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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Customs Control Equipment Instrument Annual Progress Report 2023**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI or the Instrument) has the general objective to support the Customs Union and customs authorities in their mission to protect the financial and economic interests of the European Union and its Member States, to ensure security and safety within the European Union, and to protect it from illegal trade while facilitating legitimate business activity.

This report, issued to monitor the implementation of the Instrument <sup>(1)</sup>, summarises the progress achieved in 2023 to the CCEI specific objective of contributing to **adequate and equivalent** <sup>(2)</sup> results of customs controls. It details the main results achieved by the Instrument, synergies with other European Union funding programmes, and lessons learned. The report was prepared in accordance with the requirements specified under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the CCEI (2021 – 2027) <sup>(3)</sup>, using indicators as laid down in both the CCEI Regulation <sup>(4)</sup> and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/1528 <sup>(5)</sup>.

2023 was a significant year for customs, with the **adoption of the EU Customs Reform proposal** <sup>(6)</sup> on 17 May, the **most ambitious and comprehensive reform of the EU Customs Union since its establishment in 1968**. The Instrument and the reform share a similar collaborative and data-driven vision for policy making and the CCEI supports the reform through the customs data gathering and implementation of individual grants allowing for modern and reliable control equipment to aid customs officers in their work, including policies such as co-sharing of equipment.

Equally noteworthy was the adoption of the **Communication on the EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime** (hereinafter the Communication) <sup>(7)</sup> on 18 October 2023, which reconfirmed the key role of advanced customs control equipment to support customs authorities in the fight against drugs and drug precursors. Among the actions announced, the Communication aims to mobilise EU customs in ports and customs laboratories against drugs trafficking as well as strengthen related risk management and controls. In this context, the creation of the **European Ports Alliance** was announced as a priority action, with an amount of **EUR 200 million** in support to the fight against drug trafficking and specifically the capacity of customs to manage the relevant risks. This new priority is now fully reflected in the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals documentation, which was shared with Member States at the end of 2023.

At international level, **Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine** continued to have a direct impact on CCEI grants, as Member States impacted by this crisis could, in certain cases, put to use the equipment funded by the Instrument, or, when necessary, had to proceed with amendments to their initial grant agreements to address the disruptions of trade resulting from the war. The CCEI will accordingly continue to prioritise the strengthening of the capacity of customs to face international crises in the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals.

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<sup>(1)</sup> As mentioned in Recital 26 of the CCEI Regulation.

<sup>(2)</sup> Compliant to Article 3(2) of the CCEI Regulation. Further information can be found in the [Annex on the financing of the Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment for 2021 and 2022](#); Hereinafter the 2021-2022 Multi-Annual Work Programme.

<sup>(3)</sup> SWD (2022) 314 final.

<sup>(4)</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1077 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the instrument for financial support for customs control equipment](#); Hereinafter the CCEI Regulation.

<sup>(5)</sup> [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1528 of 4 July 2022 supplementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1077 of the European Parliament and of the Council with provisions on the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework](#).

<sup>(6)</sup> COM/2023/258 final; Hereinafter the EU Customs Reform proposal. The proposal presents a new data-driven vision for EU Customs which fully embraces digital transformation, equipping customs authorities with the necessary tools and recourses to properly assess and stop imports posing real risks to the EU.

<sup>(7)</sup> COM (2023) 641 final.

The **2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme** <sup>(8)</sup> was adopted on 28 November 2023. This was followed by the launch of the invitation to submit proposals on 12 December under this Work Programme, paving the way for the next CCEI grants. **Security, including cybersecurity**, of the equipment funded by the Instrument, which had already been identified as an important issue at the start of the programme, became increasingly relevant<sup>9</sup>. To this end, the security requirements related to the equipment were reinforced in the second invitation to submit proposals.

In 2023, Member States started **reporting on their respective projects** <sup>(10)</sup>, which, in some cases (4 projects) came to an end as per the duration of their grant agreements. Several meetings of the **CCEI Coordination Group** <sup>(11)</sup> took place, allowing for discussions on issues related to overall CCEI policy, implementation, and more specifically, to grants.

## 2. OVERALL CONTEXT

### 2.1. EU Political Context

Within the general context, in 2023, the Instrument continued to deliver on the Commission priority of “**An economy that works for people**”, by contributing to the objective of ensuring an equivalent level of protection at the European Union’s external borders through the implementation of the **42** grant agreements signed under the 2021-2022 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme and through the tailored data-driven design of the second CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme and the development of country specific guidance based on a similar design and set of policy priorities. Equally, the CCEI supported the Commission priority of “**Promoting our European Way of Life**”, by continuing to address the goal of supporting customs across the European Union to act as one, through the equipment procured, maintained and upgraded by the CCEI grants.

Within a more focussed customs context, **the adoption of the EU Customs Reform proposal** followed the recommendations of the report of the **Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union** <sup>(12)</sup>. The changes to be brought about by the proposal will undoubtedly be influenced by the CCEI as the implementation of the CCEI grants directly contribute towards addressing the objective of strengthening the capacity of customs to supervise and control which goods enter and leave the Customs Union <sup>(13)</sup>.

In 2023, CCEI demonstrated to be in line also with the new European economic security package, confirming security as a key priority in different domains <sup>(14)</sup>. Equally, the **Communication on the EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime** <sup>(15)</sup> highlighted the need to immediately mobilise the customs community and bring it together with law enforcement and public and private actors, including through the **European Ports Alliance**. It stated, further, that the CCEI would support the funding of state-of-the-art equipment to **help customs authorities scan containers and other means of transport**, thereby **increasing**

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<sup>(8)</sup> C(2023) 8016 final. Hereinafter 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme.

<sup>(9)</sup> Further information on security described in section 2.1.

<sup>(10)</sup> These first set of grants were signed under the 2021-2022 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, following the first invitation to submit proposals (see annex III for further information about the CCEI implementation timeline). Each grant underlined reporting obligations. As part of their reporting obligations, Member States are expected to reflect delays in the acquisition, delivery, putting into use of equipment, as well as updated data related to the indicators in SWD (2022) 314 final.

<sup>(11)</sup> The CCEI Coordination Group (E03786) assists and supports the Commission in the implementation of the CCEI and the development of the policy aspects required by the CCEI regulation. Further information available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expertgroups/consult?lang=en&groupId=3786&fromMeetings=true&meetingId=29394>

<sup>(12)</sup> [Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union \(WPG\)](#)

<sup>(13)</sup> The EU Customs Reform proposal.

<sup>(14)</sup> COM (2024) 22 final “Advancing European economic security: an introduction to five new initiatives”.

<sup>(15)</sup> [New EU Roadmap steps up the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime \(europa.eu\)](#). 2023 saw a significant rise in drug seizures across various ports in Europe. Significantly, in August 2023, within a span of two weeks, a record-breaking 8 tonnes of cocaine was seized in Rotterdam, followed by the apprehension of 9.5 tonnes of cocaine in the port of Algeciras, Spain.

**the effectiveness of customs risk management and controls** related to illicit drugs and drug precursors. This would include support for the customs laboratories, which would also be given **equipment to analyse drugs and address the increasing challenges of designer precursors**.

By implementing the grant agreements signed, the CCEI had already signalled its strong commitment towards the fight against drugs and drug precursors through the investments made in control equipment at high-priority border crossing points (BCP) such as ports <sup>(16)</sup>. This is extremely relevant as, areas of high traffic, such as ports, account for nearly 70% of all drugs seizures by customs authorities <sup>(17)</sup>. Therefore, the Communication and ensuing priority action could be seen as an acknowledgement of the contribution that had already been made and of the potential towards ensuring the availability of advanced customs control equipment through the Instrument, while acknowledging further critical needs for it.

## 2.2. International Context

Within the **larger international context, Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine**, and the ensuing sanctions <sup>(18)</sup> decided by the EU, continued to impact customs and customs officers. They remained at the forefront of actions to manage this changing political reality and continued to address the dual challenge of implementing effectively, on the one hand, the sanctions, and on the other, trade facilitation and the Solidarity lanes <sup>(19)</sup>.

Just as in 2022<sup>(20)</sup>, CCEI funding provided, in 2023, key contributions to the **European Union capacity to manage this crisis, and substantially improve the security and safety of supplies, and the integrity of supply chains**. This was made possible notably through the systematic promotion of the multi-purpose nature of the equipment <sup>(21)</sup>, and the prioritisation of important policies such as the co-sharing of equipment and investment into mobile equipment. In addition, the need for flexibility and agility continued as part of the implementation process, as some Member States had to proceed with amendments to their initial grant agreements to reflect the changing reality at the borders and the wider impact of this military aggression.

## 2.3. Regulatory Context

The **2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme** <sup>(22)</sup> was prepared reflecting the data provided by the Member States under the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals and taking into account the new realities impacting customs, most notably the EU Customs Reform proposal, as well the EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime, including the European Ports Alliance initiative. This Work Programme was designed to contribute towards the objectives identified in these initiatives, and to improve overall Customs Union performance, through **five priorities** encouraging the exploitation of the multi-purpose nature of the equipment funded to (i) ensure **safety and security**; (ii) strengthen the capacity of customs to manage and adapt to **international crises**; (iii) address the challenges in dealing with the exponential growth in **e-commerce**; (iv) contribute towards the **European Green Deal** <sup>(23)</sup>; and (v) continue to promote **innovation** in customs control equipment, including **interoperability** of the equipment.

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<sup>(16)</sup> Further information is available in the Customs Union Performance (CUP) Report 2022.

<sup>(17)</sup> COM (2023) 641 final.

<sup>(18)</sup> For an overall view of the EU sanctions against Russia see [here](#); for a detailed list of the customs-related measures see [here](#).

<sup>(19)</sup> Communication from the Commission: An Action Plan for EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes to facilitate Ukraine's agricultural export and bilateral trade with the EU. In particular, the creation of new trade routes through the Solidarity lanes has enabled trade flows from Ukraine to the EU and through the EU to the rest of the world, creating new customs control needs at BCPs.

<sup>(20)</sup> Further information can be found in SWD (2023) 251 final.

<sup>(21)</sup> As set out in the CCEI Regulation and CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme.

<sup>(22)</sup> See annex III for further information about the CCEI implementation timeline.

<sup>(23)</sup> document 52019DC0640.

The role of customs officers as the first line of defence against risks associated with drug trafficking was strengthened, in particular, by making the **‘safety and security’ priority mandatory to every work package of every proposal** <sup>(24)</sup>. Furthermore, building on the analysis of the data available, **the Commission provided comprehensive guidance to Member States about the specific priorities** to be addressed under the second invitation to submit proposals <sup>(25)</sup>. In this way, the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme contributes to **the adequacy and equivalence of the equipment** funded by the Instrument **to mitigate EU priority risks and challenges**.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INSTRUMENT’S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Instrument’s specific objective is to contribute to **adequate** and **equivalent** results of customs controls through the transparent purchase, maintenance, and upgrade of relevant and reliable state-of-the-art equipment that is secure, safe, and environmentally friendly, thereby helping the national authorities to act as one in protecting the interests of the European Union <sup>(26)</sup>.

In 2023, implementation of the Instrument’s specific objective was done through the following:

- Design and launch of the invitation to submit proposals under the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, including the provision of country-specific guidance
- Implementation of the grant agreements signed in 2022
- Monitoring and evaluation of ongoing projects and data gathering to support customs policy
- CCEI Coordination Group

#### 3.1. Design and launch of the invitation to submit proposals under the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, including the provision of country-specific guidance

Following the adoption of the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, an invitation to submit proposals was sent to Member States. This second invitation to submit proposals followed a targeted approach. It used the data gathered from the proposals and reporting obligations of Member States as part of the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals, as well as factors influencing customs policy and funding priorities such as the EU Customs Reform proposal and the European Ports Alliance.

**Ensuring the security and cybersecurity protection of the equipment funded** continued to be a priority, which was further reinforced in 2023<sup>(27)</sup>. Following the adoption of the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals further addresses this priority by detailing measures to mitigate cybersecurity risks with a view to ensuring the overall security of the equipment.

In addition, Member States were provided with country-specific guidance to enhance **Customs Union performance** through its emphasis on adequate and equivalent customs controls. To complement this, the Commission organised **bilateral meetings** with all Member States at the end of 2023 to further support this process.

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<sup>(24)</sup> Each proposal can have up to 20 work packages on BCP topic and 5 on customs laboratories topic. Each work package represents one unique location (either a Border Crossing Point or Customs Laboratory) in each country.

<sup>(25)</sup> For further information, please refer to section 3.1.

<sup>(26)</sup> Article 3 of the CCEI Regulation. Further information on the two-step implementation process can be found in SWD (2023) 251 final.

<sup>(27)</sup> Commission guidance had already been provided to Member States: as part of the call documentation, in 2021, the Commission had strongly emphasised that projects need to comply with EU policy interests and priorities in the fields of security and provided additional guidance to Member States in 2022.

### 3.2. Implementation of the grant agreements signed in 2022

Following the signature of the **42** grant agreements in 2022 <sup>(28)</sup>, the individual projects began their operational implementation. 4 projects came to an end in 2023. Hand in hand with the implementation of the CCEI projects came the reporting obligations of each grant.

To this effect, 31 progress reports were due in 2023, 21 of which were submitted by the Member States as beneficiaries of the CCEI grants, and 16 of which were approved by the contracting authority <sup>(29)</sup>.

In the course of grant implementation, in 2023, Member States had the opportunity to inform the Commission of challenges or concerns related to the implementation of their projects, which, if duly justified and impacting the grant agreement signed, led to an **amendment** of the initial grant signed.

The challenges were varied in nature, indicating the significant impact of external factors on the grant, such as **inflation, the impact on trade flows in some BCPs due to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, improvements in technology available, delayed national procurement procedures due to global supply-chain issues or national budget issues**, etc. To this effect, 6 amendments were launched in 2023, of which 4 were signed.

It is also important to underline that 20 projects of the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals are implemented on the basis of the retroactivity clause <sup>(30)</sup>. Of them, 3 came to an end in 2023.

To guide Member States in the implementation of their first CCEI projects, the Commission organised a **training session on 8 June 2023** detailing the submission procedure for amendments, the reporting obligations, and the report authorising final payment. In addition, the Commission proactively reached out to individual Member States, organising meetings to provide guidance from a programming, policy, legal, or financial perspective and continuously provide answers to queries from the beneficiaries.

### 3.3. Monitoring and evaluation of ongoing projects and data gathering to support customs policy

The CCEI data-cycle, initiated in 2019 with a needs assessment, is updated regularly through the information provided by Member States in their proposals, and through their reporting obligations. In this way, the data should demonstrate, over time, the real impact of the equipment funded on overall performance. In 2023, Member States updated the data presented in their grant agreement as a part of their reporting obligations, and this information has been used to calculate the relevant CCEI's performance indicators. These results are reflected in Annex II of this report. This information was collected separately for the Member States that did not apply in first CCEI invitation to submit proposals.

### 3.4. Customs Control Equipment Instrument Coordination Group

Member State involvement is intrinsic to the success of the CCEI and is secured through (1) their contributions to policy development <sup>(31)</sup>, and (2) their implementation of the grant agreements signed. Such contribution is ensured by Member States' participation in the CCEI Coordination Group whose mandate is aligned to the

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<sup>(28)</sup> SWD (2023) 251 final.

<sup>(29)</sup> Progress report might be submitted but not approved if the information provided is not sufficient to accurately measure the progress of the project. In those cases, the beneficiary of CCEI funds is requested to resubmit the progress report.

<sup>(30)</sup> The retroactivity clause allowed Member States to claim costs linked to the purchase of customs control equipment from 2021, even before the signature of their respective grant agreements, as eligible costs under the CCEI. This clause was unique to the 2021-2022 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme.

<sup>(31)</sup> Such contribution is ensured by Member States' participation in the CCEI Coordination Group whose mandate is aligned to the duration of the CCEI Instrument.

duration of the CCEI Instrument. In 2023, the CCEI Coordination Group continued to assist the Commission by working on 14 policy topics <sup>(32)</sup> and finalising 4 deliverables <sup>(33)</sup>.

In addition to the approval of policy guidance (deliverables), the Group was instrumental in supporting the operational implementation of the CCEI, notably to exchange information on issues of common interest: best practices and lessons learned with regard to project management; the submission and monitoring of deliverables; discussions on the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme; individual guidance; the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals; qualitative indicators under the CCEI's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework <sup>(34)</sup>; security concerns; and training.

#### 4. COHERENCE WITH OTHER EU POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS

Policy coordination between the CCEI and other European Union programmes is designed around two strategic goals: (i) efficient spending of European Union funds: making sure that the European Union programmes offer synergies in the way the funds are spent, not only with a particular focus on avoiding double funding, but also with the objective to increase the impact through their multiplier effect and (ii) policy coordination: ultimately, even though different policies are pursued, the European Union programmes should be complementary to each other <sup>(35)</sup>.

In 2023, the CCEI continued building synergies with the Customs Programme <sup>(36)</sup> as well as with other programmes and initiatives. Notably, the newly announced **European Ports Alliance** influenced both the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme and the objectives of the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals launched at the end of 2023, reflecting the strong role of control equipment in the larger **fight against drugs and drug precursors** context. This initiative, which specifically named the cooperation with the CCEI, will undoubtedly continue to bring about synergies for the Instrument to showcase its added value in providing funding to modern and reliable equipment for BCPs and customs laboratories in **areas of high traffic such as sea, airports and other modes of transport**.

##### 4.1. Collaboration with the Customs Programme

The CCEI has a specific focus: to co-finance the purchase, maintenance, and upgrade of customs control equipment. Complementing and supporting actions, such as exchange of good practices, lessons learnt or training relating to the equipment concerned, are supported by the Customs Programme <sup>(37)</sup>. In that sense, several collaborative actions and training activities under the Customs Programme ensured its connection with the CCEI:

##### ☐ Collaborative activities

##### **CELBET**

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<sup>(32)</sup> Further information on the topics, based on pre-defined policy subjects, can be found in SWD (2022) 56 final.

<sup>(33)</sup> Deliverable 5: Guidance on procurement; Deliverable 8: Guidance on efficient maintenance of equipment (including warranties); Deliverable 10: Guidance on the safety, security and cyber protection aspects of the equipment financed by CCEI; Deliverable 11: Interoperability.

<sup>(34)</sup> SWD (2022) 314 final. In particular, an annual survey to calculate the following-OP 1.3: Proportion of national administrations who report positively on the overall Customs Control Equipment Instrument's support and the efficiency of the implementation process; RES 1.2: Proportion of national administrations who agree that the Customs Control Equipment Instrument has contributed to adequate customs controls with equivalent results; RES 2 Percentage of positive replies for BCPs and customs laboratories.

<sup>(35)</sup> SWD (2022) 314 final

<sup>(36)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/444 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2021 establishing the Customs programme for cooperation in the field of customs and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1294/2013

<sup>(37)</sup> Recital 16 of the [CCEI Regulation](#).

The Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET) <sup>(38)</sup>, an expert team under the Customs programme, is very active in the customs control equipment landscape with a dedicated team of equipment experts that performs a number of relevant complementary activities (BCP diagnostics, co-sharing, procurement, training, exchanges of images etc). CELBET also launched activities in border crossing points impacted by Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine. In this context, a specific Ukraine Task Force was created under CELBET to address challenges faced in BCPs, customs formalities related to humanitarian aid, and cooperation with other authorities <sup>(39)</sup>. This is in full synergy with the policy priority on Mitigating international conflicts and crises in the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme, which focuses on delivering equipment in strategic BCPs, to support the EU -Ukraine Solidarity lanes <sup>(40)</sup> as well as the implementation of the sanctions.

#### **CLET**

The newly available equipment funded by the CCEI provided more opportunities for operational cooperation within the Customs Laboratories Expert Team (CLET), another expert team under the Customs Programme. The equipment purchased improved the analytical capabilities of CLET, providing more support to the customs laboratories' community in the European Union, levelling out the Union customs laboratories' contribution to customs control functions.

#### **CCEI coordination, customs laboratories, and other collaborative activities**

The Customs programme also continued to support several collaborative activities that directly contributed to the management and implementation of the CCEI, such as the **CCEI Coordination Group** <sup>(41)</sup>. Furthermore, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Seminar of the **Customs Laboratories European Network (CLEN)**, which was organised in collaboration with the German Customs Administration in July in Berlin, included discussions on the use of the CCEI to equip European Union's customs with the most developed techniques to protect the European Union borders, (e.g., mobile diagnosis) <sup>(42)</sup>. In addition, CLEN organised 3 practical gemmology workshops, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience with the main gemmological instruments eligible for funding under the CCEI.

**Other activities** <sup>(43)</sup> were also undertaken with a view to **sharing best practices and expertise** of benefit to the CCEI, including bilateral study visits to facilitate knowledge-sharing on the optimal use of customs control equipment.

#### ☐ Training

Based on the training needs analysis performed by the CCEI coordination group, 7 eLearning training modules <sup>(44)</sup> were developed and made available to national administrations in 2023. In addition, the Common Learning Event Programme (CLEP) and CELBET 3 Training team organised several other training courses and activities over the year, related to customs control equipment. At international level, the Commission signed a cooperation agreement with the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in order to share training

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<sup>(38)</sup> CELBET (Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Borders Expert Team) is a Member States' expert team gathering the 11 land borders Member States (BG, FI, EE, EL, HR, HU, LT, LV, PL, SK, RO), and financed under the Customs programme. It has been particularly effective in delivering operational solutions on the ground, has proven experience in collaborating with other law enforcement authorities and ultimately ensures that customs controls are performed in a harmonised way at the land border of the EU.

<sup>(39)</sup> Further information may be found in the 2023 Annual Progress Report for the Customs Programme.

<sup>(40)</sup> COM (2022) 217 final.

<sup>(41)</sup> Further information may be found above in section 3.4.

<sup>(42)</sup> The seminar's theme was "Working together: Smart, Efficient, Competent, Committed" and it attracted more than 210 participants.

<sup>(43)</sup> Working visit related to operational practices for X-ray-scanners at Port Rotterdam; Regional Workshop for Dog Handlers; and Rummage Project Group, to name a few.

<sup>(44)</sup> [The Automatic Number Plate - Container Recognition System \(ANPRS\)](#); [the Endoscope and Videoscope](#); [the Handheld Radiation Detector](#); [the Radiation Portal Monitor](#); [the Personal Radiation Monitor/Detector](#); [the Mobile Radiation Detection Device](#); [the Handheld Radioisotope Identifiers Device \(RIID\)](#).

material through their respective online platforms (Customs & Tax EU Learning Portal <sup>(45)</sup> and CLiKC! <sup>(46)</sup>), which include, inter-alia, courses of direct relevance to the CCEI.

## 4.2. Coherence with other EU Programmes

The CCEI is part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, which also comprises the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) <sup>(47)</sup>. The two Instruments are conceived as complementary, but with distinct scopes: the CCEI for customs control of goods, and the BMVI for border control (mainly people). Linking customs and border controls enables customs and border authorities to work together and maximise the impact of the European Union budget through co-sharing and interoperability of control equipment <sup>(48)</sup>.

In addition, the CCEI maintains close links, including through a structured coordination mechanism, with the Union Anti-Fraud Programme <sup>(49)</sup>, the Horizon Europe Programme <sup>(50)</sup>, and the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) <sup>(51)</sup>.

During the reporting period, such synergies and complementarities were observed, in particular:

- With **Horizon Europe projects**, for instance, with the **Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners (PEN-CP)** <sup>(52)</sup>, and the **Parcel and Letter Security for Postal and Express Courier Flows (PARSEC)** <sup>(53)</sup> project <sup>(54)</sup>.
- With the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** <sup>(55)</sup>, under which a new invitation to submit proposals was launched in 2023 <sup>(56)</sup> with €100 million dedicated to actions related to safe and secure mobility, including the **development of the infrastructure at strategic BCPs**, which would be ineligible under the CCEI <sup>(57)</sup>. A similar invitation to submit proposals launched in 2022<sup>(58)</sup>, and implemented as of 2023, resulted in funding for strategic BCPs dealing with the implementation of the Solidarity Lanes with Ukraine to reinforce and upgrade the local road and rail infrastructure in order to improve control capacity and efficiency <sup>(59)</sup>. Most crucially, **some of these BCPs received funding under the first CCEI invitation to submit proposals**, thereby demonstrating a clear synergy where the CEF

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<sup>(45)</sup> The Customs & Tax EU Learning Portal offers opportunities for customs and tax professionals to build, upscale or share profession-relevant knowledge and expertise through initiatives ranging from educational online learning to the organisation and hosting of multiple learning events in online and presence formats.

<sup>(46)</sup> On CLiKC!, all customs officers from WCO Member administrations can access a full catalogue of learning opportunities, and participate in scheduled global and regional training workshops.

<sup>(47)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy

<sup>(48)</sup> Recital 18 of the CCEI Regulation.

<sup>(49)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/785 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021.

<sup>(50)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021.

<sup>(51)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 February 2021. Complementarities and synergies amongst programmes are reinforced at two stages: (1) Policy coordination i.e., while drafting work programmes; (2) Through the evaluation process, to allow for possible multiplier effects.

<sup>(52)</sup> The Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners (PEN-CP, [www.pen-cp.net](http://www.pen-cp.net)) is a 5-year EU Horizon 2020 funded security practitioner network project, with 13 European customs administrations – both EU and non-EU – as active partners. The project focuses on accelerating innovation efforts across three core customs technical areas: (i) data and risk management; (ii) detection technologies; and (iii) laboratory equipment.

<sup>(53)</sup> The PARSEC project, which started in 2022, and will run until 2025, is dedicated to the development of technologies do detect illicit cargo in parcels, in particular drugs. 3 technologies are being developed that could be used as an integrated system to better detect illicit cargo, at pace.

<sup>(54)</sup> Other Horizon Europe examples with a potential synergies can be found in the following projects: [BorderSens](#), [ENTRANCE](#), [SilentBorder](#), [MULTISCAN3D](#), [iFLOWS](#), [MELCHIOR](#), to name a few.

<sup>(55)</sup> EU [Funding & Tenders Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(56)</sup> CEF-T-2023-SAFEMOBGEN. Further information may be found [here](#).

<sup>(57)</sup> As defined under Article 9(c) of the CCEI Regulation.

<sup>(58)</sup> CEF-T-2022-SAFEMOBGEN. Further information may be found [here](#).

<sup>(59)</sup> [Some examples of specific projects may be found here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

contributes to the development of the infrastructure of the BCP, the CCEI provides additional equipment to secure and strengthen the BCP, and both Programmes increase the capacity in strategic locations.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

With the adoption of the ambitious **EU Customs Reform proposal** and the announcement of the **European Ports Alliance** as part of the **EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime**, significant changes impacted customs policy in 2023. Such changes were in turn translated into the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme and second invitation to submit proposals. As a result, in 2024, the Instrument will put in motion its support to the **European Ports Alliance** and will allocate the vast majority (€200 million) of the funding available under the second CCEI invitation to submit proposals to **help customs authorities increasing the effectiveness of customs risk management and controls** related to illicit drugs and drug precursors.

In 2023, the equipment funded by the Instrument continued to aid customs officers in their dual task of implementing the sanctions introduced as a result of **Russia's military aggression against Ukraine** and facilitating the solidarity lanes.

As the reporting obligations of Member States started, updated information was received and revealed **the need for continued flexibility and agility in dealing with external factors that had an impact on the performance of customs controls**. At times, this necessitated amendments to individual grants to enable Member States to implement their projects effectively.

**Security and cybersecurity protection** of the equipment funded was reaffirmed in 2023 through the work carried out under the CCEI Coordination Group, and further clarified in the 2023-2024 CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme and notably in the second invitation to submit proposals.

2024 will be another crucial year for the CCEI. The second set of project proposals will be submitted, evaluated, and will **result in the signature of the next grant agreements**. The programme's **interim evaluation** will start and will serve as a moment to reflect on the Instrument's activities thus far. Above all, the emphasis should remain on maintaining an instrument that is agile and flexible enough to deliver on its objectives whilst adapting to the changing needs of its times.

**« CCEI APR 2023 Annexes »**

**ANNEX I: ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS**

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>                     |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>BCP</b>     | Border Crossing Point                 |
| <b>BMVI</b>    | Border Management and Visa Instrument |
| <b>CCEI</b>    | Customs Control Equipment Instrument  |
| <b>CUP</b>     | Customs Union Performance             |
| <b>EU</b>      | European Union                        |
| <b>EUAF</b>    | European Union Anti-fraud Programme   |
| <b>FAQ</b>     | Frequently Asked Questions            |
| <b>IBMF</b>    | Integrated Border Management Fund     |
| <b>MAWP</b>    | Multi-Annual Work Programme           |
| <b>RRF</b>     | Recovery & Resilience Facility        |
| <b>TA</b>      | Technical Assistance                  |

## ANNEX II: CCEI PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### OP 1.1 <sup>(60)</sup>: Number of pieces of equipment per Member States Border Crossing Points (BCP) and Customs Laboratories that were purchased, maintained or upgraded through CCEI funds

*Equipment purchased, maintained and upgraded through the CCEI for border crossing points (BCPs) as of 2023*

| Type of<br>BCP | Border Crossing Points (BCPs) type of equipment to be purchased, maintained and upgraded as result of the CCEI grant agreements |   |   |                 |   |   |                          |    |   |  |   |   |                 |   |   | TOTAL |
|----------------|---|---|---|-----------------|---|---|--------------------------|----|---|--|---|---|-----------------|---|---|-------|
|                | Field analysis and spectroscopy   |   |   | Handheld search |   |   | Non-intrusive inspection |    |   | Radiation detection and nuclide identification |   |   | Trace Detection |   |   |       |
|                | P*  | M | U | P               | M | U | P                        | M  | U | P  | M | U | P               | M | U |       |
| Air            | 4   |   |   | 1               |   |   | 15                       | 2  |   |  |   |   | 3               |   |   | 25    |
| Land           | 5   |   |   | 5               |   |   | 1                        | 4  |   |  | 1 |   | 6               |   |   | 22    |
| Mobile         | 13  |   |   | 5               |   |   |                          |    |   |  |   |   | 10              |   |   | 28    |
| Postal         |   |   |   |                 |   |   | 2                        | 2  |   |  |   |   | 2               |   |   | 6     |
| Rail           | 3   |   |   | 3               |   |   | 1                        |    |   |  |   |   |                 |   |   | 7     |
| Sea            | 2   |   |   |                 |   |   | 17                       | 3  |   |  |   |   |                 |   |   | 22    |
| TOTAL          | 27  | 0 | 0 | 14              | 0 | 0 | 36                       | 11 | 0 | 0  | 1 | 0 | 21              | 0 | 0 | 110   |
|                | 27  |   |   | 14              |   |   | 47                       |    |   | 1  |   |   | 21              |   |   |       |

\*P = Purchased, M = Maintained, U = Upgraded

*Equipment purchased, maintained and upgraded through the CCEI for customs laboratories as of 2023*

|       | Customs Laboratories type of equipment |   |   |                |   |   |                              |   |   |                           |   |   |              |   |   | TOTAL |
|-------|--|---|---|----------------|---|---|------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|---|---|--------------|---|---|-------|
|       | Analytical Instruments and Analysers   |   |   | Chromatography |   |   | General Laboratory Equipment |   |   | Microscopy and macroscopy |   |   | Spectrometry |   |   |       |
|       |  |   |   |                |   |   |                              |   |   |                           |   |   |              |   |   |       |
|       | P*                                     | M | U | P              | M | U | P                            | M | U | P                         | M | U | P            | M | U |       |
|       | 19                                     |   |   | 25             |   |   | 19                           |   |   | 4                         |   |   | 17           |   |   |       |
| TOTAL | 19                                     |   |   | 25             |   |   | 19                           |   |   | 4                         |   |   | 17           |   |   | 84    |

\*P = Purchased, M = Maintained, U = Upgraded

<sup>(60)</sup> Indicators OP 1.1, OP 1.2, RES 1.1 and RES 1.3 (quantitative indicators) are calculated using the information provided by beneficiaries of CCEI funds during their proposals, as well as during their continuous monitoring and reporting obligations.

**OP 1.2: Use of equipment concerned per Member States' Border Crossing Points and customs laboratories that were purchased, maintained or upgraded through customs control equipment Instrument funds**

*Occupancy rate for equipment purchased, maintained, or upgraded through the CCEI for border crossing points and customs laboratories in 2023 <sup>(61)</sup>*

| Border Crossing Points (BCPs) type of equipment |                |                          |  |                 | Customs Laboratories type of equipment |                |                              |                           |              |
|---|----------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------|--|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Field analysis and spectroscopy                 | Handled search | Non-intrusive inspection | Radiation detection and nuclide identification | Trace Detection | Analytical Instruments and Analysers   | Chromatography | General Laboratory Equipment | Microscopy and macroscopy | Spectroscopy |
| 70%   | 100%           | 94%                      | 100%   | 82%             | 53%                                    | 70%            | 63%                          | 68%                       | 64%          |

**OP 1.3 <sup>(62)</sup>: Proportion of national administrations who report positively on the overall customs control equipment Instrument's support and the efficiency of the implementation process**

This indicator measures on one side, Member States' satisfaction with the guidance and programme management support provided and, on the other, whether the procedural and management tasks are carried out in a timely manner by the CCEI project team and the national customs administrations.

*Percentage of positive replies on CCEI support, in 2023 <sup>(63)</sup>*

|  | 2023 Value | 2023 Target | 2027 Target |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Satisfaction with the programme management support and guidance provided | 97%        | 70%         | 70%         |

*Member States level of satisfaction, in 2023, with:*

|  | Not at all satisfied | Not satisfied | Satisfied | Fully satisfied |
|--|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| The quality of the guidance provided at the application stage                | 0%                   | 0%            | 44%       | 56%             |
| The quality of the information contained in the call documentation           | 0%                   | 3%            | 53%       | 44%             |
| The quality of the ongoing guidance provided during the implementation stage | 0%                   | 3%            | 50%       | 47%             |

<sup>(61)</sup> These results represent the measurement of occupancy rate at a certain moment and may not be entirely representative due to the limited sample size. Furthermore, since it is a newly acquired equipment, its occupancy rate may be higher than under regular workload circumstances.

<sup>(62)</sup> Indicators OP 1.3, RES 1.3 and RES 2 (qualitative indicators) are calculated using the information provided by beneficiaries of CCEI funds during the survey activity performed annually by the Commission.

<sup>(63)</sup> Replies received from 23 Member States for indicator OP 1.3.

### ***Efficiency of the implementation process, in 2023:***

|   | 2023 Value           | 2023 Target | 2027 Target |
|---|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adherence to deadlines/timelines set out in the relevant grant agreements <sup>(64)</sup> | 100% <sup>(65)</sup> | 80%         | 100%        |

### **Planned EU level project implementation timeline for 2023 and 2024:**

| <i>Step:</i>  | <i>Effective date:</i>                                  |
|---|---|
| Launch of call for applications for second CCEI' invitation to submit proposals   | 12 December 2023  |
| Deadline for submission   | 27 February 2024  |
| End of evaluation of applications, with the transmission of evaluation result letters to Member States (time to inform) | June 2024   |
| Signature of all grant agreements (time to grant)   | November 2024   |
| Payment of pre-financing (time to pay)  | No later than 30 days after the signature of each grant |

### **Results indicators**

#### **RES 1.1: Specific results achieved by Member States through use of CCEI funded equipment**

##### ***Percentage of achieved commitments from the use of the CCEI funded equipment***

Results are not yet representative enough to be reported considering the still early stage in the implementation of the projects under the CCEI first Work Programme (projects started in second half of 2022).

It is important to consider that an equipment item cannot yield specific results (e.g. contributing to more seizures in a particular field) if it is not put into use in an operational context. As Indicator OP 1.1 shows, only a small percentage of the equipment funded under the first CCEI Multi-Annual Work Programme has been put into use as of 2023 and is starting to yield results.

#### **RES 1.2: Proportion of national administrations who agree that the Customs Control Equipment Instrument has contributed to adequate customs controls with equivalent results**

##### ***Proportion of National Administrations who agreed <sup>(66)</sup> that the Customs Control Equipment Instrument has contributed to adequate customs controls with equivalent results in 2023, disaggregated by types of threats <sup>(67)</sup>***

<sup>(64)</sup> Adherence to the timelines calculated in basis of the legal deadlines established in the grant agreement, and agreed by the beneficiaries of the Instrument.

<sup>(65)</sup> 2 Projects finalised on time in 2023, with the payments taking place before the deadline set out by the grant agreements.

<sup>(66)</sup> For each risk/threat, the Commission looks at the proportion of Member States that have agreed or fully agreed with the statements proposed to them during the Annual Survey activity.

<sup>(67)</sup> Replies received for 31 projects from 21 Member States.

|  | 2023<br>Value | 2023<br>Target      | 2027<br>Target      |
|--|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Radiological and nuclear materials   | 89%           | 60% <sup>(68)</sup> | 80% <sup>(69)</sup> |
| Weapons, firearms, ammunition, explosive material, precursors thereof and dual use | 92%           |                     |                     |
| Drugs and precursors thereof, pharmaceuticals                                      | 93%           |                     |                     |
| Waste, and hazardous and toxic materials   | 92%           |                     |                     |
| Goods in violation of intellectual property rights                                 | 92%           |                     |                     |
| Non-compliant and unsafe products  | 92%           |                     |                     |
| Cash declared incorrectly (Cash Control)   | 92%           |                     |                     |
| CITES (endangered species)   | 92%           |                     |                     |
| Cultural goods and treasures   | 89%           |                     |                     |
| Non-compliance with other trade regulations, prohibitions, and restrictions        | 91%           |                     |                     |
| Non-compliance with environmental standards  | 90%           |                     |                     |
| Under-valuation  | 91%           |                     |                     |
| Fiscal/VAT Fraud (customs gap, goods in evasion of tax and duties)                 | 93%           |                     |                     |
| Misclassification of goods and misdeclaration of origin                            | 93%           |                     |                     |
| Need for equipment processing capacity   | 100%          |                     |                     |
| Equipment preparedness/capacity for e-commerce                                     | 100%          |                     |                     |

**Commission's services perspective on external factors which may influence the results:**

*No external factors were identified by the Commission and National Administrations in 2023 that had negatively affected the output initially envisioned by Member States in their projects*

**RES 1.3: Degree of adherence of BCPs and customs laboratories equipment to the common list of equipment <sup>(70)</sup> that should be available per laboratory/type of border crossing point<sup>(71)</sup>, contributing to a harmonised application of customs controls**

*Degree of adherence of Border Crossing Points and customs laboratories, in 2023<sup>(72)</sup>:*

| Type of BCP                    | Degree of adherence (%) | Target 2024 | Target 2027 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Air                            | 13%                     | 60%         | 80%         |
| Land                           | 7%                      |             |             |
| Mobile                         | 36%                     |             |             |
| Postal                         | 14%                     |             |             |
| Rail                           | 9%                      |             |             |
| Sea                            | 10%                     |             |             |
| <b>Overall adherence level</b> | <b>9.74%</b>            |             |             |

<sup>(68)</sup> 60% target for each type of threat.

<sup>(69)</sup> Indicative targets which will be adjusted based on indicator values after the implementation of the first Work Programme.

<sup>(70)</sup> The common list was adopted at the meeting of the CCEI Coordination Expert Group on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

<sup>(71)</sup> In addition to the categories envisaged by the CCEI regulation, the mobile BCP category was added due to its strategic role in increasing the efficiency of the customs controls by providing greater flexibility and unpredictability in the performance of the controls.

<sup>(72)</sup> The information is based on data provided by Member States, the data comprehensiveness rating for which is assessed at 67,1% for BCPs compared to 59.8% in 2022. The rating changed due to additional data received in 2023.

| <b>Customs Laboratories</b>          | <b>Degree of adherence (%)</b> | <b>Target 2024</b> | <b>Target 2027</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Customs Laboratories <sup>(73)</sup> | <b>27%</b>                     | <b>60%</b>         | <b>80%</b>         |

#### **RES 1.4: Coverage of risks and threats present at Border Crossing Points/Laboratories contributing to a harmonised application of customs controls**

This indicator is designed to gather data to suggest that the CCEI has contributed to harmonised application of customs controls across the different categories by ensuring the conditions to address the threats and risks present at the BCPs and laboratories with the funded and available equipment. It comprises of quantitative data gathered at the application and reporting stages where Members States specify the risks and threats present at each BCP/laboratories, linking it with the equipment to be funded.

##### *Coverage of non-financial and financial risks and threats of BCPs and customs laboratories in 2023:*

|                                      | Non-financial risks/threats | Financial risks/threats | 2024 Target | 2027 Target                |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Air                                  | 58%                         | 64%                     | <b>70%</b>  | <b>90% <sup>(74)</sup></b> |
| Land                                 | 36%                         | 30%                     |             |                            |
| Mobile                               | 70%                         | 86%                     |             |                            |
| Post                                 | 65%                         | 66%                     |             |                            |
| Rail                                 | 52%                         | 45%                     |             |                            |
| Sea                                  | 44%                         | 42%                     |             |                            |
| Customs laboratories <sup>(75)</sup> | 56%                         | 55%                     |             |                            |

#### **RES 2: Proportion of National Administrations who report positively on the contribution of the Customs Control Equipment Instrument to the better implementation of the Customs Risk Measurement Framework (CRMF)**

This indicator is designed to collect data on the ways in which the CCEI contributes to the better implementation of the CRMF <sup>(76)</sup>.

##### *Percentage of positive replies for BCPs and customs laboratories in 2023:*

|   | 2023 value | 2024 Target | 2027 Target                |
|---|------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Proportion of National Administrations who report positively on the contribution of the Customs Control Equipment Instrument to | 91%        | <b>60%</b>  | <b>80% <sup>(77)</sup></b> |

<sup>(73)</sup> The common list for the customs laboratories was adopted at the meeting of the CCEI Coordination Expert Group on 5 December 2023.

<sup>(74)</sup> Targets are indicative to a large extent. They will be adjusted based on indicator values after the implementation of the first Work Programme.

<sup>(75)</sup> The matrix correlating risk/threat and laboratory equipment was adopted at the CCEI Coordination Expert Group meeting on 5 December 2023.

<sup>(76)</sup> Feasibility to report on the indicator on a yearly basis is dependent on consistent cooperation of Customs Risk Management and Customs Controls departments of specific Member States, which may take time to establish. In the meantime, reporting may be less regular.

<sup>(77)</sup> At this stage, targets are indicative to a large extent. They will be adjusted based on indicator values after the implementation of the first Work Programme.

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| the better implementation of the Customs Risk Measurement Framework (CRMF) |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|

ANNEX III : CCEI IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

