since 2021. At the time of this evaluation, EFRAG is carrying out internal assessments to forecast the (estimated) capacity for the upcoming years, possibly until the end of this programming period. This exercise will provide a more detailed estimate of the optimal level of resources for the organisation. In the case of the PIOB, while work for diversifying the funding base has progressed efforts remains necessary to arrive at a sustainable funding model for the medium- and long-term future, which ensures the independence of its oversight function from the audit profession.

In **Pillar 4a,** the results of the study revealed that across the main areas of activity (i.e. product safety, consumer rights and redress, consumer education/awareness and enforcement), a significant majority of respondents perceived the benefits from actions funded by the **Pillar 4a** as outweighing their costs because they generated significant economic, social, and policy-related gains that, while not easily quantifiable, far outweigh the financial investment. Preventing consumer financial or health-related harm, improving single market efficiency, and reinforcing consumer confidence justify the expenditure, making it a highly cost-effective investment in both consumer welfare and the broader EU market. On enforcement for instance, 81.8% of respondents saw the benefits of enforcement as significantly or moderately greater than the costs. Stakeholders noted that the costs are small compared to the benefits gained in terms of competence transfer, consensus, and cooperation with other Member States. For product safety, 55% of respondents considered the benefits were greater for consumer rights and redress, 83.3% viewed the benefits greater than the costs and in consumer education actions, 73.3% saw greater benefits.

Pillar 4a budget is relatively modest, prompting several measures to enhance cost-efficiency. For instance, the CPC and Presidency action grants were replaced by public procurement as national authorities lacked human resources to apply for these grants and the allocated budget was regularly unspent. Consultation has suggested that this has resulted in a better

allocation of funds and efficiency gains by increasing competition in processes of tendering and reducing administrative burdens associated with reporting and payments. Another efficiency improvement and reduction in administrative burdens concerns ECC grants, which have transitioned to multi-annual funding. As a result, applications are now required every two years instead of annually.

For **Pillar 4b**, the study concluded that the beneficiaries have managed EU funds and resources with efficiency and ensured best value for money to deliver their outputs. Compared to the low budget that the beneficiaries receive as part of the SMP (less than 0.5% of the total SMP budget) the beneficiaries have delivered significant results in terms of outcomes of the work programme, number of activities and quality of the work produced which are indicative of their efficiency.

Nevertheless, beneficiaries of both sub-Pillars keep reiterating the need to further simplify the grant procedures including preparation, reporting and pre-financing timing especially for small-scale beneficiaries.

In **Pillar 5** shows evidence of cost reductions in the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme, particularly in unit costs per training (EUR 47 449 in 2023, EUR 35 938 in 2022, and EUR 6 144 in 2021, compared with an average of EUR 95 683 in 2015-2019) and participation (EUR 1 634 in 2023, EUR 1 335 in 2022, and EUR 186 in 2021, lower due to a shift to online training during the COVID-19 pandemic, compared with an average of EUR 2 713 in 2015-2019)[211]. Despite a return to in-person training, unit costs have remained below pre-pandemic levels.

In the cost-effectiveness analysis, an effort is made to describe the value for money of the SMP response to HPAI and *Xylella*. Given the considerable economic losses that could result from the lack of rapid response, effective surveillance and targeted interventions, it can be concluded that the financing of HPAI and Xylella control under the SMP is significantly lower than the potential costs of non-action. Therefore, this funding is and remains justified.

The reduction of CFR by 60% from 2023 onwards was made for veterinary and phytosanitary programmes and emergency measures, due to unexpected high incurred costs for numerous outbreaks of animal diseases. Costs not anymore EU-funded had to be covered by national budgets, resulting in potential implementing delays and under-implementation.

Citizens and business also bear costs when accessing services funded by the SMP, notably in terms of time and administrative burden. Nevertheless, such costs remain relatively low, and these actors engage in this process on a voluntary basis on the prospect of reaping benefits outweighing the costs.

Overall, Pillar 5 initiatives **provide indications on cost-effectiveness**. However, it remains essential to maintain a structured monitoring in order to monitor effectiveness trends over time.

For Pillar 6, an overwhelming majority of producers and users of statistics in the targeted consultations (some 80%) consider the benefits to be proportionate or very proportionate to the costs, suggesting a general satisfaction with the ESP's cost-effectiveness.

211 European Commission, DG SANTE and HaDEA data.

However, there is little evidence of cost savings from synergies or simplifications resulting from merging previously separate programmes and budget lines into a single integrated programme[212].

4.1.2.3. Impact of EISMEA on the efficiency of the SMP

Previous evaluations and studies have concluded that delegating part of the implementation of activities to executive agencies provides significant cost savings compared to in-house management by the DGs. In 2021, the Commission communicated on the attribution of portfolios for the 2021-2027 period, mentioning that delegating programme management to executive agencies is more efficient and cost-effective[213].

A cost-benefit analysis conducted as part of the 2014-2016 evaluation of EASME, EISMEA's predecessor, affirmed that the operations of the Agency were positive, and pointed to the added value of having such external management of these activities[214]. This study estimated savings of EUR 33.9 million between 2014 and 2016, primarily resource related. The final evaluation of the COSME programme also underlined the benefits of EISMEA's centralised approach to grant management and use of IT tools.

EISMEA is in charge of actions spanning Pillars 2, 3a, and 4a. Core responsibilities include organising calls for tenders and proposals, contracting with beneficiaries, processing cost claims, and overseeing monitoring, reporting, and communications. While the agency has been effective, some targets have not been fully met. This is the case for Pillar 4 as the number of calls for tenders was lower than expected. Annual reports mention reasons for these discrepancies and indicating efficiency gains could still be realised[215].

The late adoption of the SMP Regulation led to fewer signed grant agreements in the first two years of implementation causing some delays[216]. For instance, in 2022, delays in procurement planning meant some planned tenders were finalised only in 2023. Additionally, in 2023, fewer calls for tenders were launched due to adjustments made by DG JUST, related to shifting political and policy priorities, with remaining tenders scheduled for completion in 2024.

The management of the SMP activities at EISMEA is perceived differently depending on the pillars. Within Pillar 2, the majority of EEN members found contract management (86%, 101 out of 117) and reporting requirements (77%, 90 out of 117) satisfactory or very satisfactory[217]. Beneficiaries of tourism actions also reported high levels of satisfaction with contract management (92%, 30 out 33) and reporting requirements (82%, 27 out of 33)[218]. Interviews with beneficiaries of Pillar 3 funding pointed to a need to adapt to the new tools and procedure, and those calls lacked clarity, while indicating that the delegation of responsibilities had created more distance with the relevant services, hindering the sharing of views on needs and issues[219].

212 See Section 4.4.
213 Cost-benefit analysis for the delegation of certain tasks regarding the implementation of Union Programmes, Communication of the Commission, 2021.This approach enables notable savings compared to managing the programmes internally within DGs, allowing them to concentrate on their policy responsibilities while executive agencies bring advantages through higher specialisation in implementation, and effective communication and outreach with stakeholders.
214 European Commission (2019), Evaluation of the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).
215 Annual activity reports, About EISMEA - European Commission.
216 In 2021, EISMEA also faced some temporary IT issues linked with the onboarding of eGrants.
217 Targeted consultation of EEN beneficiaries.
218 Targeted consultation of beneficiaries of other actions within Pillar 2.
219 Interviews with ESOs, Annex III organisations and National Standardisation Bodies.

4.1.3. Coherence

4.1.3.1. Internal coherence

The analysis of each SMP pillar indicates that the SMP generally functions without major overlaps or inconsistencies between its pillars or sub-pillars (see annexes IX-XIV). Each pillar targets a distinct policy area, governed by a specific set of regulations, and involves activities that play complementary roles in supporting the enforcement of relevant legislation while ensuring the effective functioning of the single market.

For Pillar 1 diverse objectives and activities show no issues of a lack of internal coherence. This is evidenced by competition policy actions and market surveillance activities, which altogether foster a well-functioning single market by supporting the market surveillance and EU competition frameworks. Activities within sub-pillar 1a, competition policy actions, perform clear and complementary roles in support of the enforcement EU competition law. The digital tools enable more effective case management, as well as secure data exchange between relevant parties with each tool serving a distinct purpose; the training actions build capacity of relevant enforcement authorities; the studies, evaluations and consultations enable better identification of potential problems and inform the design of appropriate responses. Given their very distinct role in supporting competition policy, the competition policy actions feature no overlap with actions in other pillars or sub-pillars but also no particular synergies with such actions. In terms of policymaking, standard-setting, and enforcement, the coherence is primarily dependent on the wider activities of the relevant SMP DGs, rather than on the SMP itself. Complementarities between Pillar 1 and other pillars are evidenced by SME services, Pillar 2, external technical expertise for standards conformity assessment, Pillar 3, instrument for market surveillance support, Pillar 4, and the signposting from EU portals to inform consumers and businesses on health and food safety, Pillar 5.

For Pillar 2 activities present no major issues of a lack of internal coherence nor complementarity with other pillars. However, feedback from stakeholders collected via the targeted consultations and interviews suggested that improved coordination of activities and better communication of opportunities to beneficiaries could enhance efficiency. Nonetheless, no strong consensus emerged on whether integrating SME-related actions into the broader SMP has had positive or negative effects.

There is not only synergies between the actions of the Pillar, but between the six specific Pillar objectives as well. The six specific objectives all address important dimensions of the overarching priority of strengthening SME competitiveness. Their interplay becomes apparent as many Pillar actions (e.g. Euroclusters) pursue more than one of the specific objectives to utilise their combination to the benefit of SMEs. For example, internationalisation and digitalisation are strongly interrelated: European SMEs require digital innovation to be successful on international markets.

The EU-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members surveyed in the context of the evaluation have a mixed view of the coherence of the different actions within the SME Pillar. Out of the 19 respondents, 6 (32%) rate the Pillar's actions as well coordinated, while another 6 (32%) think that coordination/synchronisation could be improved.

For Pillar 3, merging of what was previously funded under separate programmes the two separate budget lines (European standardisation and international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards) into one pillar dedicated to

standardisation did not result in any incoherencies. The specific nature of its activities minimises the risk of overlap or conflict, both within the pillar itself and with other pillars. Although there was potential concern regarding the funding of Harmonised Standards (HAS) consultants under Pillar 1, which are not direct beneficiaries under Pillar 3 but serve to support the Commission in ensuring that published standards comply with EU legislation. Thus, Pillar 1 and Pillar 3a complement each other, with HAS consultants playing a crucial role in assisting the Commission in its legislative oversight. The activities and objectives of the three organisations supported under pillar 3b remain, not only relevant, but also do not conflict with one another.

For Pillar 4, the evidence does not indicate a lack of internal coherence. Some potential similar areas of work were observed between the activities of BEUC and the financial policy-related work of the Pillar 4b beneficiaries, Better Finance and Finance Watch. Stakeholders expressed differing views on this, with BEUC members often focusing on broader consumer concerns, while organisations like Better Finance and Finance Watch emphasised financial services. Despite covering some common topics, these organisations appear to complement each other according to their specific areas of focus and expertise, working synergistically to reinforce key messages. Additionally, potential complementarity was found between Pillar 1 and Pillar 4, particularly in areas like market surveillance, standard-setting with Pillar 3, and the protection of financial interests, contributing to overall consumer protection.

For Pillar 5, no major issues of internal incoherence were identified. The internal structure of the pillar ensures that its activities – focused on food safety, animal health, and plant health – complement each other in support of the overarching goal of ensuring safety throughout the food chain. However, due to their specific nature, its activities do not show complementarity with other pillars.

For Pillar 6, due to the specificity of its activities, no issues affecting internal coherence were evidenced. The European Statistical Programme (ESP) does not overlap with the objectives or activities of other SMP pillars. Its strong internal coherence is supported by governing bodies such as the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC), the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), and the European Statistical Forum (ESF) guaranteeing the coherence and compatibility of statistical data, and structured planning processes such as the Multiannual Action Plan and annual work programmes.

4.1.3.2. External coherence

The analysis indicates no significant overlaps between the SMP and other MFF programmes. Instead, it shows strong complementarities with examples amongst almost all Pillars. No other MFF programme directly supports the enforcement of EU laws across policy areas such as competition policy, financial services, market surveillance, standardisation, consumer protection, or food safety in the same manner as the SMP. Similarly, the evaluation did not show particular overlaps with national programmes, supporting policy areas falling into the EU's competence remit (e.g. competition policy, single market, standardisation, European statistics), also enhancing coordination, capacity building and cooperation (market surveillance, SME policy, consumer protection, food and feed, and European statistics).

Pillar 1 does not benefit from strong complementarities with other MFF programmes, except with the Fiscalis and Customs programmes, which also support the implementation of EU and national laws and policy in the field of customs and tax that are targeted by this pillar[220].

Nevertheless, activities financed under Pillar 1 align with the strategic plans and management objectives of each Commission service. SMP support for market surveillance aligns with EU legislation in this area[221], and harmonises seamlessly with the Commission's Single Market Strategy.

For example, the objectives of the Single Market Programme (SMP) and DG COMP's Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 are aligned, both aiming to foster a competitive single market. The competition policy actions are closely aligned with the European Commission's 2019-2024 priorities. For the 'European Green Deal,' these actions help enforce State aid rules, which are crucial to managing the large-scale investments required to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, particularly in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and low-emission vehicles. They also support antitrust enforcement for clean technology development and merger control in the renewable electricity sector. In the context of 'A Europe fit for the digital age,' competition policy actions strengthen the EU's digital transformation by supporting competition policy enforcement in digital markets. In particular, the robust enforcement of merger rules is highlighted as a key component in implementing the Digital Markets Act. In the area of financial services, the activities funded under the SMP are aligned with the objectives set out in DG FISMA's Strategic Plan[222]. First, aiming for 'more integrated EU financial markets,' which is advanced through conformity assessments of national legislation, assisting thereby the Commission in ensuring the uniform application of Union law. Second, focusing on establishing a comprehensive framework to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, which is complemented by SMP-funded activities like FIU.net, a secure platform facilitating information exchange between Member States' financial intelligence units. Third, protecting consumers and investors, which is supported through initiatives such as the Commission's membership in FinCoNet, also financed by the SMP, contributing to enhanced financial regulation and oversight. They are also directly instrumental to the achievement of the outputs planned in the annual Management Plans[223] of DG FISMA for example in terms of planned IT initiatives (e.g. financing of development/maintenance of IT tools), enforcement actions (e.g. financing of conformity assessments) or preparation/evaluation of policy initiatives (e.g. financing studies supporting IAs/evaluations).

The services offered by Your Europe, Your Europe Advice, IMI and Solvit align with and support the objectives of the European Commission's Single Market Strategy. This strategy emphasises the need to adopt measures to prevent discrimination against consumers and entrepreneurs based on nationality or place of residence, aiming to make it easier for them to identify and address such issues. The tools funded under sub-pillar 1c/1d play a crucial role in meeting this objective by making available and accessible free information, advice, and guidance to consumers and businesses about their rights within the Single market or by ensuring that the national authorities can easier and faster act to ensure the rights of citizens and businesses are respected. This approach directly addresses the Strategy's commitment to fostering an inclusive and transparent single market environment.

220 European Commission, Fiscalis Programme. European Commission, Customs Programme.
221 Market Surveillance Regulation 2019/1020.
222 Strategic Plan 2020-2024, DG FISMA.
223 Management plans - European Commission.

Moreover, the IT tools developed under Pillar 1 are also line with the objectives of the Commission's Digital Strategy[224]. Particularly, they align with the Strategy's second objective, 'Enable digital-ready EU policymaking,' which promotes digital solutions aimed at reducing administrative burdens and enhancing efficiency and transparency across citizens, businesses, and public authorities. With respect to competition policy, SMP-funded digital tools support secure exchanges with Member States' administrations, companies, and citizens, especially in the areas of State aid, antitrust/cartel cases, and merger control. Regarding financial services, FIU.net facilitates secure data sharing with national financial intelligence units, while the EU Taxonomy Compass provides accessible digital resources for all stakeholders. Internally, the Commission benefits from tools like KOEL, EMT, and MICE, which enhance digitalisation and support policy implementation. IMI also digitalises various cross-border administrative cooperation procedures in the single market through a single system.

Pillar 2 provides support for SMEs, including access to markets and promotion of entrepreneurship, and complements EU instruments like the InvestEU SME window[225]. The EEN advisory services often refer SMEs to financial support programmes such as InvestEU, which carried forward financial instruments formerly in the COSME programme until 2020. EEN members[226] most frequently collaborate with programmes such as the ERDF (especially Interreg), Horizon Europe, and Digital Europe[227] (including European Digital Innovation Hubs). The strong linkages between EEN and national and regional support programmes, including those provided by national Chambers of Commerce, also showcase the programme's coherence with external initiatives.

The following table summarises synergies and links between SME Pillar actions and other EU programmes. In many cases the interactions with other programmes are characterised by complementarity and additionality, e.g. where support from IP Helpdesks is taken up in addition to EEN services. SMEs often use such combinations of support on a long-term and continuous basis.

Table 16: Examples of links between SME Pillar actions and other EU programmes

SME Pillar action	Other EU programme	Brief description
EEN, Euroclusters	EDIHs	Cooperate at regional/national level to boost digitalisation of SMEs
EEN	ERDF (Interreg)	EEN provides advice to SMEs with a view to participating in the programme
EEN	Horizon, EIC	EEN provides information and advice to SMEs with a view to applying for funding
EEN	IP Helpdesks	Signposting
Euroclusters	European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE) Programme	Euroclusters participate in the EIE Programme
Euroclusters	Interreg	Euroclusters use Interreg funding for joint projects
International IP Helpdesks	IP Helpdesks e.g. under Horizon	Joint events, joint web-offers

224 C(2022) 4388 final; Communication to the Commission: European Commission digital strategy, Next generation digital Commission.
225 European Commission, Invest EU.
226 Targeted survey of EEN beneficiaries.
227 European Commission, Digital Europe Programme.

Source: Elaboration for the supporting study.

Pillar 3 supports beneficiaries that under Pillar 3a, including Annex III organisations, have received complementary funding from programmes such as Horizon Europe[228] and LIFE[229]. These programmes provide targeted, project-specific funding for initiatives, such as enhancing stakeholder participation in the clean energy transition or addressing the need for skills and expertise in standardisation. While the SMP serves as the primary funding source for standardisation-related activities, ensuring stable operational support, funding from other programmes **complements this** by addressing specific initiatives aligned with EU priorities, including the Green Deal and the digital transition. **This dual approach strengthens the coherence and synergy between funding mechanisms, supporting the EU's broader goals of a green, digital, and resilient single market.** As far as Pillar 3b is concerned, the implementation of the new mandate for EFRAG represented the effort to fill a gap as other standard-setting organisations did not concretely pursue the double materiality sustainability reporting objective of the CSRD. In drafting ESRS, EFRAG paid close attention to the actual and potential interoperability with existing and future initiatives at the global level, in particular with GRI[230] and ISSB[231] Sustainability Disclosure Standards. Similarly, the specific mandates of the IFRS Foundation and the PIOB, ensure that the degree of overlap and inconsistency with the actions of other organisations is limited[232].

Pillar 4 has complementarities with other EU funding sources like Horizon Europe, particularly in supporting initiatives related to sustainable consumption. The Digital Europe Programme also complements Pillar 4, aiming to expand the use of digital technologies to step up enforcement and to ensure consumer safety. Additionally, Pillar 4a aligns well with international EU-funded actions, such as the ECC Net supporting Ukrainian communities displaced to the EU and promoting consumer rights. The programme's activities are also in line with the New Consumer Agenda[233], especially in terms of promoting consumer rights. In addition, the activities of Pillar 4b can be linked indirectly with actions financed through other EU interventions in areas such as the green economy and digitalisation with the beneficiaries contributing to promoting consumers rights in areas linked to financial services such as sustainable and digital finance. The work of the beneficiaries is also coherent with initiatives at national and international level, for example with national actions of their members covering financial literacy or engagement in international work in topics relevant to financial services users, for example on sustainable consumption and finance.

Pillar 5 finances activities that demonstrate a strong alignment with several other EU programmes and instruments, as evidenced by the following examples. The contribution of Pillar 5 to the climate and biodiversity mainstreaming aligns with the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal[234]. It includes actions contributing reducing food waste, reducing sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture, preventing and combating animal diseases and plant pests and supporting animal welfare. Pillar 5 initiatives focus on minimising the environmental footprint of food production and processing. This includes reducing the use of harmful pesticides as outlined in the SANTE Strategic Plan 2020-2024. The food waste reduction not only aligns with but actively supports the Farm to Fork Strategy's[235] objectives, indicating clear complementarities

228 European Commission, Horizon Europe.
229 European Commission, LIFE Programme.
230 EFRAG-GRI Joint statement of interoperability (link).
231 EFRAG SRB Meeting 23 August 2023, Paper 04-20 (link).
232 Interview feedback from two representatives of the financial sector and civil society at the EU level.
233 European Commission, Consumer strategy.
234 European Commission, European Green Deal.
235 European Commission, Farm to Fork Strategy.

between SMP Pillar 5 and the Farm to Fork Strategy's goals. Pillar 5 contributes to and complements Horizon Europe's Cluster 6 by aligning its objectives and activities with the cluster's focus areas, including sustainable agriculture, addressing AMR, and fostering sustainable food systems. Pillar 5 indirectly aids in the design and implementation of CAP measures that enhance the sustainability of agricultural practices.

In relation to combating AMR two programmes - SMP Pillar 5 and EU4Health - are used as instrument to implement necessary actions. SMP Pillar 5 funds actions like coordinated surveillance in the food chain (e.g. Coordinated Control Plan for AMR Monitoring), the setting up of national systems for collecting data on sales and use of antimicrobials in animals, training for farmers and veterinarians on prudent antimicrobial use in animals. Meanwhile, EU4Health focuses on addressing AMR in human healthcare, supporting the prudent use of antimicrobials in humans and enhancing cross-border health system resilience. While both programmes engage in training and awareness campaigns, their target audiences are different. SMP Pillar 5 focuses on veterinarians and agricultural stakeholders, whereas EU4Health addresses healthcare professionals and policymakers. This well-defined division of responsibilities ensures that the two programmes not only complement each other, but also align seamlessly with the European One Health Action Plan against AMR[236]. This alignment avoids duplication of efforts and maximises the impact of EU-funded interventions.

The decision-making process what to fund under SMP Pillar 5 is done with Member States agreement. At the planning stage the coherence between the national and SMP Pillar 5 (e.g. veterinary and phytosanitary programmes) are set up. In addition, the legislation stipulates that Member States are responsible for eradication and containment of outbreaks and the SMP Pillar 5 complements with the funding. Synergies between SMP Pillar 5 actions and national measures therefore are set by the legislation.

Overall, Pillar 5 activities are well aligned with the EU's broader political priorities concerning food safety and animal and plant health.

Pillar 6 has a unique focus and there is no other MFF programme that systematically produces and disseminates European statistics under Pillar 6, yet it informs various EU policies and programmes. The memoranda of understanding (MoU) signed between Eurostat and other Commission's DGs show the complementarity of the ESP's and Eurostat's activities with those of the other DGs[237]. Coordination between ESTAT and other EU bodies was positively rated by producers of statistics in the targeted consultation. The close alignment between various international and European classifications, achieved through proactive ESS input at the international level during the design stage, is a prominent example of how coherence and international comparability has been ensured. The Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX)[238] initiative is a key tool for standardised, efficient, and transparent data sharing within Eurostat and with global partners. The alignment of the European Statistical Programme (ESP) with EU strategic objectives is evidenced by the annual activity reports[239].

236 European One Health Action Plan against AMR
237 European Commission Decision - 2012/504.
238 SDMX.
239 European Commission, Annual Activity Report 2023 ESTAT.

4.2. How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom?

4.2.1. EU added-value

Evidence collected and views expressed by stakeholders have shown that the SMP has generated EU added value by funding activities with results going beyond what an intervention supported at national level could have led to (see annexes IX-XIV). It offers essential funding to advance EU-wide objectives such as a prosperous and competitive Europe, and facilitates the implementation of EU legislation across Member States. Additionally, the SMP ensures coordinated EU-level actions to tackle common challenges such as the green and digital transition, and improve the functioning of the single market.

In some areas, SMP actions are mandated by the TFEU and related legislation and the SMP supports the achievement of EU-level requirements. For instance, under **Pillar 1 and Pillar 6** activities are instrumental in supporting the Commission to enforce competition rules or fulfil its legal obligation to ensure its policy making follows a data-driven approach. For instance, the Regulation 2019/1020 on market surveillance entered into force in 2021. The implementation of the actions set out in Regulation, and financed by the SMP, allowed to provide MSAs with increased capacity to perform their operations. Moreover, it enhanced international cooperation and harmonisation of ways of working, which are key concerns addressed by the Regulation.

The SMP also supports services and activities that can only be delivered at the EU level, or that Member States alone would not provide. European transnational services and platforms enable cross-border data sharing and collaboration between national authorities, businesses, and consumers, delivering benefits that individual Member States may have neither the incentive nor capacity to establish independently. For instance, the SMP secures funding directed to digital tools and platforms with an EU-wide operating. These include digital tools and platforms (e.g. IMSOC in Pillar 5) that support EU policies (e.g. food safety policy, competition policy and market surveillance). The EU taxonomy compass provides guidance on sustainable investments. The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) allows to share information about public health risks within the Single Market. Similarly, Pillar 1 finances platforms such as Your Europe for easy access to information or IMI for efficient administrative cooperation, and **Pillar 4** the Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies ensuring access to efficient redress mechanism, European Consumer Centres supporting consumers within the EU/ EEA when engaging in cross-border transactions and the Safety Gate platform which plays a critical role in ensuring consumer protection across the EU by providing a mechanism to quickly identify and remove dangerous non-food products from the market. **Pillar 2** funds initiatives supporting businesses throughout the EU, such as the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE). **Pillar 4** enables EU-level consumer organisations to ensure a stronger and more coordinated representation of consumers' interests and participation in EU policymaking than would be possible at Member State level. This is especially important given the significant share of financial services legislation adopted at EU level. Pillar 5 provides tools such as vaccines and antigens banks, EU veterinary emergency team, networks of official laboratories and authorities (EURLs and EURCs) that can only exist because of SMP funding. The activities financed under Pillar 6 enable to produce comparable statistics for all EU Member States that would not be possible if produced individually, without Eurostat coordination of the Member States.

The SMP enables the coordination of certain actions improving the functioning of the single market. This would be difficult to achieve solely with national actions. This is

demonstrated by **Pillar 3,** which is dedicated to enhancing the EU's role and influence in global standardisation efforts, that would be undermined if not coordinated at EU level. **Pillar 4** focuses on strengthening the capacity and coordinating cooperation of national enforcement authorities (CPC) including actions related to investigation and enforcement in response to infringements of consumer law and consumer protection., The services provided by ECC Net and ADR bodies add substantial European value arising from the scale and quality of their support, as well as their unique ability to address cross-border issues. SMP funding to ECCs and CPCs enables these networks to function effectively, allows their members to coordinate activities, share knowledge, expertise, and resources, and provide advisory support to consumers. Together, these efforts reinforce the efficient operation of the Single Market, benefiting compliant traders while ensuring stronger consumer protection. Another example of EU coordination is the unified approach promoted under **Pillar 5** in relation to the implementation of the Animal Health Law[240] and Plant Health Law[241]. The emphasis of the SMP on collaboration and standardisation has significantly impacted the development and refinement of national food safety standards.

The SMP funds activities that provide economies of scale and reduce duplication that would result from having several Member States directing funding to similar activities, less costly if undertaken altogether at EU level. For instance, Member States could independently provide information and advisory services to businesses and consumers on the single market, but it would lead to overlapping efforts. In case where Member States do provide information, the SMP adds value in improving these services by providing signposting or access, for example via the Your Europe portal. The SMP allows for **economies of scale** also through large-scale and transnational initiatives supporting SME competitiveness (i.e. Europe Enterprise Network) in Pillar 2, or EU Testing Facilities for products in Pillar 1, which showcase how an EU-wide approach minimises duplication and results in economies of scale. The SMP finances specialised and costly services and equipment that would if provided by Member States risk to be underutilised or duplicated leading to non-efficient use of resources. EU testing facilities for non-food products in **Pillar 4** (CASP activities) are an example of initiatives that demonstrates how EU-wide approach minimises duplication and creates economies of scale. IMI offers national authorities one single tool to cooperate between themselves; an alternative solution where different national systems would be built for different areas would have a disproportionate cumulative cost or even prove impossible (e.g. countries would maybe not invest the funds required to build IT systems).

The following **Pillar 5** actions indicate the economies of scale. Centralised EU Reference Laboratories support various Member States in testing, analysis, and research, avoiding redundancy in each Member State's infrastructure. The establishment of vaccine banks at the EU level eliminated the need for each Member State to have such banks. Coordinated responses to animal disease outbreaks and plant pests, such as through the EU Veterinary Emergency Teams, enable shared resources and expertise. This reduces the costs compared to fragmented national responses. The development of databases and traceability systems (e.g. IMSOC, TRACES) with shared access across Member States spreads development and maintenance costs, benefiting all participants through economies of scale.

Some interviewed stakeholders (e.g. NRLs) mentioned that the availability of vaccines, sourced from EU-funded antigen and vaccine banks, has been very important in managing large-scale outbreaks, particularly for diseases like HPAI. They highlighted that these

240 Animal Health Law, Regulation 2016/429.
241 Plant Health Law, Regulation - 2016/2031.

resources enabled rapid deployment of vaccines during emergencies. These stakeholders emphasised that EU co-financing for vaccination campaigns within the veterinary programmes was essential. This funding facilitated access to the vaccines and allowed for their timely deployment, effectively preventing a far worse crisis by ensuring swift containment of the outbreak.

For **Pillar 6**, The ESP has noticeably improved the comparability and harmonisation of national statistics across EU Member States by aligning statistical data production standards, ensuring high-quality, comprehensive, and reliable statistics.

Resources available for producing and developing new statistics at the Member State level were enhanced through grants and collaborative efforts. Moreover, the ESP provides support in terms of advances in methodologies, new data sources, common tools etc.

The interviewees agreed that the ESP enhances the resources available for producing and developing new statistics at the Member State level through grants and collaborative efforts. These grants improve statistical processes in NSIs and enhance efficiency, promote literacy, and integrate new data sources, reducing costs and improving quality. Initiatives like the European Statistics Competition and training sessions on funding mechanisms contribute to capacity building.

Eurostat's continuous updates and methodological advancements help achieve a unified statistical framework, which is essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation. It could be argued that the harmonised standards and tools develop under the lead and coordination by Eurostat and the capacity building provided create economies of scale in the production of statistics. The increasing use of new sources made possible by the ESP also contributes to reduce costs and increase economies of scale.

The SMP offers additionality a strong EU added-value by providing transnational and cross-border perspectives that would not otherwise be available to businesses, consumers, and citizens. Certain services funded by the SMP focus directly on cross-border issues, providing information and guidance linked with working or trading abroad within the Single Market. For example, the EEN, financed under Pillar 2, offers a pan-EU network fostering cooperation and coordination between EU companies. The services the EEN offers benefit from operating at EU level rather than at national level. This was evidenced by 16 out 19 high-level stakeholders confirming the EU added value of the EEN[242]. The SMP also facilitate cross-border mobility, with initiatives such as EYE. National actions would not be able to create possibilities of mobility, which also benefit from the EU 'branding'. Positive feedback on the added value of the SMP funding for innovation was expressed, with 74% of Euroclusters beneficiaries indicating the results could not have been achieved as effectively without an EU-level programme[243]. The European Consumer Centres and ADR bodies (**Pillar 4**) help consumers engage in cross-border transactions more confidently by providing them with free information and advice on their rights, assist them in resolving cross-border consumer complaints and obtain access to appropriate dispute resolution. The Safety Gate platform (**Pillar 4**) plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of consumer products across the EU and has become increasingly important in addressing risks from cross-border e-commerce. The information about dangerous non-food products is publicly accessible which is particularly useful for consumers and businesses operating across borders. Moreover, the CASP activities facilitate cooperation between the market surveillance authorities across the EU and provide substantial EU added value by improving product safety across borders,

242 Targeted consultation European-level business organisations and SME Committee Members.
243 Targeted consultation of Euroclusters beneficiaries.

enhancing consumer protection, and fostering a more cohesive and effective response to market risks.

For **Pillar 2** - SMEs almost all actions of the SME Pillar entail significant EU added value.

The EU added value is attributed by stakeholders to the fact that almost all actions are strongly based on cross-border cooperation, which could not be triggered by national support programmes.

EEN is a European network, and its consortia cooperate with other consortia to support the SME clients. This international network effect is the main advantage of having an international business support programme. Furthermore, within the EEN, international expertise can be tapped very quickly to discuss problems faced by SMEs.

The survey among EEN member organisations shows that 78% of respondents (91 out of 117) could not implement the relevant services as effectively outside the EEN. Only 16% say that these services could be performed equally well outside a European network. According to the member organisations, the main factor underlying the EU added value is a wider base of knowledge, expertise and potential business partners at EU level.

Most of the EU-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members surveyed for this evaluation study confirm a clear EU added value for EYE. Out of 19 respondents, 14 (74%) think that it is an advantage that EYE is provided through an EU-level initiative as compared to a national or regional programme. Feedback from Intermediary Organisations points into the same direction: Almost two thirds of organisations (63%) state that EYE-like cross-border exchanges could not be organised and implemented just as effectively without an EU-level programme[244].

The survey conducted for this evaluation showed that 74% of cluster beneficiaries[245] said that the activities and results of their Eurocluster could not be achieved just as effectively without an EU-level programme, i.e. through (several) national programmes. The main reasons stated in the survey are: higher funding rate for clusters with EU calls, the cascade funding scheme doesn't or rarely exists at the national level, EU cross-border collaboration is not possible at national level and essential in some industries/sectors, networking opportunities for clusters and companies available on the EU-wide scale, lack of cluster policy at national level, better access to new knowledge, technologies and experiences.

With respect to the social economy actions, most of the EU-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members surveyed for this evaluation study confirm an EU added value. Out of 19 respondents, 12 (63%) think that it is an advantage that the actions are provided through an EU-level programme as compared to national or regional programmes[246].

The survey among beneficiaries of tourism-related actions, more specifically TOURSME 2021 and TOURSME 2022, revealed that 61% of respondents (20 out of 33) could not achieve the activities and results of their project without an EU-level programme, i.e. through (several) national programmes. Another 24% of the respondents could possibly

244 Survey among 133 Intermediary Organisations run between May 14-30, 2024 in which 49 Intermediary Organisations participated.
245 Question 'Could the activities and results of your Eurocluster be achieved just as effectively without an EU-level programme, i.e. through (several) national programmes?' out of 42 responses, 31 said 'No, not at all', 5 'Yes, equally well', 4 'Yes, but less effectively, 1 'Yes, even more effectively' and 1 'Don't know'.
246 Survey of high-level stakeholders, filtered for respondents involved in social economy-related projects funded by the SMP.

achieve the activities and results also through national programmes, but less effectively so. Thus, an EU added value is confirmed by 85% of the beneficiaries.

For **Pillar 4**, the SMP provides added value to policy makers through robust evidence gathering. It has funded numerous studies aimed at addressing specific consumer issues and evaluating targeted policies. It also collects regular data to assess consumer confidence levels and identify emerging trends that could pose risks to consumers within the single market. Without EU funding, it is highly unlikely that any Member State would undertake data collection on this scale. These studies are essential for benchmarking the performance of Member States, providing targeted support through action grants, and, crucially, shaping future policy decisions and coordinated enforcement actions at EU level. Much of the consumer policy at the Member State level originates from European legislation, with the European Commission leading initiatives on critical issues like digital safety and the green transition, which require coordinated action at the EU level. These efforts must be grounded in robust data collection, stakeholder engagement, and consultation at the EU level to ensure effective and informed policymaking.

The SMP provides a strong EU added value by facilitating cooperation with international organisations, such as ICPEN, OECD, UNCTAD and with non-EU countries.

For Pillar 5, The variety of measures to be implemented to eradicate and contain animal diseases and plant pests requires a centralised management system in order to properly coordinate and organise the implementation of specific actions in the Member States. This lack of coordination and action could lead to delays or disparities in the management of outbreaks, which could increase the risk of crises spreading across the EU. In such situations overall EU interests should be safeguarded.

Compliance with EU legislation remains mandatory regardless of the availability of co-financing. However, national budgets of Members States alone, especially of those struggling with economic crisis or other constraints, have difficulties to secure appropriate financial resources to respond to the combination of present and potential challenges. This requires a centralised approach to ensure the necessary oversight and a high level of overall ambition in combating diseases and pests. All measures aimed to prevent crises and ensure timely and adequately reaction to animal disease and plant pest outbreaks are in the interest of all Member States. A good example of this solidarity is the EU system of vaccine banks (e.g. classical swine fever, foot-and-mouth disease), as its stocks are immediately available in the event of an animal health crisis occurring in any of the Member States.

For **Pillar 6,** The ESP has noticeably improved the comparability and harmonisation of national statistics across EU Member States. The ESP's initiatives have aligned statistical data production standards, ensuring high-quality, comprehensive, and reliable statistics. Eurostat's continuous updates and methodological advancements have played a critical role in achieving a unified statistical framework, which is essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation.

As an example, the FIGARO (Full International and Global Accounts for Research in input-Output analysis) tables launched by Eurostat in response to the increasing demand for data on globalisation interlink EU economies and their global partners, providing insights into global value chains, economic impacts, and environmental footprints. Eurostat has been involved in updating international manuals and has promoted European statistical norms through regional programmes in neighbouring countries and thus contributed to setting global statistical standards.

All the interviewed stakeholders highly appreciated the ESP as crucial for ensuring the comparability and harmonisation of statistics across Member States. They emphasised the critical importance of having a centralised system for standardised statistics. Eurostat's role in ensuring data coherence and alignment with global standards was also highlighted. The harmonised datasets provided by Eurostat, especially in areas like labour statistics, are unique and highly valued, ensuring informed decision-making and policy development.

The stakeholders participating in the survey and interviews expressed the opinion that the ESP noticeably improved statistics timeliness, especially in response to emergent needs like the COVID-19 pandemic (European Statistical Recovery Dashboard, excess mortality indicator) and geopolitical events such as the war in Ukraine, which prompted the ESP to dramatically enhance its production of energy-related statistics.

Resources available for producing and developing new statistics at the Member State level were enhanced through grants and collaborative efforts. Many surveyed producers and users believe that Member States cannot successfully conduct the production of European statistics on their own. Moreover, the ESP provides support in terms of advances in methodologies, new data sources, common tools etc.

The interviewees agreed that the ESP enhances the resources available for producing and developing new statistics at the Member State level through grants and collaborative efforts. These grants improve statistical processes in NSIs and enhance efficiency, promote literacy, and integrate new data sources, reducing costs and improving quality. Initiatives like the European Statistics Competition and training sessions on funding mechanisms contribute to capacity building.

4.2.2. Sustainability of the added value

The sustainability of the added value of the activities funded by the SMP varies, because some benefits and effects are reliant on continuous implementation and on available funding. For instance, the IT tools and platforms developed under Pillar 1, such as Your Europe, IMI and those supporting competition policy and market surveillance, and the ongoing collection and production of statistics under Pillar 6 require regular and uninterrupted financial support to maintain their operations. Similarly, organisations funded under Pillar 3, may face challenges in continuing their participation in the standard-setting process without continued SMP grants. On the other hand, certain benefits are likely to endure. Entrepreneurs and SMEs that have engaged with initiatives financed under Pillar 2, such as the EYE and the EEN, are expected to continue reaping the benefits of their participation. Consumer organisations and competent authorities that have received support under Pillar 4, through capacity building and IT platforms will maintain their enhanced capacity for cooperation and enforcement beyond the Programme's duration.

Pillar 5 had to face increased incurred costs due to numerous outbreaks of animal diseases in several MSs (HPAI, ASF), and due to the limited budget available it was consequently required to decrease drastically the co-financing rate of several actions (veterinary and phyto programmes and emergency measures). As a consequence, there could be a potential delay and under-implementation, as national budgets had to cover the expenses not anymore funded by the EU. Actual access to an emergency reserve would have avoided this situation.

4.2.3. Impacts of withdrawing or lowering the SMP funding

In the event of withdrawing or lowering the SMP funding, the Commission would be unable to satisfy its legal obligations in relation to the single market, especially in areas

where it holds exclusive competence, or deriving from EU legislation. For instance, in respect of **Pillar 1** there is a risk with regards to competition policy for which the Commission depends on a certain level of resources allocated among others via the SMP to develop, implement and enforce EU legislation. Specific regulations also mandate the Commission to recognise certain bodies, such as the European Cooperation for Accreditation and EOTA, support networks like the EUPCN and AdCos. It is also legally incumbent upon the Commission to operate platforms and information systems such as ICSMS or IMI. Alternative dedicated financing sources would be necessary to compensate for the withdrawal of EU funding through the SMP.

Lowering of funding would also limit the capacity of the Commission to assess the enforcement of EU law or the preparedness of candidate countries since outsourcing is needed to support Commission's work in this area. Reduction of funding for the development and implementation of the internal market in financial services would hinder efforts to improve the competitiveness of the European economy, digitalisation, and the financing of the transition to a sustainable economy.

The overall functioning of the single market would be negatively affected by a withdrawal of funding by the SMP of actions instrumental to ensure coordination of relevant authorities. The withdrawal of SMP funding would have negative impacts in areas where it would be difficult to replace, for instance for studies, databases, and digital tools. The potential withdrawal of funding of activities of **Pillar 3** would disrupt all standardisation activities, notably the production of standards and the crucial support for aligning standards with EU legislation and ensuring stakeholder participation in international standard-setting.

A withdrawal of funding under **Pillar 4** could lead to a weaker and less coordinated representation of consumers at EU level. Pillar 4a supports the European Consumer Centres, and national enforcement authorities and helps maintain their budgets despite national government changes, which may be detrimental to the level of financing available. Large part of consumer protection funding supports legal obligations in relation to the enforcement of product safety (GPSR), consumer law, ADR, and qualified entities for representative actions. Lowering the SMP funding will significantly put at risk operations and undermine the Commission's abilities to effectively implement consumer policy objectives and ensure a high-level safety in the EU. Effective protection of EU consumers' interests, whose private spendings accounted for over 52%[247] of its Nominal GDP, is essential to fostering trust in the internal market, ensuring fairness in transactions, and safeguarding their rights against deceptive commercial practices and unsafe products. Consumers face great fragmentation in the single market and the different sectors shall be investigated at the EU and national level. As cross-border and online markets continue to develop, the European Consumer Centres are assigned to overlook new areas and market surveillance activities; hence more resources are key. The SMP support is essential to enable the Commission and the Member States to meet their obligations under the Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 and without EU support it would be adversely affected. The Regulation requires the Member States to cooperate and coordinate actions with each other and with the Commission in the field of consumer protection. This includes actions related to investigation and enforcement in response to infringements of consumer law. Moreover, the CASP activities enable coordinated product testing across multiple Member States. This level of cooperation and efficiency would be difficult to achieve through national actions alone. Similarly, the Safety Gate platform that has proved effective in exchanging information between the competent authorities about dangerous non-food products, resulting

247 EU Private Consumption, CEIC

in withdrawal unsafe non-food products from the Single Market would cease to operate without the European coordination and funding. Furthermore**,** a significant share of financial services legislation is adopted at EU level requiring coordinated representation at EU level. Withdrawal of funding would mean that consumer interests – unlike industry interests - may not be sufficiently heard. In the absence of EU funding the grant beneficiaries would be unable to provide the same level of support for the interests of users of financial services[248] and it is unlikely that other EU organisations would be able to fill the gap.

The negative impact of the withdrawal of funding is also increased by the political challenges ahead related for example to the European Saving and Investment Union, the digital and sustainable finance as well as the support for growth and innovation for EU companies.

Would the **Pillar 2 actions** be withdrawn, it is unlikely that replacing programmes could be initiated and developed by the Member States or regional governments. The essence and value of all SME-related actions is their cross-border dimension. Member States could not or only partially (e.g. on a bilateral basis) develop and manage programmes entailing EU-wide exchange and cooperation. A withdrawal of the EEN would not only mean a loss of its unique support structure and services, but it would also have negative indirect effects on services of member organisations provided outside the EEN.

For **Pillar 3**, EU funding remains critical to ensure the functioning of organisations that are key actors in the standardisation system for corporate reporting and auditing. The market alone is not necessarily equipped and able to produce meaningful, high-quality standards, and the lack of an EU coordination might result in fragmentation and limited applicability of standards in the market[249]. This funding ensures the development of harmonised, high-impact standards that address the evolving needs of the single market, support innovation, and strengthen the EU's global competitiveness while avoiding inefficiencies and inconsistencies caused by fragmented national-level initiatives. EU funding enabled the IASB to develop high-quality IFRS Accounting Standards. EU resources were instrumental to EFRAG to serve the European public interest by developing and promoting European views in the field of financial reporting and ensuring these views are properly considered by the IASB, as well as to develop the ESRS, which, considering that these represent the most comprehensive and ambitious example of standards for sustainability reporting, it is likely that no equivalent alternative would be available today. The current funding for EFRAG is already insufficient as mentioned in previous sections and further lowering of funds would comprise its capacity to deliver on its mandate. Finally, EU funding was indispensable to support the PIOB in safeguarding the public interest in setting International Standards on Auditing[250].

The withdrawal of funding of activities of Pillar 5 would significantly affect health and safety measures. Without the availability of adequate governance including funding mechanism, Member States may neglect the efforts of the others, especially in animal and plant health, as their individual interest may insufficiently consider the common EU interest. They could also delay the implementation of or lead to under-implementation of some emergency measures in case of animal disease outbreaks, generating much greater damages.

248 The evidence gathered as part of the study has confirmed the added value of the funding under Pillar 4b. Respondents noted that SMP funding has enabled Better Finance and Finance Watch to operate at a scale and level of influence that would not have been possible without EU support. For example, the majority of respondents felt that the results achieved by the beneficiaries would not have been possible without EU-level funding (60% for Finance Watch's results and 78% of respondents for Better Finance's results), highlighting the importance of SMP support.

249 Interview feedback from 10 representatives of the financial sector and civil society at the EU level.

250 European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the activities of the IFRS Foundation, EFRAG and PIOB in 2022, European Commission, COM(2023) 712 final.

Interviews with stakeholders from National Reference Laboratories (NRLs), RASFF, AAC, ADIS, EUROPHYT, and TRACES networks have highlighted that stopping SMP funding would lead to difficulties in managing diseases and outbreaks, weakened border controls, inconsistent health standards across Member States, and reduced capacity for effective surveillance and early detection. Additionally, without standardised measures, the approach to challenges like antimicrobial resistance (AMR) would become fragmented, potentially jeopardising the health initiatives, and undermining the functioning of the single market.

Similarly, the withdrawal of funding of activities under Pillar 6 would make the provision of timely comparable and comprehensive European statistics impossible, ultimately impairing evidence-based policymaking and monitoring at international, EU, and national levels. Benefits from the ESP have spanned beyond EU borders and extended to candidate countries and the international statistical community. By fostering collaboration with global organisations like the OECD, UNECE, IMF and World Bank, Pillar 6 has not only enabled to enhance the quality of statistics and guarantee its comparability with the rest of the world but also encouraged the exchange of best practices and ensured coordination among diverse stakeholders at global level.

4.3. Is the intervention still relevant?

4.3.1. Relevance of objectives and activities

The general and specific objectives of the SMP are in line with the structural needs of the single market. The challenges identified in the impact assessment remain relevant today. Moreover, the possibility of flexibility in budget reallocation enabled funding to be redirected to address crises that emerged during the early stage of the implementation of the SMP, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine[251].

The objectives of Pillar 1 remain relevant and in line in the EU policy priorities to ensure the sound functioning of the single market. Relevance to a great or reasonable extent has been confirmed by 75% of the respondents to the public consultation (47 out of 63)[252]. The competition sub-pillar objectives align with the current needs of competition policy, as defined by DG COMP[253]. In addition, the need for effective/increased competition enforcement was also underlined in the recent report with the evolution of competition during the past 25 years[254]. The need to ensure effective competition policy and modernise EU's competition policy (e.g. with review of Horizontal Merger Guidelines) was also underlined in the mission letter of the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition)[255]: the studies to support the modernisation of competition policy will thus remain relevant for the next years. In view of the constraints on the human resources on the Commission[256], the development of IT tools that allow for efficient and effective enforcement will remain of paramount importance to ensure the Commission can fulfil its obligations under the TFEU. The strong involvement of national competition authorities (NCAs) further supports the relevance of these activities. In fact, all 25 NCAs that responded to the survey[257] confirmed using the ECN2 platform, and most (14 out of 23) had participated in conferences or networking events. As regards market surveillance, the SMP funding is

251 As evidenced by the Work Programmes, available here: Single Market programme - legal texts and factsheets - European Commission.
252 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.
253 Competition Policy - European Commission.
254 Ex Post Economic Evaluation of Competition Policy.
255 Mission letter of the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition.
256 Also, in view of the new enforcement activities that are also outlined in the mission letter i.e. the Digital Markets Act and the Foreign Subsidies Regulation.
257 Targeted consultation of NCAs participating in the ECN.

instrumental in meeting the objectives of the Market Surveillance Regulation and the related legal requirements. The two EUTFs offer specific testing facilities, needed in the Single Market, demonstrating their relevance. As regards digital tools financed under Pillar 1, their significant use by businesses and citizens and national authorities underscores their relevance; the needs to provide information to the public or to support cross-border cooperation between authorities will not disappear in the future, on the contrary it is expected that it will increase at ever growing rates to support and empower the free movement of people, businesses and goods in the Single market. The SMP also finances certain bodies required to comply with specific regulations, such as the EOTA and the European Cooperation for accreditation. Moreover, activities in the field of financial services remain relevant in addressing risks highlighted by the Commission's 2022 supranational risk assessment on money laundering and terrorist financing[258].

The Commission also needs to continue to be supported in its policy work by having access to specific competencies via outsourcing (e.g. procurement of studies, access to data) that support evidence-based work in light with better regulation principles. The activities linked to enforcement work financed under the SMP (e.g. outsourcing of conformity assessments, maintenance of IT tool such as KOEL) also remain more than relevant in light of the new mandate of the Commission. Considering the need to increase coordination among national bodies, the financing of tools such as FIU.net in the area of anti-money laundering remains instrumental to avoid risks of unclear legal frameworks, uneven supervision, and lack of coordination of financial intelligence units[259].

The objectives of Pillar 2 remain relevant, in terms of facilitating access to markets, promoting entrepreneurship and the modernisation of the European industry[260] **and** to the achievement of the EU SME Strategy[261] and major policy priorities such as the Green Deal[262] and the EU Digital Strategy[263]. Relevance to a great or reasonable extent has been confirmed by 75% of the respondents to the public consultation (47 out of 63)[264]. Additionally, initiatives funded under Pillar 2, such as the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE), and Euroclusters, continue to play an essential role in addressing needs of their users. Feedback mechanisms embedded in the EEN and the feedback provided by Euroclusters (during mid-term review meetings for instance) guarantee the actions remain relevant. Consultations with diverse stakeholders in various settings contribute greatly, next to the regular data collection and analysis, such as through the SME Performance Review, to ensuring the Programme's ongoing relevance. However, the transnational focus of Pillar 2 projects tends to align more closely with the needs of SMEs that are already engaged in, or have the potential for, cross-border or international business activities. As a result, the relevance of these initiatives is often higher for companies involved with such activities, leaving other SMEs, particularly those with a more local or national scope, less involved. This imbalance has led to uneven levels of participation across Member States, with certain regions benefiting more from the support than others. To address this disparity, enhancing outreach efforts, particularly in Member States or regions where

258 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of recent alleged money laundering cases involving EU credit institutions; COM(2019) 373 final.
259 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of recent alleged money laundering cases involving EU credit institutions; COM(2019) 373 final.
260 In line with the European Commission political guidelines for 2024-2029.
261 EU SME Strategy.
262 The European Green Deal - European Commission
263 EU Digital Strategy.
264 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.

participation has been lower, and incentivising broader involvement across the EU will ensure-SMEs in all Member States can access the opportunities provided by the SMP.

President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for 2019 to 2024[265], focused strongly on the European Green Deal, emphasising amongst others a future-ready economy, on an 'economy that works for people', where support to small businesses with a view to innovation plays a crucial role, and on making Europe fit for the digital age. The Pillar objectives appear to be fully aligned to these guidelines. Her political guidelines for 2024 to 2029[266], prioritise 'Making business easier'. This includes creating new momentum to complete and deepen the single market and helping SMEs scale up and making the most out of it. The guidelines also aim at reducing administrative burden and improving the business environment. Decarbonisation and digitalisation also remain key areas in the President's political guidelines. With its current objectives, the SME Pillar will therefore remain highly relevant in the context of the new guidelines.

Similarly, the SME Relief Package of 2023 also calls for supporting SMEs to help them consolidate their recovery[267]. The SME Relief package underlines, amongst others, ensuring a business-friendly regulatory environment for SMEs, advancing digitalisation of SMEs, easing SMEs' access to public procurement markets, fostering/facilitating the start of new businesses and the growth of existing enterprises.

The objectives of Pillar 3 remain relevant. Relevance to a great or reasonable extent has been confirmed by 92% of the respondents to the public consultation (45 out of 49)[268]. The priorities and topics covered by the grants directly align with the EU Standardisation Strategy[269] and associated Work Programmes, addressing both current and anticipated standardisation needs. Despite this, the analysis revealed that nearly half of the calls for proposals issued between 2021 and 2023 under Pillar 3a received no responses. In some instances, this was attributed to capacity constraints faced by potential applicants. In other cases, stakeholders acknowledged the relevance of the topics but questioned whether they warranted prioritisation over more pressing matters. Concerning international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards (Pillar 3b), the objectives of the programme remain highly relevant. For instance, funding activities linked to the development of sustainability reporting standards by EFRAG have been critical for EU law implementation and contribute to the EU influence on global standardisation. For example, the new mandate of EFRAG has supported the application of the CSRD[270]. Stakeholders consulted confirmed how crucial it remains for the EU to support the development of high-quality standards and to ensure that all relevant interest are increasingly represented in the process at the EU and international level[271]. The work of EFRAG was particularly relevant considering that no other global initiatives seemed aligned with the speed and scope of EU's ambition in the field[272]. Consultations with beneficiaries as well as EU organisations representing relevant interests suggested that, especially given the increasing importance of sustainability reporting on the EU and global agenda, this could be made more explicit in the SMP

265 European Commission, President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for 2019 to 2024
266 European Commission, President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for 2024 to 2029
267 SME Relief Package of 2023.
268 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.
269 EU Standardisation Strategy
270 The Directive provides new, stronger rules related to social and environmental information reported by companies, including the need for large companies and listed SMEs to report on sustainability. All companies subject to the CSRD will need to report following the ESRS, developed by the EFRAG – and published in December 2023.
271 Interview feedback from seven representatives of the financial sector and civil society at the EU level.
272 European Financial Reporting Advisory Group, Proposal for a relevant and dynamic EU sustainability reporting standard-setting, February 2021.

objective, especially, since the new mandate of EFRAG means a shift from the support and advice to more concrete standard-setting activities[273]. The work of EFRAG is also important provide adequate support and guidance for companies in the implementation of ESRS, so helping to reduce the burden on companies.

The objectives of Pillar 4 of consumer protection, including both general consumers and financial service users continue to be relevant. Relevance placed towards supporting competent enforcement authorities and protecting consumers to enhance fairness and transparency to a great or reasonable extent has been confirmed by 78% of the respondents to the public consultation[274]. Activities funded by the SMP align well with the priorities outlined in the New Consumer Agenda, empowering, and educating consumers through targeted educational initiatives, ensuring product safety via market surveillance efforts, and addressing emerging consumer needs through evidence-gathering actions. Key capacity building initiatives, such as Consumer PRO, Consumer Law Ready; CPC capacity building scheme, e-Enforcement Academy and ADR grants, have been particularly relevant in helping both consumers and businesses understand and comply with consumer rights, while also supporting CPC authorities and ADR mechanisms ensuring effective enforcement and redress to consumers. The IT tools funded by the SMP, including the Safety Gate, ADR/ODR, RAD, CPC-, and e-surveillance web crawler, have proven to be relevant, highlighting their positive influence on consumer protection activities[275]. With regards to Pillar 4b the two beneficiaries complement each other and have both been successful in becoming an important voice of representation for financial services' consumers. They provide, with their individual expertise in the financial services, coverage in a large thematic area and at a depth that would not be possible without the intervention and their activities follow the EU political agenda in the area of financial services very closely. Stakeholders in the field of finance participating in the consultation on Better Finance and Finance Watch activities also confirmed that these initiatives meet the needs of financial service users: 77.6% of respondents (45 out of 58) acknowledged Better Finance's relevance, while 53.4% (31 out of 58) did the same for Finance Watch[276]. Going forward the political focus on the Savings and Investment Union with increased retail participation in capital markets and on strengthened financial literacy will even lead to further increased importance of the activities of the beneficiaries.

The objectives of Pillar 5 remain relevant and able to adapt to emerging threats, such as new animal diseases, plant pests, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Relevance to a great or reasonable extent has been confirmed by 92% of the respondents to the public consultation (45 out of 49)[277]. This is reinforced by its strategic flexibility. For example, the work programmes have been adjusted to incorporate enhanced surveillance systems, improved biosecurity protocols, and the use of advanced analytical techniques, ensuring that Pillar 5 remains responsive to the evolving challenges and needs in the EU food chain. These adaptations highlight the critical role Pillar 5 plays in safeguarding public and animal health, promoting animal welfare, and ensuring food safety. Additionally, the training provided by the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative is regarded as valuable by BTSF national contact points, underlining its relevance[278]. However, areas for potential improvement were noted, particularly concerning the engagement of national contact points

273 Interview feedback from two representatives of the financial sector and civil society at the EU level.
274 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.
275 Targeted consultation of Pillar 4a beneficiaries.
276 Targeted consultation of pillar 4b stakeholders in the field of finance.
277 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.
278 Targeted consultation of BTSF national contact points.

(NCPs), who have been less responsive to the Commission's requests for input on tailored training topics.

The objectives of Pillar 6 remain aligned with the evolving needs and challenges related to statistics in the EU. Relevance of European statistics has been confirmed by 77% of the respondents to the public consultation (24 out of 31)[279]. Its emphasis on technological innovation, better data integration, strengthened partnerships, and the capacity to respond to emerging data demands ensures the provision of valuable, high-quality statistics. These are crucial for EU policymaking, as well as public debate. The mechanisms designed to maintain the relevance of Pillar 6 over time are varied and robust. They include annual reports from the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), opinions from the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), and regular hearings and consultations both within the European Commission and the ESS. The targeted consultation of producers of statistics indicated a strong belief that these mechanisms effectively maintain the ESP's alignment with the needs of statistical organisations. Structured consultations, feedback collection, and regular user satisfaction surveys are primary tools used to ensure the programme remains attuned to the demands of its users. However, certain areas of improvement persist, regarding the lack of granularity in regional and territorial data, issues with timeliness, and the challenge of integrating new data sources.

The ESP's activities are well aligned with overarching EU strategies and objectives, facilitated by memoranda of understanding with various DGs and EU bodies. Eurostat undertakes significant efforts to ensure the complementarity of ESP activities with EU strategic objectives.

The memoranda of understanding (MoU) between Eurostat and other Commission's Directorates-General show the complementarity of the ESP's and Eurostat's activities with other EU bodies. Many new and renewed MoUs were signed during the evaluation period 2021-2023. These agreements cover a wide variety of topics and areas, including administrative arrangements, technical collaboration in terms of production of statistics for different policies, methodological support for development of official statistics, establishing dialogue and coordination of activities, etc.

The close alignment between various international and European classifications, achieved through proactive ESS input at the international level during the design stage, is a prominent example of how coherence and international comparability have been ensured. Eurostat has effectively coordinated with international statistical organisations, ensuring that European statistics are coherent with global frameworks. Initiatives like the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) have facilitated efficient data sharing and alignment of standards. This cooperation has enhanced the global relevance and comparability of European statistics.

The number of administrative arrangements which Eurostat reviews, renews or signs every year with its key partners is a good indicator of increasing cooperation on the international level.

There are no initiatives and national programmes that would be useful to compare the SMP against (having similar objectives).

279 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.

4.3.2. Relevance of budget

Based on the Programme's achievements and effectiveness to date, the current budget constitutes the absolute minimum necessary to carry out the activities set out in the SMP Regulation. By the same token, the allocated budget is insufficient to go beyond the basic initiatives and to accommodate new challenges. The indicative budget did not anticipate the increasing inflationary pressure. Progress in policy areas suggest that, despite the significant resource shortages, this has not yet led to underperformance. The sufficiency of the budget received mixed feedback across different pillars (see Annex IX-XIV).

In **Pillar 1**, the budget was sufficient to fund online tools, such as Your Europe and IMI, to support most competition policy actions, FIU.net, EU taxonomy compass in the area of financial services and with regards to market surveillance to finance the EUPCN activities. However, the enforcement of EU law incumbent upon the Commission would benefit from an increased budget (notably also due to enforcement of new legal instruments such as the Digital Markets Ac and the Foreign Subsidies Regulation). A severe shortage of budget for studies or databases subscriptions was also detected in some areas financed by the pillar, particularly in relation to financial services.

In **Pillar 2**, evidence suggests that the level of EU co-financing for capacity building tools is generally satisfactory. For example, 61% of EEN member organisations and 81% of beneficiaries of tourism actions found the EU co-financing levels appropriate, though a minority found them unsatisfactory[280]. 63% of new entrepreneurs considered the financial assistance sufficient or 'more or less' sufficient to cover costs, and 37% reported it as insufficient.

In **Pillar 3**, the funding allocated to European Standardisation, Pillar 3a, appears to have been sufficient to meet the needs of beneficiaries[281]. Nonetheless, stakeholders have suggested reallocating resources toward underfunded areas, enhancing flexibility in financial instruments, and ensuring targeted support for capacity building initiatives to address disparities among participants. However, within Pillar 3b focusing on international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards, consultations have indicated as mentioned in previous sections that one key beneficiary (EFRAG) may still be under-resourced relative to its substantial new tasks linked to sustainability reporting. As far as PIOB is concerned while progress has been made in the diversification of the funding base additional efforts needs to be made to arrive at a sustainable funding model for the medium- and long-term future, which ensures the independence of its oversight function from the audit profession.

In **Pillar 4**, feedback on the level of resources was overall positive, as reflected in the targeted consultations and interviews with ADRs, ECCs, and other stakeholders. Budget allocation remained stable across the two sub-pillars, with some reallocation of budget to cater for the safety of products and consumer protection needs. However, budget constraints were reported by the beneficiaries of Pillar 4b active in the area of financial services due to an increase inflation and the difficulty to secure other sources of funding.

In **Pillar 5**, the budget had to be adjusted to address emerging crises. In 2023, EUR 31 million was transferred into the Pillar 5 budget from the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve, in response to the HPAI emergency. However, due to this emergency, veterinary and phytosanitary programmes saw co-financing rates cut by 60% from 2023 onward,

280 For EEN 36% perceived it as unsatisfactory. For beneficiaries of tourism actions 12%.
281 as shown by the consumption of the allocated budget and responsiveness to the calls, see Annex XI.

signalling that the allocated funds were insufficient to cope with large-scale crises like the HPAI outbreaks of 2021 and 2022. To remedy this, an emergency reserve aid to respond to unforeseen budgetary needs would be required, as a fixed budget line proved inefficient.

In **Pillar 6**, the level of budget is not sufficient and potentially limits the financial autonomy of ESTAT, which relies on subdelegated funds from other Commission DGs. More direct funding and human resources would be needed to improve the financial efficiency and effectiveness of statistical activities.

4.3.3. Relevance to unforeseen priorities and needs

The analysis of the SMP Work Programmes demonstrates a relative capacity for adaptation and responsiveness, with resources being reallocated to address new and emerging challenges, within the limits of the allocated budget. Two significant cases illustrating this flexibility are the final phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The Covid-19 pandemic reshaped SMP activities under several pillars. **Pillar 6** responded by launching the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard, integrating new statistical indicators to capture the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. Under **Pillar 5,** the continued support to food waste reduction has contributed to the redistribution of surplus food, by strengthening the coordination of food banks' activities and their efforts to monitor donated foods through an IT portal. This was a timely support in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, when there was an increase in food demand across the EU. Under **Pillar 4**, all capacity building activities, trainings and events transitioned from in-person to online format. This shift had several key effects such as increase accessibility, broader reach, development of digital platforms and e-learning tools, cost reduction and sustainability benefits. Moreover, the Consumer Conditions Survey 2021 included targeted questions to assess the impact of COVID-19 on EU consumers and CASP adjusted its priorities to launch coordinated activity on testing safety of personal protective equipment such as hand sanitisers, and face masks and single-use gloves. During the COVID-19 pandemic ECCs played a critical role in mediating disputes related to cross-border transactions, such as cancelled flights and unfulfilled online orders. Their intervention ensured that many consumers received refunds or compensation, demonstrating their effectiveness in crisis situations.

In response to the Ukraine conflict, several SMP actions were adjusted across multiple pillars. Under **Pillar 2**, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs was expanded to include more Ukrainian participants, and targeted support was introduced to help Ukrainian SMEs navigate the Single Market. **Pillar 3** took steps to ensure the translation of key European standards into Ukrainian, while **Pillar 4** focused on an information campaign about EU consumer rights aimed at displaced Ukrainians. Meanwhile, under **Pillar 6**, the shifting geopolitical situation prompted the European Statistical Programme (ESP) to dramatically enhance its production of energy-related statistics, following EU energy evolving priorities.

The adaptation mechanisms within the SMP have also been applied beyond these two major crises. For example, under **Pillar 5**, due to unforeseen outbreaks of animal diseases (HPAI and ASF) in several MSs, leading to a very significant increase of the incurred costs, the co-financing rates of veterinary and phytosanitary programmes and emergency measures were reduced by 60% from 2023 onward in order to ensure funding continuity within the available and limited budget; animal diseases and pest priority groups had to be revised consequently. Similarly, **Pillar 3** has adapted its calls for grants to address emerging

standardisation needs by refining and adjusting the definition of the topics covered by or targets of the calls ensuring the continued relevance of the funded activities.

The scope of the SMP appears to be appropriately aligned with its policy objectives, as the Programme is showing progress across all the policy areas covered by its six pillars. Evidence also suggests that each pillar remains relevant to strengthening and deepening the single market, boosting competitiveness and prosperity as highlighted in the new Political Guidelines[282], in line with the Draghi and Letta reports[283]. Stakeholders have not widely called for an extension of the scope. In fact, none of the interviewed stakeholders recommended broadening its scope, and only a small portion (8%, 5 out of 63[284]). Any significant scope expansion would need to be accompanied by a proportional budget increase to avoid compromising its effectiveness. Additionally, any expansion of the SMP would need to ensure coherence with other EU instruments that already support the single market.

For **Pillar 5** actions appear to be adequately aligned with broader policy objectives. In particular, reducing food waste, reducing the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture, combating animal diseases and plant pests contribute to the climate and biodiversity dimension is in line with Commission Communication 'The European Green Deal'. Emergency measures to combat certain animal diseases and plant pests directly contribute to halting biodiversity decline. Antimicrobial use could affect microbial diversity and potentially threaten the health of ecosystems. In line with the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU is taking action to ensure prudent use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals. This contributes to the transition towards more sustainable food systems which are key for adapting to climate change and combating environmental degradation.

For **Pillar 6**, the ESP's general objectives were well aligned with the needs of the ESS and other stakeholders, ensuring that the ESP remained relevant and responsive to changing policy priorities and data requirements. This alignment facilitated the production of high-quality statistics that met the diverse needs of policymakers, businesses, and the public. By continuously adapting to new demands and integrating stakeholder feedback, the ESP effectively supported evidence-based decision-making across the EU. Additionally, the ESP's ability to address emerging issues and crises underscored its commitment to serving the ESS and the broader stakeholder community.

Various mechanisms were employed by the ESP to gather feedback from stakeholders, including user satisfaction surveys, structured consultations, Eurobarometer, and regular dialogues. These mechanisms were generally effective in ensuring that the ESP's activities remained relevant and aligned with user needs.

The ESP advanced experimental statistics as a means to foster innovation within the ESS in response to user needs. The ESP made considerable progress in integrating new technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, into experimental statistics.

There has been also a visible increase of the number of participants in courses of the European Statistical Training Programme. This unequivocally indicates that the knowledge and skills of staff at NSIs and Eurostat, required for rapidly addressing emerging data demands and for generating statistics derived from various sources, data sharing, and innovative methodologies, are being sufficiently developed.

282 In line with the European Commission political guidelines for 2024-2029.
283 Draghi Report', EU competitiveness: Looking ahead - European Commission. 'Letta Report', Enrico Letta - Much more than a market (April 2024).
284 Public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation.

Regarding flexibility, a share of ca. 60% of the surveyed producers are of the opinion that the ESP was very much or moderately flexible in adapting to emerging challenges. While the ESP's actions related to new technologies with initiatives like web-based surveys, machine learning for automatic coding, and web-scraping and the ESP's integration of experimental statistics and coordination with national and scientific communities, which facilitated a rapid response to economic and public health crises, were appreciated, criticism was voiced concerning the legislative process within the ESP, that could be lengthy and potentially slowing down the adoption of new technologies. The secondary nature of Eurostat's data production was also mentioned as a limiting factor.

Despite the overall positive alignment with stakeholder needs, gaps remain in certain areas, such as regional and territorial data granularity, timeliness, and the integration of new data sources. These gaps highlight the need for continuous improvement and innovation.

4.4. Was the SMP designed adequately to achieve its 'design' objectives?

The integrated design of the SMP was driven by a rationale outlined in the impact assessment, which highlighted the benefits of combining these programmes However, certain activities from the previous programmes were not transferred to the SMP (see Table 1), such as the SME guarantee facility, previously part of the COSME programme[285]. A key part of this strategy involved leveraging executive agencies to facilitate more efficient programme implementation. As explained in the intervention logic (see Section 2.1.2) the objectives for the consolidation covered flexibility, synergies, and simplifications.

4.4.1. Flexibility

No other instances of flexibility than the below mentioned have been identified demonstrating the SMP's relative degree of flexibility.

The SMP has improved both the predictability and flexibility of budget support especially for activities that were previously financed through pre-existent budget lines. Compared to prior budget lines, the seven-year timeframe of the SMP allows for enhanced predictability, which includes the ability to undertake and manage multiannual projects more effectively and provides greater long-term stability.

In contrast to its predecessor programmes and budget lines, the SMP introduces new opportunities for transferring budget appropriations between different policy objectives. A 'Flexibility clause' embedded in the annual Commission Implementing Decisions allows authorising officers to transfer up to 20% of the value of one budget line to another[286]. Importantly, such transfers must not significantly alter the nature of the funded actions or deviate from the overarching priorities of the work programme. While this clause is standard in EU funding programmes, the consolidation of previously separate programmes into the SMP, i.e. one single programme, has simplified and enhanced the process of transferring funds.

This flexibility has already resulted in 12 budgetary adjustments through transfers between its budget lines[287]. These transfers are linked the number of times payment and

285 This facility has now been incorporated into the InvestEU Fund, with the aim of giving greater visibility to SME support.
286 European Commission procedures for budget transfers include three types: (1) those requiring agreement by the budgetary authority (e.g. transfers between budget chapters above 10% or between budget titles), (2) autonomous transfers of less than 10% between two budget chapters without budgetary authority agreement, and (3) autonomous transfers within two lines of the same budget chapter, which also do not require budgetary approval.
287 Data relates to autonomous transfers between two lines of the same chapter within the European Commission's budget. It excludes transfers to executive agencies in 2021 before the adoption of the delegated act for the current multiannual financial framework.

commitment appropriations were moved between DGs from one budget line to another. Although no specific target was established for this indicator, it demonstrates the programme's adaptive capacity. The transfers carried out in 2021 reflected initial challenges in allocating funds, particularly because the SMP Regulation was only approved on 28 April of 2021, which delayed certain commitments. Thanks to this flexibility, funds that were under-subscribed in one area could be reallocated to over-subscribed areas. In cases where transfers occurred between Pillars within a given year, corresponding adjustments were sometimes made in subsequent years to balance the budgetary shifts. This enhanced flexibility in budget management is a key benefit of the SMP's design, enabling improved allocation of resources to meet varying demands across policy areas.

Flexibility in budgetary transfers within the SMP has been evident across four key Pillars: Pillar 1 (internal market, excluding competition), Pillar 2 (SMEs), Pillar 3 (standardisation), and Pillar 5 (food). As illustrated in the table in Annex VII, 10 out of the 11 budget lines within these pillars experienced transfers either into or out of their respective lines. However, there have been no budgetary transfers involving Pillar 1a (competition), Pillar 4 (consumers), or Pillar 6 (statistics).

The financial shifts have resulted in gains for specific areas. Pillar 2, which focuses on supporting SMEs, emerged as the largest recipient, receiving a total of EUR 6 million in transfers during the period from 2021 to 2023. Pillar 5, which addresses issues related to food safety and biosecurity, also benefited, with a net increase of EUR 2 million. These adjustments reflect the SMP's capacity to reallocate funds dynamically in response to varying needs, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most required within the programme's flexible framework.

4.4.2. Synergies

The impact assessment for the SMP emphasised the importance of creating synergies and avoiding duplication in supporting the single market. Potential synergies included coordinated efforts in areas such as data collection and processing, including database purchases, Eurobarometer surveys, public consultations, and training, capacity building, awareness raising, cross-border enforcement, and support for networks of Member State authorities.

Some instances of synergies have materialised, however there is limited evidence of joint activities across several pillars (see Annex IX-XIV). For instance, a training initiative was conducted for SOLVIT centres (Pillar 1) and EEN members (Pillar 2). An indicator of potential synergies from the impact assessment was the use of framework contracts for standard development, which would ideally reduce delivery time[288]. DG FISMA introduced a framework contract in collaboration with DG COMP. This contract, awarded in December 2023[289], involves providing assistance in verifying the alignment of national legal frameworks with EU standards in financial and competition policy areas. The collaboration within the SMP enabled a larger financial envelope for this contract, showcasing a benefit brought by this joint action. Another example of a joint framework contract is between DG GROW and DG JUST, fostering cooperation on consumer protection and market surveillance, and was signed in 2022. It relates to CASP coordinated activities on the safety of products. It allows for the organisation of common testing activities relevant

288 'No of times framework contract for studies was used for standard development and associated reduction in delivery time for standards'.
289 51823-2024 - Result - TED.

for both harmonised and non-harmonised products. The collaboration on the Safety Gate also represents some degree of synergy related to dangerous products. Additionally, the Commission has not consistently gathered data on joint activities as per the output and result indicators in the monitoring and evaluation framework (see Annex VI)[290]. There is limited evidence of achievement against output and results indicators linked with joint actions (see Annex VI). In addition, the lack of routine data collection on these indicators further highlights the limited evidence of synergies within the SMP.

One significant reason for the limited extent of synergy creation is the absence of a dedicated budget for such cross-pillar initiatives. The annual Commission Implementing Decisions allocate the entire SMP budget strictly to pillar-specific budget lines, making it necessary for Commission units to adopt a 'bottom-up approach' to fund joint activities. Pillar 2 had offered a small funding opportunity for developing synergies, but this possibility was not utilised and the potential for creating synergies not tapped into. The annual Commission Implementing Decisions outline work programmes for the six individual pillars. Its structure does not include a separate work programme for cross-pillar activities which would take place at programme level. Consequently, any joint initiatives are driven by the Commission services managing each pillar or budget line, rather than by a central programme-level strategy.

Some synergies do occur due to broader cooperation between Commission services responsible for different policy areas. For instance, Pillars 1, 3, 4, and 5 each support aspects of the internal market, its development, implementation, and enforcement, and supporting competent Member States authorities, leading to collaborative efforts where relevant. Synergies emerge more from the interaction and cooperation between Commission's units rather than from the Programme's design itself, i.e. having grouped budget lines from predecessor programmes and prerogative budget lines into one single programme. Examples of these ad hoc synergies include the Your Europe platform, which offers information across various SME-funded actions (Pillar 1), Enterprise Europe Network, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, and others (Pillar 2), as well as standards and European standardisation organisations (Pillar 3).

Synergies have been identified within the SMP, yet they remain limited, with only a few joint activities materialising across pillars. This is largely due to the absence of a dedicated budget for cross-pillar initiatives and a programme structure that allocates funding strictly by pillar, requiring a 'bottom-up approach' for joint activities. As a result, collaboration mostly stems from cooperation between Commission services rather than from a programme strategy.

4.4.3. Simplifications

The SMP impact assessment emphasised the need to simplify administrative management and reporting procedures compared to its predecessor programmes and budget lines. However, the evidence points to mixed outcomes regarding this objective. While individual pillars and actions have made progress in simplifying processes, as detailed in the 'Efficiency' sections of the pillar-specific reports[291], there is limited evidence of these improvements being implemented across the entire programme. The expected

290 The monitoring and evaluation framework also includes an output indicator (OP 0.4) relating to the movement of payment and commitment appropriations. This is considered in the sub-section on flexibility (Section 4.4.1).
291 See Annexes IX-XIV.

simplifications stemming from the creation of a single programme have not fully materialised.

One area where simplifications have occurred is the establishment of a single legal basis for the Programme through Regulation (EU) 2021/690. This consolidation allowed the Commission to submit just one proposal to the co-legislators, which were required to adopt only one regulation, streamlining the preparation process. Consequently, only one internal consultation within the Commission services was needed, which staff reported as a benefit.

Also, based on Article 16 of the legal basis, one single financing decision (multi-annual for certain programme pillars), constituting the work programmes for all policy areas of the SMP, is adopted every year. The consolidation has not eliminated the need for multiple work programmes or the role for multiple committees to manage their specific different policy areas. The impact assessment had anticipated savings in travel and lodging costs for both the Commission and national authorities by establishing a common Member State Programme Committee[292]. Article 21 of the SMP Regulation requires separate committees for Pillar 2 (SMEs), Pillar 4a (consumer protection), and Pillar 5 (plants, animals, food, and feed). The impact assessment also predicted time and resource savings by preparing one work programme instead of several covering each policy dimension of the SMP[293]. However, Article 16 of the Regulation requires the Commission to adopt separate work programmes for Pillars 2, 4, and also 5, where the work programme for veterinary and phytosanitary programmes shall adopted by 30 April of implementing year minus one.

The SMP aimed to simplify management and reporting, but the outcomes have been mixed. While some efficiency gains were achieved, such as a single legal basis and a streamlined process, the expected programme-wide simplifications have not fully materialised. The need for multiple work programmes and separate committees for specific pillars has limited the anticipated administrative savings.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED?

5.1. Conclusions

5.1.1. Programme level

Overall, based on the assessment of all SMP pillars presented in Annexes IX to XIV, the interim evaluation of the Programme shows positive conclusions for the first three years of implementation (2021-2023). With regard to the content of the Programme, the evaluation concludes that the key activities have contributed to the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the SMP[294].

Effectiveness

The SMP has demonstrated some degree of effectiveness in achieving its objectives across its various pillars. For instance, digital tools have reinforced the capabilities of the European Commission in its case management work and have increased the cooperation with NCAs, resulting in better enforcement of competition policy (Pillar 1). Flagship initiatives like the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) have shown good results and strong added value, with high satisfaction rates and positive effects

292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Progress toward the first general objective is reflected in the individual achievements of Pillars 1 to 5, while the second general objective is measured through the advancements made under the sixth Pillar 6.

on business performance (Pillar 2). The SMP has also supported the involvement of diverse stakeholders in European standardisation processes, increasing the number of European standards and ensured that Europe interests and views had been considered in the international standard-setting processes. In addition, it supported the implementation of the Green Deal by ensuring a fast delivery of ESRS by EFRAG (Pillar 3). Surveillance tools such as the Safety Gate and product safety coordinated actions (CASP) supported by the SMP were effective in identifying dangerous products and ensuring a high level of consumer protection (Pillar 4). The SMP has contributed to improving the health and safety of humans, animals, and plants across the EU, with significant progress made in the control and eradication of animal diseases such as ASF and HPAI (Pillar 5). The ESP has effectively improved the quality and timeliness of European statistics, providing a robust evidence base for informed decision-making in all areas of the Single Market and other key areas such as green and digital transitions (Pillar 6).

However, the effectiveness varies across different pillars, with some areas showing more progress than others. For example, while digital tools and SME initiatives have shown tangible progress, the full deployment of certain digital tools, such as Case@EC, has not yet been achieved[295], indicating partial success in some areas. Additionally, the representation of environmental and social interests in standardisation remains low, and ensuring adequate representation and influence at the international level remains a challenge.

For certain tools, such as YEA or the EU Taxonomy Compass, there is a lack of comprehensive evidence available on their effectiveness in achieving their purposes, due to the lack of regular user feedback. Furthermore, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of actions, such as those related to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and food waste reduction, due to the lack of quantitative data and the early stage of implementation.

Efficiency

The SMP has been implemented efficiently, with effective resource allocation and signs of cost-effectiveness, yet areas of improvement remain. Beneficiaries generally consider the costs and benefits proportionate, with minimal disproportionate administrative burden.

The majority of SMP funding supports the Commission's mandate to develop, implement, and enforce Union law, with the majority of funding allocated to procurement activities managed via the Commission's standard tendering process. Several IT tools are developed/maintained at a relatively low cost, which are instrumental to the achievement of key policy objectives (Pillar 1). The FSTP instrument is an efficient way to financially support small businesses, though it can be an administrative burden for smaller and inexperienced organisations (Pillar 2). The introduction of unit costs to streamline financial reporting has been beneficial, but stakeholders report increased administrative burden and insufficient travel reimbursements during inflation (Pillar 3). Actions on market surveillance and enforcement (Pillar 4a) are very efficient, delivering significant benefits to consumers. Beneficiaries have also showed to be able to deliver high-quality outputs with a low budget (Pillar 4b). The flexibility provided in the veterinary and phytosanitary work programmes has enabled a proactive approach through the reallocation of funds in response to evolving needs. The BTSF programme has played an important role in improving the skills of control staff in the Member States through extensive training and seminars, reducing training costs and avoiding duplication of work (Pillar 5). The ESP has demonstrated a strong commitment

295 The partial deployment does not indicate a delay in the overall process, as no *ex ante* fixed timeline was set out to roll-out Case@EC over all legal instruments (from a resources/risk perspective a gradual roll-out was preferred). The full deployment is still expected in this programming period, which will contribute to efficiency and effectiveness.

to efficient resource allocation, with stakeholders generally perceiving the benefits of the ESP as proportionate to the costs (Pillar 6).

However, certain IT systems, such as eGrants (activities under Pillar 1, 3, and 5) have been singled out by stakeholders for their inefficiency, requiring beneficiaries to go through many steps. The integration of budget lines has yielded only some efficiency gains (Pillar 1). Smaller actions within the programme tend to show lower efficiency (Pillar 2). The reliance on multiple sources of financing has facilitated the development of specific statistics tailored to EU needs, but concerns about financial autonomy remain and coupled with staff reduction could negatively impact efficiency (Pillar 6). The reduction of co-financing rates in the veterinary and phytosanitary work programmes has put pressure on Member States' competent authorities, and the limited applicability of the eGrants to the Identified Beneficiaries actions has resulted in an administrative burden for applicants (Pillar 5).

Coherence

The SMP demonstrates internal and external coherence, with no overlaps between pillars and areas of action. Each pillar focuses on distinct policy fields with specific regulatory frameworks. The programme aligns well with other Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) programmes, the EU regulatory framework, and broader EU strategies and objectives, facilitated by memoranda of understanding with Commission DGs and other EU bodies.

The diverse activities of Pillar 1 are aligned with the objectives set out in the SMP Regulation and matching the Commission's overall strategies and priorities. Synergies and cooperation between various actions of the SME Pillar have gradually improved, with the cross-border component of the Pillar actions ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlaps with national/regional programmes (Pillar 2). The SMP has enabled the participation of organisations representing SMEs, consumers, workers, and environmental interests in the standardisation process, though the representation of environmental and social interests remains low except for the ESRS and to a certain extent in international standard-setting. There, EFRAG's activities have further reinforced the consideration of these interests in the standard-setting process (Pillar 3). Actions on enforcement and market surveillance complement capacity building actions for the CPC authorities, while actions on redress, the ECC Net, and education work together to empower, assist, and educate consumers (Pillar 4). Pillar 5 has shown a high degree of internal and external coherence, with objectives, targets, and contributions well aligned with the overall objectives of the SMP and EU policy priorities, including the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. The ESP's activities are well aligned with overarching EU strategies and objectives, facilitated by memoranda of understanding with Commission DGs and other EU bodies (Pillar 6).

However, while the SMP demonstrates internal and external coherence, some nuance must be noted. Incorporating activities within Pillar 1 has not led to more joint actions beyond what would have been achieved without a consolidated financial instrument. The decision to merge the two objectives into one single Pillar 3 dealing with standardisation but keeping the two strands of activities separate did not result in any additional benefit considering the different activities funded. In regard to Pillar 2, some stakeholders still see room for improvement in the cooperation between various actions of the SME Pillar and other SMP Pillars. The cross-thematic nature of the SMP can make coordination complex and potentially impact the coherence of activities.

EU added value

The Programme generates an EU added value that funding at national level could not have achieved. The financed activities allow the Commission to fulfil its legal obligations to address issues falling in its competence remit. An intervention at EU level is also required due to the nature of the challenges and needs pertaining to the well-functioning of the Single Market. In doing so, the SMP offers cross-border benefits and economies of scale that actions at national level could not deliver, underscoring its additionality.

The SMP creates economies of scale by funding activities like advisory services, testing facilities, and IT systems (e.g. IMI) that reduce duplication and costs compared to individual Member States independently undertaking similar initiatives, ensuring efficient and coordinated use of resources at the EU level.

Pillar 1 delivers significant added value at the EU level by enabling the Commission to meet certain legal responsibilities that cannot be delegated to Member States, ensuring obligations under EU law are fulfilled. The benefits for citizens and businesses, particularly in areas such as consumer protection, animal and plant safety, and statistical data quality, could not be replicated by actions at the national level (Pillar 4, 5, 6). Almost all actions of the SME Pillar entail significant EU added value, strongly based on cross-border cooperation – projects and initiatives on SME policy at the EU level provide comparable data, benchmarking possibilities, mutual learning, and guidance on developing regulation and frameworks of the single market both at the EU and Member State levels (Pillar 2). Actions on the ECC Net, support to BEUC, and coordinated actions EU add value due to their cross-border nature (Pillar 4). The work and activities of the beneficiaries in the field of financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards remain focused on the needs of the market, thus strengthening the free movement of capital in the single market (Pillar 3).

However, as noted for Pillar 2 the uneven participation of countries in certain calls and projects poses a risk to maintaining this added value. The evaluation confirms that for Pillar 3, SMP funding is essential to the continued operation of Annex III organisations in the field of standardisation. The reliance on SMP funding is particularly crucial for organisations like EFRAG and the PIOB, which play key roles in developing high-quality standards for financial and non-financial reporting and auditing. These organisations require EU grants to maintain their activities and influence in the standard-setting process, and continue engage in international cooperation. Other challenges stem from the cross-border nature of many SMP-funded activities, such as those related to consumer protection and market surveillance (Pillar 1 and 4). As these activities generate benefits that cannot be achieved through national initiatives alone, continued EU-level support remains indispensable. The SMP's ability to support coordinated actions across Member States is essential for addressing challenges that require a unified approach, such as the fight against antimicrobial resistance and the reduction of food waste (Pillar 5).

Relevance

The objectives of the SMP and the activities implemented within all its pillars, remain relevant to the needs of the single market, and prove some degree of adaptability to respond to emerging and unforeseen challenges (e.g. Covid-19, Ukraine), despite a modest budget that did not anticipate the inflationary pressure nor these unexpected events. The

Programme's relevance increases when considering emerging political challenges linked to the new Political Guidelines[296] and recent reports from Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi[297].

Activities funded under Pillar 1 remain highly relevant to EU law and the needs of the Single Market, with funding dedicated to activities specifically mandated by EU law. The relevance of these activities will increase as they contribute to supporting growth, investments, and the completion of the Single Market (Pillar 1) - an essential driver of the EU's prosperity. The objectives of the SME Pillar are of high relevance, with work programmes developed with strong references to EU strategies and consultations with relevant stakeholders (Pillar 2). The objectives of Pillar 3 remain relevant to the current needs and issues faced by the European Union, addressing critical issues for the functioning of the Single Market. Education and awareness actions under Pillar 4 remain relevant to empower and educate consumers, while capacity building, market surveillance, and monitoring and enforcement-related actions remain highly relevant. The objectives of Pillar 5 remain highly relevant to the evolving needs of the food chain in the EU, covering important issues such as emerging diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, animal welfare, and sustainable practices. The ESP's general objectives (Pillar 6) are well aligned with the users' expectations and the ensuing needs of the European Statistical System (ESS) to adapt to them, ensuring that the ESP remains relevant and responsive to changing policy priorities and data requirements.

However, the programme's modest budget and the need for enhanced visibility and communication of its activities can limit the relevance of the programme over time by restricting stakeholder participation and feedback on current and emerging needs. It is essential to ensure the programme reaches its intended audience and grasp its expectations based on their experience with the activities.

The above conclusions at the level of the Programme rest on the analysis of the pillars. Therefore, a comprehensive overview of the conclusions of each of the pillars is provided below and more information is to be found in the dedicated Annexes[298].

5.1.2. Pillar level

5.1.2.1. P1

Due to the nature of some type of expenditure financed under Pillar 1 (e.g. procurement expenditure for low amounts, IT running costs, etc.) it was not possible to evaluate results or impacts but only to assess progress based on the delivery of outputs. However, while in most cases the positive effects of these outputs in terms of results and impacts are not directly quantifiable, the evidence described in previous sections shows that they have effectively supported the Commission in ensuring a well-functioning of the single market in an efficient way.

Overall, activities financed under Pillar 1 were effective in supporting the enhancement of digital tools supporting various policy areas, including competition policy, market surveillance, financial services, anti-money laundering, and information services for consumers and businesses, which levels of use indicate, alongside high satisfaction levels, that they are well-perceived and useful to their users. For instance, tools not only reinforce reporting capabilities of national competition authorities (NCAs), but also foster cooperation between them and the Commission, resulting in better enforcement of competition policy.

296 European Commission political guidelines for 2024-2029.
297 'Draghi Report', EU competitiveness: Looking ahead - European Commission. 'Letta Report', Enrico Letta - Much more than a market (April 2024).
298 See Annexes IX-XIV.

They also contributed to support Commission services in developing, monitoring, and enforcing policy by financing acquisition of data and services.

The activities financed under pillar 1 have supported the Commission in its role derived from the Treaties to develop, implement and enforce EU law. The diverse policy areas coverage from the constitutive sub-pillars enables among others access to services, data, expertise, tools, which are necessary to deepen and improve the functioning of the Single market.

The SMP has facilitated continuous improvements in digital tools serving both the Commission and national authorities in single market matters. For sub-pillar 1a, digital tools for competition policy have served an increasing number of users (e.g. case@EC, eRFI, eConfidentiality), demonstrating that the achievement of the related specific objectives is well on track. However, as regards in particular Case@EC – an instrumental case management tool, the objectives have been only partially achieved, since the tool has not yet been deployed to cover all competition policy instruments: mergers, antitrust and cartels still use legacy applications. While no *ex ante* timing was set out for the full deployment of Case@EC (and a gradual roll-out was preferred from a resources and risk perspective), the tools face challenges linked to securely manage the growing complexity and number of documents (notifications, investigations) related to cases.

For other sub-pillars, key examples include tools for financial services (e.g. FIU.net), access to information for citizens and businesses (e.g. Your Europe, Your Europe Advice), monitoring of implementation of EU law (e.g. KOEL) or administrative cooperation between national authorities (e.g. IMI). These tools are crucial to advancing policy priorities and are in line with the Commission's Digital Strategy.

Online services funded by the SMP, such as Your Europe, YEA, IMI, and the EU Taxonomy Compass, have informed citizens and businesses about single market rights and opportunities. However, the collection of user feedback for certain tools, where relevant and not already undertaken, remains limited, which affects the availability of comprehensive evidence on their full impact.

SMP-funded activities have bolstered the capacity of national authorities within various single market sectors. This has been achieved by providing access to better resources (e.g. testing facilities) and enhancing staff capabilities through training, networking, and peer reviews.

Networks benefiting from financial support under Pillar 1 have strengthened national authorities' capacities, especially those for NCAs and MSAs, and facilitated cooperation among them, while improving their coordination with the Commission (e.g. FIU.net that represents a pivotal contribution to the EU's efforts in enhancing cross-border collaboration among the Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) of Member States); targeted surveys addressed to NCAs have revealed that expert meetings and working groups of the ECN, as well as other activities, have improved NCAs' capabilities to enforce competition rules).

The majority of SMP funding supports efficiently the Commission's own mandate to develop, implement, and enforce Union law, and has been allocated to procurement activities managed via the Commission's standard tendering process. The use of procurement also allowed the Commission to adapt and focus the requested services to its actual needs and therefore using its resources in a targeted and efficient way. This also leads to a minimisation of the administrative burden related to spending operations.

Several IT tools are developed/maintained at a relatively low cost which are instrumental to

the achievement of key policy objectives and of very high interest for NCAs, business or citizens. These tools also provide benefits to national authorities, stakeholders and citizens by facilitating sharing of information and cooperation and streamlined processes. The eRFI tool developed by DG COMP is a key example – options for reuse by NCAs are being explored, in order to avoid the inefficiencies of Member States independently developing similar tools. Similarly, IMI replaces the need to at least 20 different systems by serving, through a single system, multiple policy areas. Your Europe is also an established reference point for the public in terms of easy and comprehensive information related to EU while Your Europe Advice provides citizens and business with specific advice for EU matters. On the other hand, with regard to training and peer learning activities such as the training of judges aimed at supporting national courts' capabilities to enforce competition rules, the use of simplified cost options has been limited.

Compared to the previous financing period, the integration of budget lines into one consolidated programme has, though, yielded only limited efficiency gains. There has been some reduction of administrative burden, as only one single financing decision must be adopted for the whole SMP, and the wider possibilities of making budgetary transfers between budget lines has contributed to efficiency improvements by reducing the need for budgetary approval. Yet, besides these limited examples, the SMP did not demonstrate additional simplification and efficiency in contrast to what would have been achieved without the incorporation of predecessor programmes and budget lines.

This pillar showcases coherence both internally and externally. Its activities are aligned with each other with respect to pursuing the objectives set out in the SMP Regulation, and are matching the Commission overall strategies and priorities as mentioned in the relevant Strategic Plans and Management Plans of the DGs involved in the SMP. Nevertheless, incorporating activities within pillar 1 of the SMP has not allowed to generate synergies and joint actions beyond what would have been achieved without a consolidated financial instrument.

The SMP delivers a significant added value at EU level by supporting activities under Pillar 1 by enabling the Commission to meet certain legal responsibilities that cannot be delegated to Member States, as well as by adding economies of scale. The benefits for citizens and businesses could not be replicated by actions at national level, especially considering the cross-border nature of services supported by the SMP (e.g. coordination among national authorities, enforcement of EU law, common IT tools, services required to support the development and monitoring of EU law and financial markets, etc.).

Activities funded under pillar 1 remain relevant to EU law and the needs of the Single market. The evaluation concludes that the funding is dedicated to activities specifically mandated by EU law, such as the effective enforcement of EU law, competition rules, operation of networks or IT systems, or of coordination groups, or identified in the Commission's strategies and priorities such as in the area of financial services and fight against anti-money laundering.

The relevance of these activities will also increase since contributing to support growth, investments and the completion of the single market in line with the Political Guidelines 2024-2029[299] and new mandate of the Commission, including the creation of a Savings and Investment Union.

299 Political Guidelines for the next European commission, 2024-2029.

5.1.2.2. P2

Overall, as regards effectiveness, Pillar 2 shows significant progress in achieving the general and specific objectives of the Pillar.

Based on preliminary data, some major actions have been making good progress in terms of achieving the expected outputs/results (e.g. Euroclusters, EEN). EEN clients (SMEs) report very high satisfaction rates and effects on business performance. The success rates of EYE exchanges are very high and strong learning effects are confirmed. Euroclusters use cascade funding effectively and are likely to impact on resilience, digitalisation and greening of SMEs. Also, other actions supporting internationalisation (IP Helpdesks, EU-Japan Centre, SME Centre in China) achieve high satisfaction rates and significant numbers of SMEs supported. For many ecosystem actions first results have recently materialised.

The instrument of financial support for third parties (FSTP) is in many cases an efficient way to financially support small businesses. At the same time, the instrument can constitute a certain administrative burden for project consortia, especially for smaller and unexperienced organisations.

The efficiency and usefulness of the FSTP instrument depends very much on the type of activities to be carried out. It offers an efficient financial support to third parties, and SMEs report high satisfaction with the support they receive. The text in the work programmes should allow enough space to choose the most suitable instrument at the moment of drafting the technical specifications for a call.

Beneficiaries perceive the administrative burden associated with participating in the calls and projects as reasonable.

EEN client SMEs rate service provision as efficient and in line with business needs.

The FSTP instrument remains complex, with potential to develop standard templates, a central web platform for its management, and to adapt payment conditions to avoid pre-financing by the consortium.

Smaller actions tend to show a lower level of efficiency.

Complementarities and cooperation between the various actions of the SME Pillar, notably the flagship actions or the IP Helpdesks, have gradually improved over the last few years, showing some degree of coherence. However, some stakeholders still see room for improvement and call e.g. for more practical guidance for beneficiaries. Smaller actions or less continuous actions have weaker links to other Pillar actions.

There is a mixed assessment by stakeholders about advantages and disadvantages of the SME Pillar being part of the SMP. Disadvantages are associated with the cross-thematic nature of the SMP which can make coordination more complex. However, the higher overall weight of the SMP is also perceived as an advantage for the Pillar's actions.

This evaluation provides examples of complementarity and cooperation between the SME Pillar actions, notably the flagships, and other major EU programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe, ERDF, Digital Europe).

There are also many examples showing coherence with national and regional support programmes (above all for the EEN). The cross-border component of the Pillar actions is an

important feature for ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlaps with national/regional programmes.

Complementarities between various SME measures have been identified, and some synergies between pillar 2 and other pillars have been explored.

Overall, the objectives of the SME Pillar are of high relevance. Pillar 2 is relevant to the needs of SMEs, with flagship initiatives like the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) showing good results and strong added value. The work programmes, which translate the objectives into actions, are developed with strong references to EU strategies and use consultations with relevant stakeholders. This contributes to ensuring relevance. There are sufficient flexibility mechanisms to respond to changing circumstances and overall, there is a good balance between change and continuity.

However, the work programmes (up to 2023) do not always explicitly link actions to Pillar objectives. Furthermore, while it is acknowledged that small actions can support piloting and testing new approaches, over-fragmentation of actions can be detrimental.

Relevance and the level of consultation with stakeholders are also high at the level of (flagship) actions. In some cases (e.g. Euroclusters, EEN), some projects/beneficiaries feel overloaded with too many (new) themes or objectives to be addressed/achieved at once.

Almost all actions of the SME Pillar entail significant EU added value. This was confirmed in all types of stakeholder consultations. This is attributed by stakeholders to the fact that almost all actions are strongly based on cross-border cooperation, which could not be triggered by national support programmes. Projects and initiatives on SME policy at EU level provide comparable data, benchmarking possibilities, mutual learning and guidance on how to develop regulation and frameworks of the single market both at EU and Member State level.

A somewhat uneven participation of countries in Pillar calls and projects has been identified as a certain risk in maintaining the EU added value and is now mitigated by more intensive promotion activities in under-represented countries and requirements for consortia to include partners from under-represented countries or regions.

5.1.2.3. P3

Pillar 3a has with some degree of effectiveness effectively supported the involvement of diverse stakeholders, such as SMEs and consumer representatives, in European standardisation processes, in TCs and WGs. However, its effectiveness has been uneven. Ensuring adequate representation and influence at the international level remains a challenge and still requires supporting activities ensuring that EU views and interests are considered.

European standards play a pivotal role in the Single Market Programme (SMP), fostering harmonisation across the EU and supporting key policy objectives. The development of European standards has notably benefited from SMP funding, resulting in a significant increase in the number of European standards adopted. Organisations such as CEN and CENELEC have achieved strong national adoption rates, meeting or exceeding targets, though ETSI continues to lag behind. This positive trajectory underscores the SMP's critical contribution to standardisation efforts and its alignment with the overarching goals of the programme.

Stakeholder inclusivity has improved under the SMP, as funding has facilitated the participation of organisations representing SMEs, consumers, and environmental and social

interests. The increased number of experts engaged in technical committees and working groups reflects this achievement. However, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring adequate representation of environmental and social groups, which remain under-represented despite targeted support. This mixed result highlights progress while underscoring the need for further efforts to enhance inclusivity.

The alignment of the SMP with EU priorities is another notable strength. The programme has demonstrated flexibility in addressing emerging challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, while supporting key transitions, including the green and digital transitions. This adaptability ensures that the SMP remains relevant and responsive to evolving EU policy objectives.

On the administrative front, the introduction of unit costs has streamlined financial reporting, offering a more structured and transparent process for beneficiaries. However, stakeholders have raised concerns about an increased administrative burden, particularly during the initial transition phase. Issues such as duplicative processes in the eGrants system and insufficient travel reimbursements during periods of high inflation have tempered these improvements. While the SMP has brought coherence and simplification to funding allocation, these operational challenges indicate areas requiring further refinement.

A critical dependency on SMP funding is evident, particularly for Annex III organisations, which rely heavily on this support to remain active in the standardisation process. Any reduction in funding poses risks to the uptake of standardisation requests and the continued participation of diverse stakeholders. The programme's ability to finance these activities is instrumental in maintaining the vitality and inclusivity of the European standardisation ecosystem.

Overall, while the SMP has delivered significant achievements in advancing European standardisation, fostering inclusivity, and aligning with EU policy priorities, certain challenges remain. Addressing these issues will be key to ensuring the continued effectiveness and impact of the programme in supporting the single market and broader EU objectives.

Pillar 3b has showed some degree of effectiveness while supporting the actions of beneficiaries in meeting their objectives, contributing to the development of high-quality standards for financial and non-financial reporting and auditing.

The SMP provided support to EFRAG in effectively meet the objective of developing the first set of ESRS, together with continuing its work of developing and promoting European views in the area of financial reporting, guaranteeing that they are adequately considered in the IASB's standard-setting process, and advising the Commission on the endorsement of IFRS Accounting Standards.

The SMP provided support to the PIOB in its work to oversee the auditing standard setting process. Public interest issues were published every year on both IAASB and IESBA projects, and changes in the standard setters' boards were started to ensure more multi-stakeholder representation.

No evidence was found that the beneficiaries did not manage their funds with efficiency, ensuring value for money.

All beneficiaries have actively engaged in initiatives to expand and diversify their funding sources, even if the extent to which this was achieved varies considerably between the IFRS Foundation, on the one hand, and EFRAG and the PIOB, on the other.

No issues of internal coherence were identified, as the objective set out in Article 3(2), point (c)(ii) remains broad enough to limit the risk of inconsistencies and give flexibility to avoid overlaps with other possible initiatives. Also, in terms of external coherence, no issues were identified. The new mandate of EFRAG to develop ESRS represented the effort to fill a gap as other standard-setting organisations did not concretely pursue it with the same scope and ambition (e.g. the double materiality sustainability reporting objective of the CSRD).

The analysis confirmed that any funding mechanisms that might have been established would not compensate for the withdrawal of EU funding in this area, and the renationalisation of funding of bodies related to standards-setting in financial and non-financial reporting and auditing could undermine the EU's efforts to speak with a more unified voice in international economic and financial forums.

EU action remains crucial to ensure the necessary level of oversight and coordination of EU-wide efforts, making sure that developments in the field are aligned with EU priorities, legislation as well as public interests.

The work and activities of the beneficiaries in the field of financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards remain very much focused on the needs of the market in order to strengthen the free movement of capital in the single market and to help to enable EU companies to compete on an equal footing for financial resources available in the Union capital markets as well as in world capital markets.

The SMP ensures that EU views and interests are considered, enhances transparency and accountability to the standard-setting process, and provides necessary standards in sustainability reporting.

5.1.2.4. P4

Pillar 4 has played a key role in strengthening consumer protection and promoting consumer involvement in policymaking across the EU. The mid-term evaluation of Pillar 4a confirms strong overall performance, with clear progress on all objectives and in addressing the needs outlined in the impact assessment.

Market surveillance mechanisms such as CASP and Safety Gate, under Pillar 4, have proven effective in identifying unsafe non-food products, enhancing cross-border cooperation, and promoting uniform safety standards. These tools supported market surveillance authorities in jointly testing products, removing dangerous goods from the market, and exchanging critical safety information across the EU. Their impact has been both financial and health-related, strengthening consumer trust in the Single Market.

Capacity-building initiatives such as Consumer PRO and Consumer Law Ready have successfully trained consumer professionals and traders, boosting knowledge-sharing and empowering organisations across Member States. Major events like the Consumer Summit and International Safety Week have further raised awareness and fostered international collaboration.

The CPC network has played a key role in safeguarding consumer rights across the EU. By facilitating hundreds of mutual assistance requests and enforcement measures, it has effectively addressed unfair practices, promoted fair market conditions, and reinforced

consumer protection within the Single Market. These coordinated actions have enhanced the EU's capacity to tackle large-scale cross-border scams and reduce financial risks for consumers.

Redress mechanisms supported through ADRs and the ECC Net, remains highly effective, with hundreds of thousands of disputes resolved annually. These systems are central to reinforcing consumer confidence in cross-border transactions.

Finally, funding for organisations like BEUC ensures strong, unified consumer representation in EU policymaking, particularly on digital and cross-sector issues. Stakeholders recognise BEUC's strategic role in advocacy, coordination, and knowledge exchange.

Evaluation findings confirm that Pillar 4a delivers strong value for money. The majority of stakeholders see its benefits—economic, social, and policy-related—as significantly outweighing costs. Market surveillance and CPC enforcement actions are highly efficient, reducing harm from unsafe products and boosting consumer trust in the Single Market. Coordinated enforcement and digital tools enhance efficiency by avoiding duplication.

Support to ADR and ECCs is also cost-effective: with modest funding, they recover millions for consumers and help resolve cross-border disputes, while generating valuable policy data. Capacity-building and training initiatives like Consumer PRO and the e-Enforcement Academy deliver long-term impact through knowledge sharing and risk mitigation, especially in the digital domain.

Remaining Pillar 4a actions, though representing a small share of the SMP budget, deliver significant benefits to consumers. BEUC funding ensures the representation of over 440 million EU consumers in policymaking, while Consumer Conditions Scoreboard supports evidence-based policymaking by highlighting areas where further action may be needed to strengthen consumer protection and market performance.

Pillar 4a actions are strategically aligned, with enforcement, market surveillance, and capacity-building efforts working in close coordination to enhance consumer protection, including in the digital environment. These initiatives are complementary - capacity building supports the effectiveness of enforcement and surveillance, while actions on redress, ECC Net, and education work together to empower and assist consumers. Pillars 4a and 4b are also complementary, ensuring consumer interests are protected across sectors, including financial services. The main beneficiaries focus on different yet synergistic areas, contributing to overall coherence. Furthermore, Pillar 4a aligns closely with the New Consumer Agenda 2020 - 2025 priorities, supporting initiatives on digital fairness, product safety in online sales, and tackling manipulative practices like dark patterns. It is also coherent with EU programmes such as Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme, which share goals around innovation, sustainable consumption, and safe digital transitions for consumers.

The actions under Pillar 4a have delivered distinct EU added value by funding cross-border initiatives that national efforts alone could not achieve. A vast majority of stakeholders (87%) confirmed that such results would not be possible without EU support.

Key beneficiaries like ECC Net and ADR bodies offer essential services for resolving cross-border consumer issues, which are not replicable at the national level. CPC capacity-building has strengthened cooperation among national enforcement authorities, enabling joint actions and more effective consumer protection strategies. Similarly, Safety Gate and CASP add

EU-level value by allowing rapid identification and removal of unsafe products and fostering cross-border cooperation on product safety. Pillar 4a generates EU added value through EU-wide studies and data collection addressing specific consumer issues, evaluating targeted policies and identify emerging trends that could pose risks to consumers within the Single Market. Without EU funding, EU-wide data collection would likely not take place, limiting the ability to benchmark Member State performance or address cross-border issues.

The mid-term evaluation confirms that Pillar 4a remains highly relevant and EU support is essential to empower consumers, raise awareness of their rights, and ensure access to redress through ADRs and ECCs particularly in response to rising demand linked to e-commerce, complexity of the digital market and impact of crises such the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis. This growing demand highlights the continued relevance of the ECC network in providing accessible, multilingual support and helping consumers assert their rights across the Single Market. Likewise, EU-level market surveillance remains highly relevant to addressing cross-border risks and removing unsafe products from the Single Market, while coordinated enforcement actions ensure consistent protection across Member States and enable effective responses to emerging challenges in a fast-evolving digital and globalised marketplace. EU-wide cooperation is essential to tackle misleading practices and scams uniformly, and safeguarding consumers across the Union.

Pillar 4a generates EU added value and provide policy makers with robust evidence gathering. It has funded numerous studies and databases aimed at addressing specific consumer issues, evaluating targeted policies and identify emerging trends that could pose risks to consumers within the Single Market. Without EU funding, it is highly unlikely that any Member State would undertake data collection on EU scale. This evidence is essential for benchmarking the performance of Member States, providing targeted support through action grants, shaping future policy decisions and coordinated enforcement actions at EU level. Finally, Pillar 4a provides crucial funding to support EU-wide goals, aids in the implementation of EU legislation across Member States and fosters coordinated actions at the EU level to address shared challenges and enhance the efficiency of the single market.

On relevance, the mid-term evaluation has found that the objectives and actions of the Pillar 4a remain relevant. Actions to support organisations representing the interests of consumers and helping consumers remain highly relevant to empowering and assisting consumers. The evidence shows that EU action is necessary because consumer awareness of their rights and responsibilities is low, and they are still in need of information and assistance. Support to ADRs and ECCs is relevant to ensure that consumers have access to effective redress and are provided with adequate information. Stakeholders consulted and evidence gathered for this mid-term evaluation have highlighted the increasing number of requests by consumers to ECCs and ADRs, for instance due to the energy crisis but also because of increased digitalisation. Enforcement and market surveillance actions at the EU level remain highly relevant because they ensure consistent protection for consumers, and address the challenges posed by increasingly complex, digital and global markets. They also provide a coordinated response to emerging issues like product safety, digital fraud, and sustainability. The number of dangerous non-food products notified through the Safety Gate every day, suggest that the objective on products safety remain highly relevant. Actions ensuring that the interests of consumers in the digital world are duly considered remain highly relevant. The digital marketplace poses new challenges for consumer protection, such as misleading advertising, data privacy violations, and fraudulent practices. Coordinated enforcement at the EU level

is essential to address these challenges effectively, as many of these issues involve cross-border data flows and digital platforms operating in multiple jurisdictions. EU-wide cooperation and enforcement ensure that misleading practices and scams are addressed uniformly, protecting consumers across the entire Union.

The work of the beneficiaries has been to some extent effective in achieving the objectives of **Pillar 4b**, namely, enhancing the involvement of consumers and financial services end users and representatives of civil society in financial services' policymaking, promoting a better understanding of the financial sector and of the different categories of commercialised financial products and ensuring the interests of consumers are protected. Finance Watch and Better Finance have contributed significantly to the policy debates and continued to offer alternative views from industry essential for the representation of consumers rights in the development of financial legislation. In addition, the research work of the organisations, the events organised, and the media presence have contributed to disseminating information to various groups of stakeholders and raising awareness on current issues in the financial services area.

Together both organisations cover most of the topics relevant to consumers and end users of financial services. The results of the survey however show that respondents were not always aware of the activities of the beneficiaries which suggests that there may be a need for increased visibility or better communication of the impact of these activities to broader audiences.

The analysis performed and the result of the study show that Better Finance has demonstrated high efficiency and high-quality outputs with a significant level of output per person showcasing their high productivity and effectiveness. The high efficiency of the beneficiary was confirmed also when comparing the policy and advocacy work of the organisation and its efficiency to organisations of similar size.

The analysis performed and the result of the study show that Finance Watch's actions have also been highly efficient with Finance Watch supporting a wide array of stakeholders, providing significant output and maintaining a high level of influence in the financial services sector. The organisation is performing well compared to organisations of similar size in terms of outputs, with the outputs related to communication activities demonstrating particularly high efficiency. With regards to the quality of Finance Watch's work, the interviews conducted showed that the quality of the work on financial malpractices, finance for green SMEs and over-indebtedness is regarded as high.

Pillar 4b showcases coherence both internally and externally. Its activities are aligned with each other with respect to pursuing the objectives set out in the SMP Regulation. The organisations complement each other according to their specific areas of focus and expertise, working synergistically to reinforce key messages. Their work is also coherent with some of the activities of BEUC financed under Pillar 4a that is focusing on broader consumer concerns. Additionally, potential complementarity was found between Pillar 3b and Pillar 4b, in promoting consumer financial interests in standard-setting. The activities of Pillar 4b can also be linked indirectly with actions financed through other EU interventions in areas such as the green economy and digitalisation and the work of the beneficiaries is also coherent with initiatives at national and international level, for example with national actions of their members.

Related to the EU added value, in order to defend the interests of consumers and end users, advocacy at EU level on behalf of non-industry stakeholders continues to be necessary. The

organisations represent consumers and end users in the area of financial services at EU level, that would otherwise be under-represented. In addition, when such a big part of financial regulation is developed at EU level, representation only at MS level would not be sufficient. Without EU grants to these two organisations, other EU organisations would be unable to fill the gap as there are no other alternative organisations covering a similar range of topics in financial services and in the same depth. EU funding therefore continues to be necessary in order to increase/maintain the participation of consumers in EU policymaking in the area of financial services.

Furthermore, regarding the relevance, given the political focus on the Savings and Investment Union with increased retail participation in capital markets and on strengthened financial literacy, the expertise of the two beneficiaries in the area of financial services will become even more relevant in the coming years Given the currently limited visibility of Better Finance and Finance Watch's work, strengthening their activities appears important, although there is a risk that existing resources may not be sufficient to support such efforts over time.

5.1.2.5. P5

Pillar 5 has contributed to improving the health and safety of humans, animals, and plants across the EU.

Regarding effectiveness and efficiency of the veterinary and phytosanitary programmes, as well as for emergency measures, there are strong indications, mainly based on Member States and stakeholders feedback, that SMP funds contributed to effectively eradicate and contain animal diseases and plant pests outbreaks. However, evidence based on quantitative data is unfortunately missing to confirm the extent to which the SMP contributed to these positive results. Significant progress has been made in the control and eradication of animal diseases such as ASF, HPAI. The number of cases of Salmonella in poultry populations, bovine, ovine and caprine brucellosis and rabies had also decreased in recent years. The phasing out of funding for certain diseases such as bovine, ovine and caprine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis allowed to shift strategic reorientation of resources towards priority diseases (e.g. ASF, HPAI). No C-BSE cases were found since 2016 and the only few cases found were of atypical form (considered as spontaneous). In addition, SMP co-financed measures in the area of plant health have helped Member States to eradicate or contain outbreaks of plant pests (e.g. *Xylella fastidiosa*, *Anoplophora glabripennis*, pinewood nematode, potato pests).

The flexibility provided for in the veterinary and phytosanitary work programmes has contributed to their effectiveness, which has made it possible to focus on urgent challenges (e.g. prioritising the co-financing of costs incurred by the MSs dealing with large amounts of outbreaks of HPAI). The reduction of co-financing by 60% showed a proactive approach through reallocation of funds in response to evolving needs. This flexibility in the work programmes was important in addressing unforeseen events, such as disease outbreaks. However, the reduction of co-financing rates has put pressure on Member States competent authorities, in particular for those facing numerous epidemics.

The cost-effectiveness analysis of EU co-funded responses to HPAI and *Xylella fastidiosa* have shown that SMP co-financing still played an important role in alleviating the impact of the outbreaks on national budgets, thereby contributing to mitigating the potentially huge economic losses that these diseases could cause to farmers and businesses.

As regards animal welfare, the SMP is a major donor to the WOAH Animal Welfare

Platform for Europe. The SMP co-financed the WOAH Platform's action plans, which prioritised key areas such as animal welfare during transport, slaughter and dog population management. This financial support has helped to support the implementation of WOAH international animal welfare standards in 53 countries of the European region and facilitated increase of information exchange and enforcement efforts.

The activities of the EU reference laboratories (EURLs) and EU reference centres (EURCs) have helped to promote the exchange of best practices that add value in improving the quality, coherence, harmonisation and knowledge of laboratory, animal welfare and breeding standards across the EU. These institutions are EU scientific excellence centres, contributing when it comes to pooling critical resources, expertise, and scientific knowledge. The activities of the EURLs have had a positive impact in food and feed safety, animal health and plant health areas through improvements in laboratory techniques, while the EURCs for animal welfare have contributed to knowledge and sharing of expertise and experience to implement high animal welfare standards. EU financial support under the SMP has significantly contributed to the initiatives of the EURLs and EURCs, thus strengthening the capacity of Member States and stakeholders to participate effectively in the exchange of best practices. However, areas of improvement have been identified for these EURLs and EURCs, in particular, in strengthening communication and cooperation on technical level between EURLs and improving direct impact and monitoring progress through indicators for activities of EURCs of animal welfare.

With regard to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), Member States have increasingly promoted the fight against AMR. Through the SMP, the EU has actively supported Member States in strengthening national systems for data collection and reporting on the sale and use of antimicrobials in animals and implementing coordinated control programmes to monitor antimicrobial resistance in certain food and food-producing animals. Both supported activities contribute to the harmonisation of AMR monitoring and reporting, ensuring that all Member States apply uniform methodologies for the collection and testing of AMR data. This consistency should allow the EU to efficiently collect and compare data (including through the European Medicines Agency and EFSA) to feed into EU AMR policy and take appropriate policy decisions. It should be noted that the SMP measures related to collection of data on sales and use of antimicrobials in animals only started in 2023 and therefore effectiveness of this data collection system is too early to be assessed.

In order to reduce food waste and contribute to food systems' sustainability, SMP funds were made available to national competent authorities, stakeholders and the European Food Banks Federation in the form of grants. For the latter the continued support to food waste reduction has contributed to the redistribution of surplus food, by strengthening the coordination of food banks' activities and their efforts to monitor donated foods through an IT portal. This was a timely support in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, when there was an increase in food demand across the EU. At Member States' level, the grants awarded between 2021-2023 helped Member States in their efforts to measure and monitor food waste levels at different stages of the food supply chain. This support helped refine measurement methodologies and improve data collection (e.g. also through development of IT tools), often in collaboration with stakeholders. Measurement is crucial in order to understand the size of the issue and take appropriate actions. The grants to help stakeholders measure food waste and implement prevention initiatives are still in the implementation phase and the evaluation of results could be carried out as part of the final evaluation of the SMP.

The BTSF programme has played an important role in improving the skills of control staff

in the Member States through extensive training and seminars. The centralised approach of this programme reduces training costs, avoids duplication of work and ensures that high training standards are applied in all Member States. Also, the BTSF training has proven to be an added value, especially in countries where there are few experts in specific areas and provides these professionals with a unique opportunity to meet and work together**.** The effectiveness of the BTSF initiatives in the areas of animal and plant health, food and feed safety and animal welfare was assessed on the basis of a satisfaction rate amongst the participants which was very high. In the past three years, the participants considered the programme remained effective thanks to various tools and methods such as workshops, sustained training missions, e-learning, and improved dissemination possibilities using the multilingual training material within the BTSF Academy. BTSF initiatives have improved inspection protocols and compliance with food safety standards and contributing to the harmonisation of control systems across the EU. The BTSF recorded a significant decrease in unit costs per training and per participant in 2021-2023, mainly due to the transition to virtual formats.

In 2021-2023, DG SANTE attached great importance to the development of information management systems and databases, in particular the Information Management System for Official Controls (IMSOC). The integration of IT platforms highlights the continued need for robust systems supporting implementation efforts.

Financial management and operational efficiency were generally in line with expectations, with a high rate of timely payments and efficient use of the budget. The integration of the eGrant institutional IT tool into the SMP Food programme is a step towards an increased digital transformation and efficiency. While the transition to digital process of grant management is considered useful, concerns remain about the limited applicability of the eGrants to the Identified Beneficiaries actions (i.e. to Member States), resulting in an administrative burden for applicants. The programme management has made significant efforts towards simplification, including the acceptance of unit costs, lump sums and multi-annual grants. The transition to unit costs and lump sums aims to reduce the administrative burden, streamline payment procedures and minimise error rates. These measures promote an efficient allocation of resources by reducing the need for *ex post* controls and by focusing on *ex ante* cost estimates.

The SMP has shown a high degree of internal and external coherence. Objectives, targets and contributions are well aligned and are in line with the objectives of food safety, animal welfare, animal health and plant health. The strategic framework clearly aligns the targeted actions with the overall objectives of the SMP. EU spending under Pillar 5 of the SMP is well aligned with the overall EU policy priorities, including European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. An example of this are the actions on reducing food waste.

As regards EU added value all actions of the SME Pillar 5 entail significant added value as confirmed in all types of stakeholder consultations. This is due to the fact that actions require coordinated action at EU level to make them more effective. In the area of animal and plant safety, the SMP provides tools such as vaccines and antigens banks, BTSF trainings, EU veterinary emergency team, networks of EU reference laboratories and EU reference centres that can only exist because of SMP funding. It would be too expensive for individual MS to have such activities in place. The nature of animal diseases and plant pests require cross-border approach for the measures to be effective. These actions create synergies, harmonise enforcement that is necessary to support functioning of internal market.

Regarding relevance the SMP Pillar 5 objectives remain highly relevant to the evolving needs of the food chain in the EU. These objectives cover important issues and activities such as emerging diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, animal welfare, and sustainable practices. The focus on improving surveillance systems, early detection and preparedness was a strategic priority to mitigate the impact of epidemics through timely interventions and robust surveillance systems. The activities aimed at strengthened laboratory controls and increased harmonisation of official controls demonstrate the commitment to maintain high food safety and animal health standards through disease detection and management. Supporting sustainable food production and reducing antimicrobial resistance is in line with the broader EU policy on sustainability and public health.

The SMP remains, as demonstrated by stakeholder feedback, important in many areas, and aligned with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. The strategic focus of the SMP on sustainability, food safety and public health remains relevant, with initiatives addressing new challenges such as fostering the green and digital transitions.

5.1.2.6. P6

Pillar 6 has with some degree of effectiveness improved the quality and timeliness of European statistics, thus providing a robust evidence base for informed decision-making in all areas of the Single Market and other key areas such as green and digital transitions and implementing the European Pillar of Social rights.

Eurostat data were extensively used in the development, monitoring, and evaluation of EU policies, providing a robust evidence-base for informed decision-making. This data was crucial in supporting major strategies, including the NextGenerationEU, the European Industrial Strategy, the EU Digital Strategy, the EU Green Deal and RePowerEU, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. During the energy crisis, Eurostat data facilitated timely and effective policy responses geared towards ensuring energy security and stability across the EU.

The ESP considerably improved the timeliness of European statistics, especially during crises such as COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. There was a considerable increase in the number of statistical indicators produced. This growth demonstrated the ESP's commitment to expanding its coverage.

The ESP introduced several quality improvements in statistical production, including advancements in methodologies, integration of new data sources, and enhanced data validation processes. These improvements were acknowledged in user feedback and peer reviews.

European statistics maintained high levels of trust among users, with 95% of respondents of the user satisfaction survey (USS) in 2024 indicating trust in the statistics.

The ESP has demonstrated a strong commitment to efficient resource allocation. The cost-benefit analysis indicates that stakeholders generally perceive the benefits of the ESP as proportionate to the costs, highlighting its cost-effectiveness.

A notable reduction in human resources in the ESS, particularly in 2023, indicates increased efficiency through automation and shifting statistical processes. However, as highlighted by stakeholders, further reduction of staff could risk the ESP's ability to meet the increasing demand for more detailed and timely statistics, to harness new data sources, and to invest in new technologies.

Appropriate measures were implemented to successfully reduce administrative burden through legislative simplification and the adoption of electronic tools. According to feedback from stakeholders, the ESP has achieved moderate to high success in reducing administrative burden in the period 2021-2023.

The ESP's reliance on multiple sources of financing, including substantial amounts of subdelegated funds, has facilitated the development of specific statistics tailored to EU needs. However, stakeholders support a funding structure for the ESP that ensures autonomy and efficiency. However, they did not express any views on the feasibility of giving Eurostat adequate resources to avoid the need to use subdelegated funds.

The ESP's general objectives and activities are internally and externally coherent. The legal frameworks, such as Regulation 223/2009 and domain-specific regulations, ensure consistent and comparable statistics across Member States. Robust mechanisms, including governance and advisory bodies like the ESSC and ESAC, are in place to ensure the coherence and comparability of statistical data. The ESP's activities are well aligned with overarching EU strategies and objectives, facilitated by memoranda of understanding with Commission DGs and other EU bodies. The coordination with EU bodies, such as the ECB, has improved efficiency and data quality. Eurostat has effectively coordinated with international statistical organisations, ensuring that European statistics are coherent with global frameworks.

European statistics provided under Pillar 6 have strong EU added-value, due to their impartiality, reliability, and comprehensive coverage, as well as to their significantly improved comparability and harmonisation across EU Member States.

The ESP has noticeably improved the comparability and harmonisation of national statistics across EU Member States. Eurostat's continuous updates and methodological advancements have played a critical role in achieving a unified statistical framework, which is essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation.

The ESP has effectively reduced the time lag between the reference period and the publication of statistical data, particularly in response to emergent needs such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events. Eurostat's initiatives, like the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard, exemplify the ESP' adaptability and commitment to providing timely information.

Resources available for producing and developing new statistics at the Member State level were enhanced through grants and collaborative efforts. Eurostat's support in promoting efficient statistical collection methods and integrating new data sources has reduced costs and improved quality. The centralised approach of the ESP ensures a coordinated and harmonised system for producing statistics, which is crucial for maintaining consistency and comparability across Member States.

Without the ESP common methodological advances, providing comparable statistics for all Member States in a single place would not be possible. This is an essential EU added-value and greatly appreciated by users. All the interviewed stakeholders highly appreciated the ESP as crucial for ensuring the comparability and harmonisation of statistics across Member States. They emphasised the critical importance of having a centralised system for standardised statistics, which aids, for example, in creating reliable euro area aggregates essential for European policymaking. Eurostat's role in ensuring data coherence and alignment with global standards was also highlighted. Many surveyed producers and users

believe that Member States cannot successfully conduct the production of European statistics on their own. Moreover, the ESP provides support in terms of advances in methodologies, new data sources, common tools etc.

The objectives of Pillar 6 were well aligned with the needs of the European Statistical System and other stakeholders, ensuring that the statistics provided remained relevant and responsive to changing policy priorities and data requirements.

The ESP's general objectives were well aligned with the users' expectations and ensuing needs of the ESS to adapt to them, ensuring that the ESP remained relevant and responsive to changing policy priorities and data requirements. Additionally, the ESP's ability to address emerging issues and crises underscored its commitment to serving the ESS and the broader stakeholder community.

Despite the overall positive alignment with stakeholder needs, gaps remain in certain areas, such as regional and territorial data granularity, timeliness, and the integration of new data sources. These gaps highlight the need for continuous improvement and innovation.

5.1.3. Design of the programme

The SMP has partially delivered on the effects expected from designing an integrated programme.

The potential of the SMP for **flexibility has brought some positive results, yet it** has not been fully exploited. Budgetary transfers have mostly been about small amounts and took place between budget lines managed by the same DG.

Synergies anticipated from consolidating activities into a single financing instrument have not fully materialised, despite cooperation across policy areas, implying sound collaboration between DGs. Joint activities across multiple pillars have been undertaken but could be further developed.

Though some evidence is present, overall, the **simplifications** at programme level were not achieved to the extent that was forecasted. Some simplifications have resulted from having a single legal basis for the Programme, such as the Commission preparing only one proposal and the co-legislators

adopting a single regulation. However, evidence of other simplifications is limited, as multiple committees and work programmes are still required to cover different policy areas.

5.1.4. Monitoring and Evaluation framework

Last, the evaluation served the purpose to critically test the framework in which it was conducted and identify areas of improvement. The current monitoring system and indicators were found to show some limitations. The intervention logics did not sufficiently capture the policy rationale and intended effects, and some indicators were not directly related to activities financed by the SMP. Additionally, certain indicators may be reclassified, and the rationale for promoting some indicators to the programme level while excluding others was unclear. The indicators also fail to cover all sub-pillars, main actions, and intended effects. Data collection for all indicators in the framework was incomplete, and there is a need for additional or alternative indicators as outlined in the revised pillar intervention logics. Furthermore, there was a lack of baselines, targets, and data for these new indicators. Data on the achievement of outputs and results was not systematically collated and communicated in a coordinated and consistent manner across the entire programme.

The following areas for improvement have been identified. Developing further indicators may help in refining the analysis of the Programme and ensure throughout the implementation that all actions remain relevant to its objectives and broader EU priorities. The evaluation framework would benefit from a more coordinated approach on data collection. Some indicators could better align and cover all SMP activities. Improving the framework would also allow for enhanced data collection, still inconsistent across the Programme, especially with respect to data on the achievement of outputs and results. More details are to be found in the lessons learned on the Monitoring and Evaluation framework (5.2.3).

5.2. Lessons learned

5.2.1. At programme level

Despite overall positive conclusions at this mid-term stage of implementation, there is further room for improvement. Some suggestions are included in this section and may inform the ongoing implementation of the programme and the final evaluation. Due to its pillar structure, some apply to the Programme as a whole, while others are more specific to certain pillars. The former rely on all evaluation findings presented in this document, while the latter more specifically on the findings specific to each pillar presented in Annexes IX-XIV.

Taking into account the limited budget of the Programme and fixed programming schedule, accommodating new policy priorities remains a challenge without a substantially increased budget. Notably, higher-than-expected inflation eroded the number and extent of actions that could be undertaken.

The **potential for flexibility, synergies, and simplification**, resulting from the design of the SMP should be further exploited. The SMP DGs responsible for each pillar could investigate the feasibility of initiating more joint actions, such as cross-pillar training courses, shared procurement activities, common purchases of databases, joint studies, Eurobarometers, framework contracts, and shared IT projects. Simplification should be considered with regards to the eGrants tool.

Data collection in relation to the achievement of indicators could be streamlined. A more systematic gathering of data across all pillars would better inform the assessment of the Programme's implementation and the final evaluation. It would allow to adopt adjustments and corrective measures to ensure that the activities effectively and efficiently serve the achievement of the objectives, remain relevant and coherent within the SMP and with the broader EU priorities.

Certain indicators in the **monitoring and evaluation framework** could be updated and refined to be more tailored to the SMP and serve the final evaluation. Accounting for data availability and additional data collection, the framework would benefit from improvements (see Annex VIII).

5.2.2. At pillar level

5.2.1.1. Pillar 1

The budget allocated to Pillar 1 remains largely insufficient to achieve the challenging political objectives stemming from the Political Guidelines 2024-2029 and the new mandate of the Commission including the creation of a Saving and Investment Union. It restricts the capacity of the Commission to profit from emerging opportunities and finance activities aiming for example at gathering new data, financing new IT projects, assessing new policy

scenarios and evaluating existing ones or gathering the necessary support to assess the implementation of EU law or preparedness of candidate countries. The Draghi report clearly outlines new actions to strengthen the Single Market.

More frequent feedback collection from users of IT services financed under this pillar would help monitor user satisfaction and improve service delivery. Such feedback mechanism exists for the Your Europe portal, on each webpage and an annual user feedback survey is also conducted.

Additionally, a unified system for reporting on activities, outputs, and results across all Pillar 1 budget lines may be considered as it could consolidate data on expenditure and performance against established indicators and might be incorporated into an annual monitoring report. This would not only streamline reporting but also allow for better tracking of progress towards SMP objectives, potentially feeding into the monitoring and evaluation of the SMP as a whole, and the final evaluation, and highlight opportunities for synergies in areas like joint procurement or training.

The key areas of intervention (specific objectives) selected in support of sub-pillar 1a remain relevant for new Commission mandate. For the purposes of the present evaluation, while quantitative data allowed for effective analysis, challenges arose due to limited qualitative data. For instance, DG COMP does not regularly gather user feedback on digital tools funded by the SMP (noting also that the users of most digital tools are internal to the Commission). While interviews and consultations provided useful insights into stakeholder satisfaction, some results were inconclusive due to varying levels of user involvement and tool implementation. Nevertheless, the growing number of users and requests for additional features demonstrate the tools' usability and effectiveness.

Moreover, the unutilised synergies within Pillar 1 constitutes an area for improvement that could be actively explored by coordinating joint actions across pillars. Potential collaborations could include joint procurement, enforcement actions, and training, as well as shared resources such as databases and framework contracts. This approach not only could safeguard and the improve coherence of activities, but also maximise resource efficiency of pillar 1 and the SMP as a whole.

Finally, for the next funding period, the benefits of keeping all Pillar 1 budget lines within a single successor programme could be discussed, compared to an alternative approach that places certain budget lines outside the programme for better flexibility or focus.

5.2.2.2. Pillar 2

Under Pillar 2, the work programmes up to 2023 have not clearly linked actions to the specific objectives of the pillar. Yet, these could be better addressed by explicitly assigning objectives to the actions in future work programmes. Measuring progress through indicators matters for the success of the SME Pillar as well as linking of actions to objectives which needs to be further developed at the moment of drafting the work programmes. A systematic monitoring of output and result indicators in project reports to capture all SMEs supported under the SMP, and explicitly linking these indicators to the specific objectives could increase clarity on impact. Result indicators could be enhanced by linking the level of SME satisfaction with the support received and any follow-up actions they undertake, with a harmonised survey. This survey should try to gather data on impacts like growth, digitalisation, and internationalisation.

Additionally, simplification for beneficiaries (in addition to lump sums, FSTP, budgetary flexibility), choosing an instrument at the moment of drafting the call, is an area for development in the second part of the programming period. Calls should require projects to focus on a few objectives and avoid requiring too many objectives simultaneously. The text in the work programmes should allow enough space to choose the most suitable support instrument at the moment of drafting the technical specifications for a call. While smaller actions are valuable for piloting new approaches, over-fragmentation should be avoided for efficiency reasons. The financial support for third parties (FSTP) is an effective tool for small business support, but it also presents an administrative burden for project consortia, particularly smaller or inexperienced ones. Efforts to improve the FSTP process, such as introducing standard templates, a central web platform for management, and adapted payment conditions to avoid pre-financing, are already under way.

Furthermore, ongoing measures to address uneven participation across countries in some pillar calls and projects should be continued to ensure the actions retain EU added value. While there is a good level of synergies and cooperation between the various actions of the SME Pillar, many stakeholders still see room for improvement and call e.g. for more practical guidance for beneficiaries in this respect. Enhanced practical guidance for beneficiaries could help better exploit synergies, especially for smaller or less continuous actions.

5.2.2.3. ***Pillar 3***

The SMP has been instrumental in advancing the development of financial and non-financial standards that align with EU policy objectives such as sustainability goals and EU public good. It is essential to maintain this support to ensure that our companies remain competitive in a global market. Without financial support, the IFRS Foundation, but especially PIOB and EFRAG, would be severely impacted, risking their ability to continue their activities that are instrumental to EU policy objectives.

Further efforts are needed to broaden the funding base of EFRAG, in particular as regards the sustainability reporting, as the Commission currently funds as a maximum 90% of EFRAG's eligible costs for sustainability reporting. This is especially important given the need to ensure that EFRAG can provide adequate support and guidance for companies in the implementation of ESRS, so helping to reduce the burden on companies. PIOB should continue its efforts to secure funding from other sources than the EU contribution to arrive at a sustainable funding model for the medium- and long-term future, which ensures the independence of its oversight function from the audit profession.

The Single Market Programme (SMP) has played a vital role in advancing European standardisation, demonstrating significant achievements while also revealing areas that require further attention. The alignment of SMP funding with EU policy goals, particularly in fostering the green and digital transitions, is a major accomplishment. The programme's flexibility in addressing emerging challenges, such as those posed by the Ukraine conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores its capacity to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and maintain relevance in evolving contexts.

It is essential to carry on the efforts to enhance participation of stakeholders in standardisation processes. A critical contribution of the SMP has been its support for Annex III organisations, which rely on this funding to effectively represent diverse stakeholder interests, including SMEs, consumers, and environmental groups. For European standardisation, continued dialogue with Annex III organisations is essential to assess how to strengthen their capacity at the EU level, while encouraging Member States to offer more

funding opportunities to foster participation at the national level. Without this financial backing, their participation in standardisation processes would be severely constrained, potentially undermining inclusivity and broad representation. However, despite improvements in SME and consumer involvement, the persistent underrepresentation of environmental and social stakeholders highlights a significant gap that calls for targeted engagement and outreach initiatives.

Administrative inefficiencies have emerged as a recurring concern among beneficiaries. Processes such as grant preparation and reporting have been criticised as overly burdensome, while the inflexibility of unit costs during periods of high inflation has posed additional challenges. These issues indicate a need for streamlined administrative procedures and enhanced financial adaptability to better support stakeholders, by adopting advanced electronic tools and simplified grant management systems. In the next MFF, potential improvements could be the introduction of new financial instruments, like lump-sum budgets, for action grants (AGs) managed by EISMEA which could reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries. Additional guidance and support for the use of eGrants may also be helpful, improvements such as prefilled data to reduce redundancy could enhance user experience.

Looking ahead, there are several opportunities for improvement. Establishing clearer monitoring mechanisms for participation in standardisation processes under pillar 3a would enhance the understanding of how EU funding, particularly for Annex III organisations, impacts stakeholder involvement. The introduction of additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure aspects such as inclusivity, responsiveness, and system agility could enhance the monitoring and evaluation of the programme's impact. Additionally, exploring the potential for multi-annual grants and co-financing models could alleviate administrative pressures and foster long-term sustainability for participants. Reconsidering the frequency and number of calls could offer beneficiaries more flexibility to respond, although this might increase the burden on the Commission and EISMEA. Continued use of platforms like the High-Level Forum on Standardisation and scoping papers to align standardisation priorities with European Standardisation Organisations (ESO) and National Standardisation Bodies (NSB) capacities will help improve coordination.

In summary, the SMP has successfully aligned standardisation efforts with EU priorities and demonstrated resilience in the face of crises. Nevertheless, addressing inclusivity challenges, administrative inefficiencies, and the need for more robust monitoring mechanisms will be essential to ensuring the programme's continued effectiveness and adaptability.

5.2.2.4. ***Pillar 4***

Under Pillar 4a, the evaluation showed it is crucial continue to focus on raising consumer education and awareness and continue to enhance their participation in policymaking, especially in countries where evidence suggests gaps, with specific emphasis on financial literacy and digital rights. It is also key to improve the visibility of European Consumer Centres (ECCs) which vary across Member States, as their role will expand with the update of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive, making them crucial contact points for cross-border consumer disputes. Considering that new EU legislation continues to focus on cross-border consumer protection, ensuring adequate co-financing for these centres to maintain operational capacity across all Member States is key. Capacity building for Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) authorities and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies is required, backed by regular needs assessments to keep pace with evolving legislation. Upskilling of ADRs will be essential to tackle new categories of consumer

disputes, making workshops and events for exchanging best practices essential. Enhance cooperation among Member States to address the fragmented ADR landscape across EU and promote collaboration among sector-specific ADR networks. This will help reduce administrative challenges by sharing resources, exchanging best practices. There is a need for streamlined administrative procedures and enhanced financial adaptability to better support stakeholders, by adopting advanced electronic tools and simplified grant management systems. Continued EU funding for the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) is essential to ensure that consumers' voices remain strong in policy debates, the market fairness is upheld, and consumers benefit from better protection, transparency, and empowerment.

Furthermore, it is decisive to continue building on existing cooperation with international organisations like the OECD, UNCTAD and third countries to foster global consumer protection standards. The promotion of green labelling and sustainable consumption must be strengthened, by raising awareness through regular communication campaigns and events targeting consumers and companies, encouraging businesses to sign the EU's business pledge supporting sustainable practices.

The continuous monitoring of consumer rights in the digital economy and enhancing IT tools would benefit from further financing. The continuing growth in the importance of online trading and the diversification in the methods used online suggest that there will continue to be a need for greater efforts to ensure effective surveillance and remedies. These developments will need to be guided by the results of the Commission's review of the regulatory framework relating to digital fairness for consumers. Moreover, aligning future activities under the Consumer pillar with the political priorities of the Consumer Agenda, ensuring coherence across areas like digital protection, sustainability, and safeguarding vulnerable consumers.

Another lesson learned is to improve systematic, comprehensive and consistent data collections across all activities, and further develop outcome and results indicators that emphasise the quality of deliverables and achieved results, to better assess the impact of activities funded under Pillar 4a. It is also important to improve the number of stakeholders participation in online survey and identify a larger number of relevant stakeholders that could be contacted for interviews.

In the area of enhancing the participation of consumers and users in financial services policy making. Looking at the results of the evaluation for Pillar 4b it is important to acknowledge the need for EU-wide representation of the interest of consumers and end users of financial services. There is scarcity of resources and lack of specialised expertise among financial services end users and non-industry stakeholders and the beneficiaries of the programme have been effective in filling this gap with the aid of the funding received by the SMP since 2021 and predecessor programmes before that.

There is a need for continuous action to raise awareness regarding aspects of the financial services that affect consumers in their day-to-day life such as the increase of digitalisation and digital finance or savings and financial planning through retail investments.

The current, high-inflation environment combined with regulatory requirements such as obligatory salary indexation is putting limitations in the organisations and impacts their ability to expand their activities and have a greater impact as representatives of consumers in financial services.

The results of the evaluation also suggest the importance of continuing the joint efforts of the Commission and the beneficiaries to advance the signature grant agreements. Lastly, the experience with the programme has shown that while it is important to have KPIs in place in order to measure the quantitative outputs of the beneficiaries, there are challenges in measuring the quality or impact of the activities in quantitative indicators. In addition, the dependence of the activities on the policy cycle of EU institutions makes it difficult to set specific targets. As a result, there could be a benefit in revising the KPIs of their programme in order to improve their relevance to the action.

*5.2.2.5. **Pillar 5***

SMP funds contributed to effectively eradicate and contain animal diseases and plant pests outbreaks. Nevertheless, large-scale animal disease outbreaks such as ASF, HPAI have shown weakness of the programme to adequately co-fund eradication measures. As a result of large-scale outbreaks and limited budget the co-funding rates had to be reduced by 60%. In order to improve the flexible financing mechanisms for possible resurgences or new strains of animal diseases and new plant pests, actual access to an emergency reserve fund could be introduced. This would allow Member States to have access to immediate financial support where necessary and to support more effective monitoring, eradication or containment of animal diseases and plant pests, without needing to reduce drastically the co-financing rates.

The eGrant IT tool within the SMP Food programme is considered a step towards an increased digital transformation and efficiency. Nevertheless, during interviews and surveys the stakeholders using eGrant tool expressed views that tool for direct grant beneficiaries (e.g. Member States authorities) is burdensome. Therefore, measures may be considered improving the eGrant system to be user-friendly, less burdensome and better suited to non-competitive grants.

Overall, communication and knowledge sharing between different stakeholders is satisfactory, nevertheless, it can be further improved. In particular, improvements can be implemented in the area of EURLs by strengthening cooperation on technical level between EURLs (e.g. new laboratory methods).

The Better Training for Safer Food programme played an important role in improving the skills of control staff in the Member States through extensive training and seminars. In the period 2021-2023 the BTSF recorded a significant decrease in unit costs per training and per participant, mainly due to the transition to virtual formats without negative impacts on training quality. This experience could be further explored by introducing such tools for meetings, workshops, missions in other domains of SMP.

Improving digital tools and advanced infrastructure is important to effectively implement priorities set by SMP. It is envisaged to continue further integration of IT platforms which supports SMP implementation efforts and could improve data efficiency and availability in order to make informed decisions and analysis.

The above-mentioned challenges will be further addressed in the short to medium term and the next MFF.

*5.2.2.6. **Pillar 6***

Under Pillar 6, there is a need to continue investing in new technologies and innovative data sources. Fostering innovation and collaboration should continue, with a focus on partnering with the private sector, leveraging scientific expertise, and embracing new technologies to

enhance statistical production. Maintaining and enhancing data quality standards through regular updates and aligning with international standards will ensure Eurostat remains a trusted authority for European statistics. Also, improving communication and timeliness is crucial to ensuring that data revisions and changes are communicated promptly to avoid disruptions in analytical processes. Strengthening user engagement and feedback mechanisms through timely consultations and regular feedback collection would also help better understand user needs and priorities. Additionally, expanding data coverage and granularity remains essential to address gaps, to meet emerging policy demands and grasp evolving data landscapes. Flexibility and responsiveness within legislative processes could also be improved; enhancing adaptability to rapid technological developments is crucial, and continuous efforts are needed to improve timeliness, reduce publication delays, and strengthen capacity building initiatives among Member. Moreover, there is a need to increase familiarity with coherence mechanisms through targeted training and improve the visibility of statistical objectives within broader SMP goals. Efforts to streamline administrative processes using advanced electronic tools and simplified grant management systems and incorporating digital solutions could reduce the burden on national statistical institutes (NSIs). Enhancing the prioritisation of statistical outputs and coordination with EU bodies, alongside a regular review process to phase out obsolete data, will ensure that high-impact data needs are efficiently addressed while avoiding duplication.

It is considered important to continue delineating the European Statistics Pillar, including its activities and budget, within the future MFF architecture, in order to highlight its independent and impartial nature. A dedicated budget for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics remains an essential prerequisite for continued relevance and high quality.

There are several lessons learned for the final evaluation. To improve the number of stakeholder replies, it would be beneficial to identify a larger number of relevant stakeholders that could be contacted for interviews. This could increase the pool of potential interview partners and secure more responses. Another lesson learned is to create more publicity for the evaluation, avoiding other surveys during the time of targeted surveys in order to reduce response fatigue and/or confusion. Lastly, and as a follow-up to this evaluation, monitoring indicators would need to be kept up to date to ensure that they reflect user behaviour and preferences.

5.2.3. Monitoring and Evaluation framework

Based on the analysis conducted, several areas of improvement regarding the current list of indicators in the Commission's SWD to better reflect programme performance, enhance data collection, align closer to the intervention logic, and ultimately improve the assessment of the programme's implementation, in particular during the final evaluation. First, on the programme-level indicators, second, on the indicators specific to pillars.

Experience with the current programme output indicators suggests that some, such as OP1 ('Number of new complaints in the area of free movement of goods and services, as well as Union legislation on public procurement') do not reflect an actual programme output, and changes in complaints do not directly indicate performance. Similarly, while OP2 ('Services Trade Restrictiveness Index') conceptually aligns with impact indicators, attributing changes directly to the SMP remains challenging.

Outputs and results indicators are mostly specific to activities of the pillars, which limits the ability to establish a more integrated assessment framework.

As for design output indicators, systematically collecting data on performance against indicators using Commission services' calculations benefits the assessment of the Programme's design, such as discarding indicators that are no longer relevant or lack adequate data collection capabilities..

For Pillar 1, the Commission may reconsider certain output and result indicators in the SMP monitoring and evaluation framework, particularly where their achievement cannot be directly attributed to the SMP (e.g. for DG COMP to remove the current result indicators [300]). There may be a re-assessment of output indicators to cover major activities, such as the usage of DG COMP tools, the number of officials trained in competition law, joint market surveillance efforts, and the number of YEA users. This would ensure a more comprehensive reflection of the programme's actions, including specific metrics like participation in the European Competition Network (ECN), and the usage of IT tools. Additionally, result indicators may be articulated to capture user satisfaction with key actions, including DG COMP tools, officials' training, ECN satisfaction, and the outcomes of joint market surveillance campaigns. The satisfaction of stakeholders in other sub-pillars, such as EUCPN members and YEA users, could also be included. The existing RES 1.5 indicator, which tracks the number of YEA visits, may be reclassified as an output indicator to better reflect the programme's achievements. The Commission could also focus the M&E activities under this pillar to the most relevant activities in a proportionate way, considering the amount of expenditure under the various activities and the impact of the funded activities on stakeholders, national authorities and citizens.

For Pillar 2, a refined intervention logic was developed to make objectives, expected outputs, results and impacts clearer and more comprehensible. The main lessons learned of the Pillar include measuring progress, linking of actions to objectives and simplification for beneficiaries.

For Pillar 3, it could be useful to integrate output indicators that track the participation of various stakeholders, including Annex III organisations in the European standardisation process. This may include metrics such as the number of Technical Committees (TCs) and Working Groups (WGs) in which these organisations are involved, with data potentially gathered from Article 24 reports as required by the Standardisation Regulation. Additionally, certain current result indicators may be reclassified as output indicators. RES 3.2, which tracks the number of draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) prepared by EFRAG, and RES 3.3, which covers the publication of public interest issues by the PIOB.

For Pillar 4, The experience with the programme has shown that while it is important to have KPIs in place in order to measure the quantitative outputs of the beneficiaries, there are challenges in measuring the quality or impact of the activities in quantitative indicators. Additionally, revisions to the monitoring framework and KPIs may involve engaging with beneficiaries to establish a more comprehensive set of indicators. This would ensure that information already being gathered is used effectively and that indicators and targets are more aligned with the beneficiaries' actual capacity to influence outcomes, allowing for adjustments where necessary.

For Pillar 5, further actions could be taken to improve the monitoring framework of the programme by setting up relevant indicators to better assess the effectiveness and efficiency

300 These relate to customer savings generated by the enforcement of competition policy. While the measurement of these customer savings relies on a solid methodology, enabling estimates of the direct impact of competition policy enforcement, the achievement of these indicators cannot be exclusively attributed to the SMP. Therefore, those savings are better reflected in the intervention logic of the programme, as the SMP activities are necessary to ensure effective competition policy.

of the programme. Regarding EURCAW activities on Member State legislation and animal welfare stakeholders it may be useful to develop more robust indicators directly from beneficiaries to better measure the actual outcomes of these initiatives. It is suggested where Member States that receive grants for coordinated control programmes and in the field of sustainable food production and consumption should be required to submit a specific deliverable, including to measure impacts of these grants.

At this interim evaluation stage, the analysis is supported by the indicators that mostly capture outputs and in limited cases refers to results and impacts. The monitoring framework has limitations, for example, lack of impact indicators and limited data for cost-efficiency analysis. It is difficult to evaluate results and impacts for certain actions since these have started recently and are still ongoing (e.g. food waste, AMR). The situation will improve towards the end of 2027 as many ongoing actions will be fully implemented by that time. Nevertheless, there is scope to further improve the monitoring framework of the programme by setting up relevant indicators to better assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.

For Pillar 6, the existing indicators are sufficient to assess progress in the implementation of the SMP in relation to the activities of this pillar.

ANNEX I: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead DG

The DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) is the lead DG for the interim evaluation of the SMP (PLAN/2023/1289).

Derogations granted and justification

In an email dated 21/02/2024 the contractor asked for a two-month extension of the contract in order to support DG GROW in the preparation of a staff working document (SWD) for the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB) meeting due in November 2024; and to take into account the RSB's comments in this report.

Organisation and timing

The interim evaluation of the SMP was carried out in parallel with the *ex post* evaluation of the Consumer Programme 2014-2020, one of the predecessor programmes to the SMP, and the evaluation of Regulation 1025/2012 on European standardisation[301].

An interservice steering group (ISG) was set up by DG GROW on 24 May 2023, involving representatives from the following services: Secretariat-General, Legal Service, DG Budget, JRC, DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG CNECT, DG COMM, DG DEFIS, DG DIGIT, DG ECFIN, DG CLIMA, DG EMPL, DG ENV, DG ESTAT, DG FISMA, DG GROW, DG HOME, DG JUST, DG NEAR, DG REGIO, DG REFORM, DG SANTE, DG TAXUD, DG TRADE, HaDEA, EISMEA.

The ISG was established to steer the evaluation and the work of the contractor by providing feedback on deliverables and ensuring quality standards were met throughout the exercise. Five meetings were held with the ISG between October 2023 and October 2024. The last meeting to discuss the draft Evaluation SWD took place on 16 October 2024.

Pursuant to the consultation strategy, the Commission and the contractor have undertaken consultation activities.

The Commission published a **call for evidence** on the 'Have your say' portal, open for feedback from 14 November 2023 to 12 December 2023. Six responses were received. The Commission published a **public consultation** on the 'Have your say' portal, open for feedback for 12 weeks from 8 March 2024 to 31 May 2024. Sixty-three responses were received.

Several consultations were carried out for the programme and each of its pillar by the consultant in charge of delivering the supporting study to the Commission. More than 330 interviews were conducted by the contractor with relevant stakeholders.

Consultation of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board

The SMP interim evaluation has been chosen for scrutiny by the RSB. An informal upstream meeting took place on 14 April 2024. Following this meeting, a checklist was devised to address points raised by the RSB. This allowed to define points to address in the evaluation report and to provide guidance to the consultant on points to tackle in the supporting study. The formal consultation of the RSB took place on 27 November 2024.The RSB delivered a negative opinion. On the basis of the discussion and key issues to address highlighted in the opinion, the report was amended.

Evidence, sources, quality and use of external expertise

301 European standardisation – evaluation.

The evaluation report is based on evidence from the following sources:

- Supporting study for the interim evaluation of the SMP. The study was carried out by a consortium led by the Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (CSES), and composed of CSIL Centro Studi Industria Leggera, GAC, PPMI Group, Prognos, the Austrian Institute for SME Research (KMFA), G.A.C Group, Spark Legal Network, Viegand Maagøe, IDEA Strategische Economische Consulting.
- SMP impact assessment[302] and work programmes.
- EU legislation.
- Annual activity and management reports.
- Evaluations of predecessor programmes (e.g. COSME, Consumer Programme, Common Financial Framework, ESP).
- Performance and programme statements[303].

The table below summarises the changes made based on the RSB recommendations.

RSB recommendations	Actions
Key issues: 1) The report is not sufficiently informative and self-standing. It does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall programme's performance. 2) The evaluation is not clear enough about the limitations of the current monitoring system and evaluation arrangement and how the achievement of some specific objectives can be measured. 3) The analysis of relevance, coherence and EU added value is not adequately developed. The conclusions and lessons learned in the report are not supported by sufficient evidence.	The actions related to key issues are defined in greater details below in the table. The report has been amended to include more findings and supporting evidence gathered throughout the evaluation and be self-standing and informative. Limitations of the monitoring and evaluation have been listed and described in the programme-level Staff Working Document. Elements pertaining to the analysis of the evaluation criteria have been integrated in the programme-level SWD.
1) a. The main report should be more informative and self-standing. To this end, the **key analysis and evidence provided in the pillar-specific annexes should be better reflected in the main body** of the report to allow for an assessment of the overall programme's performance. b. The report should set out **a clear intervention logic,** c. and the **links between the overarching objectives and the pillar-specific objectives** should be **clearly established** for the purpose of the evaluation.	Main limitations have been summarised and presented in Section 1.2 and reflected in the analysis and conclusions of the report in sections 4 and 5, as well as in Annex II. Pillar-specific data, evidence, and findings have been included in the main body of the programme-level report in Section 3.2 and 4 to complement the assessment of the SMP as a whole, and to tackle as possible limitations mentioned in Section 1.2. The intervention logic at programme level has been rebranded as 'rationale', revised and simplified to reflect the problems and objectives identified in the IA accompanying the SMP Regulation and to feature the overarching priorities to account for the unique and complex design of the SMP in Section 2.1. Despite departing from the structure of an intervention logic as per Better Regulation, this

302 SWD/2018/320 final - 2018/0231 (COD)
303 Single Market Programme - Performance - European Commission

	visual representation offers a clearer overview of the Programme. Pillar-specific intervention logics have been harmonised and included in Annex VII of the report. The description of activities has been revised and the 'overarching objectives' rebranded as 'overarching priorities' in Section 2.1. Information on the links behind overarching priorities, the pillar-specific objectives and the broader programme dimension has been revised to align with the reworked intervention logic at programme level and ensure a clear presentation of the starting point of this mid-term evaluation. A table on the achievements of activities related to the overarching priorities was included in Section 4.1.1.2.
2) The **key elements of the pillar-specific analyses should be <u>systematically summarised</u> in the main report** and presented in a manner that reflects the evidence, its **<u>limitations</u> positive and negative findings** etc. The extent to which perception data is sufficient and could be subject to possible biases and other limitations, including lack of representativeness needs to be taken into account.	Analysis and findings underpinned by evidence from pillars have been included at the programme level in Section 4 and 5 including limitations, challenges, and potential mitigating measures and residual problems. This aimed to encompasses both positive and negative findings, showcasing the robustness of underlying data.
3) a. The evaluation **should set out upfront the limitations of the current monitoring system**. It should explain what those limitations are and how they were addressed in the analysis. b. The report should b**e clear on the lessons learned from the mid-term evaluation that can be drawn for the final evaluation i**n this regard. c. It **should present which indicators are used in the analysis and for which areas indicators are missing**. d. It should also **identify** more clearly whic**h SMART objectives are considered for the assessment** of the programme's performance and the **links between them and the specific objectives** at pillar level. e. As far as possible, the **report should identify gaps in the current monitoring system** that may hamper an evaluation in the future. In particular, the need to attribute benefits to the actions under the programme should be reflected.	Limitations and mitigating actions in relation to the M&E have been included upfront in Section 1.2 along the methodological information added referred to above. Lessons learned in that regard have been revised. The assessment of the M&E framework in the conclusions and lessons learned has been revised in Section 5. A critical assessment of the M&E framework has been included in Annex VI, which included an assessment of the framework as it is, i.e. the indicators that have been used for this mid-term evaluation, and recommendations for potential changes to address gaps (modifications, requalification, deletion or addition). This should be useful be taken into consideration for the final evaluation. The breakdown into sub-objectives, which follow the SMART principle to ensure they are measurable, used for the evaluation, and links with Pillar-specific objectives have been mentioned in Section 3.2 in introduction of each of the Pillars.

4) a. **Estimates of benefits** should not be presented as evidence of the effectiveness of the programme if they are based on *ex ante* modelling. As the evaluation should assesses the actual benefits, an approach based on *ex ante* modelling is conceptually misplaced, and the estimates should not be used in the effectiveness and efficiency analyses. As the mid-term evaluation focuses on outputs, and to a limited extent results, as it is too early to observe the impacts of the intervention, this should be more clearly **acknowledged when drawing assessments and conclusions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme**. b. The **overview table of costs and benefits should provide adequate information on benefits and costs**. Once the effectiveness and efficiency analyses are improved, **the cost-benefit table should be extensively amended to provide estimates** of all relevant costs and benefits in, a transparent, structured, and comparable format.	Benefit estimates have been removed from the costs and benefits table. The tables of costs and benefits have been modified in Annex IV – only tables for the pillars are included, and an overview is included in the Efficiency Section 4.1.2.
5) a. The analysis of relevance should be further strengthened. It should **explore whether the programme is still relevant for problems linked with the COVID crisis**, whether it is suitable **to address emerging problems and need**s, and how they affect the prioritisation among actions. b. The report **should consider whether the limited complementarity across pillars and actions may reflect lack of synergies**. c. It should assess the **external coherence between the programme and other initiatives or national programmes** contributing to the same general objectives.	Further consideration to emerging needs is included in the relevance Section 4.3.3, and evidence and examples moved from the pillar annexes to the programme-level main body of the report strengthens the overall assessment relevance in Section 4.3.1, showing the continued relevance and adaptative capability of the SMP, in particular in light of recent crisis. The report elaborates further on the assessment of internal coherence in Section 4.1.3, and showcases more identified complementarities between pillars, noting this does result in limited synergies. The report includes further information on the assessment of the external coherence of the activities of the SMP in Section 4.1.3; it must be noted that this assessment is more relevant for certain pillars.
6) a. The report should strengthen the **EU added value** section. It should provide evidence to substantiate the claim that the programme has generated EU added value **beyond what interventions at national level could have achieved**. In particular, it should better explain and provide evidence on **EU added value related to the capacity of the programme to achieve economies of scale,**	The EU added value of the SMP in Section 4.2 is reinforced with more information from the pillars' analysis included on the capacity of the Programme's actions to address cross-border issues that national programmes alone cannot tackle, proving its additionality. Examples of economies of scale have been included as well as examples of activities that could not be ensured by Member States' intervention due to their costs, or the need for a cross-border approach for the measures to be effective.

	b. and **allow certain activities that could not be ensured by interventions at national level to take place**.	
7)	a. The **analysis in the main report should take into account the differences in the analysis across pillars**, including data availability, monitoring systems and methodologies used. b. **Such variability across pillars should be reflected in more nuanced conclusions and lessons learned.**	Information on the analysis of the pillars including the robustness of the methodology, limitations related to data, and potential biases, has been included in the programme-level report in Section 4 (and Section 1.2), showing commonalities and differences leading to more nuanced conclusions and lessons learned. These have been further developed and amended in Section 5, to account for the variability across pillars.
8)	a. The conclusions should omit statements if they are not underpinned by the analysis and the evidence provided in the main report. b. It should **make conclusions drawn on the basis of only partial evidence more nuanced** reflecting that they rely mainly on output data and to some extent result indicators or perception data. c. The report should explain better how the conclusions at programme level were derived from the ones in the six pillar-specific evaluations. The main **report should be more balanced and present both positive and negative findings**.	The conclusions and lessons learned have been modified to align with the underlying evidence and findings in Section 5. They are more substantiated, supported by examples and data from the pillars. The conclusions at programme level are based on the conclusions at pillar level and are in that respect requiring some degree of judgement to capture how the actions of the SMP have been successful. The rationale behind the drawing of findings has been explained in Section 5 and Section 1, and the report now includes more balanced conclusions.

ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

Overview on methodology, limitations, mitigating measures and reliability of data

An **evaluation framework** was devised and adopted on 28 July 2023 and revised throughout the evaluation based on feedback from the ISG, results of the research undertaken, and the preliminary views of the RSB expressed at the informal upstream meeting. In this context, and in line with Better Regulation Guidelines[304], the Commission services involved have developed in collaboration a list of evaluation questions. Annex III provides a full overview of these questions, indicating where they are addressed in this evaluation. This annex covers the methodology applied for the assessment of the SMP as a whole, and where relevant further details specific to pillars are included in annexes IX-XIV.

The evaluation methodology is based on different analytical methods and data sources. The evaluation report draws from the supporting study. The evaluation also uses evidence stemming from the impact assessment, (annual) monitoring reports, and other relevant data[305].

The contractor, to deliver its supporting study implemented a harmonised set of tasks applying across all pillars – including the review of programme documentation and relevant literature, data analysis, consultations, interviews, and reporting. This ensured both

304 Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox, Chapter 6 – How to carry out an evaluation and fitness check.
305 Ibidem.

consistency and comparability, while accommodating the individual characteristics of each pillar, thus contributing to a coherent and comprehensive analysis. Nevertheless, data collection processes were specifically adapted for each pillar to account for the distinct implementation mechanisms, activities, participants, stakeholders, and outcomes.

Evaluation tasks were divided as follow:

- 1: Inception
- 2: Document review
- 3: Analysis of programme data
- 4: Open call for evidence and public consultation
- 5: Targeted surveys
- 6: Interviews
- 7: Case studies
- 8: Analysis and reporting

Detailed description of tasks undertaken

Inception

Throughout the inception phase, the contractor implemented several steps. First, a Kick-off Meeting took place on 30 October 2023, in a hybrid format. This was followed by bilateral meetings with representatives from the Directorate-Generals (DGs) responsible for managing and implementing the respective pillars, aimed at discussing the proposed approach, obtaining feedback, and receiving suggestions on the indicators and relevant data sources. A preliminary review of programme and pillar-level documentation was carried out, including key documents such as the SMP Regulation as adopted and its initial proposal, the impact assessment report, and relevant strategic and operational papers for each pillar, such as Annual Work Programmes. The methodology and approach were subsequently refined in line with the initial feedback and additional insights from the Commission. Furthermore, an initial stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted to capture the full spectrum of stakeholders, their roles, and interests across the pillars, sub-pillars, and associated activities within the SMP. The inception phase concluded with the finalisation and submission of the inception report.

Literature and programme documents review

Following the inception phase, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, encompassing a broader range of sources. This included relevant EU legislation pertaining to the SMP and the internal market more generally, as well as EU policy documents related both to the internal market and the specific pillars, such as strategic documents from the European Commission's relevant Directorate-Generals (DGs). The review further incorporated key programme materials, including the impact assessment, Commission Implementing Decisions, the Commission's monitoring and evaluation framework, work plans, and monitoring reports. Additionally, evaluations of predecessor programmes were examined, alongside relevant content from the European Commission's websites dedicated to the SMP and its associated actions**.**

Analysis of programme data

The data collected by the SMP monitoring systems was analysed. The approach was tailored to cater for the different and specific nature of the data for each pillar and sub-pillars, and to accommodate for the various formats used by DGs and Agencies for data compilation and storage.

Several types of data were collected and assessed.

- Data on the level of demand. For actions involving competitive calls or open application processes, data was gathered to evaluate the demand relative to the funding available. This analysis allowed to draw insights pertaining to the relevance of SMP activities, and the efficiency of communication strategies related to the open calls.
- Data on funding allocations and activities.
- Data on beneficiary organisations. This data showed considerable variations. The organisations included entities receiving project-based funding, as well as organisations providing services (e.g. EEN members or EYE intermediaries). For project-related funding, information was collected on both project coordinators and any partners (e.g. Pillar 2 Clusters, tourism projects).
- Data on individual participants.
- Data provided by the Commission constituting evidence on output and result indicators.

Call for evidence and public consultation

The Commission issued a call for evidence on 14 November 2023, which closed on 12 December 2023. A total of six responses were received, including two position papers. These responses were analysed and integrated into the research findings.

A public consultation on the programme was conducted from 8 March 2023 to 31 May 2023, yielding 63 responses. The outcomes of this consultation are summarised in a factual report published by the Commission[306] and their analysis is showcased in the synopsis report of the evaluation report[307].

These consultation activities provided evidence to inform the assessment of the SMP. Some respondents represented stakeholders across the EU.

However, the response rate to these activities was low, and, due to the open and self-selecting nature of these exercises, the respondents did were not representative of any particular population.

Targeted consultations

To complement the public consultation, targeted stakeholder consultations were conducted through online surveys. These surveys were tailored to different stakeholder groups, with questionnaires customised according to the specific category of respondent. The surveys typically explored topics such as the respondents' or their organisations' perspectives on the Single Market Programme (SMP) as a whole, individual pillars, specific sub-pillars or activities, their participation, experienced costs and benefits, impacts on their organisations, and views on the future of the activities.

The initial response to targeted consultations was slow, primarily due to difficulties in reaching relevant stakeholders or a lack of availability and interest. To address this, additional promotion of the surveys, extensions to deadlines, and assistance from the Commission and intermediary organisations, such as beneficiaries (especially under Pillar 4), were employed. Despite these efforts, some responses had to be discarded due to being incomplete.

Separate surveys were undertaken as presented in the table below.

306 Factual summary report on the public consultation on the Single Market Programme interim evaluation. Single Market Programme – interim evaluation.
307 See Annex V.

Table 1: Targeted surveys implemented

Pillar	Target group	Responses received[308]
1	NCAs participating in the ECN	33
1	MSAs participating in the EUPCN	45
2	European-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members	19
2	EEN beneficiaries	117
2	Euroclusters beneficiaries	42
2	EYE beneficiaries	49
2	Beneficiaries of other actions within Pillar 2	75
3 / 4	Stakeholders in the field of finance (including members and non-members of Finance Watch and Better Finance)	71
4	Beneficiaries of Pillar 4a actions (undertaken as a joint consultation also covering the final evaluation of the predecessor Consumer Programme 2014-2020)	54
5	BTSF national contact points	40
5	EURLs	34
6	Producers of European statistics	96[309]
6	Users of European statistics	40[310]

Interviews:

In addition to the targeted surveys, 331 stakeholders were interviewed. These interviews addressed similar topics as the surveys but provided a qualitative and more in-depth examination of the issues. Each interview delved into the interviewee's role, involvement, or interest in SMP-funded actions, as well as the costs and benefits experienced. The discussions also covered the impacts on the interviewee or their organisation, and their perspectives on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and EU added value of the specific action and, where applicable, the SMP as a whole.

In most instances, the interviews covered topics similar to the surveys but offered a more qualitative and in-depth exploration, helping to clarify aspects of the process and participants' experiences with the Programme. Each interview focused on the interviewee's role, their involvement in SMP-funded actions, and the costs and benefits encountered. Discussions also addressed the impacts on their organisation and their views on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and EU added value of the specific action and, at times, the SMP overall. For Pillar 3, interviews were the primary source of stakeholder information on European standardisation. This approach was necessary because the original consultation plan had anticipated surveys in coordination with a parallel evaluation of the Standardisation Regulation 1025. However, due to timing differences between the two studies, these surveys could not be utilised, and the same questions were posed during interviews instead.

308 Indicating the responses eventually considered for the analysis.
309 Complete questionnaires were received from 36 producers, but some questions used for the analysis received more than 36 valid responses.
310 Complete questionnaires were received from 18 users, but some questions used for the analysis received more than 18 valid responses.

Table 2: Overview of stakeholders interviewed

Pillar	Stakeholder group	Stakeholders interviewed
1	European Commission officials	29
1	Other (national authorities, project beneficiaries)	16
2	Officials of EU institutions and agencies	23
2	EU level stakeholders	13
2	Beneficiaries EEN	9
2	Beneficiaries Euroclusters	7
2	Beneficiaries EYE	5
2	Beneficiaries tourism actions	4
2	Beneficiaries social economy actions	4
2	SME supported by EEN	4
2	EYE Host/New Entrepreneurs	1
2	SMEs supported by Euroclusters	1
3a	European Commission and EISMEA officials	3
3a	Beneficiaries – ESOs (CEN, CENELEC, ETSI)	5
3a	Beneficiaries – Annex III organisations (SBS, ANEC, ETUC, ECOS)	4[311]
3a	National standardisation bodies (NSBs)	10
3b	EU bodies involved in implementation	2
3b	European Parliament	1
3b	Beneficiaries – IFRS Foundation, EFRAG, PIOB	5[312]
3b	Financial sector and Civil Society representatives at the EU level	17
3b	National standard setters	5
4a	European Commission and EISMEA officials	11
4a	Consumer Policy Network (CPN)[313]	1
4a	Consumer Policy Advisory Group (CPAG)	2 (2 additional interviews also fall under the consumer association category)
4a	European Consumer Centres (ECCs)	6
4a	Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation authorities	6
4a	Consumer Safety Network (CSN) authorities	2
4a	BEUC (EU-level consumer organisation)	2
4a	Citizens' Energy Forum representatives	/
4a	Consumer Financial Programme Committee	1
4a	Financial Services User Group (FSUG)	3

311 Several rounds of consultations were conducted with representatives from the organisations.
312 Several rounds of consultations were conducted with representatives from the organisations.
313 Although not directly funded through the SMP, the CPN organisation interviewed made use of outputs that were funded by the SMP.

Pillar	Stakeholder group	Stakeholders interviewed
4a	National consumer associations	3 (2 also members of CPAG)
4a	International partners (e.g. CPSC, Health Canada, OECD, UNCTAD, WTO, WHO)	3
4a	Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies	3
4a	Debt Advice	2
4a	EU level trade associations	3
4b	EU bodies (European Commission, European Parliament)	5
4b	Beneficiaries of strand 2 (Better Finance and Finance Watch)	5
4b	Relevant international or national Administration, notification bodies, Authorities, Agencies, etc.,	4
4b	Different stakeholder organisations representing different interests (Consumer organisations, etc.),	
4b	Financial institutions	10
4b	NGOs and civil society organisations	
5	National competent authorities (NCAs) (including grant coordinators from MS)	6
5	National competent authorities in charge of food waste prevention from a sample of Member States	3
5	Contact points from RASFF, AAC, FOOD FRAUD, ADIS, EUROPHYT, and TRACES networks involved in the use of databases and information technology systems such as IMSOC	6
5	EU Reference Centres (EURCs)	4
5	National Reference Laboratories (NRLs)	6
5	Members of the Advisory Group on Sustainability of Food Systems (AGSFS, COPA-COGECA, UECBV, etc.)	2
5	International organisations	1
5	BTSF contractors	3
5	BTSF participants	3
5	European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)	1
5	Other DGs/agencies and EU institutions such as SANTE, HaDEA	3
5	Member State authorities (overseeing financing for tackling Xylella fastidiosa and HPAI)	8
5	BTSF survey follow-up	2
5	EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs) survey follow-up	6
6	ESS members and bodies (ESAC, ESGAB, NSIs, ONAs, other)	15
6	Organisations outside the ESS and users of European statistic	11
6	Eurostat staff	10
6	Other Stakeholders	3

Case studies:

Case studies were employed to explore specific activities within the pillars, focusing either on selected beneficiaries or highlighting good practices and synergies across pillars. These studies provided insights into the effects of the actions and the challenges encountered.

For **Pillar 2**, case studies examined key initiatives such as Euroclusters, EEN, EYE, and additional actions like the IP SME Helpdesk. These studies gathered detailed information on the effectiveness and experiences associated with these initiatives.

In **Pillar 5**, two thematic case studies were conducted on Xylella fastidiosa and HPAI[314]. These studies specifically contributed to evaluating the efficiency and EU added value of SMP support by assessing the economic impact of these diseases within the Union and quantifying the corresponding benefits of the SMP.

Final analysis and reporting:

The evaluation rested on the **following methods and steps**. Analysis of evidence for the pillar-level assessment, relying on the output and result indicators and the evaluation questions. The triangulation and validation of data. Evidence collated for the evaluation was cross-referenced to guarantee the consistency of findings and their relevance to the evaluation purposes. In cases of discrepancies, further verification as to whether this is linked to different data collection methodology was undertaken. Synthesis of research data and key issues followed the triangulation of data, to respond to evaluation questions and draw conclusions on quantitative and qualitative data, using examples to illustrate and substantiate the findings. Then, after each pillar of the SMP had been explored, the programme-level assessment was conducted on this basis. This led to the cross-analysis of pillar-specific conclusions, to provide answers to evaluation questions at programme level and also build the analysis of the programme design and the criteria of flexibility, simplification and synergies.

The evaluation also included an **estimation of the costs and benefits** associated with the Programme's implementation, detailed in annex IV. Due to the varied nature of actions under each Pillar, the scope for quantifying these costs and benefits differed significantly. Costs were primarily linked to the Programme's budget, covering both the Commission's implementation expenditures and the procedures involved in executing grants and procurement actions. Benefits, on the other hand, were generally tied to reduced burdens on beneficiaries or the positive impact of funded initiatives, such as efforts to counter disease outbreaks under Pillar 5. The estimation relied heavily on data from beneficiaries and the Commission, focusing on direct and indirect costs related to processes and the benefits, often seen in the form of cost savings or reduced pressures. However, the analysis faced certain limitations, which are discussed further below.

However, **challenges and limitations** were faced during the evaluation. They are summarised below alongside their impacts and the measures taken to address them. Several of these challenges were horizontal, affecting the entire SMP, while others were specific to individual pillars. In some cases, these limitations had a direct impact on the availability of data or the depth of analysis. For more details, see annexes IX-XIV.

Horizontal challenges:

First, the **lack of a common reporting structure** for expenditure and monitoring data that functions across all 14 SMP budget lines. The data gathering is incumbent to the responsible Commission units. Data on outputs and results was identifiable in most cases, and provided

314 See Annex XIII.

by relevant Commission units when requested, the availability of compiled SMP data remains a significant challenge.

Then, the **limited number of responses to both the public consultation and call for evidence** posed another issue and questioned the usefulness of these activities. Even if representative organisations, public authorities, or business associations participated in the public consultation, it must be noted that the respondents were self-selecting, therefore were not entirely representative of any particular stakeholder group. To compensate and ensure representativeness of the opinions gather during consultation activities and gather more specific and complementary information the supporting study carried out additional targeted consultations, including surveys and interviews.

The **complexity of the SMP**, which covers a wide range of interventions aimed at achieving diverse objectives across different pillars, was also a challenge. Some pillars, such as Pillar 1 and Pillar 2, include a large variety of small-scale activities, making it more difficult to strike a balance between reporting on limited-scope actions and larger, strategic interventions. This was mitigated in the supporting study by focusing on strategic actions that accounted for the majority of the budget and beneficiaries while making the best use of available evidence from monitoring data and past evaluations. Additionally, the presence of multiple budget lines in certain pillars (especially Pillars 1, 3, and 4) required a specific approach. Pillar 1, in particular, featured a 'silo' approach, where activities financed by separate budget lines had little coordination, leading to fragmented implementation. Where relevant, findings were disaggregated by sub-pillar to ensure the complexity of the SMP is reflected in the analysis and fully covered.

Another challenge was the **limited availability of data for quantifying costs and benefits**. This issue was particularly important to address for initiatives where services or processes, such as IT tools or direct support to specific beneficiaries, lacked directly quantifiable or monetisable impacts. This made it difficult to evaluate how larger categories of stakeholders, like citizens or national administrations, were affected. Where possible, the supporting study focused on available cost-related data from beneficiaries responding to calls for proposals and assessed the benefits derived from implementing actions.

Limited data on results and impacts, at this mid-term implementation stage posed another obstacle. Since many actions were still in the early stages of implementation, the expected outcomes and long-term impacts had not yet materialised. The evaluation therefore focused on assessing the progress made so far and the potential for these actions to deliver their intended effects in the future.

In addition, the **evaluation was conducted in parallel to other evaluations**, such as the final evaluation of the Consumer Programme (2014-2020) and the evaluation of Standardisation Regulation 1025/2012. These created risks of confusion or 'stakeholder fatigue' when the same individuals or organisations were approached for feedback by multiple evaluations. To address this, the contractor in charge of the supporting study coordinated with other contractors to align consultation approaches and minimise the consultation burden on stakeholders.

Limited responsiveness from stakeholders was another issue that had varying impacts across the pillars. While the evaluation achieved good results through interviews and targeted consultations, some groups of stakeholders, especially for Pillars 4, 5, and 6, showed signs of 'consultation fatigue,' leading to lower-than-expected response rates. The contractor worked closely with the Commission to identify stakeholders willing to participate and used effective channels for survey dissemination. In cases where gaps remained, additional evidence was gathered through published studies and position papers, though the limited

availability of alternative information for certain specialised topics (e.g. standardisation, food safety) posed a challenge.

Challenges specific to pillars:

Pillar 1: The siloed approach for the implementation of Pillar 1, linked to the diversity of activities financed, rendered difficult and limited the possibility to draw common harmonised findings applying to all or several of its sub-pillars. This was mitigated in the evaluation by assessing certain criteria such as effectiveness, EU added value and relevance by sub-objective.

Pillar 2: A major challenge was the difficulty in comparing costs and benefits within the evaluation timeframe. Many benefits from funding commitments made between 2021 and 2023 will only be measurable in later periods, leading to a potential underestimation of benefits. In addition, response rates were relatively low among some stakeholder groups, including EU-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee members. Stakeholder fatigue, stemming from similar surveys in the past, likely contributed to this. However, response rates were consistent with those from the COSME final evaluation. Additional case studies of funded projects were undertaken to provide deeper insights and compensate for these limitations.

Pillar 3: Coordination with the evaluation of Standardisation Regulation 1025/2012 was hindered by differences in the timelines of the two evaluations, meaning the results of parallel targeted surveys could not be used in this evaluation. Instead, the contractor conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders, though this limitation affected input from certain groups, such as industry representatives. Despite additional attempts, some interviews could not be scheduled, limiting the scope of the analysis. A low response rate from certain beneficiaries, such as the European Parliament and industry representatives, also affected the ability to quantify application and reporting costs.

Pillar 4: A key limitation was the low response rate from Pillar 4a beneficiaries regarding the costs of applications and reporting, meaning cost estimates were based on limited input and were not fully representative. Due to this gap in data, it was not possible to consistently estimate the total costs for each objective.

Pillar 5: In consultations involving interviews and surveys, a low response rate required intervention from DG SANTE. Despite efforts to engage over 200 stakeholders, only 54 interviews were completed, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives, particularly from national competent authorities (NCAs). Low engagement also affected survey participation, though additional contacts provided by DG SANTE helped to improve participation rates. Furthermore, language differences during consultations with national representatives created some communication challenges, though these did not significantly affect the quality of feedback. The evaluation also encountered difficulties in accessing detailed data for case studies on Xylella fastidiosa and HPAI, leading to gaps in the assessment of these emergency actions.

Pillar 6: Additional evidence was collected to further underpin and corroborate responses to the evaluation questions. Efforts were made to identify the most effective channels to reach the relevant stakeholders, for instance through targeted surveys and interviews. While some limitations in relation to data collection and analysis persisted, in particular due to the unwillingness of some stakeholders to be interviewed and due to the limited number of

responses received to the targeted surveys, they were mitigated by taking appropriate actions. Some additional stakeholders to interview were subsequently identified and contacted, and additional sources were used to corroborate the results of the targeted surveys, like Eurostat's user satisfaction surveys. This ensured that the conclusions are robust and reliable.

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX AND, WHERE RELEVANT, DETAILS ON ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS (BY CRITERION)

Evaluation Matrix at programme level

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Current situation			
Q0.1) What are the objectives and intended effects of the activities of the SMP?	Description of: Problems or needs addressed Intervention logic Objectives, activities and intended effects	EU-level document review Consultations of European Commission units	1.1. 2.1.
Q0.2) What are the objectives and intended effects of the design SMP?	Description of: Problems or needs addressed Intervention logic Objectives, activities and intended effects	EU-level document review Consultations of European Commission units	2.2.
Q0.3) What is the background to and context of the SMP?	Description of: Predecessor programmes and budget lines Wider policy context	EU-level document review Consultations of European Commission	2.3.
Q0.4) What is the current state of play?	Description of: Programme implementation to date Budget implementation to date Activities within the pillars	EU-level document review Consultations of European Commission SMP programme data	3.
Effectiveness			
Q1.1) To what extent have the six specific objectives of the SMP been achieved? Are the results in line with what was foreseen in the prior IA?	Degree to which the intended outputs, results and impacts have been realised for each Pillar Comparison of achieved outputs/results against the expectations, indicators and targets specified in the impact assessment	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar Review of impact assessment	4.1.1.1.
Q1.2) What have been the quantitative and qualitative effects of the SMP in relation to its objectives? How have they evolved since	Presentation of quantitative and qualitative outputs and results: Programme-level output and result indicators from Commission SWD (OP1 to OP8, RES1 to RES6) Achievement of outputs and results at Pillar level	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar	4.1.1.1. 4.1.1.2. Annex VI

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
the start of the implementation of the SMP?			
Q1.3) To what extent have the three overarching priorities of the SMP been achieved?	Degree of achievement for each Pillar Comparison of achievement against the expectations in the impact assessment	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar	4.1.1.2.
Q1.4) Where expectations have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement? Are there any aspects/means/actors that render certain aspects/pillars of the SMP more or less effective than others, and – if there are – what lessons can be drawn from this?	Comparison to expected outputs and results set out in the IA Stakeholder perception over the factors favouring or hindering the achievement of objectives Identification of aspects/lessons learned in the implementation of the SMP	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.1.3. Annex VII
Q1.5) Are there any unintended effects of the SMP and any of the SMP pillars?	Description of unintended effects	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.1. Annex VII
Efficiency			
Q2.1) What are the main benefits for stakeholders for the SMP and each of the pillars?	Description of types of benefits reported by stakeholders Level of benefits reported by grant recipients and stakeholders under each Pillar Stakeholders perception over possible factors hampering the achievement of benefits	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.1. Annex IV
Q2.2) What are the regulatory and administrative costs for the different stakeholders?	Description of types of costs incurred by stakeholders in managing and participating in the SMP Level of regulatory and administrative costs reported by grant recipients	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.2. Annex IV

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.3) What does this represent in terms of administrative and reporting burdens?	Administrative burden reported by managing DGs for administrative purposes Reporting costs reported by beneficiaries Increase of these costs compared to previous programmes Stakeholders perception over possible reduction of administrative and reporting burdens	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.2.
Q2.4) What aspects of the SMP and each of the pillar are the most efficient or inefficient?	Perception of stakeholders over the steps of the administrative and reporting procedures where the benefits are lower compared to the costs borne Extent to which activities under each Pillar produced the expected outputs Perception of stakeholders over the best and worst measures and procedures introduced by the SMP compared to previous programmes	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.2.
Q2.5) Are the costs (direct and indirect) generated by the SMP measures proportionate to the benefits generated?	Cost-benefit ratio (where effects can be monetised) Broad comparison of costs and benefits and identification of obvious (in)efficiencies Stakeholders perception of the extent to which benefits outweigh costs	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.2.
Q2.6) Were the benefits achieved at a reasonable cost for the SMP and each of the pillars?	Cost-benefit ratio (where effects can be monetised) Broad comparison of costs and benefits and identification of obvious (in)efficiencies Stakeholders perception of the extent to which costs borne were reasonable	Evidence from the analysis of each Pillar EU-level document review SMP programme data EU-level consultations	4.1.2.2.
Q2.7) To what extent has EISMEA contributed to efficient roll-out and implementation of the SMP?	Perception of stakeholders and grant recipients of the role of EISMEA and any improvements brought by its involvement compared to previous programmes Identification of clear contribution(s) made by EISMEA	Evidence from the analysis of Pillars 2, 3, 4 EU-level document review EU-level consultations	4.1.2.3.
Q3.1) Are there overlaps or complementarities between the SMP pillars?	Feedback from stakeholders and grant recipients on possible overlaps, duplications, synergies and complementarities of the SMP Pillars Extent of instances of overlap or complementarities in Pillars	Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European	4.1.3.1.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
	objectives, stakeholders targeted and types of actions funded Evaluator's expert judgement based on comparison of Pillars	Commission units Stakeholder consultations	
Q3.2) Is there any issue of internal coherence of the SMP i.e. between the various pillars and components of the SMP?	Feedback from of stakeholders and grant recipients on the existence of inconsistencies in the implementation of the SMP (internal coherence) Extent of instances of (in)coherence of objectives and types of actions funded across Pillars Evaluator's expert judgement based on comparison of Pillars and components	Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European Commission units Stakeholder consultations	4.1.3.1.
Q3.3) Are there overlaps or complementarities between the SMP and other MFF programmes?	Feedback from stakeholders and grant recipients on the existence of duplications, overlaps and complementarities between the SMP and other programmes offering similar support Extent of instances of overlap or complementarities of Programmes' objectives, scope and actions Evaluator's expert judgement based on comparison of SMP to other programmes	Literature review (including documents of other programmes) Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European Commission units Stakeholder consultations	4.1.3.2.
EU added value			
Q4.1) Is there additional value resulting from the SMP and each of the pillars, compared to what could be achieved merely at national level?	Perception of stakeholders and grant recipients on the added value provided by the SMP compared to national resources and programmes Presence of national programmes and funds in the same areas as the SMP Evaluator's expert judgement based on comparison of SMP to action at national level	Literature review (including evidence of national action relevant to the Pillars) Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European Commission units Stakeholder consultations	4.2.1.
Q4.2) To what extent do the issues addressed by the SMP and each of the pillars	Feedback from stakeholders and grant recipients regarding the importance and need for continuous actions at the EU level Presence of alternative sources of funding for the same types of	Literature review (evidence of current issues manifested in the	4.2.1.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
continue to require action at EU level?	activities and policy areas Evaluator's expert judgement based on demonstrated need for continued action	Single Market) Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Stakeholder consultations	
Q4.3) In terms of sustainability of the added value, are the effects achieved so far likely to pertain after the intervention ends?	Stakeholders and grant recipients offering a positive opinion over the likely sustainability of funded actions Evaluator's expert judgement based on demonstrated need for the SMP and evidence of effects produced by funded actions	Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Stakeholder consultations	4.2.2.
Q4.4) What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the SMP and each of the SMP pillars?	Perception of stakeholders on possible consequences of a reduced, discontinuous or absent SMP implementation Presence of alternative sources of funding for the same types of activities and policy areas Evaluator's expert judgement based on demonstrated need for the SMP and evidence of effects	Literature review (of similar programmes and sources of funding) Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Stakeholder consultations	4.2.3.
Relevance			
Q5.1) To what extent do the initial six objectives of the SMP still correspond to current needs/issues?	Level of alignment of the SMP objectives with current and emerging needs and priorities at the EU level Perception of stakeholders and grant recipients on the level of alignment between SMP objectives and their needs Evaluator's expert judgement (based on weight of evidence) on correlation between objectives and: identified needs/issues in the Single Market higher-level EU policy objectives	Review of Programme documents, EU Policy and strategic documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Stakeholder consultations at Pillar level	4.3.1.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q5.2) Was/is there any mismatch between the objectives of the SMP at the time it was put in place and current needs or problems?	Perception of stakeholders and grant recipients on the misalignment between SMP objectives and current needs Level of alignment between SMP objectives and current EU policy priorities Evaluator's expert judgement based on weight of evidence	Programme documents Review of relevant EU strategies and policies Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Stakeholder consultations at Pillar level	4.3.1.
Q5.3) Is the available budget sufficient and relevant in the light of the needs/issues?	Level of demand under each call relative to funds available Amount of available budget committed by Pillar Perception of stakeholders and grant recipients on the availability of funds vis-à-vis their needs for funding Evaluator's expert judgement based on weight of evidence	Programme data Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Stakeholder consultations at Pillar level	4.3.2.
Q5.4) To what extent are there adaptation mechanisms in place to ensure that the SMP and the different measures supported by the SMP pillars meet new priorities and new needs in response to political, economic, technological, scientific and social developments?	Feedback from stakeholders and grant recipients regarding any existing measures in place to adapt SMP-funded activities to emerging needs Changes in the priorities and objectives of funded actions in the SMP Annual Work Programmes Extent to which existing mechanisms address any requirements highlighted in the SMP IA Evaluator's expert judgement based on weight of evidence	Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European Commission units Stakeholder consultations	4.3.3.
Q5.5) Is there an issue on the scope of the SMP?	Feedback from stakeholders and grant recipients on the possible need to review the scope of the SMP Level of misalignment between SMP (and Pillars) objectives and current needs for EU action in the Single Market Evaluator's expert judgement based on weight of evidence	Programme documents Triangulation of evidence from each Pillar Consultations of European Commission units Stakeholder consultations	4.3.3.
Design of the SMP			
Q6) Design of the SMP			

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q6.1) To which extent has the SMP facilitated synergies, flexibility and simplification for a more efficient budgetary spending?	Achievement against the outputs and results specified in the design-specific intervention logic Evidence of reduction in % of programme budget spent on programme management tasks Effect of scale on savings in resources and investments (tools, staffing, time) throughout the governance of administrative, IT and communication activities of the SMP Savings from joint procurement actions: common purchases of databases, joint studies, Eurobarometers and joint framework contracts Feedback from stakeholders on the extent to which the design of the SMP facilitates synergetic and coordinated actions and the benefits that these might have produced	Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Programme and Commission monitoring documents and activity reports Programme data Consultations of European Commission units Targeted consultations at Pillar level	4.4.
Q6.2) Are there any unintended effects due to the creation of the SMP and bringing together six predecessor programmes from various policy areas?	Identification of specific instances of unintended effects Stakeholders' opinions on the existence and impacts of such effects		4.4.
Q6.3) How efficient is the implementation structure and governance of the SMP?	Evidence of reduction in % of programme budget spent on programme management tasks Identification of specific instances of synergies, flexibility and simplification (e.g. budgetary transfers between Pillars) Stakeholders perception over the improvements in efficiency of the implementation structure and governance of the SMP compared to predecessors programmes Effects of scale on savings in resources and investments (tools, staffing, time) throughout the governance of administrative, IT and communication activities of the SMP		4.4.
Q6.4) Are there any aspects/means/actors that render certain aspects of the	Identification of specific aspects of the SMP design (implementation structure, governance) that can be improved Feedback from stakeholders on possible improvements to increase		4.4.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
SMP design more or less effective than others, and – if there are – what lessons can be drawn from this?	the effectiveness of SMP design (and compared with other programmes) Feedback from stakeholders over the feasibility of changes in the SMP design to improve its effectiveness		
Q7) Flexibility			
Q7.1) To what extent has the SMP provided for 'flexibility' especially as concerns the transfers of appropriations by the Commission? Are the results in line with what was foreseen in a prior IA?	Number of times Payment and Commitment Appropriations were moved between DGs from one budget line to another Value of transfers (€ and % of SMP budget) Opinion of stakeholders on flexibility, impacts of such flexibility and contributory or hindering factors	Programme data Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Programme documents Consultations of European Commission units	4.4.1.
Q7.2) Has the 'flexibility' been equally used among all SMP pillars? If not, which SMP pillars benefited most and least from the 'flexibility'?			4.4.1.
Q7.3) Where expectations related to 'flexibility' have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?			4.4.1.
Q8) Synergies			
Q8.1) To what extent has the SMP achieved 'synergies'? What kind of 'synergies' were achieved in the SMP?	Number and subject of training organised covering more than one policy area (with common programme or common venue or common participants or common date) Number of joint procurement actions: common purchases of databases, joint studies, Eurobarometers and joint framework contracts Number and development related costs of common IT projects	Programme data Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Programme documents Consultations of European Commission units	4.4.2.
Q8.2) Are the results in line with what was foreseen in a prior IA? Have 'synergies'			4.4.2.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
been achieved for all identified potential areas (e.g. joint trainings, procurement actions, IT projects)?	supporting more than one policy area Satisfaction of participants in trainings covering more than one policy area (with common programme or common venue or common participants or common date) Number of people reached in joint promotion campaigns Users' satisfaction rate on IT systems Comparison of scale and type of synergies to the IA report Extent to which the design of the Programme favours synergies across Pillars according to stakeholders Stakeholders' opinions on the impacts of such synergies and contributory or hindering factors		
Q8.3) Have the 'synergies' been equally achieved among all SMP pillars? If not, which SMP pillars generated most and least 'synergies'?			4.4.2.
Q8.4) Where expectations related to 'synergies' have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?			4.4.2.
Q9) Simplification			
Q9.1) To what extent has the SMP contributed to 'simplification'?	Effect of scale on savings in resources and investments (tools, staffing, time) throughout the governance of administrative, IT and communication activities of the SMP Documented instances of simplification reported by stakeholders both in the management of the SMP and access to funding Comparison of scale and type of simplifications to the IA report Stakeholders' opinions on the impacts of such simplifications and contributory or hindering factors (also compared to previous programmes)	Programme data Evidence from the evaluation of Pillars Programme documents Consultations of European Commission units	4.4.3.
Q9.2) In which aspects has the 'simplification' brought most effects? Are the results in line with what was foreseen in a prior IA?			4.4.3.
Q9.3) What was the scale of savings in resources and investments (tools, staffing, time) throughout the SMP governance of administrative, IT and communication activities?			4.4.3.

Questions	Indicators/descriptors	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q9.4) Has the 'simplification' been equally achieved among all SMP pillars? If not, which SMP pillars generated most and least 'simplification' benefits?			4.4.3.
Q9.5) Where expectations related to 'simplification' have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?			4.4.3.

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 1

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
Evaluation questions for pillar 1 as a whole			
Q1.1) Effectiveness: how effective was Pillar 1 in achieving its objectives?	Stakeholder perceptions of extent of progress in realising the objectives of Pillar 1 Achievement of intended outputs and results	Evidence from the analysis of sub-pillars within Pillar 1	Annex IX (3.1. and 4.1.)
Q1.2) Efficiency: were the benefit s achieved at a reasonable cost?	Degree to which the benefits outweigh the costs	Programme documents and data Interviews Targeted surveys Evidence from the analysis of sub-pillars within Pillar 1	Annex IX (3.2. and 4.1.)
Q1.3) Coherence: are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	Extent of coherence with other measures within Pillar 1 and with similar measures funded through other EU programmes/ initiatives.	Desk research Interviews Targeted surveys Evidence from the analysis of sub-pillars within Pillar 1	Annex IX (3.3. and 4.1.)
Q1.4) EU added value: what is the EU value added of Pillar 1?	Stakeholder perceptions on the EU value added of Pillar 1	Evidence from the analysis of sub-pillars within Pillar 1	Annex IX (3.4. and 4.1.)
Q1.5) Relevance: do the objectives correspond to the current needs?	% of stakeholders that agree or agree strongly that the objectives correspond to current needs.	Evidence from the analysis of sub-pillars within Pillar 1	Annex IX (3.5. and 4.1.)
Evaluation questions for Pillar 1a (Competition)			
QA1) Effectiveness: how effective was Pillar 1a (Competition) in achieving its objectives and intended effects?	Answers to sub-questions below Achievement of intended outputs and results	[Sources for sub-questions]	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.1) To what extent has Pillar 1a succeeded in measuring the impact of the Commission's enforcement actions, both in terms of direct customer savings as well as the broader impact	% of national competition authorities reporting impact Perceptions of national competition authorities and other stakeholders of the scale of impact	SMP programme reports	Annex IX (3.1.1.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
on macroeconomic performance (e.g. GDP, investment, prices)?	Documentary evidence of impact		
QA1.2) To what extent has Pillar 1a contributed to the assessment of the state of EU competition and the identification of potentially malfunctioning sectors?	No. of studies, surveys, etc. undertaken Stakeholder feedback on the value of studies, surveys, etc. DG COMP units reporting better assessment National competition authorities reporting better assessment	Targeted consultation survey Interviews Data analysis (i.e. comparing sector inquiries to actual infringement cases?)	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.3) To what extent have Pillar 1a investments proved effective in respect of the following evaluation activities: (i) *ex post* evaluation studies, (ii) impact measurement and (iii) the assessment of the state of EU competition and the identification of potentially malfunctioning sectors?	Qualitative assessment of benefits relative to costs of activities Identification of any obvious (in)efficiencies implementation	Desk research European Commission data Literature review Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.4) To what extent have the digital business solutions funded by Pillar 1a facilitated and increased the reporting and transparency capacity on competition policy activities with public administrations and EU citizens in the EU?	Use of digital business solutions Perceived utility of digital business solutions (reported by competition authorities and other users)	Desk research Interviews Targeted consultation	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.5) To what extent have the digital business solutions funded from Pillar 1a facilitated the secure and effective exchange of confidential information with Member State authorities, private companies and their law firms and	Perceived utility of digital business solutions (reported by competition authorities and other users)	Desk research Interviews Targeted consultation	Annex IX (3.1.1.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
other stakeholders, in the context of competition investigations?			
QA1.6) To what extent have the digital business solutions funded from the CP facilitated the exploitation of new technological evolutions (e.g. cloud or cloud-like services) and their effective usage within the standard case-handling processes	Stakeholders' assessment of contribution	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.7) To what extent have the digital business solutions funded from the CP enhanced cooperation and partnership with public administrations in the EU?	Level of use of digital business solutions User satisfaction with solutions DG COMP units reporting enhanced cooperation National competition authorities reporting enhanced cooperation	Programme data Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.8) To what extent have CP investments in IT solutions contributed to more efficient case-handling and speedier investigations?	% of relevant stakeholders reporting: reduced time and burden associated with negotiations concerning confidentiality of information quicker review/processing of documents gathered in the context of investigations reduced level of physical interference with companies' operations during investigations (e.g. due to lower reliance on physical seals in company premises)	Targeted consultations Stakeholder interviews	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA1.9) To what extent has the CP contributed to making the internal market work better by improving the Commission's, National Authorities'	DG COMP units reporting enhanced capability Officials trained / providing positive feedback on training	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.1.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
and National Courts' capabilities to enforce competition rules?	National courts/judges reporting enhanced capability National competition authorities reporting enhanced capability		
QA1.10) To what extent has the CP succeeded in raising awareness of EU competition policy in disseminating information, networking across the EU and beyond?	Number of visits/visitors to relevant websites Stakeholders' perceptions of increased awareness Documentary evidence of increased awareness	SMP programmes (ENTanCE etc.); Website metrics Open public consultation Targeted consultations Stakeholder interviews Final reports of studies commissioned under SMP	Annex IX (3.1.1.)
QA2) Efficiency: To what extent were the CP resources used efficiently to achieve the desired results?	[answered at pillar level]	[answered at pillar level]	Annex IX (3.2.)
QA3) Coherence: are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	[answered at pillar level]	[answered at pillar level]	Annex IX (3.3)
QA3.1) Are the CP actions coherent with DG COMP long-term objectives defined in the Strategic Plan?	Extent to which the activities are aligned with long-term objectives defined in the Strategic Plan	Literature review Interviews	Annex IX (3.3)
QA33.2) Are the activities aligned with overarching EU strategies and objectives, including the Commission's Digital Strategy?	Extent to which the activities are aligned with overarching EU strategies and objectives, including the Commission's Digital Strategy	Review of programme documents and relevant EU policy documents	Annex IX (3.3)
QA4) EU added value: What is the EU added value of the competition sub-pillar?	Qualitative assessment of EU added value	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.4.)
QA4.1) Would there be additional costs or additional problems in the	Stakeholders' assessment of potential additional costs of additional	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.4.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
control function of the European Commission if the actions of the competition programme were not implemented?	problems		
QA5) Relevance: do the objectives and activities of the competition sub-pillar (1a) correspond to the current needs?	Assessment of extent of relevance with specific objectives. Assessment of current needs in competition domain and how these have evolved over time.	Stakeholder consultation	Annex IX (3.5.)
Evaluation questions for Pillar 1b (Product market surveillance)			
QA6) Effectiveness: How effective were the Pillar 1b measures in achieving their objectives and intended effects?	Achievement of intended outputs and results	Desk research Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.2.)
QA6.1) In what ways have the different actions (joint enforcement actions, horizontal activities, EUPCN, AdCos, EUTF, digital tools, IMS, Safety Gate) supported more effective market surveillance? QA6.2) Have there been any weaknesses in the actions and is there any scope for improvement?	% of MSAs having a positive view Qualitative assessment of perceptions of usefulness of expertise Qualitative assessment of extent to which expertise delivered and advice given has been used	Desk research Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.2.)
QA7) Efficiency: were the benefits in Pillar 1b achieved at a reasonable cost?	[answered at pillar level]	[answered at pillar level]	Annex IX (3.2.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
QA8) EU added value: what is the EU value added in Pillar 1b (product market surveillance)? QA8.1) Is there additional value resulting from Pillar 1b (product market surveillance), compared to what could be achieved merely at national level? QA8.2) To what extent do the issues addressed by Pillar 1b continue to require action at EU level? QA8.3) What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the measures in Pillar 1b (product market surveillance)?	Qualitative assessment of EU added value	Desk research Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.4.2.)
QA9) Relevance: do the objectives correspond to the current needs in Pillar 1b? QA9.1) Are the activities carried out by the beneficiaries in Pillar 1b (product market surveillance) relevant to achieve the objectives of the SMP?	% of MSAs having a positive view Qualitative assessment of relevance in light of documented needs	Desk research Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.5.2.)
Evaluation questions for Pillars 1c and 1d (Your Europe Advice, IMI, Solvit)			
QA10) Effectiveness: How effective were the tools in achieving their objectives and intended effects?	Maintenance/enhancement of tools Number of users/visits/views Quality of YEA replies Number of IMI exchanges Number of authorities using IMI Member States performing at green	European Commission data Targeted consultations Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.3.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
	level in IMI		
QA11) EU added value: what is the EU added value of the tools?	Qualitative assessment of EU added value	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex IX (3.4.3)
QA12) Relevance: do the tools correspond to current needs?	Qualitative assessment of relevance in light of documented needs	European Commission data Targeted consultations	Annex IX (3.5.3.)
Evaluation questions for Pillar 1e (Support to policymaking, standard-setting, enforcement)			
QA13) Effectiveness: How effective have the actions been in achieving their objectives and intended effects?	Satisfaction of relevant Commission services Achievement of intended outputs and results	Desk research European Commission data Interviews	Annex IX (3.1.4.)
QA14) EU added value: what is the EU added value of the activities funded under sub-pillar 1e?	Qualitative assessment of EU added value	Desk research European Commission data Interviews	Annex IX (3.4.4.)
QA15) Relevance: how relevant are the activities funded under sub-pillar 1e?	Qualitative assessment of relevance in light of documented needs	Desk research European Commission data Interviews	Annex IX (3.5.4.)

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 2

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Effectiveness (all SME Pillar actions)			
Q2.1: To what extent have the general and specific objectives of the SME Pillar been achieved in terms of outputs, outcomes, results and impacts? Are the results achieved thus far in line with objectives and milestones? (Also include an overview of the implementation of the SME Pillar measures)	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Other KPIs of specific actions • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.2: What have been the quantitative and qualitative effects of the actions in relation to their objectives?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Other KPIs of specific actions • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Interviews and case studies (beneficiaries/projects)	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.3: How have these actions evolved since the start of the SME Pillar measures in 2021?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Other KPIs of specific actions	• Monitoring data	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.4: To what extent and how has the SME Pillar contributed to the Commission's keynote objective 'An economy that works for people' which refers in particular to investment, growth and quality jobs for small businesses?	• Growth of SMEs • Job creation in SMEs	• Feedback and impact surveys	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.5: How do the different measures compare in terms of effectiveness?	• Difference in achievements	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys	Annex X (4.1.1.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
		• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	
Q2.6: What type of SMEs are benefiting more or less from SME Pillar measures?	• Sector and size composition of supported SMEs	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.7: Are specific measures more effective for certain types of SMEs than others?	• Sector and size composition of supported SMEs by actions	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.8: What is the effectiveness of the SME Pillar measures in the different Member States and participating third countries?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework by country	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.9: Compare the situation before the adoption of the SMP, and how the effectiveness of the SME Pillar and the measures it supported has evolved in the implementation of the programme so far.	• Degree of achievements relative to COSME	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact surveys	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.10: What factors are driving or hindering the achievement of objectives?	• Reported drivers and impediments	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Interviews and case studies (beneficiaries/projects)	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.11: To what extent are these factors linked to the different SME Pillar actions?	• Reported drivers and impediments by actions	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Interviews and case studies (beneficiaries/projects)	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Q2.12: Have the measures brought any unintended effects?	• Reported effects	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
		• Interviews and case studies (beneficiaries/projects)	
Q2.13: How effectively has information about the availability of the SME Pillar measures and the results and impacts of actions been transmitted to potential stakeholders and beneficiaries?	• Degree of visibility and knowledge among stakeholders	• Targeted consultations among stakeholders • Interviews among stakeholders	Annex X (4.1.1.)
Effectiveness: EEN			
Q2.14: How effective is the Enterprise Europe Network in achieving its aim?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact survey • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.1.)
Q2.15 Are certain aspects of the Enterprise Europe Network's services for SMEs more or less effective than others?	• Qualitative degree of achievement by service type	• Feedback and impact surveys • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.1.)
Q2.16: How effective are the activities for promoting and communicating about the EEN network and its achievements?	• Degree of visibility and knowledge among stakeholders	• Monitoring data (outreach data) • Targeted consultations among stakeholders • Interviews among stakeholders	Annex X (4.1.1.1.)
Q2.17: To what extent did EEN services at regional level complement and add to the services previously offered by the network?	• Qualitative assessment of synergies	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Interviews among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.1.)
Q2.18: EEN Energy Efficiency Action: to what extent did this complementary action support SMEs in receiving more expert	• Qualitative assessment (no quantitative data available due to state of implementation)	• Interviews among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.1.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
support on energy efficiency? Were SMEs able to afford better energy efficiency services through this Action? Did the Action contribute to a reduction of energy consumption from SMEs and of related greenhouse emissions?			
Effectiveness: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)			
Q2.19: How effective is the EYE in achieving its aim?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Feedback and impact survey • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.2.)
Q2.20: Which impact did EYE have on the participants (New Entrepreneurs (NEs)/Host Entrepreneurs (HEs) (number of jobs/companies created, increased turnover, operations extended to other markets EU/non-EU, new business partner, new innovative products/services implemented)?	• Counts or percentage changes • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Feedback and impact survey • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.2.)
Q2.21: To what extent did EYE create opportunities for different type of entrepreneurs (women, senior, young, etc. entrepreneurs)?	• Number or share of entrepreneur types involved in action	• Monitoring data • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.2.)
Effectiveness: Joint Clusters Initiative			
Q2.22: How effective are the Joint Cluster Initiatives for achieving their aim? How effective and efficient is the format of cascade financing (time needed for implementation, transparency for SMEs, possible ways to reduce time of implementation)?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Qualitative degree of achievement • Qualitative assessment of FSTP efficiency	• Monitoring data • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.3.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.23: How did the grants help to increase the resilience of industrial ecosystems and /or lead to interlinkages among different industrial ecosystems to jointly address the resilience aspects?	• Qualitative assessment of contribution	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.3.)
Q2.24: How have the Joint Cluster Initiatives supported the integration of a regional perspective from clusters into EU policies and initiatives, e.g. by institutionalising a 'rapid alert function' (especially on supply chain disruptions)?	• Qualitative assessment of contribution	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.3.)
Q2.25: How effective have the Joint Cluster Initiative been in better connecting clusters with other EU policies and their funding opportunities? e.g. by smart specialisation strategies (S3), mobilising clusters for the new I3 programme of DG REGIO and general awareness raising about opportunities from the Cohesion Policy or under the EU Research programmes?	• Qualitative assessment of contribution	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.3.)
Effectiveness: Tourism			
Q2.26: How effective are the Tourism measures for achieving their aims?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Q2.27: How effective were they for helping businesses to put in place more sustainable business practices, assisting them with the digital transition, boosting skills and for tackling Covid-related issues?	• Qualitative assessment of effects	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Q2.28: How effective is FSTP in tourism actions?	• Number of SMEs supported through FSTP	• Project monitoring	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Effectiveness: Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem			
Q2.29: How effective are the proximity and social economy measures for achieving their aims?	• Indicators as defined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework • Qualitative degree of achievement	• Monitoring data • Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Q2.30: How effective were the measures for helping businesses in terms of capacity building, access to new markets and assisting them with the green and digital transition and for addressing skills issues?	• Qualitative assessment of effects	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Q2.31: To what extent did the grants for social economy and proximity motivate SMEs from this ecosystem to participate in mainstream business support measures of the programme?	• Qualitative assessment of effects	• Targeted consultations among beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Effectiveness: SME studies (e.g. SME performance review, Eurobarometers) and meetings for interacting with authorities and stakeholders (SME Envoys, SME Assembly)			
Q2.32 How effective were these in contributing to evidence-based SME policymaking?	• Degree of usefulness • Degree of interest of stakeholders • Outreach	• Stakeholder consultations (survey and interviews)	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Effectiveness: Other SME Pillar actions: SME Internationalisation (including EU-Japan Centre, SME Centre China), actions for skills, procurement, and intellectual property, and smaller actions for sectors and ecosystems (e.g. construction, agri-food, textiles and retail)			
Q2.33: How did these and other smaller actions contribute to the specific objectives of the SME Pillar?	• KPI achievement • Qualitative assessment of effects	• Project monitoring • Interviews with beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Q2.34: Are there any aspects/means/actors that render certain aspects of such smaller actions more or less effective than others, and – if there are – what lessons can be drawn from this?	• Qualitative, exemplary reports to this regard	• Consultations, interviews	Annex X (4.1.1.4.)
Efficiency			

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.35: How efficiently is the Pillar managed?	• Budget implemented • Time from calls to contracts • Resources used by EISMEA	• Data provided by DG Grow • EISMEA Annual Work Programme	Annex X (4.1.2.)
Q2.36: What is the administrative burden for beneficiaries and SMEs using the Pillar's support services?	• Qualitative assessment of administrative burden	• Targeted consultations and feedback surveys among beneficiaries • Interviews	Annex X (4.1.2.)
Q2.37: Were the benefits achieved at a reasonable cost?	• Number of SMEs supported (EEN, Euroclusters) per million euro • Number of partnership agreements concluded (EEN) per million euro • Number of jobs created by supported SMEs (according to EEN impact survey) per million euro • Number of (host and new) entrepreneurs engaged (EYE) per million euro • Number of SMEs receiving FSTP (Euroclusters) per million euro	• SME Pillar monitoring data	Annex X (4.1.2.)
Coherence: all SME Pillar actions			
Q2.38: To what extent is/has the internal coherence of the six specific SME Pillar objectives been maximised? What are the lessons learned?	• Examples of synergies • Cooperation of beneficiaries of different actions	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Cooperation mechanisms in place	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.39: To what extent are the different SME Pillar actions implemented coherently between one another to maximise the effects of the SME Pillar? To which extent has there been active management of synergies in place?	• Examples of synergies • Cooperation of beneficiaries of different actions • Examples of coordination mechanisms	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Cooperation mechanisms in place	Annex X (4.1.3.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.40: Are there any issues of internal coherence of the measures (i.e. between the various components of the programme)?	• Examples, cases of overlaps	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Interviews with EISMEA, GROW	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.41: To what extent are there synergies in place with actions in other pillars of the SMP?	• Examples of synergies • Cooperation of beneficiaries with actions of other Pillars • Examples of coordination mechanisms	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Interviews with EISMEA, GROW • Cooperation mechanisms in place	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.42: How have the different SME Pillar actions overlapped/synergised with or complemented the activities of European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, the SME window of InvestEU, EASI (Employment and Social Innovation) and other measures impacting SMEs in other EU programmes (e.g. IPR Helpdesks)?	• Examples of synergies • Examples of overlaps • Cooperation of beneficiaries with other programmes • Examples of coordination mechanisms	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Cooperation mechanisms in place • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.43: To what extent has the external coherence of the six specific objectives been maximised in view of other EU and National programmes? What are the lessons learned?	• Cooperation of beneficiaries with national programmes	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Coherence: specific SME Pillar objectives and actions			
Q2.44: What is the level of interaction of different support services for businesses within the SME Pillar (For example, EEN, Joint Clusters Initiatives)?	• Cooperation of beneficiaries of across actions • Examples of coordination mechanisms	• Consultation of beneficiaries • Interviews with EISMEA, GROW • Documents about cooperation mechanisms in place	Annex X (4.1.3.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.45: Does the intervention (for the EEN) create synergies with/contradict other EU interventions that have similar objectives?	• Cooperation of EEN member organisations with other EU programmes • Mechanisms in place	• Consultation of EEN member organisations • Documents about cooperation mechanisms in place	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.46: Is there coherence between the objectives and implementation of EYE (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) with the Enterprise Europe Network? (Targeting different stages of the development of SMEs …)	• Cooperation of EEN member organisations with EYE intermediary organisations	• Consultation of EEN member organisations and EYE IOs • Documents about cooperation mechanisms	Annex X (4.1.3.)
Q2.47: To what extent were SME pillar measures for sustainability coherent with other EU and national support actions?	• Qualitative reports about synergies or overlaps	• Consultation of beneficiaries	Annex X (4.1.3.)
EU added value			
Q2.48: To what extent has the SME Pillar and/or the specific actions supported under this pillar created EU value added (additional value compared to what could be achieved on merely national, regional and/or local level)?	• Degree of advantage of the actions being carried out at European level	• Consultation of beneficiaries	Annex X (4.2.1.)
Q2.49: To what extent has the SME Pillar supported the development of cross-border business activities?	• Number of cross-border partnerships created	• Monitoring data on international partnerships • Feedback and impact surveys • Consultation of beneficiaries • Case studies	Annex X (4.2.1.)
Q2.50: How has the SME Pillar tackled the challenges it is addressing at the level of each of its specific objectives and how has it	• Official indicator on improvement of business environment • Qualitative reports on contribution to business environment	• WEF data • Stakeholder consultation	Annex X (4.2.1.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
helped to improve the business environment in the EU?			
Q2.51: Are the SME Pillar measures better addressing the market failures detected than national or regional programmes? Are they rather synergising or overlapping with national and regional programmes?	• Qualitative reports on overlaps and synergies with national/regional programmes	• Stakeholder consultation	Annex X (4.2.1.)
Q2.52: To what extent do the issues addressed by the SME Pillar and/or specific actions therein continue to require action at EU level?	• Fictitious consequences of removing Pillar actions • Replaceability of Pillar actions	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.2.1.)
Q2.53: In terms of sustainability of the added value, are the effects achieved so far likely to pertain after the intervention ends?	• Persistency of effects	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.2.1.)
Q2.54: What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the measure(s)?	• Examples and numbers of reported consequences	• Stakeholder consultations (beneficiaries)	Annex X (4.2.1.)
EU added value: Enterprise Europe Network			
Q2.55: To what extent can the added value of the Enterprise Europe Network be considered EU added value?	• Degree of advantage of the EEN services being provided at European level • Replaceability of EEN by national actions	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.2.1.1.)
Q2.56: To what extent do EEN's stakeholders attribute the perceived added value to the EU? To answer this question an analysis (amongst others) is needed of the services that host organisations (chambers of commerce etc.) provide exclusively under the umbrella of the Network versus those services they provide in their own right without support from the programme?	• Identification of types of services and interaction of EU-funded and national services	• Consultation of EEN member organisations	Annex X (4.2.1.1.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Relevance			
Q2.57: To what extent are the SME Pillar's initial objectives pertinent to the needs, problems and issues they were designed to address?	• Congruence with needs of SMEs in 2021	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.58: Are the objectives and measures of the SME Pillar relevant to current needs and problems faced by SMEs?	• Congruence with actual needs of SMEs	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.59: Was /is there is any mismatch between the objectives of the measure at the time it was put in place and current needs or problems?	• Difference objectives and current needs	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.60: Were/are certain objectives and/or measures more relevant to specific types of SMEs than others?	• Needs by types of SMEs	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.61: To what extent are there adaptation mechanisms in place to ensure that the SME Pillar and the different measures supported meet new SME policy priorities and new needs in response to political, economic, technological, and scientific and social developments?	• Identified mechanisms and processes • Degree of regular stakeholder consultation in work programme development • Degree of freedom for project beneficiaries	• Reports/interviews by GROW and EISMEA • Stakeholder consultation including beneficiaries	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.62: How did the SME pillar adapt to deal with major new challenges and market deficiencies affecting businesses, in particular the impact of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and related issues such as high energy costs faced by SMEs?	• Identification of tailored actions and their budgets	• Work programmes	Annex X (4.3.)
Q2.63: Were the initial measures more relevant to specific types of SMEs than others?	• Needs by types of SMEs	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.)

Questions	Indicators	Sources of evidence	Relevant section
Q2.64: To what extent were adaptations made to meet the needs of different types of SMEs?	• Identification of measures for specific types of SMEs	• Work programmes	Annex X (4.3.)
Relevance: Enterprise Europe Network			
Q2.65: To what extent were the objectives set for the network at the start of the programme, and the network's initial services in line with SMEs' needs at that time?	• Congruence with needs of SMEs in 2021	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.2.1.)
Q2.66: To what extent do EEN objectives and services meet current needs/challenges faced by SMEs?	• Congruence with needs of SMEs in 2023	• Studies • Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.2.1.)
Relevance: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs			
Q2.67: To what extent did EYE respond to the needs/ problems and challenges identified at the start of the programme?	• Congruence with needs of entrepreneurs in 2021	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.2.2.)
Q2.68: To what extent does EYE respond to current needs and challenges faced by SMEs?	• Congruence with needs of entrepreneurs in 2023	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.2.2.)
Relevance: Other/smaller actions			
Q2.69: To what extent do other Pillar actions address current needs faced by SMEs or sectors?	• Congruence with needs of SMEs	• Stakeholder consultations	Annex X (4.3.2.4.)

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 3

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
Evaluation questions: European standardisation			
QC1 – Effectiveness and relevance			
QC1.1. How relevant are the financed projects with the EU priorities and the Single Market in the area of standardisation?	Level of alignment between the objectives of the SMP (and its Work Programmes) and the priorities set in the Standardisation Strategy and Annual Union WP on standardisation Level of alignment between the priorities set in the Annual Union Work Programmes on standardisation and the topic(s) of grants allocated under SMP Stakeholder perceptions on the relevance of the identified challenges / needs related to Strand A (as elaborated in the SMP programming documents) and any relevant additional market / regulatory developments vis-à-vis current and emerging needs in the area of standardisation Stakeholder perceptions on the extent to which the objectives of Strand A and the activities funded by the SMP correspond to general objective 1 of the SMP, as well as wider EU priorities on the single market	Programming documents on AGs funded Desk research and documentary evidence of priorities in standardisation Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with companies and civil society organisation	Annex XI (4.3.1.)
QC1.2. How successful was the standardisation budget in supporting sectoral policy objectives within the	Amount of funding committed over amount available (per year) Number of OGs and AGs funded (per year and sector)	Desk research and documentary evidence of grants awarded under Strand A, current activities implemented by beneficiaries of	Annex XI (4.3.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
SMP and outside the SMP (Digital and green transition and resilience)?	Number/share of grants allocated to actions aligned with/responding to the priorities identified in EU strategic documents in the area of standardisation Degree to which the intended outputs and results have been realised for Strand A of Pillar 3 against set targets (SO3) Degree to which the achievement of the outputs / results / impacts and objectives can be attributed to SMP funding (compared to other available sources of funding) Stakeholder perceptions of extent of progress in realising the objectives of Strand A of Pillar 3 (SO3) Stakeholder perceptions on the presence and effect of factors driving / hindering the success of the Strand A of Pillar 3	AGs and OGs Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with companies and civil society organisation	
QC1.3. Has the EU funding contributed to prioritising the EU needs from the European standardisation system, including the need to modernise and improve the system?	Number of AGs funded for the development and/or revision of European standards related to key EU objectives (e.g. digital and green transition, sustainability, accessibility, etc.) Number of standards developed per year in the sectors/topics defined as priorities for the Union Stakeholder perceptions on extent to which SMP funding to has contributed to prioritising and addressing needs of	Programming documents on AGs funded Desk research and documentary evidence on results achieved by ESOs Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with companies and civil society organisation	Annex XI (4.3.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	the ESS Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the prioritisation of standardisation needs Stakeholder perceptions of contributions of Pillar 3 Strand A activities to wider EU sectoral policy objectives (e.g. digital and green transition, sustainability, accessibility, etc.)		
QC1.4. Has the EU funding impacted the access to standards from SMEs? Has it increased the level of participation from SMEs and organisations representing consumers, workers and environmental interests and, in particular, to the topics of the green and digital transition and the resilience of the single market?	Evidence over increased participation of stakeholders in the ESS and process (e.g. projects and initiatives to foster greater access and participation from Annex III organisations, SMEs and social partners to the standardisation process (e.g. ad hoc initiatives, training courses, etc.) Number of AGs agreements to beneficiaries including SMEs/civil society organisations Stakeholder perceptions on developments in relation to the access and contributions of SMEs, consumer, worker and environmental representatives to standard setting processes Stakeholder perceptions on extent to which developments can be attributed to the activities of grant beneficiaries (i.e. Annex III organisations) and thus SMP funding	Programming documents on AGs funded Desk research and documentary evidence on ESOs activities Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with	Annex XI (4.1.1.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
QC1.5. Has it increased the awareness of SMEs, consumers, trade unions and environmental stakeholders on standardisation, particularly the green and digital transition and the resilience of the single market?	Evidence on increased awareness of consumers and other stakeholders on standardisation (e.g. dissemination activities, trainings, etc.) Stakeholder perceptions on the degree of awareness on standardisation, as well as the green and digital transition and single market resilience in this context, from SMEs, consumers, trade unions and environmental stakeholders Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering their awareness	Desk research and documentary evidence on results achieved by ESOs Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with companies (SMEs) and civil society organisations Public consultation	Annex XI (4.1.1.1.)
QC2 – Efficiency			
QC2.1. How does the EU funding build new capacity, like new Technical Committees and appointed experts, in critical areas for the single market, such as resilience and the green and digital transition?	Number of new Technical Committees, Working Groups, appointed experts, as well as deliverables produced related to critical areas for the single market, such as green and digital transition issues, sustainability, etc. Stakeholder perceptions on the contribution of the grant beneficiaries (and thus SMP funding) to the establishment of these new TCs and WGs	Desk research and documentary evidence (e.g. ESOs reports and documents) Interviews with Commission officials Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)
QC2.2. Has the EU funding increased industry experts' participation compared to standards developed without EU grants?	Number of AGs agreements to industry-participating beneficiaries Evidence of industry experts' participation in the standardisation process Stakeholder perceptions on the contribution of the grant beneficiaries (and thus SMP funding) to increased	Programming documents on AGs funded Desk research and documentary evidence (e.g. ESOs annual reports) Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	industry expert participation in standards development	Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	
QC2.3. In how many topics for action grant proposals have the European standardisation organisations responded?	Number of AGs proposals received and granted per topic/sector Number of standards and other deliverables developed/revised per topic Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering ESO responses to action grant proposals (and coverage of topics)	Desk research and documentary evidence on AGs (proposals received and grants awarded) Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)
QC2.4. Why do the action grants have a longer duration than the three years average time for producing a standard?	Stakeholder perceptions on the factors impacting the timelines for standards development Stakeholder perceptions of any improvements in the process leading to the production of standards	Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)
QC2.5. Are the implementation and progress regularly reported, monitored and measured?	Number of monitoring and reporting deliverables on the activities prepared by the beneficiaries and the Commission Evidence of monitoring indicators used Stakeholder perceptions on the relevance and timeliness of monitoring and reporting on implementation and progress	Desk research and documentary evidence on grants (AGs and OGs) implementation Interviews with Commission officials Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)
QC2.6. Do the grant agreements deliver what was agreed on regarding budget, time and quality?	Average time for the process leading to grant agreements Existence of practical guidance on grant procedures Cost and burden of operating and action grants reported by Strand A	Desk research and documentary evidence on grants (AGs and OGs) implementation Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs	Annex XI (4.1.2.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	beneficiaries (ESOs and Annex III organisations) Degree to which the benefits of accessing grants outweigh the costs Stakeholder perceptions on the efficiency and room for improvement of administrative and financial procedures to manage grant agreements Stakeholder perceptions on the quality and timeliness of activities delivered using SMP funding Stakeholder perceptions on the factors impacting the delivery of agreed activities and outputs to budget	Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	
QC3 – Coherence			
QC3.1. Does the EU funding generally support EU policies, and how strongly does it foster other policy objectives, for example, in the green, digital and resilient single market?	Degree of coherence and complementarity between the objectives of the budget lines of Strand A (*strand internal coherence*) Degree of coherence and complementarity between the activities funded by Strand A of Pillar 3 and elements of other SMP Pillars (e.g. Strand E of Pillar 1, Pillar 2 on SMEs, Pillar 4 on consumers and Pillar 5 on health) (*SMP internal coherence*) Degree of coherence and complementarity between the activities funded under Strand A of Pillar 3 and other EU policy and legal initiatives (including in particular on green and digital	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	Annex XI (4.1.3.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	transition and resilient single market) (*external coherence*) Degree of coherence between the objectives of Strand A and the EU priorities related to green and digital transition, resilient Single Market and sustainability Evidence of actual or possible synergies between objectives and activities funded and those related to other Pillars Stakeholder perceptions on the degree of coherence between the objectives of Strand A and EU policy priorities		
QC4 – EU added value			
QC4.1. How does the EU budget contribute to the EU's global role as a standard setter?	Number of EU standards aligned and identical to International Standards (and trend over the years) Degree of contributions of grant beneficiaries to international standard setting environments according to stakeholders (i.e. ISO, IEC, ITU) Stakeholder perceptions on the role and influence of the EU in international standard setting environments (i.e. ISO, IEC, ITU) and the factors driving this global role	Desk research and documentary evidence on ESOs activities (e.g. Annual report) Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	Annex XI (4.2.1.)
QC4.2. Has it accelerated as from 2021, the transposition of the European standards at the national level?	Number of European standards developed and published every year Stakeholder perceptions on the EU value added of Strand A of Pillar 3 and the factors driving / hindering the added	Desk research and documentary evidence on ESOs activities (e.g. Annual report) Interviews with ESOs Interviews with Annex III organisations	Annex XI (4.2.1.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	value	Targeted consultation with NSBs Targeted consultation with industry and civil society representatives	
Evaluation questions: International financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards			
QC5 – Effectiveness			
QC5.1. Have all three beneficiaries effectively supported the development of high-quality international standards for financial and non-financial reporting and auditing, facilitated their integration into Union law, and promoted innovation and development of best practices in corporate reporting?	Number and amount of budget for OGs and AGs committed and spent each year under the SMP compared to available budget Number and percentage of international financial reporting and auditing standards endorsed by the Union Stakeholder perceptions of the degree to which the effects can be attributed to SMP funding (e.g. considering the presence of any alternative sources of funding for the beneficiaries) Stakeholder perceptions of contributions of Pillar 3 Strand B activities to the international standards environment, including development of standards, promotion of EU views, innovation and best practices and oversight practices Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the success of the Strand B of Pillar 3	Desk research and documentary evidence (FISMA and beneficiaries' Annual reports) Interviews with Beneficiaries (IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB) Interviews with the European Parliament Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs) and civil society	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)
QC5.2. How effectively has the IASB developed high-quality international financial reporting standards in a transparent and democratically accountable way?	Number of countries using International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Amount of funding provided from the Commission per year (also compared to other funding sources)	Desk research and documentary evidence (FISMA and IFRSF Annual reports) Interviews with IFRSF Interviews with the European	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	Stakeholder perceptions on the quality, transparency and democratic accountability of the IASB standard setting approach Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the quality, transparency and democratic accountability of the IASB standard setting approach	Parliament Targeted consultation with the Accounting Regulatory Committee Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs) and civil society	
QC5.3. How effective has EFRAG been in providing technical advice to the Commission on the endorsement of IFRSs?	Number of EFRAG endorsement advice per year Stakeholder perceptions on the relevance, quality and timeliness of EFRAG's technical advice on IFRS endorsement Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the quality of EFRAG's technical advice	Desk research and documentary evidence (EFRAG Annual reports) Interviews with FISMA and EFRAG Interviews with the European Parliament	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)
QC5.4. How effective has EFRAG served the European public interest by developing and promoting European views in the field of financial reporting and ensuring these views has been properly considered by the IASB?	Number of draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) and coverage in line with the mandate of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive CSRD Stakeholder perceptions on EFRAG's work promoting EU views within the IASB and other international forums Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the promotion and consideration of EU views within the IASB and other international forums	Desk research and documentary evidence (EFRAG Annual reports) Interviews with FISMA and EFRAG Interviews with the European Parliament Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs) and civil society	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)
QC5.5. How effectively has EFRAG fulfilled its new mandate from the CSRD to develop timely high-quality	Number of draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) and coverage in line with the mandate of	Desk research and documentary evidence (FISMA and EFRAG Annual reports)	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
European Sustainability Reporting Standards that will contribute to a more sustainable EU economy?	the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive CSRD Number of draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) adopted as Delegated Acts by the Commission and topics covered Stakeholder perceptions on EFRAG's work on developing ESRS Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the development of ESRS	Interviews with FISMA and EFRAG Interviews with the European Parliament Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations Interviews with National Standard Setters	
QC5.6. How effective has the PIOB fulfilled its role of overseeing the auditing standard-setting process of IAASB and IESBA and identifying public interest issues?	Number of Publication of public interest issues by the PIOB Stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of PIOB oversight activities Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving / hindering the effectiveness of PIOB oversight	Desk research and documentary evidence (PIOB annual report) Interviews with FISMA and PIOB Interviews with representatives of civil society (e.g. consumers)	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)
QC5.7. Are there any unintended effects of the measure?	Stakeholder perceptions on the nature and scale of unintended effects of Strand B Stakeholder perceptions on the factors driving any unintended effects	Desk research and documentary evidence from the Commission and beneficiaries (on possible factors hampering the effectiveness of support) Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.1.2.)
QC6 – Efficiency			
QC6.1. To carry out their work programme, did the beneficiaries	Administrative burden and other costs borne by beneficiaries (IFRSF,	Desk research and documentary evidence (e.g. beneficiaries Annual	Annex XI (4.1.2.2.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
manage their funds with efficiency, ensuring best value for money? *Comparison between the beneficiaries (e.g. IFRS Foundation and EFRAG) or with relevant benchmarks should be included if possible.*	EFRAG, PIOB) in the use of SMP funds Burden and costs borne by beneficiaries compared to previous programmes/other sources of funding Degree to which the benefits outweigh the costs according to beneficiaries	reports and internal documents) Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB	
QC6.2. What are the main benefits for stakeholders and civil society that derive from the outputs of the beneficiaries? What benefits are derived from the reputation and work experience of the beneficiaries?	Evidence and indicators on main benefits achieved (previous EQs on effectiveness) and degree to which the effects can be attributed to SMP funding (compared to other funding and considering co-financing rates) Stakeholder perceptions on the main benefits, by beneficiary and by stakeholder type	Desk research and documentary evidence Public consultation Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB Interviews with European Parliament Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.2.2.)
QC6.3. What should be the optimal level of resource (inputs) required to produce outputs and generate the results delivered? In particular, for the new EFRAG mandate of developing ESRS. What are reasonable costs for developing ESRS and how do cost per ESRS developed in 2022 by EFRAG compare to other international standard-setters?	Administrative burden and other costs borne by beneficiaries (IFRSF, EFRAG, PIOB) Presence (and weight) of alternative sources of funding Nature and scale of any funding gaps identified by beneficiaries Stakeholder perceptions on the optimal level of resource for each beneficiary Stakeholder perception of the need for greater/better outputs produced by beneficiaries Stakeholder perceptions on the costs required to develop ESRS (compared to development of sustainability reporting standards by the ISSB)	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB Interviews with European Parliament Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations Targeted consultation with Accounting Regulatory Committee members	Annex XI (4.1.2.2.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	Stakeholder perceptions on the factors impacting the level of resource required		
QC6.4. Did the beneficiaries engage in initiatives aimed at diversifying their funding sources?	Number and scale of other funding (i.e. beyond SMP funding) received and acquired by beneficiaries Number and type of initiatives implemented to diversify funding sources, Stakeholder perceptions on the types and success of initiatives aimed at diversifying funding sources Stakeholder perceptions on the factors impacting the ability to engage in such initiatives	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB	Annex XI (4.1.2.2.)
QC7 – Relevance			
QC7.1. To what extent do the initial objectives still correspond to current needs / issues as EFRAG has a new legal mandate to develop ESRS which are important for supporting the transition to a more sustainable EU economy and for the EU Green Deal? Are the activities carried out by EFRAG, IFRS Foundation and PIOB relevant to achieve the objectives defined in Article 3.2.c.ii) of the SMP 2021-2027?	Degree of alignment between the objectives and activities carried out by IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB and the objectives of the SMP Degree of alignment between the objectives and activities carried out by IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB and the objectives of current EU priorities in the Single Market (e.g. Green Deal) Stakeholder perceptions on the relevance of the identified challenges / needs related to Strand B (as elaborated in the SMP programming documents) and any relevant additional market / regulatory developments Stakeholder perceptions on the extent to	Desk research and documentary evidence (EU policy documents and strategies, SMP documents, activity reports from beneficiaries) Public consultation Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB Interviews with European Parliament Interviews with National Standard Setters Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations Targeted consultation with Accounting Regulatory Committee members	Annex XI (4.3.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	which the objectives of Strand B correspond to the identified and emerging needs (in particular, the developments in sustainability reporting) Stakeholder perceptions on the extent to which the objectives of Strand B and the activities funded by the SMP correspond to general objective 1 of the SMP, as well as wider EU priorities on the single market (in particular the context of the EU Green Deal and the CSRD)		
QC7.2. Is the stakeholder representation in EFRAG, IFRS Foundation and PIOB appropriate considering the mission of each beneficiary?	Number and type of stakeholder represented, by beneficiary (EFRAG, IFRSF and PIOB) Stakeholder perceptions on the appropriateness of the stakeholder representation, by beneficiary	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB Interviews with National Standard Setters Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.3.)
QC8 – Coherence			
QC8. Are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	Degree of coherence and complementarity of the objectives and activities funded by Strand B of Pillar 3 (*strand internal coherence*) Degree of coherence and complementarity of the objectives and activities of Strand B of Pillar 3 with those of Strand A of Pillar 3 (*Pillar internal coherence*)	Desk research and documentary evidence (at Pillar, programme and EU level) Interviews with EU institutions Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.3.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	Degree of coherence of the objectives and activities of Strand B of Pillar 3 with those of other Pillars (*SMP internal coherence*) Degree of coherence and complementarity of the objectives and activities of Strand B of Pillar 3 with wider EU objectives and initiatives (e.g. on sustainability reporting) (*external coherence*) Assessment of the extent to which the activities and objectives of Strand B of Pillar 3 are coherent with international developments (e.g. on sustainability reporting) Assessment of the factors driving / hindering coherence		
QC8.1. Are there overlaps or complementarities between the measure and any other Union measure?	Degree of coherence and complementarity of the objectives and activities of Strand B of Pillar 3 with other EU policy and legal initiatives (in particular, EU Green Deal and CSRD)	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with EU institutions Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.3.)
QC8.2. Is there any issue of internal coherence of the measure (i.e. between the various components of the measure)?	Degree of coherence between different elements of Strand B Degree of coherence and complementarity of the objectives and activities of Strand B of Pillar 3 with those of Strand A of Pillar 3 Degree of coherence between the activities funded by Strand B of Pillar 3 and elements of other SMP Pillars	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with EU institutions Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.3.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	(e.g. Strand E of Pillar 1, Pillar 2, Pillar 4 and Pillar 5)		
QC8.3. To what extent the measure is coherent with similar measures at Member States or international level?	Degree of coherence between the activities funded by Strand B of Pillar 3 and relevant national and international standardisation activities	Desk research and documentary evidence at EU and National level Interviews with National Standard Setters Interviews with representatives of industry (including SMEs), civil society organisations	Annex XI (4.1.3.)
QC9 – EU added value			
QC9.1. Is there additional value resulting from the measure, compared to what could be achieved merely at national or even European level?	Number of alternative sources of funding for beneficiaries (IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB) coming from EU MS Stakeholder perceptions on the progress that could be achieved merely at national or European level Stakeholder perceptions on the EU value added of Strand B of Pillar 3 and the factors driving / hindering the added value	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG, PIOB Interviews with National Standard Setters Targeted consultation with Accounting Regulatory Committee members	Annex XI (4.2.)
QC9.2. To what extent do the issues addressed by the measure continue to require action at EU level?	Number of alternative sources of funding for beneficiaries (IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB) Number of activities that could be funded without EU funding Stakeholder perceptions on the continuing need for EU action and the reasons	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG, PIOB	Annex XI (4.2.)
QC9.3. What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the measure?	Number of alternative sources of funding for beneficiaries (IFRSF, EFRAG and PIOB) Number of activities that could be funded without EU funding	Desk research and documentary evidence Interviews with IFRSF, EFRAG, PIOB	Annex XI (4.2.)

Question	Indicators and descriptors	Sources	Relevant section
	Stakeholder perceptions on the likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the measure and the reasons		

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 4

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
Q4.1 Effectiveness: how effective was the SMP Pillar 4 in achieving its objectives and intended effects? 4.1.a. Consumer protection and product safety objectives (regarding cooperation, enforcement including ECC support, ADR, education and awareness) 4.1.b Promoting interests of consumers, including financial services	Analysis of project outcomes against programme objectives: - Extent to which projects have achieved their objectives - Extent to which projects have achieve objectives of the call topics - Examples of impacts achieved - Examples of outstanding results/impacts already achieved Achievement of intended outputs and results (See Annex E)	Literature review (Data from ECC-IT tool, Commission, Consumer Index) Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1. and 4.1.2.)
Q4.2 Efficiency: were the benefits achieved at a reasonable cost?	Cost-effectiveness of the activities funded in relation to Pillar 4, particularly in terms of administrative arrangements (ratio between administrative and operational budget); evolution over time. This assessment will consider characteristics of specific parts of the programme and forms of implementation. Identification and (to the extent possible) quantification of cost-efficiency drivers (such as introduced simplifications) Factors influencing higher or lower cost-efficiency (such as the average size of a project, level of competition at application stage, specific project features, administrative modalities, etc.) Types of simplification measures	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.3.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
	introduced or considered Perception of stakeholders on whether administrative arrangements and specific requirements are making funded projects more costly than necessary Perception of stakeholders on the overall cost-effectiveness of the activities funded in relation to Pillar 4 and how it compares to other parts of the programme Stakeholders' opinion on which implementation processes and arrangements could be further improved to maximise the benefits of the programme		
Q4.4. Coherence: are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	Distribution of projects/EU funding by funding instrument/specific objectives/thematic area Analysis of thematic areas/groups of projects that cover similar grounds (by instrument) Types of stakeholders attracted in different instruments Extent to which activities funded in relation to Pillar 4 /other programmes seek the same higher-level objectives with different instruments or by targeting different groups, or topics Extent to which the activities funded in relation to Pillar 4/other programmes strengthen their contributions to Commission priorities	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
	Mechanisms for coherent planning, monitoring and coordination of activities Examples of overlaps, if any Existence of any outputs achieved, which would not be possible, if SMP programme and other EU programmes were implemented without communication and interaction. non-financial complementarity, financial complementarity, dissemination of good practice and policy learning.		
Q4.5 EU added value: what is the EU value added of Pillar 4?	Extent to which Member States could have implemented their projects at national/regional level Extent to which these national projects had the same scope, scale, timeframe Types of value generated by analysed projects, as opposed to national level (e.g. Access to skills, infrastructures, better commercialisation opportunities, access to more markets, pooling of research and/or commercial risks, faster implementation, etc.) Key reasons which would make analysed projects not possible to implement at national level (e.g. Not being able to address cross-country issues, not finding alternative funding, insufficient scale/scope of funding instruments at national level) Examples of exceptional EAV	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
Q4.3 Relevance: do the objectives correspond to the current needs?	Key (emerging) challenges and how they change over time Extent to which challenges and needs are still relevant, discussed, included in WPs, policies, declarations, etc. Extent of issues flagging's change over time, low/high submission rates for certain issues Extent to which activities were flexible and able to adapt to changes in the implementation context, notably in updating strategic documents: Absence of gaps/recently emerged aspects Share of programme's resources allocated to most recent (2020-2023) developments	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD1. Effectiveness: how effective was the measure in achieving its objectives?			Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.1 To what extent did the implemented/ongoing actions contribute to ensuring a high level of consumer protection?	Consumer condition index (RES4) Stakeholders' views on contribution of SMP actions to (any change in) level of consumer protection	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.2 How effective were the EU actions regarding market surveillance activities in improving methodologies for analysing product safety and promoting support and interaction between Member States?	Stakeholders' views regarding market surveillance (distinguishing by MS, type of product or service) Number of authorities participating in the joint actions on the safety of products (CASP) Number of measures on dangerous non-food products alerted on the Safety Gate platform	Targeted consultation survey	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.3 How do the results of the actions meet the interests of consumers, in	Consumer needs, especially in relation to cross-border and online activities	Consumer Scoreboard Targeted consultation survey	Annex XII (4.1.1.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
particular, for their cross-border or online activities? Are there any gaps that could be better covered?	Stakeholders views on gaps in existing coverage		
QD1.4 To what extent do the implemented/ongoing actions contribute to assist, advise, educate consumers and businesses and increase awareness of their rights and obligations?	Analysis of already implemented and ongoing activities	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.5 How effective were the activities in supporting competent enforcement authorities and consumer organisations?	View of competent authorities and consumer organisations regarding the support provided	Targeted consultation survey	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.6 How effective were the major communication activities (including conferences, events, social media etc.)? Have consumer professionals, policy makers, national authorities and other stakeholders found them useful?	Stakeholder views on usefulness of SMP-supported communication activities in relation to consumer protection	OPC Targeted consultation Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.7 How effective have the activities been in promoting sustainable consumption and in raising awareness of the environmental impact of goods and services?	Analysis of different actions under the strand in relation to their achievements re. sustainable consumption and awareness raising among consumers of environmental impact of goods and services	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.8 What factors negatively or positively influenced the Consumer protection strand achievements?	Role of external factors in relation to the objectives under this strand	Interviews	
QD1.9 How successful each action has been in achieving its own objectives, considering the set of indicators? What are the factors influencing the achievements?	Extent to which each of the objectives was achieved Stakeholders' views regarding role of external factors in relation to the objectives under this strand	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)
QD1.10 To what extent does the Consumer protection strand	Evidence that SMP activities under this stand added to knowledge in this area	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.1.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
build/improve the evidence base on market and consumer conditions in the internal market, providing a basis for the development of consumer policy and for the identification of the most problematic areas for consumers?	Stakeholders' views regarding the contribution of SMP activities to identifying areas that are most problematic for consumers		
QD2. Efficiency: were the benefits achieved at a reasonable cost?	Proportionality of benefits to costs.	Literature review Stakeholder consultation	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD2.1 To what extent has the allocation of funds to specific actions and to the beneficiaries been used efficiently?	Assessment of how far funds under this strand have provided useful inputs in an efficient manner	Literature review Interviews (European Commission)	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD2.2 To what extent were the costs of the Consumer strand actions proportionate to the benefits achieved through the outcomes of these actions? What factors influence any discrepancies?	Cost-benefit analysis of selected actions under the consumer strand	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD2.3 Could the interventions have been done in a more efficient way? Where is potential to reduce inefficiencies and simplify the interventions?	Evidence of potential efficiency savings and stakeholder views regarding scope for simplifications	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD4. Coherence: are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.1.4.)
QD4.1 Is there any issue with internal coherence of the actions under the Consumer strand? How different actions of the strand operate or should operate together to achieve the objectives of the consumer policy	Extent to which actions under the consumer strand align, in terms of their objectives and implementation Stakeholder views regarding complementarity of different actions under the strand	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)
QD4.2 To what extent are the actions financed under the Consumer strand coherent and complementary with other EU policies, and with actions	Stakeholder views on coherence of activities in scope with national and international actions	Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
implemented at national or international level? Are there any overlaps?			
QD5. EU added value: what is the additional EU value added?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD5.1 What was the additional value resulting from the actions of the Consumer strand compared to what could have been achieved by Member States at national and/or regional levels?	Overview of what is being done in the Member States (inc. at regional level) Stakeholder views on what could be achieved in the absence of support at EU level	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD5.2 To what extent do the issues addressed by the interventions continue to require actions at EU level?	Stakeholder views on what could be achieved in the absence of support at EU level	Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD5.3 What would have been the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the EU interventions through the Consumer strand?	Stakeholder views on what could be achieved in the absence of support at EU level Evidence of experience in comparable non-EU countries (e.g. UK, Switzerland)	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD3. Relevance: do the objectives correspond to the current needs?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD3.1 To what extent are the actions relevant to the specific objectives of the Consumer strand and to the priorities of the New Consumer Agenda 2020-2025?	Extent to which the actions' objectives align with those of this strand and of the New Consumer Agenda	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD3.2 To what extent have the objective and the actions of the Consumer strand proven relevant to consumer needs and problems in the period under review?	CCI and Consumer Scoreboard	Literature review Open Public Consultation (OPC) Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD3.3 How did the objectives of the actions (legislative or spending measures) correspond to wider EU policy goals and priorities?	Gap analysis of objectives of the actions compared with wider EU policy goals and priorities	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD6. Effectiveness: How effective was the measure in achieving its objectives?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.1.2.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
QD6.1 To what extent has the work carried out since 2021 by the beneficiaries been effective in achieving the specific objective under Article 3.2 (d) ii)?	Stakeholders' views regarding extent that the specific objective has been achieved The extend to which the work of the beneficiary enhanced the involvement of end users and non-industry stakeholders in policy Are the activities contributing in number and quality to the achievement of the objectives?	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)
QD6.2 Has quantitative and qualitative expertise of the beneficiaries (including research work, policy papers, responses to consultations, studies) been found useful and used by their members, by policy makers and other stakeholders?	Extent to which members, policy makers and other stakeholders have used / agree that beneficiaries' expertise has proven useful The extent to which beneficiaries have provided with views and expertise in this area that represent consumer voice in the financial services The extend to which the work of the beneficiary enhanced the involvement of end users and non-industry stakeholders in policy The extend to which specific activities have led to a positive impact on stakeholders/have been taken on board	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)
QD6.3 To what extent have the communication activities (including press releases, conferences, social media) carried out been effective and found useful and used by members, policy makers, and other stakeholders (e.g. the work has been referred to by other stakeholders, newspapers)?	Extent of reach of communication activities Stakeholder views on usefulness of communication activities and materials	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
QD6.4 Is the performance monitoring system of the beneficiaries effective in ensuring appropriate selection of activities and evaluation of results in order to achieve the set of objectives?	Examination of selection procedures Examination of evaluation of results	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)
QD6.5 Are there any factors or obstacles that render certain aspects of the measure more or less effective than others, and – if there are – what lessons can be drawn from this?	Identification of factors that rendered activities more effective Identification of obstacles that limited the activities' effectiveness	Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)
QD6.6 Are there any unintended effects of measure?	Stakeholder views on unintended effects (both negative and positive) Number of complaints	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.2.)
QD7 Efficiency: were the benefits achieved at a reasonable cost?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD7.1 Did the beneficiaries manage EU funds and resources with efficiency and, ensuring best value for money to deliver their outputs also in comparison with relevant benchmarks or similar organisations?	Value for money achieved by different SMP-funded activities under this strand Evidence of value for money achieved by analogous activities (including at national level and outside the EU and done by other organisations than the beneficiaries)	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD7.2 Has there been a diversification of funding sources since 2021?	Extent to which funding sources have diversified since 2021	Literature review	Annex XII (4.1.3.)
QD9 Coherence: Are there any issues of coherence within the measure or with others having similar objectives?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.1.4.)
QD9.1 Are there overlaps or complementarities between the measure and any other Union action having similar objectives?	Identification of overlaps and complementarities between the various SMP-funded activities and those under this strand	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
QD9.2 Is there any issue of internal coherence of the measure (i.e. between the various components of the measure)?	Identification of overlaps between the various SMP-funded activities within this strand	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)
QD9.3 To what extent is the measure coherent with similar initiatives at national or international level?	Identification of overlaps between SMP-funded activities and national or international initiatives (incl. extent of cooperation and complementarity)	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.1.4.)
QD10 EU added value: what is the additional EU value added?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD10.1 Is there additional value resulting from the measure, compared to what could be achieved merely at national level?	Overview of what is being done in the Member States (inc. at regional level) Stakeholder perception of value of action at EU level vs MS action in this field	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD10.2 To what extent do the issues addressed by the measure continue to require action at EU level?	Stakeholder views on the need to continue action at EU level ((for example there is continued EU policy development in the area, is this expected to continue and require intervention at EU level to protect consumers in the field?)	Stakeholder consultation OPC Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD10.3 What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the measure?	Stakeholder views on what could be achieved in the absence of support at EU level Evidence of experience in comparable non-EU countries (e.g. UK, Switzerland)	Literature review Targeted consultation survey	Annex XII (4.2.)
QD8 Relevance: do the objectives correspond to the current needs?	See sub-questions below	See sub-questions below	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD8.1 To what extent do the initial objectives mentioned in Article 3.2.d.ii) of the SMP still correspond to current needs/issues?	Alignment between consumer needs (CCI, Scoreboard for DG JUST actions mostly) and objectives Alignment between other stakeholder needs and objectives Alignment between initial objectives and	Literature review OPC Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)

Question	Indicators	Sources	Relevant section
	current issues/needs Perception of EU bodies and representatives of key stakeholders		
QD8.2 Are the activities carried out and topics covered by the beneficiaries relevant to achieve the objectives under Article 3.2.d.ii) of the SMP also in light of the EU political agenda in the financial services or are some essential areas missing?	Gap analysis between activities carried out and objectives / areas covered by EU political agenda in the financial services	Literature review Targeted consultation survey Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD8.3 Are the beneficiaries independent from the industry, commerce or business, have no conflicts of interest and are through their membership representative of the interests of EU consumers and other end users in the financial services area as required by Article 10.f.1) of the SMP Regulation?	Any evidence of a conflict of interest or that industry can exert influence over the beneficiaries (in terms of funding, governance, expertise, or other support) Evidence that beneficiaries are representative of consumers and other end users (and of the mechanisms that ensure this)	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)
QD8.4 Have other potential beneficiaries emerged having among their primary objectives and activities representing the interests of consumers and end users at Union level, and that have, through their membership, a broad geographical coverage and range of interests?	Evidence (including stakeholder views) that organisations whose primary objectives and activities and whose scope is analogous to that of the current beneficiaries	Literature review Interviews	Annex XII (4.3.)

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 5

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
QE1.1 To which extent have the specific objectives been attained by the work programmes? Which factors influenced the results achieved? QE0.1 To which extent national veterinary and phytosanitary programmes, emergency measures have been satisfactorily implemented? QE0.2 To which extent EU reference laboratories and EU reference centres achieved required objectives laid down in work programmes?	Extent to which the following Food Pillar 5 specific objectives have been met between 2021-2023, following the activities launched under Work Programmes 2021-2023 and the corresponding reported results in DG SANTE and HaDEA Annual Activity Reports: I – Prevent, detect and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including by means of emergency measures II – Support the improvement of the welfare of animals III - Fight against AMR IV – Develop sustainable food production and consumption V – Stimulate the exchange of best practices between stakeholders in those fields Examples of factors that influenced/hindered the achievement of the Food Pillar 5 specific objectives Stakeholders' perception whether the Work Programmes' specific objectives were successfully achieved and the factors that potentially has been influencing/hindering the achievement	Desk research Interviews with Stakeholders, Grant beneficiaries and Commission officials Surveys ADIS Reports EFSA reports DG SANTE and HaDEA internal reporting data and Annual Activity Reports EPPO EU Platform on Animal Welfare EURC and EURL websites EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste	Annex XIII (3.1.1.)
QE1.2 What has been the impact achieved by EU financial support in terms of food safety, animal health, plant health and	Results (RES) and outputs (OUT) achieved (to quantify where data is available):	Desk research Interviews with Stakeholders,	Annex XIII (3.1.1.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
official controls?	OUT1.1 Number of national eradication, control, and surveillance programmes launched; Number of veterinary emergency measures put in place and related indicators RES 1.1.1 Reduced number of cases of diseases in humans RES 1.1.2 Increase of the poultry population below the EU target (Salmonella programmes) RES 1.1.3 No of successfully implemented national veterinary programmes OUT1.2 Number of phytosanitary survey programmes launched (by pest/category and in outermost regions); Number of phytosanitary emergency and eradication measures put in place and related indicators RES 1.2.1 Number of successfully implemented national phytosanitary programmes OUT1.3 Number of veterinary and phytosanitary emergency measures taken up by the MSs RES 1.3.1 Number of veterinary and phytosanitary emergency measures implemented by MSs OUT2.1 Number of activities of the WOAH Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe and number of WOAH Workshops on NCPs on Animal Welfare RES2.1.1 Increased awareness and improved cooperation with non-EU countries on animal welfare. Prevention and quick exchange of information in case of incidents during international transport of animals OUT3.1 Number of coordinated control programmes launched and related indicators: RES3.1.1 Reduced sales of antimicrobials in farmed animals and aquaculture OUT4.1 Activities relating to food waste prevention, food fraud prevention activities, and other initiatives contributing to a high level of health for plants and animals, and food and feed safety; Number and type of related information and awareness raising activities launched and related indicators RES4.1.1 Actions to strengthen food waste prevention and reduction in Member States	Grant beneficiaries and Commission officials Surveys ADIS Reports EFSA reports DG SANTE and HADEA internal reporting data and Annual Activity Reports Interviews of NRLs, contact points from RASFF, AAC, FF, ADIS, EUROPHYT, and TRACES networks involved in the use of databases and IT systems, members of the advisory groups on the sustainability of food systems,	

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
	RES4.1.2 Decrease in use of more hazardous pesticides RES4.1.3 Increased awareness related to the sustainable food practices OUT5.1 EURL activities: a) Number of inter-laboratory proficiency tests and comparative testing organised by EURLs for national reference laboratories, b) Number of annual workshops organised by EURLs following proficiency and comparative testing OUT5.2 EURC animal welfare: a) Number of technical and scientific studies and materials developed and/or updated, b) Number of training and collaboration activities with national support networks and bodies and competent authorities and related indicators, c) Number of enquires requested from national support networks and bodies and competent authorities RES 5.2.1 Improved animal welfare through EURC activities OUT6.1 Number of training programmes launched, number of participants (per type of training, in-person vs online), test scores, satisfaction rates, content assets availability and related indicators RES6.1.1 Official control staff is proficient in the applicable rules and regulations RES 6.1.2 Improved satisfaction rate of participants attending in-person BTSF training OUT 7.1 The databases and information management systems related to enhanced crisis management capabilities RES 7.1.1 Enhanced crisis management capabilities (the databases and information management systems related to enhanced crisis management capabilities	representatives from the national competent authorities in charge of food waste prevention from a sample of MS and national competent authorities	
QE1.3 To which extent has the setting of SMP thematic priorities for Union financial support contributed to the achievement of the specific objectives?	Extent to which the thematic priorities for animal health, plant health, animal welfare, AMR, EURL/EURC, and BTSF have contributed to the specific objectives at the programme level Stakeholder's opinion on the extent to which the thematic priorities have contributed to the specific objectives at the programme level: I – Prevent, detect and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including by means of emergency measures	Desk research Work Programmes	Annex XIII (3.1.1.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
	II – Support the improvement of the welfare of animals III - Fight against AMR IV – Develop sustainable food production and consumption V – Stimulate the exchange of best practices between stakeholders in those fields		
QE1.4 To which extent has the implementation of measures co-financed under the SMP framework contributed to a positive impact on the functioning of the internal market and to the competitiveness of the agri-food industry at global level?	• Stakeholder's opinion on the extent to which the co-financed measures (through coordinated control programmes, BTSF trainings and official controls) contributed to the functioning of the internal market and competitiveness of the agri-food industry. • Examples from the desk research on co-financed measures (through coordinated control programmes, BTSF trainings and official controls) contribution to the functioning of the internal market and competitiveness of the agri-food industry.	Desk research Interviews Surveys	Annex XIII (3.1.1.)
QE1.5 To which extent the built-in flexibility of the work programmes added to its effectiveness?	Extent to which Work Programmes (SANTE) are introducing build-in flexibility Evidence of the redistribution of money in case of the emergencies and outbreaks Extent to which stakeholders agree that project implementation processes provide for sufficient flexibility and are adapted to take account of the necessary changes in project implementation	Interviews Surveys Work Programmes	Annex XIII (3.1.1.)
QE2.1 To which extent has the relationship between resources employed and results achieved been efficient? Could the same results have been achieved with fewer resources?	Costs: budget figures for separate SMP actions • Annual figures. • Shares from total. Cost-effectiveness: • Unit cost of BTSF training, annual (online and face to face). • Costs associated with addressing HPAI vs benefits associated with HPAI. • Costs associated with addressing Xylella vs benefits associated with Xylella. • Comparison of evolution of the outputs and results vs the budget dedicated to each of the SMP actions.	Desk research (including budget data analysis) Interviews with Grant beneficiaries and Commission officials Case studies	Annex XIII (3.1.2.)
QE2.2 Do the financial procedures in place	Timely execution of the key outputs and results:	Desk research	Annex

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
ensure a swift and resource-saving decision-making process and thus a quick implementation of the interventions? If there are shortcomings what are the reasons for this?	• Time-to-grant; time-to-pay. • Perceived timeliness by the grant beneficiaries. Financial risk management: • Error rate. • Risk at closure rate. • Extent the potential financial risks associated with the projects under the SMP Food Pillar are identified, assessed and managed. Budget implementation: • Share of budget delegated to HaDEA. • Budget utilisation. Administrative measures: • Perception of stakeholders on the move to the eGrants system. • Perceived administrative burden. • Perception of stakeholders on possible measures, which could further ease the administrative burden. Perception of stakeholders on whether administrative arrangements and specific requirements are making funded projects more costly than necessary	Interviews with Grant beneficiaries and Commission officials	XIII (3.1.2.)
QE2.3 To which extent the terms and conditions for participation guard the financial interest of the EU and ensure sound governance and management of the programme?	Fraud prevention, detection and correction: • The extent to which audit recommendations were implemented. Governance and management of the programme: • The extent to which the SMP governance and management was dedicated to HaDEA. Revision of unit cost and lump-sum: • The extent to which the financing is sufficient. The extent to which simplifications (unit costs and lump sums) are effective, according to the beneficiaries.	Desk research Interviews with Grant beneficiaries and Commission officials Surveys	Annex XIII (3.1.2.)
QE3.1 To which extent are the SMP objectives still valid and in accordance with food chain needs in Europe?	Relevance of SMP Pillar 5 Objectives in addressing key (emerging) challenges Key (emerging) challenges and how they change over time Extent to which challenges and needs are still relevant, discussed, included in WPs, policies, declarations, etc. *(needs as identified in the intervention logic: Rapid spread of diseases / pests; Ethical concerns and public*	Desk research Interviews with Stakeholders, Grant beneficiaries,	Annex XIII (3.3.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
	demand for better treatment of animals; Overuse and misuse of antibiotics in animals contributing to the rise of AMR; Lack of sustainable agricultural practices) Extent to which activities were flexible and able to adapt to changes in the implementation context, notably in updating strategic documents: absence of gaps/recently emerged aspects share of programme's resources allocated to most recent (2020-2023) developments Extent of the continuing relevance of the following SMP (Food Pillar) specific objectives perceived by the consulted stakeholders. *Specific objectives being: To prevent, detect and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including by means of emergency measures; Support the improvement of the welfare of animals; Fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR); To develop sustainable food production and consumption; To stimulate the exchange of best practices between stakeholders in those fields.*	and Commission officials Surveys EFSA reports DG SANTE Annual Activity Reports Work Programmes of the SMP (2021-2023) Interviews of NRLs, EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs), and national competent authorities ADIS Reports	
QE3.2 Are the needs identified at the time of the adoption of the MFF still relevant or have new needs emerged which necessitate an adjustment of future Regulation?	Relevance of the needs identified at the time of adoption of the MFF Stakeholders' perceptions on any additional needs that might not have been identified at the time of the MFF adoption Examples of new suggested needs/objectives currently not covered by the SMP Food Pillar objectives that could be added to adjust SMP programme Perceptions of stakeholders on the extent to which SMP objectives sufficiently cover the key needs of the food chain in Europe: emerging gaps Relevance of SMP Food Pillar compared to other similar funders Gaps and differences when compared to other similar funders analysed under benchmarking analysis Extent in which these gaps are addressed by other initiatives	Desk research Interviews with Stakeholders, Grant beneficiaries, and Commission officials EFSA reports DG SANTE Annual	Annex XIII (3.3.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
		Activity Reports Work Programmes of the SMP (2021-2023) DG SANTE internal reporting data Surveys	
QE4.1 To which extent was the EU spending for food and feed measures consistent with the political priorities in the food safety area?	Alignment of EU Food and Feed Spending with Food Safety Priorities Share of EU spending that is related to the following specific objectives in relation to the Food Pillar 5 between 2021-2023: • Prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases and plant pests ▪ Supporting sustainable food production and consumption ▪ Improving the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of official controls ▪ Supporting policies to increase animal welfare • Stakeholders' perception whether the EU spending for food and feed measures are consistent with the political priorities in the food safety area: On a global level (e.g. WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety, etc.) • On European level (e.g. TFEU Articles 168 – 169) • On national level Examples of potential gaps between the EU spending for food and feed measures and the political priorities in the food safety area	Desk research Interviews with Stakeholders, Grant beneficiaries, and Commission officials Surveys with EURLs and BTSF NCPs DG SANTE Annual Activity Reports (2021-2023) European Green Deal Communication Farm to Fork Strategy (2020) SANTE Work Programme	Annex XIII (3.1.3.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
		(2023-2024) WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety Reports TFEU Articles 168-169 Interviews of NRLs and EURLs Consultation activities with stakeholders from the BTSF programme	
QE4.2 To what extent the general objective, specific objectives and inputs are coherent with one another?	Alignment with the EU priorities and objectives Extent to which the general EU objective of maintaining a high level of health protection, as stated in Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) is coherent with specific objectives being: To prevent, detect and eradicate animal diseases and plant pests, including by means of emergency measures; Support the improvement of the welfare of animals; Fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR); To develop sustainable food production and consumption; To stimulate the exchange of best practices between stakeholders in those fields. Internal coherence of SMP Food Pillar Distribution of projects/EU funding by funding instrument (e.g. i) grants; ii) procurement; iii) actions implemented under indirect management; and iv) other actions or expenditure, a provision for payment of experts' remunerations or allowance.) and thematical areas covered. Analysis of thematic areas/groups of projects that cover similar grounds (by instrument) Types of stakeholders attracted in different instruments External coherence with similar programmes	Desk research Interviews with DG SANTE officials, NRLs, and EURLs Surveys with EURLs and BTSF NCPs DG SANTE Annual Activity Reports (2021-2023) Work Programmes of the SMP (2021-2023) European Green Deal and Farm	Annex XIII (3.1.3.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
	Extent to which (how closely) the funded activities under the SMP's Food Pillar and other related programmes align with the main goals, while using different methods or focusing on various groups and topics. Examples of overlaps, if any.	to Fork Strategy (2020) Consultation activities (Interviews with national competent authorities, EURLs, and stakeholders from RASFF, ADIS, EUROPHYT, and TRACES networks)	
QE5.1 To which extent has the EU financial support for food and feed measures added specific value to what would have resulted from Member States' intervention only? Can MS alone implement the measures envisaged under the sectoral legislations?	Types of value generated by analysed projects, as opposed to national level (e.g. Access to skills, infrastructures, better commercialisation opportunities, access to more markets, pooling of research and/or commercial risks, faster implementation, etc.) Key reasons which would make analysed projects not possible to implement at national level (e.g. Not being able to address cross-country issues, not finding alternative funding, insufficient scale/scope of funding instruments at national level) the unique advantages provided by the EU, including support for training, networking, and resource allocation beyond what is available nationally.	Survey of BTSF national contact points; Survey of EURLs. Interviews of NRLs, BTSF participants and contractors, national competent authorities, contact points from RASFF, AAC, FF, ADIS, EUROPHYT,	Annex XIII (3.2.)

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
		and TRACES networks involved in using databases and IT systems, EURCs, International Organisations and Members of the Advisory Group on the Sustainability of Food Systems.	
QE5.2 Can MS act alone as rapidly and efficiently in emergencies as they would under the SMP?	Examples, if available, of SMP funding contributing to the (faster/more effective) implementation of emergency measures to combat certain animal diseases and plant pests[315] • Stakeholders' opinion on the capacity of Member States to act as rapidly and efficiently in emergencies (as they would under the SMP)	Desk research. Interviews of Commission officials and national competent authorities	
QE5.3 What would be the most likely consequence of stopping or withdrawing the EU co-financing of the measures covered by the SMP?	Stakeholders' opinion on the capacity of Member States to implement activities funded in relation to Pillar 5 if the EU co-financing of the measures covered by the SMP were stopped (and associated consequences)	Interviews of NRLs, contact points from RASFF, AAC, FF, ADIS, EUROPHYT, and TRACES networks	Annex XIII (3.3.)

315 Based on European Commission (2023) Annex to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the Programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed and European statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024 and the action' Implementation of emergency measures to combat certain animal diseases and plant pests for 2023', p. 27.

Question	Indicator	Data sources	Relevant section
		involved in the use of databases and IT systems, members of the advisory groups on the sustainability of food systems, representatives from the national competent authorities in charge of food waste prevention from a sample of MS and national competent authorities.	

Evaluation Matrix for Pillar 6

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
Q6.1: To what extent was the ESP successful in providing timely statistical information? Was this delivery impartial? Was this delivery cost-efficient? What was its statistical coverage?	• Timeliness, • Impartiality • Cost-efficiency, • Statistical coverage.	• Desk research (e.g. EU reg. 2021/690, Annual Activity Reports) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. User Satisfaction Survey 2022, monitoring activities per objective, etc.) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)
Q6.2: To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of European statistics and avoiding duplication of	• n/a	• Desk research (e.g. Eurostat activities and outputs 2022, 2023) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. User Satisfaction Survey 2022) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.2.)

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
effort?			
Q6.3: To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing quality improvements in the production of European statistics?	• Evolution of statistical output observed during the period 2021-2023	• Desk research (reg. No 99/2013 on European statistical programme 2013-2017, (EU) reg. 2017/1951, Eurostat activities and outputs, • SMP administrative & monitoring data (User Satisfaction Survey 2022) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)
Q6.4: To what extent were ESP data used in the development, monitoring and evaluation of EU policies? Was there evidence that the ESP contributed to improving policy making (at EU/MS level)? Was there evidence that the ESP contributed to other	• Leveraging European statistics to create and assess EU policies, • Contribution of ESP data to other purposes.	• Desk research (e.g. Staff Working Documents (SWD), AARs, Previous evaluations of the ESP, Management Plans, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. Monitoring reports to EP and Council, User Satisfaction Survey 2022) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
purposes?			
Q6.5: To what extent did the ESP increase the availability of data?	• Availability of ESP's data	• Desk research (e.g. ESTAT Response to COVID-19 related outputs, Previous evaluations of the ESP, AARs. SWDs, etc. • SMP administrative & monitoring data (User Satisfaction Survey 2022) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)
Q6.6: How effective was the ESP in strengthening partnerships within and beyond the ESS?	• Development of partnerships within the ESP	• Desk research (e.g. Strategic plan 2020-2024 – Eurostat, Previous evaluations of the ESP • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. Directors' Seminars related outputs such as minutes/reports held between 2021-2023 relevant for Pillar 6, Memoranda of Understanding, etc.) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)
Q6.7: Which factors prevented or reduced the impact of ESP activities? How could these be overcome?	• Factors preventing and/or reducing the ESP's impact	• Desk research (e.g. AARs, EU reg. No 99/2013, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.1.)
Q6.8: To what extent were ESP resources used efficiently to achieve the desired results?	• Cost-Benefit information collection, • Resource usage monitoring and optimisation, • Anti-Fraud	• Desk research and data analysis (e.g. Commission Implementing Decision of 6.5.2021 on the financing of the Programme for Single Market and Annex V, AARs, Programme performance statements, Anti-fraud and internal control strategies2021-2023 etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. Monitoring of activities per objective, Financial data, Management Plans, etc.) • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.2.)

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
	measures effectiveness, • Efficiency gains in statistics production.	• Cost-effectiveness analysis	
Q6.9: To what extent were ESP activities successful in limiting the administrative burdens for ESS stakeholders, including Member States and data providers (respondents)?	• Analysis of the administrative burden, • Reduction of the administrative burden, • Benefits for Member States.	• Desk research and data analysis (Annual Statistical Work Programmes, 2021-2023, AARs 2021-2023) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. outcomes of the exercise on burden reduction[316]) • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews • Cost-effectiveness analysis	Annex XIV (4.1.2.)
Q6.10: Was the management / organisation of the ESP as a whole conductive to supporting efficient delivery?	• Effectiveness of systems to review efficiency and performance, • Effectiveness of governance mechanisms.	• Desk research and data analysis (e.g. 2020-2024 Eurostat Strategic Plan, AARs 2021-2023, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. User Satisfaction Survey 2022) • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews • Cost-effectiveness analysis	Annex XIV (4.1.2.)
Q6.11: To	• Potential to	• Desk research and data analysis (e.g. cost assessment survey results, previous ESP evaluations)	Annex XIV

316 This information remains to be obtained from DG EUROSTAT if possible.

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
what extent / how could the next European statistical programme be less reliant on multiple sources of financing?	reduce or eliminate the use of subdelegated funds	• SMP administrative & monitoring data • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews • Cost-effectiveness analysis	(4.1.2.)
Q6.12: To what extent did the objectives of the ESP reflect the needs of the ESS?	• Relevance of the ESP's design in terms of correlation of the ESP's general objectives and the ESS' needs, • Mechanisms to maintain the ESP's general objectives' relevance	• Desk research (e.g. EU reg. (EU) 2021/690, EU reg. No 223/2009, etc.)) • SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.3.)
Q6.13: To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the set objectives of the ESP?	• Relevance of the ESP activities, • Adequateness of user feedback mechanisms, • Flexibility of the ESP to adapt to technological advances.	• Desk research (e.g. Activities and outputs: 2022, 2023, Main statistics produced and disseminated by Eurostat: 2022, 2023, Eurostat reference database, social media channels and other website publications, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data (e.g. microdata requests, etc. Other outputs e.g. Eurostat publications, EP publications, dashboards) • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.3.)
Q6.14: To what extent	• Internal coherence of	• Desk research (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding, Activities and outputs: 2022, 2023, Main statistics produced and disseminated by Eurostat: 2022, 2023	Annex XIV (4.1.3.)

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
did ESP activities and objectives contribute to the internal coherence of the ESS?	ESP's general objectives and activities, • Mechanisms to ensure coherence of statistical data.	• SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Interviews	
Q6.15: To what extent do ESP activities complement / contradict / overlap with wider EU activity?	• Complementarity of the ESP's and Eurostat's activities with other EU bodies, • Complementarity of the ESP's activities with EU strategic objectives, • Usefulness of the ESP's integration within the SMP, • Flexibility to respond to new strategic priorities.	• Desk research (e.g. Overview - Sustainable Development Goals - Eurostat (europa.eu), Overview - European Statistical System (ESS) - Eurostat (europa.eu) • SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.3.)
Q6.16: To what extent are ESP activities coherent with the activities of	• Cooperation and coordination of the ESP with international partners	• Desk research (e.g. MOU, Meetings of European Statistical System Committee, ESS position paper on future Data Act proposal, News releases, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.1.3.)

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Relevant section
international statistics organisations?			
Q6.17: What is the EU added value of the ESP?	• Comparability of national statistics • Preferred statistics sources • Timeliness added value • Resources for production of statistics at MS level • Possibility to produce European statistics at MS level.	• Desk research (e.g. SWD, AWPs, EU reg. No 223/2009, etc.) • SMP administrative & monitoring data • Public consultation • Targeted consultation surveys • Interviews	Annex XIV (4.2.)

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS [AND, WHERE RELEVANT, TABLE ON SIMPLIFICATION AND BURDEN REDUCTION]

Pillar 1

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 1							
	Type	Citizens / Consumers		Businesses		Administrations	
		Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Direct compliance costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 237 million	SMP budget commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling and accounting for EU funds).
Indirect costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in joint actions, training, networks, forums, etc.
Direct benefits	Recurrent (annual)	Your Europe: 132 million visits (2021-23) Your Europe Advice queries: +64 633 EU Taxonomy Compass: 431 745 visitors; 953 720 visits	Includes all users (not only citizens and consumers)	COMP digital tools: 204 398 users (2022-2023)	Includes all users (not only businesses)	ECN2: 1 136 external users submitted 4 055 documents (2023) IMI: 112 550 exchanges; 12 500 users, (2023)	Secure and effective exchange of confidential information with the Commission Enhanced cooperation between competent authorities
Direct benefits	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	NCAs reporting: More efficient case-handling and speedier investigations (22/23)	Benefits of the ECN reported by NCAs

						Improved capacities, skills, knowledge (22/23) Improved capabilities to enforce competition rules (22/23) Better implementation and enforcement of competition policy in their country (22/23)	(survey for this evaluation)
Direct benefits	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	National officials to be trained in competition law: 343	Within approved projects
Direct benefits	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	MSAs reporting: More effective market surveillance across the EU due to horizontal activities (22/32) Greater homogeneity of market surveillance and increased capacity due to EUPCN (29/32)	Benefits reported by MSAs (survey for this evaluation)

Pillar 2

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 2							
	Type	**Citizens / Consumers**		**Businesses**		**Administrations**	
		Quantitative	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**
Direct compliance costs	Total (2021-2023)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 414 million	SMP budget commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling EU funds).

Indirect costs	One-off	None	n/a	5-30 days per beneficiary per application 10-20 days per beneficiary per reporting period	Rated as 'reasonable' by the majority of beneficiaries.	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in activities.
Direct benefits	Total (2021-2023)	None	n/a	SMEs receiving support by the EEN: 292 000 International partnerships for SMEs established by EEN: 2 048 Entrepreneurs involved in EYE exchanges: 2 086 SMEs benefiting from Euroclusters: 3 087 SMEs benefiting from financial support to third parties: 1 747 SME digital tools (EEN, EYE, YEB, ECCP): 21.5 million users IPR Helpdesks: 14 414 SMEs supported EU SME Centre in China: 2 682 SMEs supported EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation: 7 732 SMEs supported	Total for 2021-2023	None	n/a

Pillar 3

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 3							
	Type	**Citizens / Consumers**		**Businesses**		**Administrations**	
		Quantitative	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**

Direct compliance costs	Total (2021-2023)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 89 million	SMP budget commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling and accounting for EU funds).
Indirect costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in joint actions, training, networks, forums, etc.
Direct benefits	Total (2021-2023)			Support received to participate in the standardisation process: SBS: EUR 5.3 million ANEC: EUR 4.5 million ECOS: EUR 3.8 million ETUC EUR 1.5 million		Support received to develop standards: CEN, CENELEC and ETSI: EUR 10.6 million EFRAG: EUR 13.1 million. IFRS Foundation: EUR 11.4 million PIOB: EUR 1.045 million	
Indirect benefits	Total (2021-2023)	Development of standards fostering sustainability and competitiveness and access of EU companies to international capital markets. Better representation in standardisation process: IFRS Foundation, IFRS Foundation, EFRAG, PIOB: representation of EU interests and public good in international standard setting. ANEC: increased number of experts from 158 to 185, participating in 225 committees ECOS: increased number of experts: 40 to 55 ETUC: experts active in 20 committees; submitted 86 comments / contributions		None	n/a	None	n/a

Pillar 4

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 4							
	Type	**Citizens / Consumers**		**Businesses**		**Administrations**	
		Quantitative	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**
Direct compliance costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 78.6 million	SMP budget commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling and accounting for EU funds).
Indirect costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in joint actions, training, networks, forums, etc.
Direct benefits	Recurrent (annual)	European Consumer Centres (ECCs): ca. 120 000 consumers assisted and advised per year After intervention of ECCs consumers recovered ca. EUR 26 million (2021-23) ECC Net website: 120 000 visits (2023) Enhanced operational capacity of BEUC representing 44 consumer associations		Consumer Law Ready and Consumer PRO: 24 000 website visits; 1 069 SME trainers or SMEs trained Train-the-Trainer: +900 consumer professionals trained Consumer Summits: 2 200 attendees SMEs trained in consumer law: +500		317 enforcement officials trained 7 671 alerts on Safety Gate 9 184 follow-up actions (2021-2023); 752 requests exchanged via CPC Network (2020-2024) 1 058 products tested (2021-2022)	Training provided by the e-Enforcement Academy for the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network and the Consumer Safety Network (CSN) Quicker and more effective circulation of information on measures taken against non-food dangerous products Strengthened cooperation and enhanced capacity of enforcement authorities

Indirect benefits	Total (2021-2023)	Improved assistance and representation of consumer interests BEUC 2021-2023: 730 public events, 150 press release, 26 000 quotes in written press Quicker, cheaper, more effective resolution of disputes by ADRs: 300 000 cases p.a. (national resolution rates of 17% to 100%) Better Finance: 4 million consumers represented through 40 organisations in 25 countries; 60 responses to public consultations, 15 position papers; 5 open letters Finance Watch: includes +110 civil society organisations or experts; 41 responses to consultations; 23 policy/position papers	None	More level playing field across the EU Improved awareness of consumer rights	None	

Pillar 5

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 5							
	Type	**Citizens / Consumers**		**Businesses**		**Administrations**	
		Quantitative	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**
Direct compliance costs	Total (2021-2023)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 798 million	SMP budget commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent	None	No enforcement requirements	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs are imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling and accounting for SMP funds).

	(annual)		imposed on consumers.				
Indirect costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in joint actions, training, networks, forums, etc.
Direct benefits	Total (2021-2023)	None	n/a	EUR 5.5 million	Compensation paid for culled birds/eggs due to highly pathogenic avian influenza in Czechia	27 400 staff trained	Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF)
Indirect benefits	Total (2021-2023)	Unquantifiable	Safer food, higher food standards; improved human, animal and plant health	Unquantifiable	Fewer and less severe disease outbreaks (targets met for Salmonella in poultry populations, Bruceliosis, Rabies, TSE, C-BSE; targets partially met for African swine fever, highly pathogenic avian influenza)	163 proficiency tests and 41 comparative tests undertaken by EURLs for NRLs	Tests improve NRLs' laboratory testing capacity by standardising procedures and enhancing their diagnostic capabilities

Pillar 6

Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation: Pillar 6							
	Type	**Citizens / Consumers**		**Businesses**		**Administrations**	
		Quantitative	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**	**Quantitative**	**Comment**

Direct compliance costs	Total (2021-2023)	None	No compliance requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No compliance requirements imposed on businesses.	EUR 225 million	Budgetary commitments (2021-2023)
Enforcement costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on consumers.	None	No enforcement requirements imposed on businesses.	None	No enforcement costs are imposed by the SMP (except in respect of handling and accounting for SMP funds).
Indirect costs	Recurrent (annual)	None	n/a	None	n/a	Unquantifiable	Administrative burden associated with EU grant funding. Time and costs required to participate in joint actions, training, networks, forums, etc.
Direct benefits	Total (2021-2023)	12 million database sessions (2021-2023) 3 895 requests for access to European microdata Twitter followers: +252 000 (2023) Facebook followers: +150 000 (2023) Instagram followers: +116 000 (2023) 95% of users express confidence in impartiality of Eurostat statistics (2024 User Satisfaction Survey)		None	Businesses included in total figures for Citizens / Consumers	1 769 trained in courses on innovative sources and methods for official statistics	Qualitative benefits in the form of: IT Infrastructure and Methodological Advancements Improved governance and resource management via ESS Peer Reviews Enhanced capacity, skills and methodologies through knowledge sharing and partnerships within the European Statistical System (ESS)

ANNEX V. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

This annex presents an overview of the outcomes of the consultation activities undertaken for the interim evaluation of the SMP on the basis of the consultation strategy established by the Interservice Steering Group.

The consultation activities for the interim evaluation of the SMP **aimed at** collecting evidence to substantiate the analysis and subsequent conclusions and recommendations for the programme as a whole and each of its pillars.

The consultation strategy **featured the following consultation activities**: a call for evidence, a public consultation, targeted surveys of stakeholders, targeted surveys of beneficiaries, interviews with stakeholders.

The **call for evidence** and **public consultation** were conducted by the Commission and undertaken for the SMP as a whole, though questions specific to the pillars were included in the public consultation's online questionnaire. **Targeted consultations** and **interviews** were conducted by the contractor and undertaken for each pillar separately, including mainly pillar-specific questions, yet were also used to collect data about the SMP as a whole.

A **call for evidence** was published for the entire Single Market Programme (SMP) via the Commission's 'Have your say' portal, open from 4 November to 12 December 2023. A total of six responses were received, three of which specifically addressed the SMP.

Small Business Standards (SBS), a beneficiary of a grant under the SMP as an Annex III organisation, emphasised the critical importance of maintaining, if not enhancing, financial support for the European standardisation system. They suggested prioritising stronger representation of SMEs in standardisation at all levels–national, European, and international. SBS also recommended extending the duration of grants from one year to two and shifting travel reimbursements from unit costs to actual costs.

The Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS), also an Annex III beneficiary under the SMP, highlighted the importance of including under-represented interests in the European standardisation system. They noted that SMP support for Annex III organisations is essential and suggested extending this support to national and international standardisation efforts. ECOS further recommended simplifying travel cost procedures, grant proposal templates, and reporting requirements.

BEUC, another SMP grant beneficiary under Pillar 4, reported that the programme had positively impacted their work. They appreciated the streamlined interim and final reporting requirements compared to previous systems. BEUC also noted that their designation as an SMP beneficiary provided them with greater certainty and allowed them to undertake challenging consumer and SME education projects and activities targeting vulnerable consumers.

The remaining three respondents provided comments on the Single Market more broadly. The Organisation Européenne des Constructeurs de Véhicules Accessibles (Netherlands) raised concerns about the limited options for manufacturers of wheelchair-accessible vehicles to gain approval in the Single Market. They urged the Commission to ensure proportionality between the technical requirements of the EC Whole Vehicle Type Approval scheme and the EU Individual Vehicle Approval scheme, which is better suited to SMEs producing in small quantities. A German citizen suggested that the EU should promote cross-border capital movements by limiting stock exchange trading fees outside the EU. A citizen from Slovakia highlighted the importance of the Single Market for Europe but noted the economic differences between Member States.

A **public consultation** on the Single Market Programme (SMP) ran from 8 March to 31 May 2024, via the European Commission Have your say portal, gathering 63 responses. This overview if complemented by a factual summary report, available online on the Commission Have your say portal[317].

Among all respondents, 54 (86%) represented organisations and 9 (14%) were EU citizens. Public authorities formed the largest respondent group 23 (36%), 9 (14%) were business associations, 7 (11%) were companies, 5 (8%) were NGOs, 3 (4%) were consumer organisations, 2 (5%) were environmental organisations, 1 (2%) was a trade union, and 4 (6%) classified as 'other'.

In terms of geographical coverage contributions came from 19 countries, with Belgium and Spain leading (12 responses each, 19%), followed by Germany (9, 14%) and Italy (5, 8%). Countries like Austria, France, and Portugal provided 3 responses each (5%), and others like Czechia, Denmark, Finland, and Greece had 2 (3% each). The rest, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and Türkiye, had one response each (2%).

Responses are classified per Pillar, the questionnaire was structured as the SMP. Respondents were to choose based on their interest in the different parts of the Programme which pillars they would respond to. Questions were divided in sections covering each pillar and the Programme as a whole and, hence responses are classified below following this logic.

Pillar 1: A majority of respondents (75%, 47 out of 63) felt that the objectives and activities under this pillar were relevant to the needs of the internal market to a great or a reasonable extent. However, only 19 respondents had used the 'Your Europe' platform, and among them, 53% found it to be reasonably or very useful.

Pillar 2: A significant majority of respondents (81%, 38 out of 47) believed objectives and activities under this pillar are relevant to SME needs. Among those familiar with the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) programme, half (16 out of 32) acknowledged its support for new and aspiring entrepreneurs. The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) was viewed as effective by an overwhelming majority (94%, 32 out of 34), while 68% (17 out of 25) agreed that Euroclusters initiatives supported SMEs in becoming more innovative, resilient, digital, and sustainable.

Pillar 3: A vast majority of respondents (92%, 45 out of 49) perceived the objectives and activities under this pillar as relevant. A majority also agreed that European standardisation bodies such as CEN (38 out of 49), CENELEC (34 out of 49), and ETSI (36 out of 49) have significantly contributed to the development of standards relevant to the internal market. Annex III organisations were also recognised for enhancing stakeholder participation in standardisation: ANEC (25 out of 49), ECOS (26), ETUC (28), and SBS (32). However, there was mixed feedback on other organisations; only 37% (18 out of 49) agreed that the IFRS Foundation aligned with EU stakeholder needs, while 53% were uncertain. Similarly, 55% (27 out of 49) viewed EFRAG as effective, though 41% were unsure. Only 25% (12 out of 49) supported the contributions of the PIOB, with 71% expressing uncertainty.

Pillar 4: A majority of respondents (74%, 34 out of 46) felt that Pillar 4 activities met consumer needs. Furthermore, most (78%, 36 out of 46) emphasised the importance of supporting enforcement authorities, consumer organisations, and protecting vulnerable consumers to promote fairness and transparency. Activities were seen as very or reasonably effective by ADRs (86%, 19 out of 22), Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (65%, 17 out of 26), Safety Gate (88%, 21 out of 24), European Consumer Centres (73%, 16 out

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of 22), BEUC (78%, 18 out of 23), and organisations protecting financial service users (52%, 11 out of 21).

Pillar 5: A significant majority (83%, 19 out of 23), felt that the activities under this pillar were effective to a great or reasonable extent: veterinary and phytosanitary programmes animal welfare improvements (68%, 15 out of 22), coordinated control programmes (88%, 23 out of 26), sustainable food production and consumption support (68%, 17 out of 25), EURLs and EURCs (77%, 17 out of 22), training for official control staff (78%, 18 out of 23), development of databases and information management systems (86%, 18 out of 21), and RASFF (91%, 21 out of 23).

Pillar 6: A majority of respondents (68%, 21 out of 31) found EU statistics accessible, accurate, relevant, coherent, timely, impartial, and user-friendly. Among respondents, 59% (10 out of 17) observed a notable improvement in statistical quality from 2021 to 2023, while a minority (23%, 7 out of 17) noted no change. A large majority believed progress was made towards each of the European Statistical Programme (ESP) objectives, including the development, production, dissemination, and communication of high-quality statistics (81%, 13 out of 16), strengthening the European Statistical System (71%, 10 out of 14), enhancing partnerships (77%, 10 out of 13), using multiple data sources and advanced technologies (87%, 13 out of 15), and providing national and regional statistics breakdowns (84%, 16 out of 19). Furthermore, 82% (14 out of 17) agreed that the ESP was effective in adopting innovations or measures in statistical processes to meet emerging technological and digital needs from 2021 to 2023.

With respect to the **SMP as a whole**, a small majority (52%, 33 out of 63) supported maintaining a single, integrated SMP encompassing all policy priorities, whereas 19% (12 out of 63) preferred separate programmes for different areas. A majority 66% (23 out of 35) considered the SMP pillars complementary. The SMP was widely perceived as complementing broader strategies, including the Green Deal (36 out of 63) and 'A Europe fit for the digital age' (64%, 40 out of 63). Support for continuing the SMP in its current integrated form stood at 54% (34 out of 63), with a small minority (8%, 5 out of 63) recommending expansion to additional policy fields. Meanwhile, 19% (12 out of 63) advocated for support through separate programmes, and 18% (11 out of 63) were unsure. Only a single respondent (2%, 1 out of 63) opposed the extension of the SMP beyond 2027.

Other consultation activities have been conducted by the contractor tasked to produce the supporting study, **including targeted consultations and interviews**, allowing to gather specific and useful feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. Details for each Pillar will be described separately.

Table 1: Timeline of consultation activities

Consultations	Start date	End date
European Commission open consultations		
Call for evidence	4 November 2023	12 December 2023
Public consultation	8 March 2024	31 May 2024
Online surveys		
Online survey of national competition authorities participating in the ECN (Pillar 1)	March 2024	April 2024

Consultations	Start date	End date
Online survey of market surveillance authorities participating in the EUPCN	March 2024	April 2024
European-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members	May 2024	June 2024
EEN beneficiaries	May 2024	June 2024
Euroclusters beneficiaries	May 2024	June 2024
EYE intermediary organisations	May 2024	June 2024
Beneficiaries of other actions within Pillar 2	May 2024	June 2024
Stakeholders in the field of finance (including members and non-members of Finance Watch and Better Finance)	28 February 2024	14 June 2024
Beneficiaries of Pillar 4a actions (undertaken as a joint consultation also covering the final evaluation of the predecessor Consumer Programme 2014-2020)	15 April 2024	21 June 2024
BTSF national contact points	16 April 2024	7 May 2024
EURLs	16 April 2024	23 May 2024
Producers of European statistics	May 2024	June 2024
Users of European statistics	May 2024	June 2024
Interviews (total: 331)		
European Commission	October 2024	August 2024
Pillar 1 stakeholders	April 2024	September 2024
Pillar 2 stakeholders	May 2024	September 2024
Pillar 3 stakeholders	April 2024	September 2024
Pillar 4 stakeholders	March 2024	September 2024
Pillar 5 stakeholders	March 2024	September 2024
Pillar 6 stakeholders	March 2024	September 2024

Table 2: Number of interviews

Pillar	Stakeholders interviewed (including European Commission)
1	45
2	71
3	52
4	70

Pillar	Stakeholders interviewed (including European Commission)
5	54
6	39
TOTAL	331

NB: some pillar interviews also covered issues at programme level (particularly interviews of the European Commission).

For **Pillar 1**, separate online survey were conducted for sub-pillar 1a and sub-pillar 1b. For the former, pertaining to competition, a total of 33 national competition authorities (NCAs) across 20 Member States covering 20 MS (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden were not represented) responded in part or fully to an online survey. Most had used the 'COMP Cases' search engine (23 out of 25, 92%), and found it useful. The ECN2 platform was similarly well-received, with all 25 NCAs indicating its utility. A significant proportion of NCAs (22 out of 23, 96%) reported that the European Competition Network (ECN) improved their capacity and skills in enforcing competition rules, and all 23 NCAs confirmed the platform's benefits for implementing competition policies nationally. A majority (21 out of 23, 91%) also acknowledged the added value of SMP support for competition policy over national-level actions. Qualitative feedback highlighted the positive role of ECN conferences, networking, and research activities, as well as training in competition law for judges.

For sub-pillar 1b, market surveillance, 45 MSAs participated in the survey. They spanned 19 EU Member States (excluding Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) and two third countries (Norway, Switzerland). Most MSAs voiced that joint enforcement actions for product compliance testing effectively fostered harmonised practices (28 out of 34, 82%), facilitated best practice exchange (28 out of 34, 82%), and promoted Member State cooperation (27 out of 34, 79%). Many MSAs affirmed that horizontal activities supported improved market surveillance (22 out of 32, 69%). The European Product Compliance Network (EUPCN) meetings were rated as useful (29 out of 32, 91%) and well-organised (31 out of 32, 97%). Regarding the impact of AdCos, a large majority indicated improved surveillance both at the EU level (25 out of 32, 78%) and within their countries (22 out of 32, 69%). Many MSAs also viewed the European Union Testing Facilities (EUTF) and digital tools such as the Proactive Web Crawler (22 out of 32, 69%), Unique Identifiers (19 out of 32, 59%), and ICSMS (24 out of 31, 77%) as supportive of market surveillance efforts. There was close to a consensus on the continuing need for EU action (30 out of 31, 97%) and the SMP's added value (27 out of 31, 87%).

Officials from DG COMP, DG FISMA, DG GROW, DG JUST, and DG TAXUD were interviewed and emphasised that Pillar 1 activities are crucial for developing, implementing, and enforcing Union law. The Commission, with the SMP's Pillar 1, has maintained key digital tools and enhanced the capacity of both the Commission and national authorities, while also fostering cooperation between the entities. With the Commission managing most expenditures directly, the administrative burden remained minimal. However, efficiency gains from integrating budget lines into the SMP were modest.

Interviews with 5 NCAs (from Denmark, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, and Sweden) corroborated survey findings. These authorities valued digital tools for their ability to secure information exchange, manage large datasets, and enable efficient case allocation. ECN working groups and conferences were seen as opportunities for mutual learning and improvement of enforcement.

Interviews with 7 MSAs (from Switzerland, Germany, Finland, Italy, Poland, and Sweden) supported the survey data, noting that horizontal activities improved market surveillance,

although participation and interest were somewhat limited. EUPCN and AdCos meetings offered platforms for discussion on common concerns and facilitated the development of consistent market surveillance approaches. EUTFs provided potential for harmonised testing, new methods for testing, joint control actions, and enhanced risk assessment. However, the need for the ICSMS to include more product categories and see broader use was highlighted.

Interviews with three beneficiaries of SMP funding for training judges in EU competition law found high demand for these courses, though demand varied across Member States. Feedback was systematically collected post-participation and remained positive. However, follow-up assessments to measure impact, such as surveys conducted after six or twelve months, were not identified. The SMP was seen as continuing successful existing courses rather than introducing entirely new ones, with no concerns raised about the administrative burden.

Invitations for interviews were sent to five permanent representations of Member States, yet only one participated in the interviews. The interlocutor commented exclusively on the competition-related digital SANI2, praising its effectiveness for facilitating submissions to DG COMP daily.

For **Pillar 2**, separate online surveys were undertaken for European business organisations and SMP SME committee members, EEN beneficiaries, Euroclusters beneficiaries, EYE beneficiaries, and other beneficiaries.

European-level business organisations and SMP SME Committee Members (19 responses) targeted by the survey, with which they confirmed that overall Pillar 2 makes a difference with a view to strengthening the competitiveness of European SMEs. Respondents viewed the effectiveness of the EEN, Euroclusters, and EYE favourably, and also found the SME studies and forums relevant for supporting evidence-based policymaking and enhancing the business environment. While tourism and social economy actions were perceived as less effective, their overall impact remained positive. Stakeholder perspectives on the coherence of the SME Pillar were mixed; while some saw good coordination, others identified areas needing improvement. The EU added value, especially for flagship actions, was deemed high. The relevance of the SME Pillar was assessed as moderate by this group, with adequate continuity in its actions and work programmes, although the EEN's relevance was rated particularly high.

The survey conducted among EEN member organisations (117 responses) found a strong impact of EEN services, particularly in facilitating market access, product innovation, and boosting SME turnover growth. Services relating to business partnerships, access to finance, and EU funding were identified as having the most significant effect. Member organisations also noted positive impacts on their own operations. The administrative burden associated with participation was considered manageable but increasing over time. Respondents reported strong collaboration with other EU initiatives, particularly the ERDF (including Interreg), Horizon Europe, and Digital Europe (specifically EDIHs), and frequent cooperation within the Pillar with IP Helpdesks and EYE. Despite some overlaps with national and regional support programmes, the EEN was perceived as having high EU added value, particularly in terms of partnerships and resolving Single Market issues. Member services were regarded as highly relevant, with increasing demand since 2021. Moreover, a large majority indicated that the EEN is flexible enough to adapt to new challenges and the evolving needs of SMEs and regions.

With the survey of Euroclusters beneficiaries (42 responses) Euroclusters' effectiveness and the utility of the FSTP instrument were confirmed. Budget constraints were identified as a primary limitation on broader value chain impacts. Approximately 40% of beneficiaries

reported links with the EEN. A majority recognised the EU-level programme's added value, with most respondents asserting that their activities and results would not be possible without such support. A large portion also affirmed that the Euroclusters action meets the needs of SMEs within their industrial ecosystems.

The survey of EYE intermediary organisations (49 responses) indicated that EYE effectively contributes to skill development for young entrepreneurs, although its impact on turnover and job creation was less pronounced. Host entrepreneurs also experienced positive outcomes. Most respondents viewed the administrative burden of EYE participation as reasonable, and nearly half reported established links with the EEN. The EU added value of EYE is perceived as high, with a significant majority affirming the relevance of cross-border exchanges for entrepreneurs.

The survey focused on other actions (75 responses), mainly from tourism and social economy initiatives, the FSTP instrument's effectiveness and utility were reiterated, and the administrative burden was perceived as reasonable. However, beneficiaries seldom reported collaboration with the three flagship actions of the SME Pillar, nor was there frequent systematic cooperation with other EU programmes. Beneficiaries did confirm the added value of the actions at the EU level, indicating that similar results would not have been possible without an EU programme. A vast majority found the calls and priorities highly relevant to the tourism sector.

Over 50 interviews complemented these online surveys, involving essentially the same stakeholder groups and corroborated survey findings. They provided additional, nuanced insights on various aspects, such as factors contributing to administrative burdens, barriers and facilitators of effectiveness, and the specific needs of SMEs.

Additional 13 interviews were conducted with officials from DG GROW and EISMEA, delving into objectives comprehension, the process of formulating work programmes, steps taken to enhance the FSTP instrument, measures to reduce administrative burdens, improvements in action services, and coordination with other SMP Pillars and EU programmes, such as EDIH.

For **Pillar 3,** an online survey in the field of financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards (71 full responses) targeting financial service users was conducted in coordination with Pillar 4. Only 35 respondents addressed questions specific to Pillar 3. A majority (27 out of 33) believed that EU-level action in corporate reporting and auditing standardisation is necessary beyond efforts by other national or international actors. Respondents with knowledge of beneficiaries and activities largely agreed that the IFRS Foundation plays a pivotal role in producing quality international standards (19 out of 29) and fostering corporate reporting innovations (20 out of 28). EFRAG was similarly recognised for effectively representing EU priorities in standardisation (18 out of 23) and contributing to high-quality standards (19 out of 24).

50 stakeholder interviews took place covering both of the Pillar's main objectives. While most of the interviews were with EU-level organisations, National Standardisation Bodies from six countries (Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, and the Netherlands) were also included. Discussions with European Commission officials from DG GROW, DG FISMA, and EISMEA highlighted that Pillar 3 activities play a critical role in supporting the Commission's efforts to enhance the internal market, ensuring transparency, safety, and competitiveness. Pillar 3 has provided the necessary backing to organisations crucial for developing standards related to products, services, reporting, and auditing. With the shift of certain grant management responsibilities from DG GROW to EISMEA, both bodies experienced a period of adjustment to these changes.

With respect to European standardisation, feedback from all 7 beneficiaries (3 ESOs and 4 Annex III organisations) underscored the SMP's vital role in enabling their activities and objectives. While beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the support level, there were calls to streamline the administrative processes, which some estimated could be simplified. National Standardisation Bodies also noted the burdensome nature of new processes, particularly for smaller entities, potentially limiting their participation in AGs calls during the initial two years as they adjusted to the new system. However, these national bodies recognised the Commission's efforts to enhance dialogue, ensuring alignment of views and priorities.

Interviews with the 3 beneficiaries of Pillar 3 confirmed that SMP funding is central to their activities, especially EFRAG and PIOB, which rely and depend on this funding. Discussions with EFRAG highlighted challenges due to its new dual mandate, especially regarding the drafting of ESRS, suggesting that the current resource levels might be inadequate for the organisation's expanded responsibilities. Additionally, it was suggested that EFRAG's governance could benefit from more inclusive representation, particularly from civil society and other diverse stakeholders, like innovative companies.

Interviews with 17 stakeholders active in financial and non-financial reporting, including EFRAG members, provided views reinforcing the survey findings. Although PIOB's work was less widely recognised, the Commission's support for these organisations was broadly appreciated. However, there were concerns over whether EFRAG's resources are sufficient, given its increased role in drafting ESRS. The interviewees recommended greater representation of diverse interests within EFRAG's structures.

Only one Member of the European Parliament (MEP) participated in the consultation out of the several invited. The MEP emphasised the significance of supporting organisations like EFRAG, highlighting the importance of funding organisation focusing on sustainability and green finance, although without elaborating on specific beneficiary activities.

For **Pillar 4,** an online survey (52 responses) was conducted, and focused on actions funded under Pillar 4a, with participants including ECCs, ADRs, competent authorities, and consumer associations. A vast majority (16 out of 17) found the SMP's contribution to product safety to be highly effective, particularly through initiatives like Safety Gate and joint actions by the CPC network. Additionally, most respondents (25 out of 27) recognised the effectiveness of ECCs in consumer assistance. Educational programmes, such as the Better Internet for Kids, were noted as crucial in safeguarding vulnerable consumers, with feedback suggesting that these efforts should be expanded to reach those most in need.

Another survey on financial service users, (71 responses)[318], involving the programme's beneficiaries, EU public bodies, relevant international or national administrations, stakeholder organisations representing different interests, financial institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations. The survey saw a significant number (47 out of 58) perceiving both organisations as effective in enhancing consumer and financial service user participation in policymaking. Furthermore, an even larger group (50 out of 58) agreed that these beneficiaries effectively promoted a better understanding of the financial sector and its products.

15 interviews were conducted with officials from DG JUST, DG FISMA, and EISMEA for clarification on various actions of Pillar 4. DG JUST highlighted consumer protection as an essential cross-cutting objective of all EU policies, underscoring that Pillar 4 activities are fundamental to the Commission's efforts in developing, implementing, and enforcing Union law. The activities have specifically addressed challenges identified in the SMP's impact assessment, such as improving compliance through capacity building for the CPC network

318 71 respondents out of which 13 exited the survey at some point.

and coordinated joint actions. Furthermore, digital initiatives like the e-Enforcement Academy were praised as very positive in their role of tackling emerging consumer challenges. In the financial services sector, the beneficiaries' expertise was considered particularly valuable in advocating consumer interests. A notable change during the period was the shift from grants to procurement for CPC network funding, which resulted in efficiency gains but also presented challenges during the transition, particularly for legacy projects.

Stakeholder interviews, including those with ECCs, ADRs, and representatives from consumer and financial service user organisations, corroborated the survey findings. ECC representatives emphasised that SMP funding is crucial to their ability to respond to increasing consumer inquiries, though visibility remains an area for further enhancement. Financial service user representatives also noted the complementary nature of activities undertaken by beneficiaries like BEUC, Better Finance, and Finance Watch.

An interview with BEUC, a direct beneficiary of SMP grants, emphasising the significance of SMP's operating grant in facilitating their work. BEUC's response to the call for evidence highlighted SMP's positive impact, streamlined reporting requirements, and greater operational certainty due to its designation as a beneficiary. The SMP funding, providing the organisation more certainty, has also enabled BEUC to lead critical consumer and SME education projects, as well as EU-funded initiatives for sustainable consumption and vulnerable consumer protection (e.g. CLEAR2.0, CLEAR-X, PROMPT, BELT, STEP project).

Similarly, interviews with Better Finance (BF) and Finance Watch (FW) confirmed that SMP funding remains a key income source, alongside member fees. Both beneficiaries supported survey dissemination and maintained regular communication to encourage participation. They were satisfied with the support from DG FISMA and the SMP and had comprehensive monitoring systems to ease reporting. Administrative costs were approximately EUR 10 000 each for grant applications and reporting for each beneficiary. While generally content with the process, Better Finance suggested improvements like speeding up the grant process (Time to Grant) and simplifying some information requirements.

Other respondents, such as Members of FSUG and users of FW and BF outputs expressed a positive view of the effectiveness of the activities funded under the SMP. They emphasised the value of research reports and policy papers in supporting national advocacy efforts. The stakeholders pointed out on the need for more work in financial literacy and education and adapting to the rise of e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic. One MEP also emphasised the importance of funding such organisations to advance towards green finance.

For **Pillar 5**, in addition to interviews of stakeholders, surveys collected insights from Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) national contact points (40 responses), and European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) (34 responses), providing comprehensive feedback on programme strengths and areas needing improvement.

Feedback from the BTSF survey was overall positive, with 93% (37 out of 40) fully completing the survey, with 85% (34 out of 40) of respondents indicating that the training effectively met food safety needs and 78% (31 out of 40) affirming that it kept Competent Authority staff current. The harmonisation of food safety practices across the EU was confirmed by 71% (27 out of 38) of respondents. Workshops (50%, 19 out of 38) and e-learning modules (58%, 21 out of 38) were rated as highly effective training tools, and the BTSF Academy Library was well-utilised (60%, 22 out of 37) and valued (91%, 20 out of 22). Nonetheless, budget constraints were highlighted, particularly by 71% (5 out of 7) of respondents from resource-limited countries who faced challenges in sending sufficient staff

to trainings. 79% (30 out of 38) of respondents were able to send enough staff to participate in the training, some highlighted that the number of available spots was often insufficient. 82% (32 out of 38) reported improvements in official controls due to BTSF training, particularly in inspection protocols (21) and compliance by food business operators (13)[319].

The EURLs survey, with a 97% (33 out of 34) completion rate, revealed that these laboratories are key in maintaining high standards in food safety, animal health, and plant health. However, respondents in open-ended questions reported challenges with unclear and inconsistent reporting deadlines, affecting their operational planning. Financial constraints were significant in the responses, citing increased costs for staffing and equipment, and 61critiquing new travel cost rules as insufficient. Despite these issues, technical collaboration with the European Commission was lauded by 85% (29 out of 34), particularly for responsiveness and clear communication. The activities of EURLs were viewed as highly relevant to EU health and safety priorities though the need for more training and improved data sharing to keep up with evolving food safety demands was also highlighted.

Exploratory interviews with DG SANTE and HaDEA representatives were first conducted to tailor the evaluation methodology. Next, interviews targeted 54 stakeholders such as national competent authorities, food waste prevention authorities, representatives from IT systems and networks, EU Reference Centres (EURCs), National Reference Laboratories (NRLs), and participants in the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme. These interviews also delved into specific disease management linked with Avian Influenza and Xylella fastidiosa.

Interviews with six national competent authorities highlighted success in implementing veterinary regulations, enhancing animal health programmes, and improving pest control. However, administrative burden was identified as a challenge, particularly with the eGrants IT tool. While SMP activities were well coordinated with national and EU priorities, especially in areas like antimicrobial resistance and pest management, interviews indicated the added value and relevance by filling funding gaps, supporting cross-border disease management and supporting national priorities.

Interviews with three national competent authorities involved in food waste prevention reported effectiveness in reducing household food waste and adapting quickly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine conflict. Efficiency was enhanced through strategic resource use, despite financial constraints. These efforts were aligned with EU sustainability goals, and SMP funding enabled comprehensive data collection and the implementation of innovative food recovery models.

Interviews with 6 contact points from networks using databases and IT systems discussed the effectiveness of tools in relation to food safety monitoring like the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and TRACES, which provided real-time information. However, technical glitches and inconsistent use across Member States occasionally hindered efficiency. The coherence of these systems was clear in supporting the single market with a consistent regulatory framework at EU level, and stakeholders suggested integrating food safety and plant health systems for better coordination.

Interviews with 4 EURC representatives revealed that these centres effectively enhanced animal welfare standards across the EU, primarily through training, research, and communication strategies. However, administrative burdens due to system transitions impacted efficiency. Despite these issues, EURCs maintained coherence by standardising methodologies across Member States, with a strong alignment to EU priorities on sustainable and ethical animal production.

319 For these questions respondents could select several answers, hence there is no total number of responses.

Interviews with 6 National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) representatives, collaborating closely with European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs), confirmed their effectiveness in ensuring high health and safety standards for diagnostics and analysis. Efficiency was supported by flexible staffing, but overall shortages posed challenges. The added value of SMP funding was essential for maintaining coherence and alignment with EU consumer safety standards. NRLs play an essential role in implementing health and safety measures in line with EU priorities.

Interview with 3 BTSF training programme contractor and 3 participants showed recognition of the programme's effectiveness for enhancing compliance in food safety, plant health, and animal health, as well as challenges in budget constraints and post-pandemic training demands. Interviews with three BTSF contractors and three participants showed the programme's coherence with EU regulations and its crucial role in harmonising practices across Member States. However, further specialised content and expanding opportunities to non-EU countries were identified as areas for improvement.

The interviews focusing on the management of HPAI and Xylella fastidiosa emphasised the critical role of EU co-financing for effective implementation of disease control measures. Financial challenges due to reduced co-funding rates were noted, underlining the need for sustained EU support. Despite the administrative burden in accessing funds, the added value of financial support was pointed out by the increase capacity of Member States to manage public health threats, contributing to align national and EU health priorities.

For **Pillar 6**, the targeted surveys focused on the one hand on statistics producers and on the other on users within the ESS. Therefore, a producers' survey (92 responses), with most respondents coming from Portugal, followed by Denmark, Sweden, Slovakia, and Latvia, and a users' survey (40 responses), primarily from Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Poland, were conducted. These aimed to collect views from stakeholders, quantitative feedback, on the programme's performance, including in producing high-quality, timely, and cost-efficient EU statistics. They also sought to collect feedback on the coherence of Pillar 6 activities with overall EU strategies and its flexibility to respond to new challenges, including those arising unforeseen events such as from COVID-19 and geopolitical events.

The interview programme featured 39 stakeholders divided into four categories. 15 interviews were conducted with ESS members and bodies like ESAC, ESGAB, NSIs, and ONAs, 11 with organisations outside the ESS and users of European statistics, 10 with Eurostat staff and 3 with other stakeholders. Each group received tailored questionnaires based on their roles and experiences. For instance, Eurostat staff were questioned on how well the objectives of Pillar 6 aligned with the ESS. The interviews also delve into the programme's adaptability to technological advancements. Users and organisations outside the ESS provided input on how the objectives matched their needs and its adaptability to new data sources and technologies.

Across all consultation activities under Pillar 6, broader themes emerged. Stakeholders generally acknowledged the Programme's effectiveness in delivering high-quality statistics and praised its adaptability to new challenges and technological changes. However, concerns were raised in relation to the communication of data revisions, the need for proactive user engagement, and more rapid integration of new technologies like big data and AI. Moreover, the consultations emphasised maintaining coherence in statistical practices across the EU is crucial. While Eurostat's role in achieving this coherence was widely recognised, stakeholders suggested improving coordination with other EU bodies to align statistical production more closely with emerging policy objectives and further improve efficiency. Additionally, the administrative burden on national statistical institutes was pointed out as

an area with room for improvement, with more to be achieved in terms of streamlining to reduce workload.

Under Pillar 6, the consultation activities offered a thorough evaluation of the ESP from diverse perspectives. Overall, the Programme was perceived as effective, particularly in producing reliable and timely statistics. However, suggestions for improvement were highlighted in areas like user engagement, communication, and the integration of emerging technologies, guiding future developments for the ESP to better align with evolving EU priorities and stakeholder needs.

ANNEX VI. PERFORMANCE AGAINST INDICATORS

Performance against indicators

The below tables show the performance of the SMP against the indicators that have been used for this interim evaluation. It must be noted that revisions to the monitoring and evaluation framework have also been suggested in the prior section, and this may impact the final evaluation of the SMP.

Programme level

Table 1: Output and result indicators at Programme level

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
Outputs			
OP 1. Number of new complaints in the area of free movement of goods and services, as well as Union legislation on public procurement	475 (2021)	No target	N/A 2022: 215 2023: 227
OP 2. Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI)	EU-22 average of the OECD STRI	Decrease	No 2022: 0.19 2021: 0.19
OP 3. Number of visits to the Your Europe portal and to the national pages included in Your Europe; user satisfaction	Number of visits 2020	Increase of 20%	No 2023: 39.2 million 2022: 42.3 million 2021: 57.9 million
OP 4. Number of Joint market surveillance campaigns	10 (2020)	Possible increase in the number of campaigns	Yes 2023: 23 2022: 8 2021: 12
OP 5. Number of SMEs, clusters and business network organisations, and business support organisations receiving support from the programme, in particular for internationalisation, digitalisation and sustainability.	N/A	320 000 in 2025	N/A 2023: 266 448
OP 6. Number of entrepreneurs benefiting from mentoring and mobility schemes, including young, new and female entrepreneurs, as well as other specific target groups	N/A	3 000 matched per year 22 000 over 7 years	No 2023: 2 086 (on track since the number of realised exchanges increases with the duration of the Programme)
OP 7. Percentage of international financial reporting and auditing standards endorsed by the Union	100%	Aim for full coverage	No 2022: 98.4% (A higher result is hard to achieve given the gap between the time of changes and new developments of standards and the time needed for the endorsement process.)

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
OP 8. Number of position papers and responses to public consultations in the field of financial services from beneficiaries	53 (2020)	Aim for positive trend	Yes 2022: 60
Results			
RES 1. Number of cases of non-compliance in the area of goods, including online sales	9 606 (2020)	N/A	N/A 2023: 16 245 2022: 10 000 2021: 10 234
RES 2. Number of companies supported having concluded business partnerships.	2020 figure	Assumption of 2 700 partnership agreements per year in 2024	Yes 2023: 1 724
RES 3. Share of implementation of European standards as national standards by Member States in total amount of active European standards	2020 figure	Progressive increase	Yes 2022: 80.29% 2021: 71.23%
RES 4. Consumer condition index	0 in 2020	Positive trend	Yes 2022: 71.8 2021: no data
RES 5. Number of successfully implemented national veterinary programmes	90%	>90% in 2027	Yes 2021-2022: 94.2%
RES 6. Number of successfully implemented national phytosanitary programmes	*N/A*	95% in 2027	Yes 2023: 100% 2022: 100% 2021: 100%

Sources: European Commission Single Market Programme website and MFF EU Core Performance indicators

Table 2: Programme design indicators

Indicator	Target	Result
OP 0.1. – Number and subject of training organised covering more than one policy area (with common programme or common venue or common participants or common date)	n/a	0
OP 0.2. - Number of joint procurement actions: common purchases of databases, joint studies, Eurobarometers and joint framework contracts	n/a	1 joint framework contract
OP 0.3: Number and development related costs of common IT projects supporting more than one policy area	n/a	0
OP 0.4 Number of times payment and commitment appropriations were moved between DGs from one budget line to another	n/a	4 between different DGs 8 within the same DG

Indicator	Target	Result
OP 0.5: Effect of scale on savings in resources and investments (tools, staffing, time) throughout the governance of administrative, IT and communication activities.	n/a	0
RES 0.1: Satisfaction of participants in trainings covering more than one policy area (with common programme or common venue or common participants or common date)	n/a	0
RES 0.2: Savings from joint procurement actions: common purchases of databases, joint studies, Eurobarometers and joint framework contracts	n/a	Reduced administrative burden resulting from 1 joint framework contract instead of 2
RES 0.3: Measure of success of joint promotion campaigns	n/a	n/a
RES 0.4: Users' satisfaction rate on IT systems.	n/a	n/a

Pillar 1

Table 3: Pillar 1 main outputs and results

(sub-pillar) Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
Outputs			
Enhanced quality and greater use of services for citizens, businesses, public authorities			
(1c/1d) OP 1.1. Number of policy areas covered by IMI	2021: 17	Stable or positive trend	2023: 20
(1c/1d) OP 1.2. Number of administrative cooperation procedures in IMI	2021: 68	Stable or positive trend	2023: 97
(1c/1d) IMI maintenance/enhancement of IT tool	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1b) Portal for consumers (market surveillance)	N/A	N/A	In development
(1c/1d) Your Europe portal visits	N/A	N/A	2021: 58.3 million
(1c/1d) Your Europe portal users redirected to national websites and assistance services	N/A	N/A	2023: 42 million
(1c/1d) YEA maintenance/enhancement of IT tool	N/A	N/A	Achieved
Studies, analyses, evaluation, databases, expert services, subscriptions, etc.			
(1a) Studies or consultations in the field of competition policy	N/A	N/A	17
(1b) Studies in the field of market surveillance	N/A	N/A	3
(1e) Studies in the field of technical standards, product legislation, taxation and customs union, company law, anti-money laundering, financial services, corporate reporting, sustainable and digital finance	N/A	N/A	Numerous
(1b) Provision of expertise by the JRC in product safety and testing, development of technical specifications, etc.	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1e) Membership of organisations and bodies in the field of financial services (IOSCO, FinCoNet, IAIS) or anti-money-laundering, FATF)	N/A	N/A	Achieved
New/improved product testing activities, facilities, resources, IT tools, information systems			
(1b) New EUTFs	N/A	N/A	2 (toys, radio equipment)
(1b) Upgrade/development of IT tools used to perform non-food product market surveillance	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1b) Union market surveillance campaigns	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1b) Joint enforcement actions	N/A	N/A	Achieved
Participation in networks, exchanges, committees, peer evaluations			
(1a) Operation of the ECN	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1b) Operation of the EUPCN	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1b) Coordination Groups of Notified Bodies (for multiple products)	N/A	N/A	Achieved

(sub-pillar) Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
(1e) European Organisation for Technical Assessment (EOTA)	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1e) European Cooperation for Accreditation and for the operation of the peer evaluation system of National Accreditation Bodies	N/A	N/A	Achieved
Enhanced quality and greater quality of digital tools serving the Commission and national authorities			
(1a) Launch of COMP Cases (revamped case search engine)	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1a) Modernisation of eConfidentiality, eRFI eLeniency, and SARI2	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1a) Investment in CASE@EC case management system	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1a) Update of security plans: SANI2, SARI2, TAM	N/A	N/A	Achieved
(1e) Maintenance/enhancement of FIU.net, EU Taxonomy Compass, KOEL	N/A	N/A	Achieved
National officials/judges trained			
(1a) New/enhanced training courses in competition law for judges + supporting materials (training materials, database of cases, videos of lectures, etc.)	N/A	N/A	6
(1a) Judges (to be) trained	N/A	N/A	343
(1a) Participants attending 'Stepping up with the fundamentals of competition law'	N/A	N/A	28
Results			
Increased knowledge/awareness of citizens, consumers and SMEs regarding their rights and opportunities in the internal market			
(1c/1d) RES 1.5. Number of Your Europe Advice (YEA) visits	2020: 25 821	N/A	2022: 20 071 2021: 19 002
(1c/1d) RES 1.6a. YEA performance: Share of replies within the deadline	N/A	N/A	2023: 94.1%
(1c/1d) RES 1.6b. YEA performance: replies provided >1 day late	N/A	N/A	2023: 1.9%
(1c/1d) RES 1.6c. YEA performance: average quality of replies	N/A	N/A	2023: 93.6%
Better communication between competent authorities			
(1c/1d) RES 1.7. IMI exchanges in total	N/A	Stable or positive	2023: 112 550
(1c/1d) RES 1.8. Number of competent authorities using IMI	2021: 11 394	Stable or positive	2023: 12 500
(1c/1d) IMI: Member States performing at green level	N/A	N/A	2023: 21
(1c/1d) IMI: Member States performing at yellow level	N/A	N/A	2023: 5

(sub-pillar) Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
(1c/1d) IMI: Member States performing at red level	N/A	N/A	2023: 1
Enhanced ability of the Commission and competent national authorities to fulfil roles in policymaking, standard-setting and enforcement			
(1a) NCAs reporting more efficient case-handling and speedier investigations	N/A	N/A	22/23 NCAs expressing a positive view
(1a) NCAs reporting improved capabilities to enforce competition rules due to the ECN	N/A	N/A	22/23 NCAs expressing a positive view
(1a) NCAs reporting better implementation and enforcement of competition policy in their country due to the ECN	N/A	N/A	23/23 NCAs expressing a positive view
(1b) MSAs expressing satisfaction with joint enforcement actions	N/A	N/A	27/34 MSAs expressing a positive view
(1b) MSAs reporting more effective market surveillance across the EU due to horizontal activities	N/A	N/A	22/32 MSAs expressing a positive view
(1b) MSAs reporting greater homogeneity and increased capacity due to the EUPCN	N/A	N/A	29/32 MSAs expressing a positive view
(1e) European Commission services reporting benefits of SMP expenditure in terms of helping them to fulfil their role in developing and enforcing Union law	N/A	N/A	Achieved
Better, more secure case management, transfer of information and documents, communication, etc.			
(1a) External users/visitors of DG COMP IT tools	N/A	N/A	2023: 178 521
(1a) Documents submitted by external users on DG COMP IT tools	N/A	N/A	2023: 112 742 2022: 91 656
(1a) Satisfaction of NCAs regarding DG COMP IT tools	N/A	N/A	23/25 NCAs expressing a positive view
Greater knowledge of/expertise in EU competition law among national officials and judges			
(1a) Satisfaction of participants in training in competition law for judges	N/A	N/A	Data not available
(1a) Satisfaction of participants in 'Stepping up with the fundamentals of competition law'	N/A	N/A	4.64/5.0 (average score)
Other results			
(1a) RES 1.1. Estimate of customer benefits resulting from cartel prohibition decisions	EUR 1.7-2.6 bn (10-yr average, 2012-2021)	Increasing or stable	2023: EUR 3.4-5.5 bn (cartel + antitrust + merger interventions)
(1a) RES 1.3.Estimate of customer benefits resulting from merger interventions	EUR 7.4-12.3 bn (10-yr average, 2012-2021)	Stable	

(sub-pillar) Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Result
(1a) RES 1.4.Estimate of customer benefits resulting from non- cartel antitrust interventions	EUR 3.3-6.1 bn (10-yr average, 2012-2021)	Increasing or stable	
(1a) RES 1.2. Total State aid expenditure falling under Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 as a percentage of total State aid in the EU.	2018: 94%	Increasing trend	Data not available

Pillar 2

Table 4: Pillar 2 indicators for outputs and results

Indicator	Description	Target	Achieved
Outputs			
Number of SMEs, clusters, business network organisations, and business support organisations receiving support from the programme, in particular for internationalisation, digitalisation and sustainability (OP 5)	Number of entities that received concrete support from the actions (in particular EEN and Euroclusters)	n/a	266 448
Number of entrepreneurs benefiting from mentoring and mobility schemes, including young, new and female entrepreneurs, as well as other specific target groups (OP 6)	Participating entrepreneurs (new and host) engaged in a business exchange (EYE)	Annual target is 3 000 entrepreneurs	2 086 entrepreneurs benefiting from EYE (end of 2023)
Number of SMEs benefiting from third party finance to participate in projects for enhancing their competitiveness, sustainability, digitalisation, and/or for innovating business processes (OP 2.1)	Refers to SMEs benefiting from FSTP	n/a	1 747
Results			
Number of companies supported having concluded business partnerships (RES 2)	Partnership agreements signed through the EEN services	Annual target is 2 700 agreements per year	2 048 in 2023 (data until June) *There may be businesses that have obtained more than one partnership agreement*
Client satisfaction rate for flagship support services for SMEs (RES 2.1)	Based on annual satisfaction survey It relates to flagship actions	Targets: EEN > 90% satisfied; other actions > 80% satisfied	99% of EEN clients being satisfied (2023) IP Helpdesk: 96%
Number of supported SMEs that undertook business process innovation tied to technological adoption leading to progress with their green transition (including improved climate performance, and/or higher sustainability) (RES 2.2)	Includes SMEs receiving third party finance (i.e. relates to all actions with third party finance)	Target: 30% of all SMEs receiving financial support through SMP SME pillar	40% (gross estimate based on call themes)
Number of supported SMEs that undertook business process innovation tied to technological adoption leading to higher digitalisation (RES 2.3)	Includes SMEs receiving third party finance (i.e. relates to all actions with third party finance)	Target: 30% of all SMEs receiving financial support through SMP SME pillar	25% (gross estimate based on call themes)
Number of supported SMEs (with direct support/third party finance) that enhanced their skills for implementing sustainable business models and	For all actions providing third party finance	Target: 30% of all SMEs receiving financial support	15% (gross estimate based on call themes)

Indicator	Description	Target	Achieved
practices and/or their digital skills as a result of participating in the project (RES 2.4)		through SMP SME pillar	
Percentage of businesses that are climate neutral or negative, or that already have a strategy in place for this purpose (RES 2.5)	Source: Eurobarometer survey Baseline 24% (2021 data)	Target value 2027: 27%	25% (2024)
Burden of government regulation (RES 2.6)	Result of opinion survey of World Economic Forum, using a scale from 1=extremely burdensome to 7=not burdensome at all (Question is: How burdensome is it for businesses in your country to comply with governmental administrative requirements (e.g. permits, regulations, reporting)? Baseline 3.4 (2020)	Target value 2027: 3.9	3.8 (2022)
Number of users of digital services/digital information tools provided by the programme (RES 2.7)	Relates to EEN, EYE, YEB, ECCP One user may be using several digital services	Target: 18.8 million by 2027	21.5 million (see explanation in Pillar 2 report)

Pillar 3

Table 5: Pillar 3 indicators for outputs and results

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Achieved
Outputs			
European standardisation			
Number of topics in the calls for proposals for action grants launched by EISMEA	N/A	N/A	2023: 54 2022: 57 2021: 6
Number of topics for action grants responded to by ESOs	N/A	N/A	2023: 28 2022: 29[320] 2021: 3
Number of the topics funded through action grants	N/A	N/A	2023: 16 2022: 23 2021: 0
Number of active European standards (CEN-CENELEC)	N/A	N/A	2023: 23 229 2022: 23 111 2021: 23 058
Number of active European standards (ETSI)	N/A	N/A	2023: 4 898 2022: 5 137 2021: 5 099
Number of TCs and WGs participated by Annex III organisations – SMEs[321]	N/A	N/A	2023: N/A 2022: 233 2021: 220
Number of TCs and WGs participated by Annex III organisations – consumers	N/A	N/A	2023: 225 2022: 237 2021: 180
Number of TCs and WGs participated by Annex III organisations – environmental[322]	N/A	N/A	2023: 358 2022: 323 2021: 300+
Number of TCs and WGs participated by Annex III organisations – social	N/A	N/A	2023: 12 2022: 12 2021: 12
Number of European standards adopted worldwide (CEN-CENELEC)	N/A	N/A	2023: 123 540 2022: 121 252 2021: 115 973
International financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards			
OP 7. Percentage of international financial reporting and auditing standards endorsed by the Union	100%	Aim for full coverage	2023 2022: 98.4% (A higher result is hard to achieve given the gap between the time of changes and new developments of standards and the time needed for the endorsement process.)
Results			

320 In one case, the same proposal covered two different calls and topics.
321 Numbers include TCs in both EU and international standardisation organisations.
322 Numbers include TCs in both EU and international standardisation organisations.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Achieved
European standardisation			
RES 3. Share of implementation of European standards as national standards by Member States in total amount of active European standards	2020 figure	Progressive increase	Yes 2022: 80.29% 2021: 71.23%
International financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards			
RES 3.1 - Number of countries using International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)	156 (2020)	159 (by 2027)	Yes 2023: 168
RES 3.2 - Number of draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) prepared by EFRAG and their coverage in line with the mandate of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)	0 (2020)	54 (by 2027)	In development 2022: 12
RES 3.3 - Publication of public interest issues by the Public Interest Oversight Board (PIOB)	0 (2020)	3 yearly	Yes 2023: 7[323] 2022: 6[324] 2021: 6[325]

323 Three PI issues on IAASB projects and four on IESBA projects. One PI Issues on IESBA projects was actually published in 2023 but referred to 2022 projects.
324 Three PI issues on IAASB projects and four on IESBA projects.
325 Three PI issues on IAASB projects and three on IESBA projects.

Pillar 4

Table 6: Pillar 4 Output and result indicators with targets

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Achieved
Outputs			
OP 4.1. Number of authorities participating in the joint actions on the safety of products (CASP) (pillar 4a)	2020: 35	Stable trend	Target partially met: 38 in 2021 and 37 in 2022 (no activities in 2023)
OP 4.2. Number of Consumer Law Ready and Consumer Pro trainings (pillar 4a)	2020: 80	Positive trend	Target already met (jointly by Consumer Law and Consumer Pro) as follows: Consumer Law Ready: 4 European workshops[326] and 52 training sessions between the second half of 2021 and 2022[327]. The latest report on Consumer Pro, covering period from July 2021 to July 2023, notes 46 national training sessions[328]. Six European workshops were completed from June 2022 to June 2023.
OP 4.3. Number of participants to consumer policy major communication events (pillar 4a)	2020: 1 000	Positive trend	IPSW: 640 Consumer Summit: 2 206 (2021-2023) European Product Safety Award: 458 (2021-2023) Safety Gate media event: 60 Consumer dialogues on YouTube: +500
OP 4.4. Number of press releases of the beneficiaries (pillar 4.b)	2020: 41	≥ 40 yearly	Target already met 2023: 46 2022: 40 2021: 38
OP 4.5 Number of conferences, seminars, webinars organised by the beneficiaries (pillar 4.b)	2020: 14	≥ 12 yearly	2023: 13 2022: 12 2021: 12
OP 4.6. Number of meetings with Commissioners, MEPs, representatives from European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions and Permanent Representations (pillar 4.b)	2020: 28	≥ 50 yearly	Target partially met. 2023: 111. 2022: 108 2021: Slightly below target (47).

326 Attended by 94 participants.
327 At least 1 069 people trained during that period, about half of them SME trainers. These figures are second half 2021 to end 2022. Reporting date was JAN23. Half of the people trained are multipliers, i.e. trainers that in turn train SMEs. Not all SMEs trained are covered by this figure. Unfortunately, not annual figures have been made available.
328 900 professionals benefiting from training. The national training sessions started in September 2022 and continued in three different rounds until May 2023.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Achieved
OP 4.7. Number of position papers and responses to public consultations in the field of financial services from beneficiaries. (pillar 4.b)	2020: 53	53	Target partially met. 2023: 25 responses to public consultation; 15 position papers, policy briefs and open letters 2022: 40 responses; +7 position papers 2021: 43 responses to pc; 16 position papers
Results			
RES 4.1 Consumer Condition Index CCI monitors the quality of the consumer environment and covers knowledge and trust, compliance and enforcement and complaints and dispute resolution. It is part of the Consumer Conditions Scoreboard and measured every two years at absolute value.	Set at 0 due a change in the methodology in 2020 in line with policy priorities	Positive trend	CCI 2022: 71.8 Knowledge and trust: 51.2 Compliance & enforcement: 77.4 Complains & dispute resolutions: 86.7
RES 4.2. Outcome of consumers queries to European Consumer Centres Network (ECC Net) (pillar 4a)	2021: 116 424	Positive trend	2022: 118 142 2023: 124 119
RES 4.3. Number of measures on dangerous non-food products alerted on the Safety Gate platform (pillar 4a)	6 500	Positive trend[329]	Fewer alerts in 2021, and 2022 than 2020 but an increase in 2023[330]; fewer follow-up actions in 2021, 2023 and 2022 relative to 2020). In 2021, 2 142 alerts with 4 965 follow-up actions In 2022, 2 117 alerts with 3 932 follow-up actions; in 2023, 3 412 alerts and 4 287 follow-up actions) The total number of measures (both in the alerts and in the follow-ups) shows a varied trend. 2021: 7 041 measures 2022: 6 384 measures 2023: 8 293 measures
RES 4.4. Number of Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies supported (pillar 4a)	2020: 16	Positive trend	Target partially met 46 ADRs supported in 2021-2023; 2023: 15 2022: 22 2021: 9

329 To be noted, fewer alerts/measures could mean there are fewer dangerous products in the market, but more alerts/measures could mean that the authorities have been more active, which is also positive. The numbers can vary based on the products that are placed on the market, showing different purchasing trends and preferences. The numbers may indicate greater level of activity and not just more unsafe products in the market and vice versa. Therefore, the numbers can only give indication for the overall functioning of the Safety Gate.

330 The number of alerts in 2023 increased due to the entry into force of a ban on the chemical BMHCA in cosmetics, that entered into force in 2022.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2027)	Achieved
RES 4.5. Number of social media followers of the beneficiaries (pillar 4.b)	2020: 33 894	≥ 33 894 (until 2023)	Target already met 2023: 43 358 2022: 35 281 2021: 35 225
RES 4.6: Participants in conferences, seminars and webinars organised (pillar 4.b)	(new proposed indicator based on consultation findings)	No target	2023: 985 (combined) 2022: 858 2021: 972

Pillar 5

Table 7: Performance indicators and results achieved related to the specific objective I

Indicator	Judgement criteria/target Baseline	Outputs/results achieved			Outcome
		2021	2022	2023	
Salmonella prevalence in breeders of Gallus gallus below EU target at EU level	EU target (1% for breeders of Gallus gallus, for the 5 EU target serovars) Baseline (2020) 0.52%	0.58%	0.84%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Salmonella prevalence in layers of Gallus gallus below EU target at EU level	EU target (2% for layers of Gallus gallus, for the 2 EU target serovars) Baseline (2020) 1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
The EU prevalence of broiler flocks of Gallus gallus positive for either of the two target Salmonella serovars.	EU target (1% for broiler flocks of Gallus gallus, for the 2 EU target serovars). Baseline (2020) 0.25%	0.28%	0.25%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
The EU prevalence of breeding flocks of turkeys positive for either of the two target Salmonella serovars.	EU target (1% for breeding flocks of turkeys, for the 2 EU target serovars) Baseline (2020) 0.48%	0.49%	0.32%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
The EU prevalence of flocks of fattening turkeys positive for either of the two target Salmonella serovars.	EU target (1% for flocks of fattening turkeys, for the 2 EU target serovars) Baseline (2020) 0.38%	0.31%	0.32%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Percentage of poultry population under an EU co-financed Salmonella programme, below the EU target(RES5.2)	More than 80% of the poultry populations under EU co-financed programmes have an incidence below the EU target Baseline (2020) 80%	83.3%	84.5%	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Number of successfully	90% Baseline (2020) 90%	94.2%	94.2%	99%	Achieved

implemented national veterinary programmes(RES4)					
Number of veterinary emergency measures successfully implemented by MSs(RES5.3)	All emergency measures that were applied for were implemented successfully 100% Baseline (2020) 100%	24 (100%)	28 (100%)	37 (100%)	Achieved
Number of successfully implemented national phytosanitary programmes(RES5)	90% Baseline N/A	100%	100%	100%	Achieved
Number of phytosanitary emergency measures successfully implemented by MSs(RES5.3)	All emergency measures that were applied for were implemented successfully 100% Baseline (2020) 100%	4 (100%)	2 (100%)	3 (100%)	Achieved
Number of phytosanitary eradication measures successfully implemented by the MSs	All emergency measures that were applied for were implemented successfully Baseline N/A	12	12	13	Achieved
African swine fever No of Member States which are not infected in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Not infected countries remain non-infected Baseline 2020 (15)	17	16	13	Partially achieved
African swine fever number outbreaks in domestic pigs within each of the affected Member States in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Number of infections is either decreasing since 2020 or is stable Baseline (2020) 1 174	1 810	377	1 929	Partially achieved
Number of HPAI cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Number of infections is either decreasing since 2020 or is stable Baseline (2020) 479	1 847	2 636	619	Partially achieved
Reduced number of	Cases in humans have	60 050	65 208	N/A	Not achieved

cases of Salmonella in humans)(RES5.1)	decreased since 2020 Baseline (2020) 52 690	(*data contains cases not only from poultry but other possible sources of Salmonella)*	*(data contains cases not only from poultry but other possible sources of Salmonella)*	(EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	
Zoonotic Salmonella: The number of MSs reporting on Salmonella control programmes that met the reduction targets for all poultry populations in 2021, 2022 and 2023	The number of MSs reporting on Salmonella control programmes that met the reduction targets for all poultry populations is increasing since 2020 Baseline (2020) 14 MSs	16	19	N/A (EFSA zoonoses report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Infection with rabies virus: number of cases in wild animals in the Union in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Reduction of cases in wild animals recorded in the Union 2021-2023 Baseline N/A	103(97 foxes)	45(43 foxes)	36(35 foxes)	Achieved
Classical bovine spongiform encephalopathy (C-BSE) - number of cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Below five cases of classical BSE per year for all EU Member States. Baseline N/A	0	0[331]	N/A (EFSA report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies: - Number of Member States with a negligible BSE risk in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Number of countries with a negligible risk of BSE is increasing as compared to 2020 Baseline (2020) 24	25	26	26	Achieved
Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies: - number of index cases of classical scrapie in sheep and goats in the EU in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Decrease the number of index cases of classical scrapie in sheep and goats in the EU as compared to the situation 2020 Baseline (2020) 132	110	135	N/A (EFSA report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Brucellosis in kept bovine animals (Brucella abortus):	Cases are decreasing since 2020 Baseline (2020) 3	4	6	2	Achieved

331 EU TSE report, Table 13: https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.2903/j.efsa.2023.8384.

- number of cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023					
Brucellosis in kept ovine and caprine animals (Brucella melitensis): - number of cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Cases are decreasing since 2020 Baseline (2020) 7	11	4	2	Achieved
Bovine, ovine and caprine brucellosis: - number of Member States free from the disease in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Increased number of MS free form disease as compared to the situation in 2020 Baseline (2020) 19	20	20	N/A (EFSA report not produced for 2023)	Achieved
Bovine tuberculosis: Number of cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Cases did not grow exponentially since 2020 in the MS with EU co-funded eradication programme Baseline (2020) 132	131	142	157	Partially achieved
Bovine tuberculosis: - Number of Member States free from the disease in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Increased number of MS free form disease as compared to the situation in 2020 Baseline (2020) 17	17	17	N/A (EFSA report not produced for 2023)	Partially achieved
Classical swine fever: - Number of cases of CSF in wild boar in 2021, 2022 and 2023	No cases of CSF in wild boar Baseline N/A	0	0	0	Achieved
Classical swine fever: - No of cases in domestic pigs in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Not a single country where a number of cases exponentially grew Baseline N/A	0	0	0	Achieved
Lumpy skin disease, peste des petits ruminants, sheep and goat pox: Number of cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Not a single country where a number of cases exponentially grew Baseline N/A	0	23	13	Achieved
Number of priority	At least one priority	3 (Number	0	0	Achieved

pests eradicated in 2021, 2022 and 2023	pest eradicated, Baseline (2020) 1	of MS that eradicated at least one pest from the priority pests list)[332]			
Number of priority[333] pests not spreading into new MS in 2021, 2022 and 2023	No priority pest is spreading over time in other new EU MS Baseline (2020) 20	19 (Number of priority pests that did not spread into new countries)	20 (Number of priority pests that did not spread into new countries)	19 (Number of priority pests that did not spread into new countries)	Achieved

Sources: monitoring data and data in 2021 and 2022 SANTE Annual Activity Reports, EFSA Reports, ADIS reports, and EPPO reporting system.

Table 8: Performance indicators and results achieved related to the specific objective II

Indicator	Judgement criteria/target Baseline	Outputs/results achieved			Outcome
		2021	2022	2023	
Number of activities of the WOAH Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe(OP5.4)	Number of successfully implemented activities Baseline N/A	2	3	4	Achieved
Number of WOAH Workshops on NCPs on Animal Welfare(OP5.4)	Number of successfully implemented workshops Baseline N/A	2	1	4	Achieved

Sources: data received from WOAH.

Table 9: Performance indicators and results achieved related to the specific objective III

Indicator	Judgement criteria/target Baseline	Outputs/results achieved			Outcome
		2021	2022	2023	
Number of coordinated control programmes to	All planned coordinated	24	26	26	Achieved

332 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1702&from=EN.
333 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1702&from=EN.

fight against AMR launched in 2021, 2022 and 2023(OP5.5)	control programmes were launched (2020) 0				
Number of the Member States funded which collected and timely reported to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) data on the sales of antimicrobial veterinary medicines and use in animals of the antimicrobial medicinal products(OP5.13)	All Member States that were funded Baseline N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A Activities ongoing, reporting to be available from 2024

Sources: data provided in the 2021 and 2022 SANTE Annual Activity Reports.

Table 10: Performance indicators and results achieved related to the specific objective IV

Indicator	Judgement criteria/target Baseline	Output/Result achieved			Outcome
		2021	2022	2023	
Number of MS that have put in place national food waste prevention strategies	MS have a national food waste programme in place Baseline N/A	18 (66.6%)	23 (85.2%)	23 (85.2%)	Partially achieved
Increased awareness related to food waste reduction and monitoring actions(RES5.7)	Number of presentations in events and other communication activities (e.g. posts on the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub) Baseline N/A	0	0	1	Projects are ongoing so not possible to fully assess the outcome yet
Number of tested and improved national/regional food waste measurement methods (datasets) prepared in 2021, 2022 and 2023.	Each awarded grant resulted in at least one tested and improved measurement method(dataset) Baseline N/A	N/A	1 (year of the grant)	4 (year of the grant)	Achieved
Percentage of countries with reduced food waste levels following the implementation of the grant(RES5.14)	Baseline N/A	N/A	Data on food waste levels in MS at the end of the project are not available yet	Data on food waste levels in MS at the end of the project are not available yet	

Contribution towards the SDG Target 12.3 to halve food waste by 2030 at consumption level and reduce food losses across the food supply chain(RES5.15)	Each awarded grant contributed to MS' monitoring of food waste levels and/or reducing levels of food waste through concrete actions, as part of reaching the SDG Target 12.3 Baseline N/A	N/A	1	4	Achieved
Number of grants awarded in 2021, 2022 and 2023(RES5.5)	The number of grants Baseline N/A	N/A	(5 grants for national competent authorities, 1 for FEBA, 14 stakeholder grants signed for 2022	N/A	Achieved
Decrease in use of hazardous pesticides(RES5.6)	Baseline 100 (of average of data from 2015-2017)	N/A	N/A	N/A	SMP-funded activities in 2023 and 2024 are ongoing

Sources: data DG SANTE and provided in the 2021, 2022 and 2023 SANTE Annual Activity Reports.

Table 11: Performance indicators and results achieved related to the specific objective V

Indicator	Judgement criteria/target Baseline	Output/Result achieved			Outcome
		2021	2022	2023	
Number of proficiency and comparative tests performed by NRLs(OP5.7)	Planned proficiency and comparative tests successfully implemented Baseline N/A	163 proficiency and 41 comparative tests (value for 2021 and 2022 combined)		N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual 2023-2024)	Achieved
Improved satisfaction rate of participants attending in-person BTSF training(RES5.11)	Satisfaction rates are improving over time Baseline N/A	89%			Achieved
For animal breeding, number of harmonised methods of genetic evaluation of purebred breeding animals of the bovine species in 2021, 2022 and 2023	Number of harmonised methods is cumulatively increasing since 2020 Baseline N/A	1	1	N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual	Achieved

				2023-2024)	
Number of harmonised, efficient and reliable methods of laboratory analysis, test or diagnosis in 2021, 2022 and 2023	The number of introduced methods in EURLs increased over 2021-2022 Baseline N/A	495	544	N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual 2023-2024)	Achieved
Number of diagnostic methods for which details and guidance as regards their techniques, validation and interpretation are available in the EURLs website, situation in 2024	Increased number of diagnostic methods over 2021-2022 Baseline N/A	334	342	N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual 2023-2024)	Achieved
Success rate of NRLs in proficiency tests in 2021, 2022 and 2023(RES5.8)	High success rate (%) in proficiency test Baseline N/A	89%	85%	N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual 2023-2024)	Achieved
Number of updated, reliable and consistent technical data, research findings, new techniques and expertise necessary for the correct application of EU legislation in the field of animal welfare in 2021, 2022 and 2023(OP5.8)	Number of technical data, research findings and new techniques in increasing since 2020 Baseline N/A	3 scientific studies, 1 technical and scientific study, 4 scientific papers, and 8 reports, 70 factsheets, with 42 updates to existing versions, 13 comprehensive reviews focused on animal welfare.		N/A (report not produced yet by HaDEA since grants are multiannual 2023-2024)	Achieved

Sources: DG SANTE and HaDEA data.

Table 12: Data on BTSF satisfaction rate

Contract name	Average	%	Technical content		Degree of relevance		Theory - practice		Course materials		Helpfulness	
TRACES	**4.3**	86%	4.3	87%	4.3	85%	4.3	86%	4.2	83%	4.4	87%
EU food standards - non-EU	**4.5**	91%		0%		0%		0%		0%		0%
Animal disease preparedness	**4.6**	92%	4.7	94%	4.5	90%	4.5	90%	4.7	94%	4.5	90%
HACCP	**4.5**	91%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%	4.5	90%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%
FCM	**4.4**	88%	4.5	90%	4.4	88%	4.2	84%	4.4	88%	4.4	88%

IMSOC non-EU	**4.5**	89%	4.5	90%	4.4	89%	4.4	89%	4.4	88%	4.5	90%
PPP Evaluation	**4.3**	87%	4.4	89%	4.2	84%	4.3	86%	4.4	89%	4.3	85%
Food Improvement Agents	**4.4**	87%	4.5	90%	4.2	84%	4.4	87%	4.5	89%	4.4	87%
TSE ABP	**4.5**	90%	4.8	95%	4.6	91%	4.1	81%	4.4	88%	4.7	93%
IPM	**4.4**	88%	4.5	90%	4.4	88%	4.2	84%	4.6	92%	4.3	86%
Risk analysis non-EU	**4.3**	85%		0%		0%		0%		0%		0%
AMR non-EU	**4.5**	90%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%	4.3	86%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%
Food hygiene at primary production	**4.7**	94%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%	4.7	94%	4.7	94%	4.7	93%
Audits of plastic recycling processes	**4.4**	89%	4.5	90%	4.5	90%	4.3	86%	4.3	86%	4.6	92%
Pesticide application equipment	**4.6**	92%	4.7	94%	4.5	90%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%
Food testing - non-EU	**4.7**	94%	4.8	96%	4.7	94%	4.5	89%	4.8	95%	4.8	96%
Risk assessment	**4.4**	88%	4.6	92%	4.1	82%	4.5	90%	4.6	92%	4.2	84%
Plant health controls	**4.5**	90%	4.6	93%	4.5	91%	4.1	83%	4.5	90%	4.6	92%
Novel foods non-EU	**4.4**	88%	4.6	92%	4.3	87%	4.2	84%	4.6	91%	4.3	87%
Meat hygiene and controls	**4.3**	87%	4.4	88%	4.4	88%	4.2	84%	4.3	86%	4.4	88%
Preparedness to crisis	**4.5**	89%	4.5	91%	4.5	91%	4.4	88%	4.4	88%	4.4	88%
New plant health regime	**4.4**	88%	4.6	91%	4.4	89%	4.2	85%	4.4	89%	4.4	89%
Biocides	**4.3**	85%		0%		0%		0%		0%		0%
Food fraud non-EU	**4.6**	92%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%
Animal health law	**4.3**	87%	4.7	94%	4.2	84%	4.3	86%	4.4	88%	4.1	82%
Plant health surveys	**4.5**	90%	4.7	94%	4.3	86%	4.3	86%	4.6	92%	4.5	90%

Geographical indications	**4.5**	91%	4.7	93%	4.4	88%	4.5	90%	4.7	93%	4.5	90%
EU SPS	**4.7**	93%	4.7	94%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%
BCPs	**4.5**	90%	4.7	93%	4.4	89%	4.4	87%	4.6	91%	4.6	91%
Organic farming	**4.4**	88%	4.5	89%	4.4	87%	4.4	89%	4.4	88%	4.3	87%
Crises preparedness non-EU	**47**	93%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%	4.7	94%	4.7	94%	4.6	92%
Animal welfare enforcement	**46**	92%	4.7	93%	4.8	95%	4.5	89%	4.4	88%	4.8	95%
Total average	**4.5**	89%	4.6	83%	4.4	81%	4.4	80%	4.5	82%	4.5	81%

Source: supporting study.

Pillar 6

Table 13: Eurostat SMP indicators, their baselines and targets for 2024 and 2027

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2027	Achieved
Outputs			
OP 6.1.Statistical coverage (measured as number of indicators, sub-indicators and all their breakdowns)	446	850	2023: 705
OP 6.2.User friendliness of Eurostat's website	90	≥90	2024: 88
OP 6.3. Number of participants in the ESTP courses on innovative sources and methods for official statistics	380	500	2023: 596
Results			
RES 6.1. Number of database sessions (in millions) made by external users from Eurostat reference database via the Eurostat website	4.0	4.8	2023: 3.2
RES 6.2. Timeliness of statistics, measured on news releases of a set of quarterly and monthly statistics	82.5 (Q)	≤82.5 (Q)	81.7 (Q)
	32.5 (M)	≤32.5 (M)	29.2 (M)
RES 6.3. Number of new experimental statistics dataset published	0	7	7
RES 6.4. User trust in European statistics	94%	≥94%	2024: 95%
RES 6.5. Number of administrative arrangements which Eurostat reviews, renews or signs every year with its key partners	2	2	2023: 2
RES 6.6. Number of research projects requesting access to European microdata in the Eurostat database	end-December 2020: 2 700 project proposals received since 2013	5 000	2023: 3 895
Impacts			
IMP 1. Number of web mentions and positive/negative opinions	480 000	497 054	2023: 931 300

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2027	Achieved
IMP 6.1a. Number of Eurostat followers	163 500 (X) 61 500 (Facebook) 3 000 (Instagram)	240 000 (X) 150 000 (Facebook) 130 000(Instagram)	252 000 (X, 2023) 150 000 (Facebook, 2023) 116 000 (Instagram, 2023)
IMP 6.1b. Engagement rate on social media	1.9%	≥1.9%	2.2% (X, 2023) 6.2% (Facebook, 2023) 6.1% (Instagram, 2023)

ANNEX VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION

1. Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

Table 1: Contribution of the SMP to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG	Contribution of the SMP
SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Pillar 5 has supported the European Food Bank Federation (FEBA) to improve food redistribution, particularly in response to the heightened demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions.
SDG8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	All Pillars are helping create the conditions for per capita economic growth by strengthening EU rulemaking, standard-setting and enforcement of EU law. Pillar 2 is supporting entrepreneurship (e.g. 2 086 entrepreneurs benefiting from EYE), as well as innovation, and the formation and growth of SMEs (e.g. 1 747 SMEs benefiting from better access to third party finance, 99% of EEN clients and IP Helpdesk clients satisfied). Pillar 2 tourism actions of the SME Pillar focus on accelerating the green and digital transitions and improving the resilience of the tourism ecosystem.
SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation	Pillar 2 is supporting product and process innovation by SMEs, e.g. by customised advice provided by the EEN. Pillar 2 Euroclusters have provided FSTP, to 1 281 SMEs to develop their innovation performance and their resilience and green and digital transformation.
SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	Sub-pillar (1b) is building the capacity of market surveillance authorities and strengthening cooperation between them, which will help limit or reduce the placement of non-compliant or unsafe products on the market. Pillar 3b has enabled the drafting of the first set of European Sustainability Reporting Standards. Pillar 4 is raising awareness on sustainable consumption and supporting the new proposed Directive on Green Claims and Sustainable Consumption Business Pledge. Pillar 5 has supported sustainable food production and consumption, e.g. raised consumers' awareness of the sustainable food practices, tested and improved national food waste measurement methods etc.)
SG16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies	In pillar 6 Eurostat is called to regularly monitor progress towards the UN SDGs in an EU context. For this purpose, it coordinated the development of the EU SDG indicator set, which consists of around

SDG	Contribution of the SMP
	100 indicators. The indicator set is reviewed every year to ensure the highest quality and that the most policy relevant indicators are included. About two thirds of these indicators are produced by the European Statistical System. Based on the EU SDG indicator set, Eurostat produces an annual monitoring report (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi) assessing the progress of the EU towards the UN SDGs. The report is complemented by various communication products (website, data tables, interactive visualisation tools, country profiles) to target different user groups. Eurostat also analyses spillover effects on countries outside the EU. Furthermore, the SDG indicators are integrated in the European Semester. Eurostat provides a graphical overview of status and progress of each Member State towards the SDGs, which is included in the country reports

Sources: European Commission data, elaborated in the supporting study.

2. Financial information

Table 2: SMP Budget allocations and commitments

SMP Pillar	Indicative amount in Regulation*	Programming (2021-2027)**		Commitments[334] (2021-2023)**	
	%	EUR	%	EUR	%
Pillar 1 Making the internal market more effective	13%	534 762 601	13%	225 565 601	12%
Pillar 2 SMEs	24%	942 924 579	23%	413 942 579	23%
Pillar 3 Standardisation	5%	219 730 498	5%	89 011 498	5%
Pillar 4 Consumers	5%	181 418 068	4%	76 496 068	4%
Pillar 5 Food	40%	1 757 215 038	42%	797 937 154	44%
Pillar 6 Statistics	13%	527 681 000	13%	224 935 000	12%
TOTAL (pillars only)	**100%**	**4 162 725 900**	**100%**	**1 827 887 900**	**100%**
Administration	-	197 822 905	N/A	81 259 778	N/A

334 Excluding contributions of EEA EFTA countries to SMP.

SMP Pillar	Indicative amount in Regulation*	Programming (2021-2027)**		Commitments[334] (2021-2023)**	
	%	EUR	%	EUR	%
TOTAL (including administration)	-	**4 360 548 805**	**N/A**	**1 909 147 677**	**N/A**

*Sources: *SMP Regulation; ** Commission data, elaborated in the supporting study.*

Table 3: Allocation of SMP funding in Pillar 1 (2021-2023)

Sub-pillar	EUR	%
1a) Competition	61 362 309	26
1b) Market surveillance	40 322 242	17
1c/1d) Your Europe, IMI, Solvit	16 952 231	7
1e) Support to policymaking, standard-setting and enforcement	119 184 423	50
TOTAL	237 821 203	100

Sources: SMP Work Programmes 2021; 2022; 2023-2024, elaborated in the supporting study.

3. Further information on flexibility

The majority of budgetary transfers within the SMP have occurred between budget lines managed by the same Directorate-General (DG) of the Commission. Specifically, out of twelve transfers, six were between lines overseen by DG GROW and two by DG FISMA. Only four transfers involved different DGs: two from DG FISMA to DG SANTE, one from DG TAXUD to DG JUST, and one from DG TAXUD to DG SANTE. Transfers between SMP budget lines have generally involved relatively small amounts. Only two budget transfers exceeded 1% of the annual final programme budget.

Table 4: Transfers between SMP budget lines

Pillar	DG	Budget line	Net value of transfers (2021-2023) (EUR)	Number of transfers between SMP budget lines (2021-2023)	
				IN	OUT
1e	GROW	03 02 01 01	-148 589.55	4	1

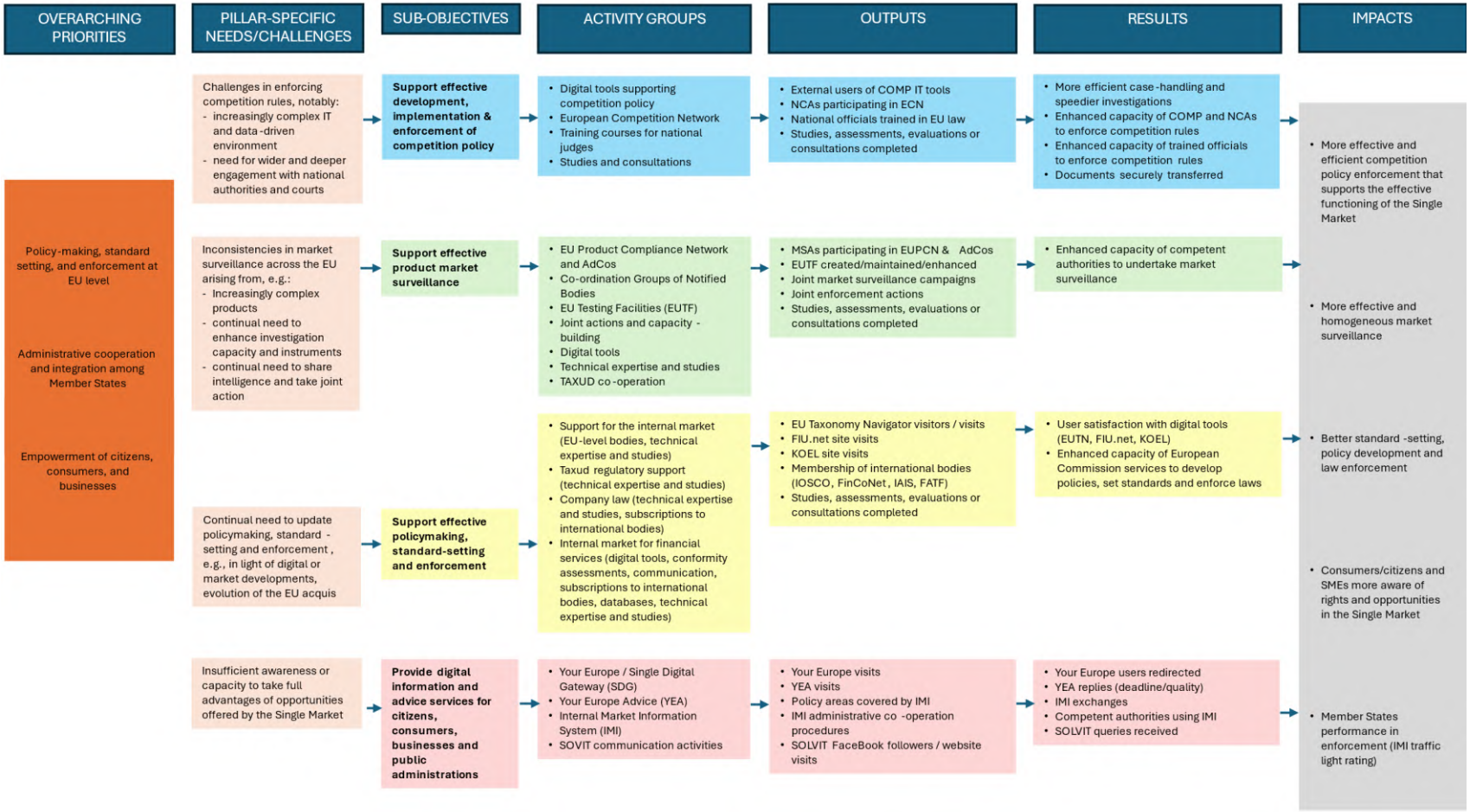
Pillar	DG	Budget line	Net value of transfers (2021-2023) (EUR)	Number of transfers between SMP budget lines (2021-2023)	
				IN	OUT
1c/1d	GROW	03 02 01 02	-407 123.74	0	1
1e	TAXUD	03 02 01 03	-2 177 750.00	0	2
1e	JUST	03 02 01 04	250 000.00	1	0
1a	COMP	03 02 01 05	0.00	0	0
1e	FISMA	03 02 01 06	-157 944.45	1	2
1b	GROW	03 02 01 07	-2 940 541.02	0	1
2	GROW	03 02 02 00	6 165 129.12	2	1
3a	GROW	03 02 03 01	-2 668 874.81	0	2
3b	FISMA	03 02 03 02	-192 055.55	1	2
4a	JUST	03 02 04 01	0.00	0	0
4b	FISMA	03 02 04 02	0.00	0	0
6	ESTAT	03 02 05 00	0.00	0	0
5	SANTE	03 02 06 00	2 277 750.00	3	0
TOTALS			0.00	**12**	**12**

Sources: European Commission data, elaborated in the supporting study.

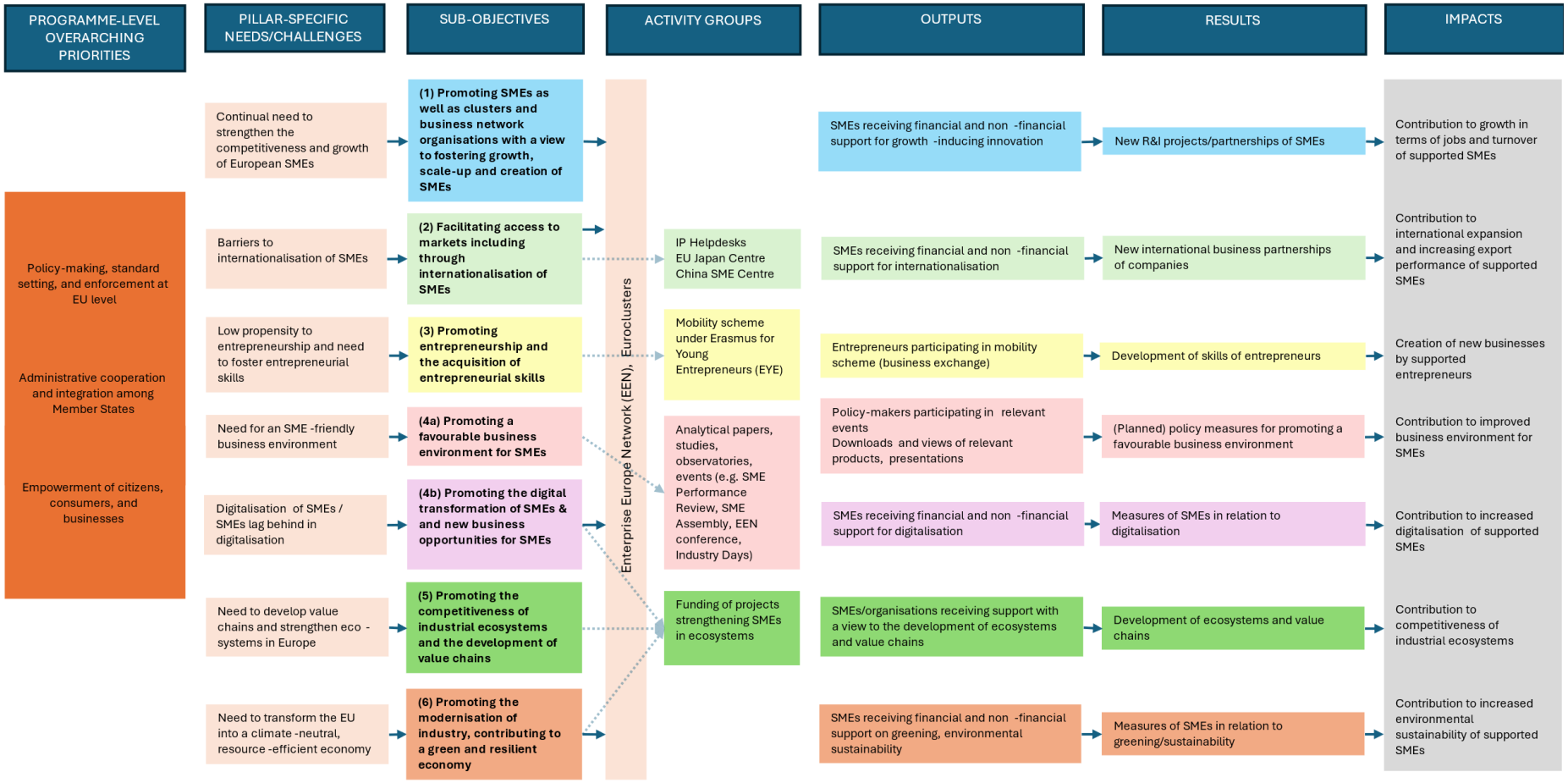
ANNEX VIII. INTERVENTION LOGICS

The following intervention logics stem from the supporting study, adapted from the SWD (2023) supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/690.

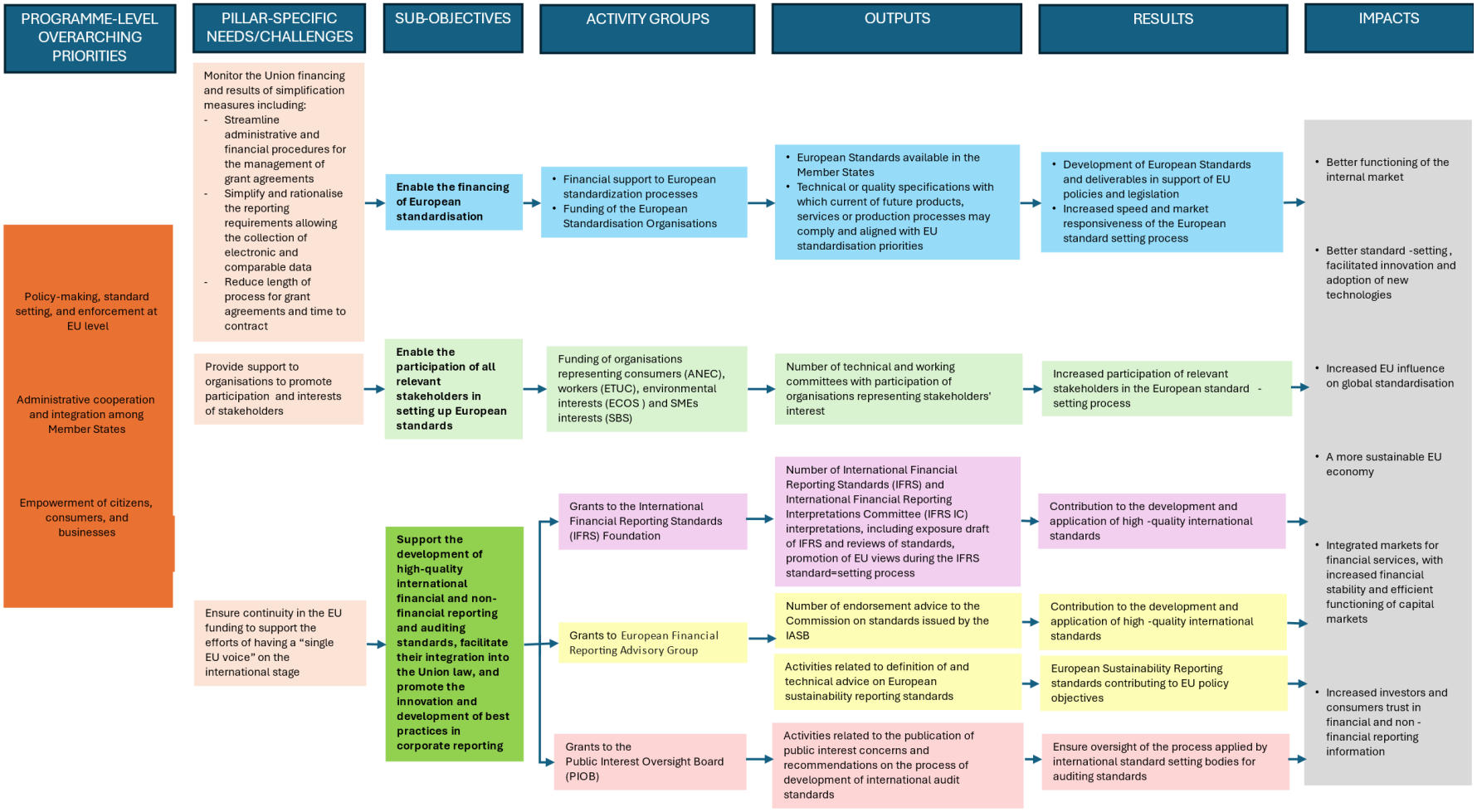
Pillar 1: Internal market



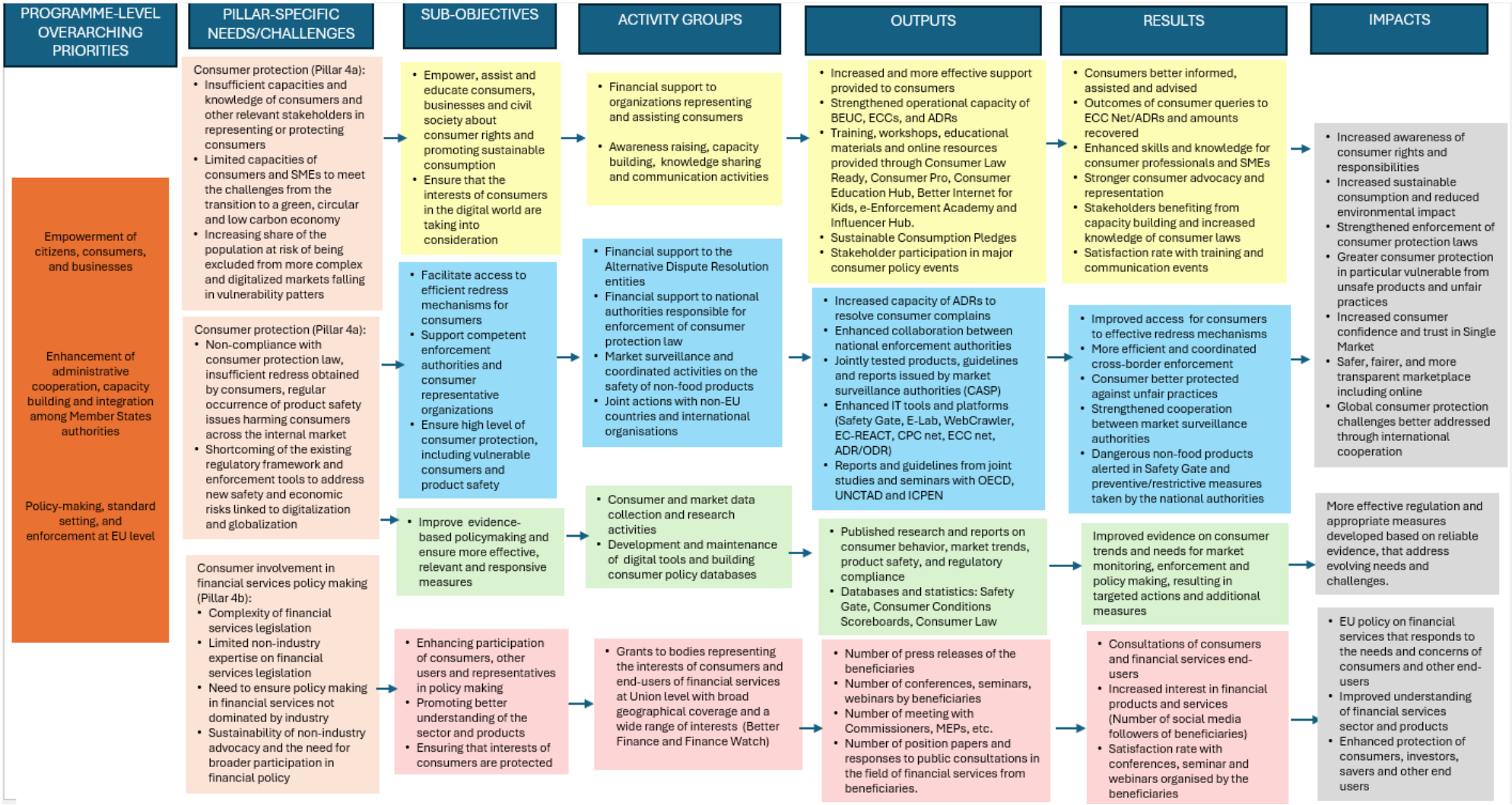
Pillar 2: SMEs



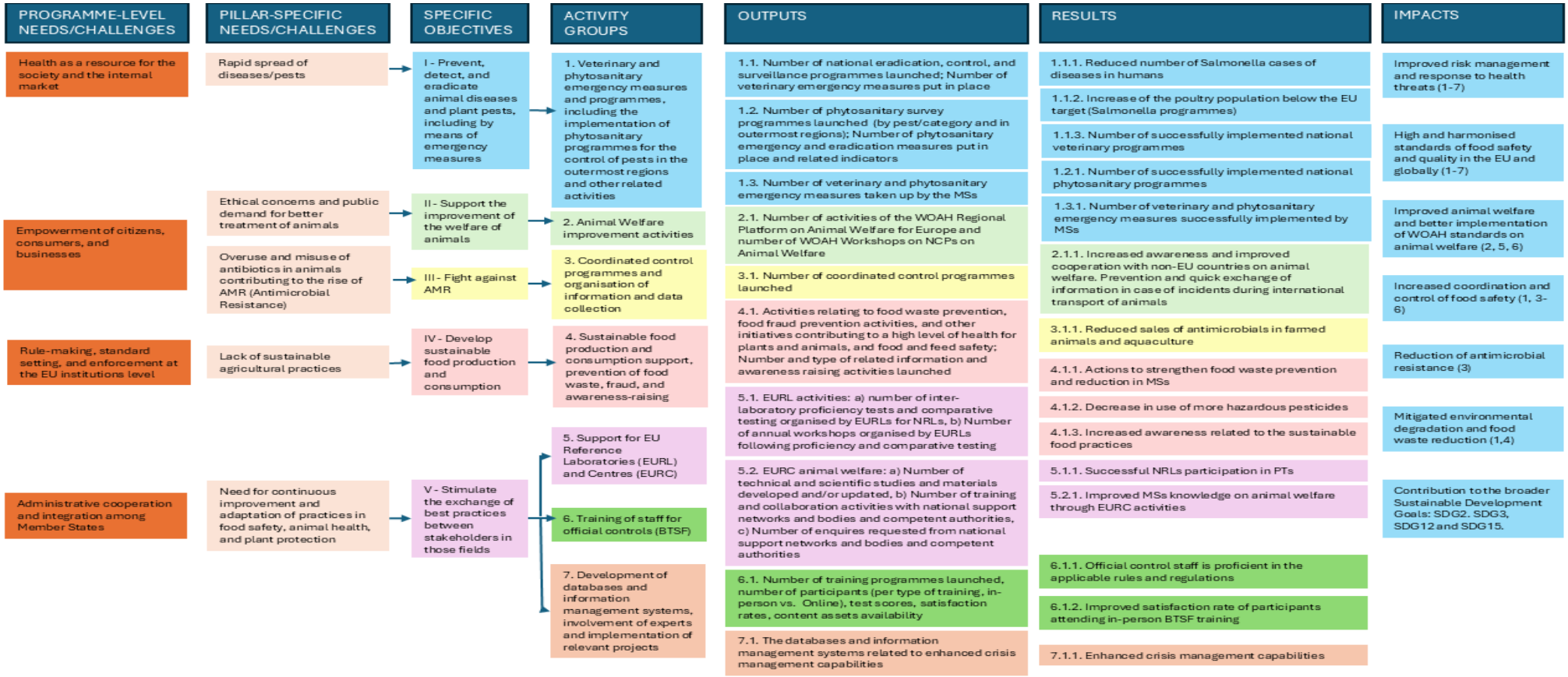
Pillar 3: Standardisation



Pillar 4: Consumers



Pillar 5: Food and Feed



Pillar 6: European statistics