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EVALUATION

of the

TEMPORARY SCHENGEN FACILITY OF CROATIA

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Glossary

<i>Term or acronym</i>	<i>Meaning or definition</i>
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ARPA	The Agency for the Audit of EU Programmes Implementation System
BC	Border Crossing
BCP	Border Crossing Point
BPS	Border Police Station
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
CR	Comprehensive Report on the implementation of measures and the execution of the payments under the Schengen Facility for Croatia
CS	Case study
EOD/IED	Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Improvised Explosive Devices
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
EBCGA	The European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GIS	Geographic Information System
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IBM AP	Integrated Border Management Action Plan
IP	Indicative Programme of the Schengen Facility for Croatia
ISF – B&V	Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa

MFEA	Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
MoI	Croatian Ministry of Interior
N.SIS	National component of the Schengen Information System
NBMIS	National Border Management Information System
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
SAP	Schengen Action Plan
SIRENE	Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries
SIS II	Schengen Information System
VIS	Visa Information system
TC	Transit Centre

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope

Croatia joined the European Union on 1 July 2013. As of the accession date, the provisions of the original Treaties and the acts adopted by the institutions before accession were binding on Croatia and applied in Croatia under the conditions laid down in those Treaties and the Act of Accession¹. Article 31 of the Act of Accession entailed the creation of a temporary financing instrument (i.e. Schengen Facility) from the date of accession until 31 December 2014, whose objective was to help Croatia finance actions at the new external borders of the Union for the implementation of the Schengen acquis and external border control.

The main objective of this evaluation is to examine all outcomes, including outputs, results and impacts resulting from the implementation of actions and measures under the Schengen Facility for Croatia, in the period 1 July 2013 - 21 January 2017. Based on the examinations of implemented measures, the evaluation provided elements which could be taken into consideration for any future EU funded interventions with similar features.

The preparation for entering the Schengen Area started before Croatia's accession to the EU. Croatia introduced the Integrated Border Management concept (IBM) in 2005 and has since then continuously been upgrading it to align it to the *acquis communautaire*.

In 2007, Croatia adopted the Schengen Action Plan (SAP)² with the goal of aligning the national legislation to the Schengen acquis and planning for activities that would allow strengthening administrative capacity. The key areas outlined by the SAP overlapped largely with the areas that will later on be mentioned in the Indicative Program of the Schengen Facility (IP): border police management, asylum and migration, visa management, police cooperation, and fight against crime and terrorism. The SAP was revised in 2014 to reflect the updated status of actions that still needed to be undertaken in aligning to the Schengen acquis, complementary to the provisions of the IP 2013-2014.

In 2013, the Croatian Government adopted the Law on state border surveillance and the Law on amendments and additions to the Law on foreign nationals, which ensured the harmonisation of Croatian law with the Schengen acquis of provisions related to border police activities. In the same year, the Regulation on border crossings in the Republic of Croatia was adopted, establishing the border crossings, locations, categories as well as the types of transportation allowed.

An evaluation of the Schengen Facility for Croatia was launched on 6 April 2018 with the publication of a Roadmap that describes the context, purpose and scope of the evaluation as well as its main evaluation criteria: (1) effectiveness of the intervention; (2) efficiency in relation to resources used; (3) relevance in relation to identified needs and

¹ Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Republic of Croatia (L 112/21), Council of the European Union.

² Reference in the Integrated Border Management Strategy (Strategija integriranog upravljanja granicom), Section 2, article 3 (published by the Croatian Official Gazette NN 92/2014, available at https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_07_92_1864.html).

problems; (4) coherence; (5) sustainability; and (6) EU added value compared to what could have been achieved at Member State or international level. As part of the evaluation, a public consultation took place.

This staff working document describes the evaluation process, how it was carried out, and what it found. It is accompanied by four annexes that contain procedural information, a summary of the consultations and an overview of the methodology.

An external contractor has carried out a study that has informed the evaluation. The study started in November 2018 and ended in July 2019.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE INTERVENTION

Description of the intervention and its objectives

The Schengen Facility for Croatia is the third such instrument for new EU Member States. The first one (Schengen Facility I), in the period 2004-2006, helped seven new EU Member States³ to get prepared for accession to the Schengen area⁴. The second Schengen Facility (Schengen Facility II) was set up for Bulgaria and Romania for the period 2007-2009⁵.

The Schengen Facility for Croatia ensured EUR 120 million to finance actions at the new external borders of the Union for the implementation of the Schengen acquis and external border control

The general objective of the Schengen Facility is the compliance of Croatia with the Schengen acquis.

The Schengen Facility addressed the *general need* of full compliance with the Schengen acquis, including improved external borders control, surveillance, and interoperability, as well as *specific needs* such as: insufficient/outdated operating equipment, inadequate border crossing infrastructure and related buildings, non-interoperable IT and insufficient qualification of border police and consular staff. There was also a horizontal need to support the necessary logistics and operations, required to fulfil the obligations in respect of Schengen acquis.

In order to meet this general objective of the Schengen Facility, Croatia drafted an Indicative Programme (IP), which covered three areas of intervention:

- enhancing control and surveillance of the borders,
- implementation of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) principle at national and international level and
- enhancing the skills and knowledge of the border police and employees at consular and diplomatic mission in relation to the Schengen acquis.

³ Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

⁴ Commission Decision C(2004) 248 on the management and monitoring of the Schengen Facility.

⁵ Commission Decision C(2007) 1417 on the management and monitoring of the Schengen part of the Schengen Facility.

The IP further defined 11 objectives⁶:

- Objective 1: Acquisition of new technical equipment for surveillance and control of external borders
- Objective 2: Modernisation and development of radio communication system necessary for surveillance and control of external borders
- Objective 3: Development and upgrading of information systems and computer networks related to the implementation of the Schengen acquis
- Objective 4: Construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure
- Objective 5: Increase of the qualification of the border police
- Objective 6: Development of the Croatian Visa Information System and connection to the EU Visa Information System (VIS)
- Objective 7: Improvement of Schengen related knowledge and skills of the consular staff.
- Objective 8: Providing Croatian diplomatic missions and consular offices with additional security equipment;
- Objective 9: Support costs for logistics and operations for managing the Instrument;
- Objective 10: Increasing the number of police officers for border control and police officers for state border protection;
- Objective 11: Equipment for border police.

The objectives of the Schengen Facility for Croatia and their links to all other elements of the intervention logic of the Schengen Facility are presented in section 2.4.1.

The 11 objectives of the Schengen Facility were further broken down to measures, out of which the procurement of equipment accounted for most of the financial allocations, with more than 30% of allocated funds, followed by infrastructure (approx. 28%).

It was expected that a share of contracted amounts would not be paid as some of the planned actions may not be implemented within the eligibility period. Thus, in order to increase the absorption rate and utilise as much funds as possible within the eligibility period, the Responsible Authority exceeded the available Schengen Facility funding in procurement plans, up to EUR 122,75 million.

⁶ Initially, the IP defined 7 objectives (1 to 7). Throughout the implementation, four additional objectives were added (8 to 11), by three amendments of the IP.

Table 1 Financial allocation of the Schengen Facility per activity type in euro

Activity type	Programmed		Costs incurred ⁷	
	Amount (EUR)	% out of total	Amount (EUR)	% out of total
Equipment	41 027 079,26	33,42%	38 207 321,79	32,69%
Infrastructure	34 224 523,71	27,88%	33 747 343,85	28,87%
IT solutions	8 841 599,15	7,20%	8 303 506,91	7,10%
Means of transport	37 583 663,37	30,62%	35 274 952,97	30,18%
Operations	340 000,00	0,28%	228 264,20	0,19%
Salaries	350 000,00	0,29%	887 532,61	0,75%
Training	381 000,00	0,31%	212 493,45	0,18%
Grand Total	122 747 865,49	100 %	116 861 415,78	100,00 %

The Schengen Facility helped Croatia in securing border management that would help it with tackling the complexities of the border and allow it to join the Schengen area. The needs of Croatia in relation to border surveillance and control are strongly influenced by the specificities of the national border, which is relatively long given the size of the country. The total border length is 3 318,6 km, out of which the external border is 2 304,3 km. A high volume of cross border traffic and large number of traffic routes makes the surveillance and control of the border challenging. Other challenges concern the geographical features, the remaining potential mine fields in the vicinity of borders with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, and the discontinuity of the land border between Dubrovnik and the rest of the Croatian territory.

The implementation of the Schengen Facility for Croatia was finalised in January 2017; however Croatia has not yet entered the Schengen area. The Commission adopted a Communication⁸ to the European Parliament and Council on 22 October 2019 in which it is concluded that the Commission considers that Croatia has taken the measures needed to ensure that the necessary conditions for the application of all relevant parts of the Schengen acquis are met. It also indicates that Croatia will need to continue working consistently on the implementation of all the ongoing actions, in particular in the field of management of the external borders, to ensure that these conditions continue to be met. Furthermore, the Council of the European Union should take a decision on Croatia's accession.

Management of Schengen Facility and roles of Authorities

As per Article 13 of the Commission Decision C(2013)2159, Croatia was required to designate a responsible authority, a certifying authority and an audit authority that would oversee the implementation of the Schengen Facility. These authorities, as well as a

⁷ The amounts are subject to further verifications by the Commission

⁸ COM(2019) 497 final.

coordinating body and the beneficiaries of the Schengen Facility, were nominated by Government Decision⁹.

The Independent Sector for Schengen coordination and EU Funds of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) was set up as the Responsible Authority (RA), whose role was the management of the Schengen Facility and the implementation of actions under the defined objectives.

The Agency for the Audit of EU Programmes Implementation System was designated as the Audit Authority, whose main duty was to ensure that independent verifications on the effective functioning of the management and control system are performed.

The Sector for National Fund Affairs of the State Treasury in the Ministry of Finance was appointed as the Certifying Authority and performed tasks related to the certification of the declared expenditure. It was in charge of processing the receipts for services procured under the Schengen Facility and paying contractors.

A separate Coordination and Monitoring Board was also established, consisting of the Minister of interior, deputy ministers of several relevant ministries¹⁰, the representative of the State Commission for Supervision of Public Procurement Procedures, Chief of Police, Head of the Border Police Directorate, Head of the Responsible Authority and a representative of the Audit Authority (as observer). The Board gave recommendations related to the IP and its possible changes, assessed the overall implementation of the Schengen Facility and advised the Responsible Authority.

Five beneficiaries of the Schengen Facility were chosen on the basis of their administrative jurisdictions and legal status related to project implementation: the Border Police Directorate (MoI), the IT and Telecommunications Sector (MoI), the Service for Construction and Maintenance of Border Crossings (Ministry of Finance), the Consular Affairs Sector and the Sector for Informatics, Distribution of Data and Protection of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Intervention logic

The intervention logic presented below serves to depict the chain of expected effects associated with the Schengen Facility.

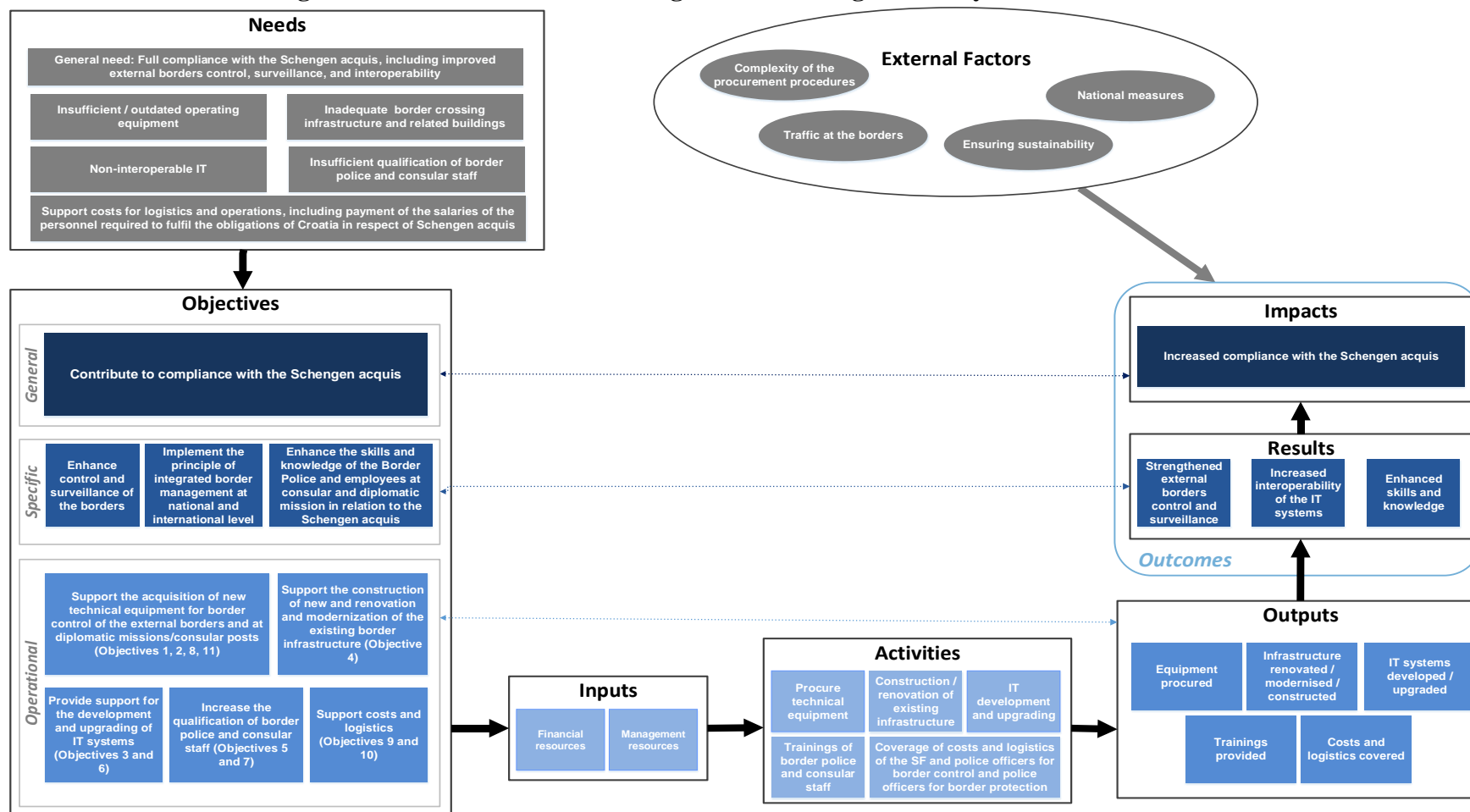
The intervention logic illustrates the causality between objectives, activities and the expected effects. Understanding it is essential for the design of the analytical framework and the evaluation of the actions and measures performed under the Schengen Facility for Croatia.

⁹ Croatian Government Decision of 28 November 2013 (Class:022-03/13-04/493) available in Croatian at <http://eufondovi.mup.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Odluka%20Vlade%20RH%20-%20sustav%20upravljanja%20i%20kontrola%20Schengenskog%20instrumenta.pdf> [28.03.2019].

¹⁰ Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Construction and Spatial Planning, and Ministry of Foreign and EU affairs.

Figure 1

Intervention logic of the Schengen Facility for Croatia



The general objective of the Schengen Facility was the compliance of Croatia with the Schengen acquis. The Schengen Facility addressed the *general need* of full compliance with the Schengen acquis, including improved external borders control, surveillance, and interoperability, as well as *specific needs* such as: 1) insufficient/outdated operating equipment; 2) inadequate border crossing infrastructure and related buildings; 3) non-interoperable IT and 4) insufficient qualification of border police and consular staff. There was also a horizontal need to support the necessary logistics and operations, required to fulfil the obligations in respect of Schengen acquis.

In order to meet this general objective of the Schengen Facility, the Indicative Programme (IP) covered three areas of intervention:

- enhancing control and surveillance of the borders,
- implementation of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) principle at national and international level and
- enhancing the skills and knowledge of the border police and employees at consular and diplomatic mission in relation to the Schengen acquis.

The IP further defined 11 operational objectives (as described on Section 2.1 above). The **inputs** are the financial and management resources needed for the implementation of the Schengen Facility.

The envisaged **activities** - procurement of technical equipment, construction/ renovation of existing infrastructure, development and upgrading of IT systems, trainings of border police and consular staff, coverage of the costs and logistics for border police officers as well as for the management of the Schengen Facility – are clearly linked to the operational objectives of the Schengen Facility.

The **outputs** of the abovementioned activities¹¹ have contributed to the achievement of three main results:

- strengthening of the external border control;
- increased interoperability of the IT systems;
- enhanced skills of the relevant staff.

The implementation of the Schengen Facility in Croatia has been influenced by some external factors.

Certain factors have influenced negatively the implementation process; aspects such as the complexity of the procurement procedures, the limited administrative capacity of public Authorities in some situations as well as the extended traffic at the borders did not allow for a the smooth progress of certain activities.

¹¹ Equipment procured; Infrastructure renovated/modernised/constructed; IT systems developed/upgraded; Trainings provided; Costs and logistics covered.

On the other hand, some national measures which complemented or facilitated the actions funded by the Schengen Facility, such as the investments near the state border, influenced positively the implementation of the Schengen Facility.

Baseline and points of comparison

Overall situation at the external and internal boarder

Since the Schengen Facility implementation started in 2014, the baseline year for the evaluation was considered 2013, the last year before the intervention for which relevant information/ data is available.

In 2013, Croatia had 189 border crossing points. The external land border was supervised by border police distributed across 27 police stations.

In 2013, 136.347.236 passengers crossed the Croatian border. The highest share of these crossings occurred at the border with Slovenia, where 65.133.886 crossings were registered. The second highest traffic was recorded at the Bosnian border crossing, amounting to 43,688,380 passengers. The most frequently used border crossings were at the border with Slovenia: Macelj (11,632,571), Bregana (11,251,484), and Kaštel (9,157,498). A total number of 45.866.702 vehicles have crossed the Croatian border in 2013. Out of those, 41.563.900 were personal vehicles, 3.600.212 were cargo vehicles, 568.572 buses, 65.057 airplanes, 18.417 trains and 50.544 ships. Maritime border crossings in 2013 amounted to 3.183.408 passengers.

The number of registered illegal border crossings in 2013 was 4.734 (including EU nationals). Looking at illegal crossings according to police directorates shows that the highest number of illegal crossings (1.091) occurs in the Zagrebačka police directorate, followed by Vukovarsko-srijemska police directorate (993) and Primorsko-goranska (874). Out of the registered illegal border crossings 603 took place at the border crossing and 1.363 close to the border crossing. According to Eurostat data, the number of third country nationals found to be illegally present in Croatia in 2013 was 4.150.

In 2013, reception and accommodation of asylum seekers was organised by two reception centres, one in Zagreb (Dugave) and the other in Kutina, which received funding through PHARE¹² and IPA¹³. A reception centre for foreigners¹⁴ in Ježevo was also functional and data on its functioning is provided below:

- Number of persons in the centre: 784 (2012)
- Number of days spent in the centre: 18,494 (2012)

As mentioned above, the number of apprehended irregular migrants in 2013 was 4.734, which presents a decrease in comparison to the previous year (6.839). The number of asylum seekers amounted to 1.089 in 2013, presenting a slight decrease since the year before (1.193).

When it comes to the registration of human trafficking cases, there is no available data for 2013 and 2014 concerning persons coming into formal contact with the police

12 Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies.

13 Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

14 The reception centre for foreigners (prihvatni centar za strance) is a facility that accommodates migrants who are to be returned to their origin countries.

(suspected, arrested, or cautioned), but only for 2011 and 2012: 14 and 11 cases respectively.

The number of all valid residence permits in Croatia in 2013 was 12.259. According to Eurostat data, the number of immigrants in Croatia in 2013 was 10.378. No publicly available data was available for the number of visas issued in 2013, but according to data provided by the MFEA, their number was around 110 000. In 2014, 72 463 visa applications were processed.

Technical equipment

Although significant progress was made in providing technical equipment to the border police even before the Schengen Facility, further modernisation was needed in order to reach the technical standard of Schengen external borders. The equipment for border surveillance and checks at border crossing points did not adequately meet the requirements in order to ensure compliance with the Schengen acquis. In particular:

- the TETRA¹⁵ system did not ensure adequate signal in the overall area along the land and maritime state border;
- there was insufficient optical and other special surveillance equipment required to prevent or reduce the illegal crossing of EU external borders;
- patrols did not have sufficient vehicles and were hence did not have the required mobility to appropriately respond to dynamic situation at the border;
- lack of special surveillance equipment to perform border protection, border control and surveillance functions from the air;
- Not all Border Crossing Points (BCPs) at the external border were covered with permanent video surveillance;
- the maritime police had access to 6 type A vessels, 13 type B vessels and 24 type C vessels¹⁶, all of which were used to control the high risk areas. However, more A and B type vessels were needed for the purpose of ensuring presence of police vessels at sea.

Infrastructure

According to the IP 2013-2014, BCPs in Croatia were not constructed and equipped according to standards and requirements imposed on BCPs and the standards and recommendations of the EU on the future external border of Republic of Croatia and EU. Respectively, indoor facilities in existing containers and control booths were considered too small and not adequately technically equipped.

The border control of incoming passengers was done in accordance to national regulations that were aligned to the EU legislation. However, according to the revised SAP, the state of play at the Croatian airports in 2013 did not entirely meet EU standards. The infrastructural units and the organisational procedures conducted by the airport police in relation to border controls were not congruent to Schengen standards. An

15 Terrestrial Trunked Radio / Trans European Trunked Radio.

16 Type A (over 18 m length), type B (10-18 m length), and type C (less than 10 m length).

infrastructural reconstruction was needed for the purpose of dividing arriving passengers based on location of departure (Schengen vs non-Schengen). The number of air traffic counted by passengers crossing the Croatian border was 5.380.081 in 2013.

From 2014, the **Maritime Police Development Strategy for blue border surveillance** was incorporated in the IBM Strategy and its Action Plan. Thus, a strategic framework for the establishment of a surveillance system of the blue state border has been set up. However, as identified by the IP 2013-2014, the premises of the maritime police stations were not completely functional and did not satisfy the organisational needs.

IT systems

In 2013, the NBMIS¹⁷ was functional and in use on all external border crossings that were operating at the time, and at 7 border crossings at the internal border. Even though the system was considered critical, before the launch of the Schengen FS it did not fully meet the standards required for safe and reliable operation.

The Croatian SIRENE¹⁸ Bureau was set up within the Sector for General Crime and International Police Cooperation of the General Police Directorate in 2012. It employed 10 police officers whose work related primarily to tracing and handing over persons with issued European Arrest Warrants, as well as cooperation with EU Member States' police departments on topics of international interest. There was, however, a need to develop SIRENE application that would allow the connection to the MoI Information System and as well as to other SIRENE offices in EU member states.

In relation to the EU Visa Information System, the MFEA identified the need to modify and extend the functionalities of the existing Croatian Visa Database and to establish the Croatian VIS. As concerns radio communication equipment, prior the implementation of the Schengen Facility, it was considered that the coverage of TETRA signal at the borders with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro was insufficient, and other communications capabilities that provide public communications operators were weak or non-existent.

The National Maritime Centre for Data Collection was established in May 2012 in Zadar. In 2013, the Vessel Traffic Management and Information Systems (VTMIS), which would give the MoI direct access to the maritime surveillance database, was in its final phases of implementation.

Human resources

The total number of border police officers in October 2013 amounted to 6,163, out of which 4,904 police officers were stationed at the external border. The SAP envisaged an increase of police officers to 5,825 at external borders.

According to SAP, the border police officers had received specialised training on a regular basis since 2005. The following areas were emphasised as priorities during the

¹⁷ The National Border Management Information System is the Croatian IT system for conducting border control of entry and exit of vehicles, passengers and objects.

¹⁸ The Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries (SIRENE) Bureau is responsible for any supplementary information exchange and coordination of activities connected to SIS alerts between Member States.

specialisation process: EU law, combating smuggling of vehicles and misuse of documents, risk analysis, using the NBMIS, combating trafficking in human being, maritime police related topics, fundamental rights and issuing visas at border crossing points. The IP identified the training needs concerning the maintenance and use of the newly developed SIS II and SIRENE, improvement of Schengen related knowledge and skills of the consular staff, as well as the need for modernising and equipping the premises at the Police Academy, which provides trainings to the MoI.

3. IMPLEMENTATION / STATE OF PLAY

As a temporary financing instrument, the Schengen Facility provided EUR 120 million to finance actions at the new external borders of the Union for the implementation of the Schengen acquis and external border control. The types of actions that were eligible for financing under the Schengen Facility included: investments in border crossing infrastructure, investments in operating equipment and IT systems needed to implement the Schengen acquis, training of border guards, and support to costs for logistics and operations. In the following paragraph, more details on the implementation of the Schengen Facility are provided.

Description of the current situation

For the period 1 July 2013 to 31 December 2014, the total amount of EUR 120 million was made available to Croatia (in two lump sums of EUR 40 million for 2013 and EUR 80 million for 2014). These funds were supposed to be used within three years from the first payment. The first expenditure was executed on the 24 July 2013, setting the end of the expenditure admissibility period to 23 July 2016. Due to the low execution caused by the limited capacity or the responsible authorities in the first years of the implementation of the programme¹⁹, the MoI requested a six-month prolongation of the implementation, which was approved by the Commission. Decision C(2016) 4656 allowed for expenditures until the 23 September 2016 and payments until 21 January 2017.

The costs incurred in the implementation period and declared to the Commission amounted to EUR 116 861 415,77. The breakdown of the programmed Schengen Facility allocations per objective (and the actual declared expenditure) is presented in Table 2.

¹⁹ For more details see below, Evaluation Question 2.4.

Table 2 Financial allocation of the Schengen Facility per objective in euro

Objectives 1	Programmed		Costs incurred ²⁰		Percentage point difference between the share of programmed and incurred cost 6 (3-5)
	Amount (EUR) 2	% out of total 3	Amount (EUR) 4	% out of total 5	
Objective 1 Acquisition of new technical equipment for border control of the external borders	71 146 051,41	57,96	66 983 911,67	57,31	-0,64
Objective 2 Modernisation and development of radio communication system necessary for surveillance and control of external borders	8 668 534,08	7,06	8 263 138,31	7,07	0,008
Objective 3 Development and upgrading of information systems and computer networks related to the implementation of the Schengen acquis	14 129 107,07	11,51	14 279 507,45	12,21	0,70
Objective 4 Construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure	20 328 700,93	16,51	19 610 964,31	16,78	0,22
Objective 5 Increase of the qualification of the border police	300 000,00	0,24	207 031,70	0,17	-0,067
Objective 6 Development of the Croatian Visa Information System and connection to the EU Visa Information System (VIS)	1 560 000,00	1,27	1 053 480,13	0,90	-0,36
Objective 7 Improvement of Schengen related knowledge and skills of the consular staff	81 000,00	0,06	5 461,75	0,004	-0,061
Objective 8 Investment in security equipment at diplomatic missions/consular posts according to the Schengen standards	2 109 000,00	1,71	958 387,27	0,82	-0,89
Objective 9 Support costs for logistic and operations for managing	170 000,00	0,13	227 980,10	0,19	0,056

²⁰ The amounts are subject to further verifications by the Commission.

Objectives	Programmed		Costs incurred ²⁰		Percentage point difference between the share of programmed and incurred cost
	Amount (EUR)	% out of total	Amount (EUR)	% out of total	
the Instrument					
Objective 10 Increasing the number of police officers for border control and police officers for state border protection	350 000,00	0,28	887 532,61	0,75	0,47
Objective 11 Equipment for border police	3 905 472,00	3,18	4 384 020,48	3,75	0,56
Grand Total	122 747 865,49²¹	100,00	116 861 415,78	100,00	-

²¹ According to the CR, the Responsible Authority assessed in 2016 that a share of contracted amounts would not be paid as some of the planned actions may not be implemented within the eligibility period. In order to increase the absorption rate and utilise as much funds as possible within the eligibility period, the Responsible Authority exceeded the available Schengen Facility funding in procurement plans.

The Schengen Facility significantly supported the modernisation process and completing the gaps concerning the insufficient/outdated equipment, through the measures implemented under Objectives 1, 2, 8 and 11 of the IP, aiming to attain the technical standard of Schengen external borders.

Most of the targets of Objective 1 were achieved, consisting of procurement of border surveillance equipment (cameras, stationary radars), devices and materials for border control, specialised vehicles, vessels and helicopters, setting up the border surveillance IT system and purchase of the necessary hardware.

The measures of Objective 2 led to the upgrade of the MoI national network (MUPNet)/TETRA system for digital radio-communication system for blue and green border.

Under Objective 8, technical protection equipment (video surveillance, access control, intrusion detection etc.) was delivered to 50 locations. In addition, interior adaptation works were performed for priority Diplomatic Missions/Consular Offices.

Under Objective 11, necessary equipment was purchased for the border police such as motorcycle gears, police uniform articles, weapon kits.

The need for construction, renovation or upgrading of border related infrastructure and related buildings was addressed by the measures implemented under Objective 4, such works being done in 13 locations.

Due to the measures implemented under Objectives 3 and 6, the relevant IT systems have been developed and upgraded, in particular the national component (N.SIS II) of the new Schengen Information System (SIS II) and the IT backup for SIS II, the NBMIS infrastructure of the MoI's Information system, the application for the SIRENE bureau, Croatian VIS and the communication channels MoI - MFEA and MFEA – DM/CPs.

Objectives 5 and 7 addressed the needs identified in the human resources area, through language training, training on Schengen acquis and training for identification and detection of counterfeited and false documents.

4. METHOD

Short description of methodology

This Commission evaluation relies on an external study carried out between November 2018 and July 2019 by a specialised consultancy. The evaluation aimed to analyse the implementation and application of the Schengen Facility in Croatia according to a number of specific criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value and sustainability) set out in the [Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines](#). The evaluation covered the implementation of the Facility from its entry into force in July 2013 to January 2017.

The study's methodology combined desk research, and both qualitative and quantitative analysis; information was drawn from various primary and secondary sources, such as:

- Desk research;
- Interviews with EU staff, senior public officers of the relevant Croatian Authorities, beneficiaries etc.;
- Surveys with recipient and end-users benefiting from Schengen Facility funding;
- 8 case studies on various elements of the programme, covering at least 75% of the total funding²²;
- Public consultation, as foreseen in the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines.

A more detailed overview of the methodology used for the evaluation study is presented in Annex 3.

Deviations from the evaluation roadmap

One deviation from the Evaluation Roadmap was made over the course of the evaluation. While according to the Roadmap the evaluation should have been completed in the last quarter of 2018, the actual completion date was June 2019. This was due to the fact that the tendering procedures took longer than expected and the actual timeframe of the contract had also to be adjusted, providing more time for consultation activities.

Limitations and robustness of findings

The overall assessment of the availability and robustness of data is that they provide sufficient basis to answer the evaluation questions.

Nevertheless, the data collection and analysis faced limitations:

- Changes in the Indicative Programme, which hampered a clear comparison between planned and achieved measures/allocations;
- The semi-structured interviews were informative, nevertheless, they provided mostly anecdotal data rather than hard evidence on certain issues;
- Limited outreach to different types of end users;
- Beneficiaries did not always have sufficient knowledge to provide all the information that was requested;
- Low response rate of the open public consultation.

More information on data limitations is provided in Annex 3.

²² The selected case studies covered a variety of objectives and measures set out in the Indicative Programme. In particular, the topics selected for the case studies included: acquisition of new technical equipment for surveillance and control (vehicles, helicopters and special equipment); development of information systems (development of the national SIS II); (re)construction of border infrastructure; development of the national VIS; trainings for border guards and consular officers; costs for management of the Schengen Facility; and salaries for additional border police officers.

5. ANALYSIS AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines, the evaluation looked at the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and the EU added value of the Schengen Facility.

Relevance

The main criterion to judge the relevance of the Schengen Facility for Croatia was assessing the extent to which it addressed the needs and problems identified in relation to external border control and surveillance in Croatia.

EQ 1.1: To what extent were the objectives of the Schengen Facility relevant for the needs of EU and Croatia, including stakeholders, to prepare the accession to the Schengen area?

Findings: The objectives of the Schengen Facility were relevant to a large extent to the needs of the EU and Croatia. In particular:

- The analysis showed that there was a strong link between the needs identified in national strategic documents and through the stakeholder consultation and the objectives of the IP 2013-2014.
- The Schengen Facility in Croatia was designed to meet the European Union priorities with regard to the Schengen acquis. The Schengen Facility has contributed to EU priorities with regard to the Schengen acquis by ensuring technical means to prepare Croatia for the accession to the Schengen area.
- The objectives setting of the Schengen Facility showed flexibility in light of newly identified needs. Thus, the original objectives were supplemented, which was considered as one of its greatest advantages compared to other EU assistance programs.
- At the same time, the Schengen Facility did not address needs related to trainings for border police in human rights protection and interactions with immigrants, an issue which was highlighted by NGOs and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia.
- Furthermore, there were outstanding needs, which were not fully addressed by the Schengen Facility due to financial limitations: land border surveillance of the green border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, further trainings on how to use the equipment, and infrastructure needs at BCPs.

Overall, the objectives of the Schengen Facility were relevant to addressing the needs of Croatia to prepare for the accession to the Schengen area.

Concerning the IT systems, the need to address insufficient and outdated operating equipment was of major significance to achieve the required level of border surveillance and control, therefore several Schengen Facility objectives address this need. Furthermore, there was a need for construction, renovation or upgrading of border crossing infrastructure and related buildings. This included changes to external objects (e.g. booths) for performance of border control, which were judged to be too small and not functionally organised, as well as changes to indoor facilities (police stations).

Although the National Border Management Information System (NB MIS) was developed and the IT structure at borders were in place to some extent, improvements were needed. Specifically, there was lacking capacity for data provision and data

management, as well as the need to adapt to the Schengen information system. This entailed the establishment of the National component of the Schengen Information System and the SIRENE²³ bureau and development of an adequate national interface for the Schengen Information System and storage facilities. Insufficient qualification of border police and consular staff required to fulfil the obligations of Croatia in respect of the Schengen acquis was assessed as another need that the Schengen Facility sought to address. Lastly, support to costs for logistics and operations was needed, including payment of the salaries of the personnel required to fulfil the obligations of Croatia in respect of Schengen acquis.

Insufficient and outdated operating equipment

Enforcement of border control as well as a continuous development of external border surveillance, were pointed out in the Integrated Border Management Action Plan as one of the main goals in the process of harmonisation with the Schengen standards. The Council of the European Union²⁴ recognised the lack of necessary technical equipment at land, air and sea borders. The investments relating to external border surveillance (Objective 1) were designed to address needs that the border police was facing due to the challenging terrain along the Croatian border, as well as to ensure proper border controls and prevent illegal crossings.

Objective 2 envisaged the establishment of the TETRA system²⁵ in order to enable more efficient border police communication as identified in the Council recommendations²⁶.

In order to comply with the standards of the EU Schengen Catalogue²⁷, the consular offices and diplomatic missions were upgraded through implementation of technical protection and surveillance systems at consular offices (Objective 8).

Objective 11 provided for procurement of equipment like motorcycle gear, police uniforms and weapon kits.

Need for construction, renovation or upgrading of border crossing infrastructure and related buildings

Many BCPs were not constructed and equipped according to applicable standards and requirements for safe and economic performance of border control, as well as standards and recommendations of EU at the future external border of Republic of Croatia and EU. Some police facilities were not satisfying the organisational needs of the border police. Hence, under Objective 4 several investments in construction, reconstruction and renovation of border infrastructure were carried out.

Development and upgrading of IT systems

²³ Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries.

²⁴ Council Implementing Decision (2017/0037 (NLE)) setting out recommendations addressing the deficiencies identified in the evaluation of Croatia in view of fulfilling the conditions necessary for the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of management of the external border.

²⁵ The terrestrial Trunked Radio is a European standard for a trunked radio system, is a professional mobile radio and two-way transceiver specification.

²⁶ SCH-EVAL 96, 2017.

²⁷ EU Schengen Catalogue, Volume 3, Council of the European Union, General Secretariat, March 2003.

The SAP indicated that the Croatian IT equipment and infrastructure was inadequate. This issue was addressed under Objective 3.

Furthermore, it was necessary to develop the Croatian component of Visa Information System and to connect it to the EU VIS as stated in the IBM Action Plan, the SAP and the Migration Policy and further addressed by the IP under Objective 6.

Insufficient qualification of border police and consular staff

Priority areas for increasing the qualification of border officers were linked to Objective 5 of the IP. These were in line with the Schengen Action Plan, which defined several fields such as strengthening of the competencies in English, qualification of trainers, combatting human trafficking, and trainings on database searches. Moreover, the Council recommendations outlined the need for training on operational planning, use of tracking dogs, technical surveillance systems, patrolling and interception tactics.

Support to costs for logistics and operations

According to the Commission's monitoring visit in 2014, Croatia needed to strengthen the capacity of the Responsible Authority; thus Objective 9 being added to the IP, providing support for additional staff in the Responsible Authority.

The lack of capacity (e.g. lack of enough police officers) was a major gap for border surveillance, border control and related administrative capacity, as outlined in the Council's recommendations. Accordingly, this was translated to Objective 10 of the IP.

In order to address the evolving needs of the country with respect to border surveillance and control, the scope of the IP had to be extended during its implementation. The possibility of changing / supplementing the actions in order to better achieve EU priorities with respect to the Schengen acquis was a great advantage compared to other programs in which this possibility was very limited.

The Council provided two recommendations outlining further needs at the time of their evaluation in 2017 and 2018²⁸. Outstanding needs, which were not fully addressed by the Schengen Facility, included:

- Policy related areas (e.g. updating development of projects related to the IBM Strategy), which were not within the scope of the Schengen Facility;
- Human resources and trainings²⁹, which represent a reoccurring need and were not at the focus of the Schengen Facility (these included as well trainings related to risk analysis methodology);

²⁸ SCH-EVAL 96, 7739/17 - Schengen evaluation of CROATIA - Action Plan to remedy the deficiencies identified in the 2016 evaluation of Croatia in view of fulfilling the conditions necessary for the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of management of the external borders (27 March 2017); and SCH-EVAL 218, 13902/18 - Schengen evaluation of CROATIA - Action Plan to remedy the deficiencies identified in the 2017 evaluation of Croatia in view of fulfilling the conditions necessary for the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of management of the external borders (revisit) (6 November 2018).

²⁹ For instance, even though the Schengen Facility entailed an increase in Border Police officers, the allocated funds for this measure were not sufficient to cover the needs. The Council recommendations (2018) still mention the need to further increase the number of staff responsible for performing

- Infrastructure and technical equipment - Land border surveillance of the green border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, which included the need to set up a mobile technical surveillance system during the time one border crossing point is under construction³⁰.

As concerns the EU objectives, the IP actions and measures had to fall entirely or principally within the Schengen acquis³¹ and be designed to further strengthen and upgrade external border control and must be physically located at external borders, or otherwise must be related to the protection of the external borders. The enlargement of the European Area required the development of appropriate infrastructures, institutions and mechanisms to protect public and internal security in the enlarged Schengen Area and ensuring smooth and swift crossing the external borders. The evaluation showed that all measures funded under the Schengen Facility satisfy the above-mentioned criteria as objectives were related to construction and investment in equipment, training of staff and logistical support.

All versions of the IP were approved by the Commission, ensuring thereby full alignment with EU priorities with regard to the Schengen acquis.

Effectiveness

Under the criterion Effectiveness, the extent to which the objectives of the Schengen Facility have been achieved is explored.

EQ 2.1: To what extent were the operational objectives of the Schengen Facility achieved? What outcomes (positive and negative, intended or unintended) can be attributed to the Schengen Facility in Croatia?

Findings: Most targets of the Schengen Facility have been met, with only a few exceptions under some objectives as described in the IP. Out of 11 objectives defined in the IP, 5 were fully achieved (100%), 4 were achieved to a large extent (> 90%) and 2 were partially achieved (between 50% - 90%). Consequently, in line with the Intervention Logic presented in section 2.4.1, the operational objectives of the Schengen Facility were achieved to a large extent.

While some modifications did not necessarily have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility (e.g. acquisition of helicopter instead of aircraft under Objective 1), equipment and services that were planned but not procured/delivered hampered the effectiveness (most notably for Objectives 5 and 8). Effectiveness was diminished in particular by the long duration of procurement procedures, unresolved property-legal relations and inability to reallocate premises for diplomatic missions.

Positive outcomes of the Schengen Facility implementation include improved mobility and efficiency of border control, upgraded communication and information systems,

practical border tasks, especially number of staff at land border crossing points to provide effective border checks during peak times (Recommendation 4).

³⁰ Even though the surveillance system was partially covered through Objective 4, there was no need for a mobile surveillance system at the time that the IP was drafted.

³¹ The Schengen acquis - Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders; Official Journal L 239 , 22/09/2000 P. 0019 - 0062.

improved working conditions for Border Police, and improved capacity and working conditions of staff at consular missions in third countries.

The achievement of the operational objectives of the Schengen Facility can be attributed to the achievement of the IP objectives, which built on the achievement of targets³². Out of the 5 operational objectives, 2 were fully achieved (*Provide support for the development and upgrading of IT systems; Support costs and logistics*), 2 were achieved to a large extent (*Support the acquisition of new technical equipment for border control of the external borders and at diplomatic missions/consular posts; Support the construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure*) and 1 was partially achieved (*Increase in qualification of border police and consular staff*).

More details are provided on Table 3 below.

Table 3 Assessment of the achievement of targets

Objectives (11) as defined in the Indicative programme of the Schengen Facility and Operational objectives (5) as presented in Figure 1.	Level of achievement of target values
<i>Operational objective: Support the acquisition of new technical equipment for border control of the external borders and at diplomatic missions/consular posts</i>	
Objective 1 Acquisition of new technical equipment for border control of the external borders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 1.1 - 100% of target met - Measure 1.2 - 82% of target met - Measures 1.3 - 1.4 - 100% of targets met - Measure 1.5 - 100% of targets met - Measure 1.6 - 100% of targets met after modification of measure - Measure 1.7 - 53% of targets met - Measure 1.8 - 100% of targets met - Measure 1.9 - 87% of targets met - Measure 1.11 - 1.12 - 100% of target met 	Achieved to a large extent
Objective 2 Modernisation and development of radio communication system necessary for surveillance and control of external borders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 2.1 - 90% of targets were met 	Achieved to a large extent
Objective 8 Investment in security equipment at diplomatic missions/consular posts according to the Schengen standards	Partially achieved

³² Targets fell within one of the following categories: targets fully met; targets met to a large extent; targets partially met; and targets met but modified. When planned and achieved targets were fully aligned, they were judged as fully met. In cases of minor amendments between planned and achieved targets (at least 90% correspondence) the targets were met to a large extent. Targets were judged to be partially met when there was a lower correspondence between planned and achieved targets (at least 50%). In cases where targets were met but solely due to modifications done to planned measures, the 'targets met but modified' categorisation is noted.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 8.1 - 86% of targets met - Measure 8.2 - 75% of targets met - Measure 8.3 - 50% of targets met 	
<p>Objective 11 Equipment for border police</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 11.1 - 100% of targets met 	Fully achieved (based on targets from revised Indicative Programme)
<i>Operational objective: Support the construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure</i>	
<p>Objective 4 Construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 4.1 - 66% of targets met - Measure 4.2 - 100% of targets met - Measure 4.3 - 100% of targets met - Measure 4.4 - 100% of targets met after modification of measure 	Achieved to a large extent
<i>Operational objective: Provide support for the development and upgrading of IT systems</i>	
<p>Objective 3 Development and upgrading of information systems and computer networks related to the implementation of the Schengen acquis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 3.1 - 100% of targets met - Measure 3.2 - 100% of targets met - Measure 3.3 - 100% of targets met <p>Measure 3.4 - 100% of targets met after modification of measure</p>	Fully achieved
<p>Objective 6 Development of the Croatian Visa Information System and connection to the EU Visa Information System (VIS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures 6.1 - 6.6 - 100% of targets met 	Fully achieved
<i>Operational objective: Increase in qualification of border police and consular staff</i>	
<p>Objective 5 Increase of the qualification of the border police</p> <p>Measure 5.1 - 50% of targets met</p>	Partially achieved
<p>Objective 7 Improvement of Schengen related knowledge and skills of the consular staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure 7.1 - 75% of targets met - Measure 7.2 - 100% of targets met 	Achieved to a large extent
<i>Operational objective: Support costs and logistics</i>	
<p>Objective 9 Support costs for logistic and operations for managing the Instrument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures 9.1.-9.5 - 100% of targets met 	Fully achieved (based on targets from revised Indicative Programme)
<p>Objective 10 Increasing the number of police officers for border control and police officers for state border protection</p>	Fully achieved (based on targets from revised

- Measure 10.1 - 100% of targets met	Indicative Programme)
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EQ 2.2: To what extent and how have external/internal factors influenced the implementation of the Schengen Facility in Croatia?

Findings: Both internal and external factors have influenced the implementation of the Schengen Facility, but their effects are not judged to be significant. External factors influencing the implementation of the Schengen Facility included complex procurement procedures and time required to acquire permits, while internal factors included limited administrative capacity and insufficient guidance.

Croatia initially experienced a significant delay in implementing projects financed through the Schengen Facility. In some cases, the inability to implement projects within the given timeframe was related to the complexity of project implementation, mainly due to the challenging procurement procedures.

There were also other issues such as unclear ownership rights of property where infrastructure was to be developed, issues with acquiring construction and building permits/operational licence, unfavourable conditions on the ground, etc.

The uncertainty related to the date of accession to Schengen area was the main external factor influencing the connection of Croatian VIS with EU VIS inhibiting the full realisation of Objective 6. Concerning Objective 8, there was a need to perform interior adaptation of 16 priority Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices of Republic of Croatia, which was completed except for one case.

The limited administrative capacity (within the Responsible Authority specifically) was a major internal factor that hampered the implementation of projects at the beginning of the implementation period.

EQ 2.3: To what extent has the Schengen Facility in Croatia been aligned to and contributed to the EU priorities with regard to the Schengen acquis?

Findings: The Schengen Facility was fully *aligned* and contributed to the EU priorities with regard to the Schengen acquis. Specifically, the Schengen Facility for Croatia has been designed to contribute to the broad European Union priorities on border and internal security. Furthermore, the Schengen Facility measures are aligned and contributed to all specific areas of the Schengen acquis, in particular external borders policy. The Schengen Facility did not directly affect only issues related to police, but Objectives 5 and 7 contributed to the implementation of this part of Schengen acquis.

The Schengen Facility objectives were fully aligned and contributed to the EU Internal Security Strategy for the period 2015-2020, which aims at reinforced border security and integrated border management as these are specific objectives and benefits of the Schengen Facility.

Furthermore, the Schengen Facility is aligned to the priorities of the Schengen acquis, which covers:

- external borders policy;
- visa policy;
- the Schengen Information System;
- data protection;
- police cooperation;
- judicial cooperation in criminal matters;
- the absence of border control at the internal borders, and;
- the functioning of the authorities applying the relevant parts of the Schengen acquis.

All of the Schengen Facility objectives correspond to the external borders policy area priority. In particular, proper protection of the EU external borders, which requires appropriate technical means to protect green and blue borders (Objectives 1 and 2) and also ensuring adequate border crossing infrastructure (Objective 4) directly correspond to the policy on external borders. At the same time, Objective 10 concerns employment costs of additional border police officers, which is related to the proper implementation of the external border policy.

Although none of the Schengen Facility objectives were directly related to the absence of a border control at internal borders, measures of the Objectives 1, 2, 4, and 10 directly affected the implementation of this part of the Schengen acquis.

Issues of the Schengen acquis relating to visa policy were covered by Objective 6 measures as they supported the preparation of an appropriate system that is complementary to the EU visa system. Objective 8 provided Croatian diplomatic missions and consular offices with additional security measures, while Objective 7 raised the level of knowledge about Schengen and increased skills of consular staff in Croatia's diplomatic posts.

The Schengen acquis priorities in the areas of Schengen information system as well as data protection were envisaged under Objective 3. These measures created the basis for integration with EU IT systems which are currently under implementation (EES³³, ETIAS³⁴, ECRIS-TCN³⁵) as well as for their interoperability.

Police cooperation was facilitated through implementation of systems such as the SIRENE, the VIS and SIS, whose objective was to ensure seamless information flow with other Member States (Objectives 3 and 7). Activities that strengthened the border surveillance system at the external “green” and “blue” borders contributed to more frequent communication with the police of neighbouring countries (Objective 1).

The only part of the Schengen acquis, which was not directly covered by the objectives of the Schengen Facility, is judicial cooperation in criminal matters. This component of the Schengen acquis was outside the scope of the Schengen Facility.

³³ Entry-Exit System.

³⁴ European Travel Information and Authorisation System.

³⁵ The European Criminal Records Information System (Third Country Nationals).

The functioning of the bodies applying the relevant parts of the Schengen acquis in Croatia was originally planned to be supported by Schengen Facility through improvement of the knowledge and skills related to Schengen consular employees and investments in security equipment in diplomatic missions / consular offices in accordance with Schengen standards (Objectives 7 and 8). During the implementation of the Schengen Facility, it was found that support for its logistics and management, increasing the number of police officers for border control and police officers for state border protection, as well as additional equipment for border police (objectives 9, 10 and 11) were necessary to ensure proper functioning of the bodies applying the relevant parts of the Schengen acquis.

Furthermore, the Schengen Facility for Croatia created the conditions for implementation of the Schengen Borders Code (Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 establishing a Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders) - one of the pillars of the Schengen acquis.

EQ 2.4: To what extent the monitoring of the Schengen Facility in Croatia has been appropriate and supported the achievements of the Schengen Facility? Were the monitoring arrangements adequate?

Findings: In the beginning of the implementation of the Schengen Facility, the monitoring of the funding instrument was not adequate and it partially supported the achievements of the Schengen Facility due to limited administrative capacity. After the problems with Schengen Facility implementation in the first two years caused by the lack of sufficient number of staff, monitoring functioned well. The annual reports are comprehensive and of good quality, but did not contain monitoring indicators that can present results of the measures, which is a deficiency in the monitoring system.

There have been several organisational changes within the Independent Sector for Schengen Coordination and European Union Projects (Responsible Authority) throughout the implementation period, whose aim was to enhance the capacity of the unit, in particular for management and monitoring of the Schengen Facility. In 2013, the Responsible Authority started with one employee in 2013 and one year later the number of staff increased to five employees and two trainees. Since 2015, the capacity of the Responsible Authority has significantly been improved due to the contracting of temporary staff – in total 9 additional employees.

The monitoring of the Schengen Facility has been planned in order to support its achievements and prevent misuse of funds. The tasks of the Responsible Authority were carried out by the Independent Sector for Schengen coordination and EU Funds within the MoI, which provided technical assistance to the Board for coordination and monitoring of the Schengen Facility, and monitored the implementation of related activities. The organisational unit within the Independent Sector for Schengen coordination and EU Funds which manages the projects was the Department for Schengen Coordination.

The Responsible Authority cooperated with the Schengen Facility Coordinator, which was established within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA). The task of the Schengen Facility Coordinator was to coordinate and monitor the activities of three

working groups in MFEA (each of them was responsible for the implementation of one Schengen Facility objective).

The Responsible Authority was responsible for control of payment (payment was allowed only after their approval) as well as for final control of all documentation and compatibility of issued documents with different regulations. The monitoring of individual projects was carried out at the level of departments responsible for projects. The Infrastructure Department of the MoI was in charge for monitoring of implementation for all infrastructural projects.

The Responsible Authority carried out on-the-spot check and ex-ante checks of the invoices and accompanying documentation before allowing the execution of payments. In total, 27 on-the-spot visits on 12 projects implemented under Objective 1 were undertaken by the Responsible Authority, i.e. 21% of all planned/concluded contracts within this objective were verified on-the-spot. There are 5 on-the-spot visits on 4 projects implemented under Objective 2 (14% of contracts), 8 on-the-spot visits on 8 projects under Objective 3 (21% of contracts) and 8 visits on four projects under Objective 4 (21% of contracts).

The Responsible Authority was in charge of preparing quarterly, yearly and the final report, as well as checking quarterly and progress reports that were prepared by beneficiaries. The Responsible Authority prepared summary reports that were presented to the Board for coordination and monitoring of the Schengen instrument. Reports were approved by the Board before being sent to the Croatian government and the Commission for approval.

As the Schengen Facility objectives were formulated in the form of immediate effects, the monitoring system was based on procurement (product) indicators only, which provided information on outputs (e.g. about the number of new technical equipment for border control, number of BCPs and transit centres built and renovated, usage of technical equipment etc.). There were no result indicators (e.g. on surveillance equipment coverage, illegal crossings detected), which could allow the assessment of the Schengen Facility contribution to the implementation of the Schengen acquis and external border control.

Efficiency

The three evaluation questions covered by this criterion consider the relationship between the resources used to implement the Schengen Facility in Croatia, in other words its cost, and the changes generated as a result of it. In general, it poses the question of whether the achievements were maximised, given the level of resources available or could the same have been achieved at a lower cost.

EQ 3.1: Which were the costs and benefits of the Schengen Facility? To what extent were the results of the Schengen Facility achieved at a reasonable cost?

Findings: The results of the Schengen Facility were achieved to a large extent, at a reasonable cost. This is mostly due to the conducting of competitive procurement procedures, which guaranteed fair prices for the goods and services procured. Most of the expected outputs of the Schengen Facility were achieved at a cost below the allocated

funds. Comparison with similar (Schengen Facility) investments in Bulgaria and Romania indicate that costs of acquisition were in line with prevailing market prices.

The total programmed costs for the Schengen Facility for Croatia were EUR 122 747 865, the contracted amount was EUR 119 318 705, and the costs incurred and declared to the Commission were EUR 116 861 415. These costs were allocated to 11 objectives of the IP, and each objective was divided into several measures. The eligible costs represent 95,2% of the programmed allocations, while the contracted projects amount to 97,3% of the programmed allocations, showing a reasonably high absorption rate for the Schengen Facility for Croatia as it is close to 100%.

Significant variances between programmed allocations and actual costs occurred in Objective 1 (with savings of EUR 4,16 million) and Objective 8 (with savings of EUR 1,15 million). Competitive bids for the procurement of equipment in these two objectives explain the variance between planned and incurred costs.

The evaluation concluded that the benefits of the Schengen Facility were achieved at a reasonable cost, based on the following:

- All large investments in equipment (helicopters, vehicles, vessels), infrastructure development, information systems upgrades and development, surveillance facilities were procured at or below the programmed allocations for the respective objectives and measures;
- For most procurement projects, competitive bids were received and the lowest bidders were awarded the contract. No significant irregularities with the tendering procedures were reported by bidders, by the Audit Authority or as a result of monitoring visits by the Commission, suggesting that procurement was fair and the purchases were done at the best possible terms. Most of the acquisitions were through open public procedures. For a limited number of items restricted tenders were held as the nature of the equipment or services to be procured did not allow open public tenders either for security or for technical reasons, such as need for compatibility with existing equipment (e.g. construction of the IT back-up centre of the MoI, video surveillance equipment at BCPs etc.). The value of restricted procurement procedures was about EUR 6,5 million, or 5,6% of the total eligible costs of the Schengen Facility.
- Direct comparison of market prices was not possible for most of the investments, due to their unique requirements and technical specifications. Nevertheless, comparisons with similar acquisitions indicate that the costs incurred under the Schengen Facility for Croatia are comparable within reasonable deviations with costs incurred by other EU Member States under Schengen Facility (Bulgaria and Romania), or under External Borders Fund (EBF)³⁶ or ISF-B&V³⁷ projects.

³⁶ Decision No 574/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007 establishing the External Borders Fund for the period 2007 to 2013 as part of the General programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows.

³⁷ Regulation (EU) No 515/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing, as part of the Internal Security Fund, the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa and repealing Decision No 574/2007/EC.

EQ 3.2: Do the outcomes of the Schengen Facility represent value for money?

Findings: The outcomes of the Schengen Facility for Croatia represent good value for money. This conclusion was based on the achieved savings and future cost reductions, but also on the perception of stakeholders. The management costs are very low compared with the management costs of other EU funds.

The allocated funds were sufficient for achieving the goals of the IP and were used effectively to obtain the desired benefits and impact in terms of strengthening border control at the external border and preparing Croatia for joining the Schengen area.

The Schengen Facility has generated good value for money and has brought measurable positive changes in critical areas, such as reaction capacity of the border guards, connectivity of national information systems with Schengen Information System II and Visa Information System, preparation for introduction of future EU systems (e.g. EES, ETIAS), improving the safety and efficiency of border checks, preparedness for full introduction of the Schengen acquis.

Acquisitions financed by the Schengen Facility have contributed to cost reduction in the future (for instance, the construction of additional refugee facilities or BCPs have had a long-term effect of reducing transportation costs as refugees can be transported to the nearest facilities rather than a central one; additional BCPs reduce waiting lines at the border and offer more convenient routes to travellers; surveillance systems at the green border reduce the need for border patrols).

Several tenders resulted in savings of over EUR 6 million. These savings were re-allocated to increase the capacity of Border Police through acquisition of technical equipment and hiring of additional human resources.

The management costs of the Schengen Facility were partially covered under Objective 9, covering the compensation for 9 employees of the Responsible Authority, for a total amount of EUR 198 186, representing about 0,2% of the total eligible cost of the Schengen Facility. Given the number of projects and beneficiaries involved in the implementation of the Schengen Facility for Croatia, these costs are very low compared with management costs of other EU funds (where costs usually account for 3% to 5% of the fund). While the low amount provided for management cost can be seen as a sign of efficiency, it also shows that, in particular at the beginning of the implementation of the Schengen Facility measures, the required effort for the implementation has not been considered and there have been some delays, due to lack of staff and their limited experience.

EQ 3.3: Which were the factors that helped or inhibited the efficiency, simplification and reduced burden? What were the simplification and reduced burden gains?

Findings: A variety of factors produced mixed results in terms of helping efficiency simplification and reduced administrative burden. While certain areas benefited from improved productivity (communications, exchange of information, mobility in surveillance), other areas, such as border checks, management of BCPs or use of acquired equipment had to comply with additional operational and reporting requirements which slowed down the work and created new administrative tasks.

Overall it can be considered the Schengen Facility contributed to the simplification and reduction of administrative burden of the Border Police. However, there are significant differences in the opinions and information collected during the evaluation, from acknowledging the positive impact of more streamlined processes, better training and equipment which facilitates the work of border police and consular officers, to claims that the Schengen Facility had either no impact on administrative burden or it created a heavier burden due to the introduction of new business processes and applications that need maintenance and supervision. The latter was observed at units managing the information systems and at BCPs and police stations, where overhead costs had to be split for reporting and accounting purposes.

It should be noted that there were several factors into play, such as the introduction of systematic checks of all travellers crossing the external borders, which caused delays at some BCPs. At the same time, automation of access to SIS II and national information systems has had a positive impact on the time needed to complete border checks, and on the ability to carry out mobile checks (e.g. on trains or outside of BCPs).

Coherence

The evaluation of coherence covers both the *external* perspective (complementarities and synergies between the Schengen Facility and national and EU-funded programmes) and the *internal* perspective (looking at how the various components of the Schengen Facility operate together to achieve its objectives).

EQ 4.1: To what extent was the implementation of the Schengen Facility in Croatia coherent with and complementary to the border control measures in Croatia financed from national resources?

Findings: The implementation of the Schengen Facility has been to a large extent complementary to the overall border control measures in Croatia. The Schengen Facility has been complementary with national actions, when it comes to investments in police infrastructure (for example national budget was used for facilities of the regular and special police, while the Schengen Facility was used for facilities for the border police, within the same police station building), but also access roads and other communal infrastructure near the border crossing points. Since 2009, Croatia has a well elaborated Strategy and Action plan for Integrated Border Management (significantly revised and re-adopted in 2014), managed by an inter-ministerial steering group, which ensures complementarity and coherence of measures and sources of funding used to improve its border management.

For the purpose of ensuring adequate border management, next to the alignment of the legislative framework and continuous institutional capacity building, Croatia has elaborated several strategic documents providing key guidance in terms of priority actions and investments, taking into account the needs of the border police, but also other relevant stakeholders linked to the border management: Strategy for IBM and Action Plan, Strategy for development of maritime police and Action Plan, Concept for green border protection and Concept for implementation of compensation measures.

The complementary national funding was primarily used for ensuring the required national co-financing for the internationally (mostly EU) funded projects.

The majority of the related national investments were in the police infrastructure, which is not exclusively for the border police but located in the same premises and used by other police officers. Complementary national funding came not only from the MoI and MFEA as beneficiaries of the Schengen Facility, but also from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, national funding was used for access roads and other communal infrastructure (energy, water, sewage, telecommunication etc.) near the border crossing points³⁸, which were not planned under the Schengen Facility. The Schengen Facility financed structures directly related to the functioning of the Border Police, while national funds were used to finance auxiliary infrastructure.

Furthermore, national funding was used to support EU funded activities for the necessary but ineligible costs related to infrastructure (construction permits, technical documents)

Given the limited timeframe of the Schengen Facility implementation, national resources were used in cases where there were delays in the public procurement procedures (occurrence of irregularities, lack of valid offers, filed complaints, etc.), which were preventing a timely implementation of actions/measures. In such cases, the procurement was finalised using the national budget and savings from the Schengen Facility budget were reallocated to other measures.

Complementarity can also be seen in the example of the development of new functionalities of the Croatian VIS (Objective 6, Measure 6.1). The national VIS was fully developed through the combination of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and national resources, while new functionalities were financed through the Schengen Facility.

EQ 4.2: To what extent was the implementation of the Schengen Facility in Croatia coherent with and complementary to other EU funded actions in the field of border controls, the Schengen acquis implementation and related policy areas (such as PHARE, the External Borders Fund 2010 Annual Programme, the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the Connecting Europe Facility), in particular concerning synergies and overlaps?

Findings: The implementation of the Schengen Facility was to a large extent complementary and consistent with measures financed by other EU instruments. High coherence and complementarity has been identified in particular for investments prior to the Schengen Facility, in particular CARDS³⁹ and PHARE programmes (e.g. in the field of institutional capacity building, strengthening of the border police, NBMIS, modernisation of surveillance system on blue and green border). After the Schengen Facility investments, there is good complementarity with the ISF (e.g. for purchasing and maintaining additional IT equipment, trainings and operational costs) and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) - actions targeting migrants and asylum seekers).

Prior to 2013 and since 2005, the concept of IBM was adopted and since then there has been a continuous strategic planning effort to identify and prioritise investments needs so

³⁸ This includes national financing for building of additional infrastructure to/from building site financed through the Schengen Facility and additional support infrastructural works.

³⁹ Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation.

as to ensure the proper use of all the available international funding (mostly EU pre-accession funds: CARDS, PHARE, IPA). An Inter-ministerial working group was established, meeting relatively frequently (on monthly or even bi-weekly basis), for the coordination purposes.

The Strategy for IBM and Action Plan was elaborated in the framework of an EU supported action. It was developed in the frame of a Twinning light programme in 2013, together with Slovenian partners, to include already all needs linked to the Schengen-related requirements of integrated border management. The Strategy was adopted in 2014 and was the basis for elaboration of the IP, therefore ensuring that the Schengen Facility in Croatia would be used in a coherent way, linking to the past investments and avoiding the possible investments in the political “wish lists”, not relevant for the preparations for Schengen⁴⁰. The main activities from the Strategy which the Croatian government (mostly through its Ministry of Interior) is implementing can be grouped as follows:

- harmonisation of legal framework with the EU acquis,
- revision of existing bilateral agreements on border crossing and border control,
- organisational reform and related human resource management,
- modernisation and improvement of training programmes and increasing the professionalism of the border police officers,
- upgrading of national IT infrastructure and systems,
- procurement of technical equipment for border control and protection,
- introducing risk analysis and information exchange (compliant with joint integrated risk analysis model),
- increasing fight against corruption,
- strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

For each objective and measure, the Indicative Programme has clearly indicated the chapter related to the “Complementarity and consistency with measures financed by other instruments“.

Although in the IP only Objectives 2 and 6 indicated a direct link with other investments (the TETRA radio-communication system procured through ERDF and national funds and the National VIS funded through IPA 2010 and PHARE PPF 2006⁴¹), it is clear that there is coherence of the investments also in all other topics covered by the Schengen Facility.

The consistency and coherence of the investments started prior to EU accession, from CARDS and PHARE⁴² programmes, in the field of institutional capacity building, asylum, IBM inter-agency cooperation, strengthening of the border police, NBMIS/SIS II, criminal intelligence, modernisation of surveillance system on blue and green border (including purchase of cars and vessels), combating trafficking in firearms, ammunition

40 The previous version of the Strategy (2009-2013) did not include all the necessary investments and actions in this respect.

41 PHARE Project Preparation Facility 2006.

42 Until 2007, when both CARDS and PHARE were substituted by IPA.

and explosives. This complementarity continued through IPA funds, which were used through investments in IT and surveillance systems, border police equipment, institutional and administrative capacities, construction and equipping BPSs and reception centres.

Croatia has benefitted from the last 6 months of the implementation of the Programme ‘Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows’ (July-December 2013), through the European Refugee Fund and the European Return Fund, which financed transport of third country nationals, procurement of basic items, translation services, reception infrastructure. Overlapping investments with Schengen Facility were not noted.

From 2014 Croatia has benefited from AMIF. This Fund covers actions in the migration/asylum areas, which are not directly linked to the requirements of Schengen, but complementary and relevant for the integrated migration management, where border control plays a significant role. On the other hand, ISF is closely linked to Schengen Facility as it provides for additional procurements and maintenance of IT equipment, vehicles, vessels and helicopters purchased from the Schengen Facility, operational costs, training of border police officers etc.

Croatia did not benefit from the *External Borders Fund*, as this was programmed in 2010/2011 when Croatia was not an EU Member State. Also, ESI Funds for Croatia (ESF, ERDF and Cohesion Fund) were not used for any Schengen Facility related activities.

EQ 4.3: To what extent were the measures/actions implemented under the Schengen Facility in Croatia internally coherent?

Findings: The measures/actions implemented under the Schengen Facility were internally coherent without overlapping and very often with significant synergies. Differences between the initial and final version of IP should be considered as fast adaptation to changing needs during the implementation of the Schengen Facility and reaction aimed to substitute time-consuming activities in order to maximise absorption rate.

Several internal synergies and complementarities can be noticed:

- Measure 3.2 (Enhancing the infrastructure of the MoI's Information System needed for Schengen operation; Action b - NBMIS application upgrade) was implemented in unison with Measure 6.3 (Upgrade NBMIS software for VIS Functionality) as the scope of both measures was similar to a large extent.
- Infrastructural issues were solved by investments in construction of new and renovation and modernisation of the existing border infrastructure and investment in security equipment at diplomatic missions/ consular posts according to the Schengen standards. This allowed better working conditions and the level of efficiency was increased by acquisition of new technical equipment for border control of the external borders and modernisation and development of radio communication system necessary for surveillance and control of external borders.

- The development and upgrading of information systems and computer networks related to the implementation of the Schengen acquis as well as the development of the Croatian VIS and connection to the EU VIS increased connectivity inside Croatia and with other EU countries. Departments using NBMIS and Croatian VIS have access to much more data in comparison with the period before the Schengen Facility implementation. As reported during the evaluation, the joint development of NBMIS and Croatian VIS allowed synergies, which would not have been accomplished if both systems were developed as two stand-alone systems that are connected at a later stage.
- Internal coherence was visible also in the cases when capacity building activities followed the procurement of equipment, to ensure that all the required skills and knowledge are in place to maximise the benefits of procured equipment and investments in infrastructure.

Sustainability

The evaluation questions related to sustainability concern two issues: the first one looks at the prospects for endurance of the results achieved under the Schengen Facility (infrastructure, equipment, and training), while the second one considers long-term effectiveness of the actions funded under the facility.

EQ 5.1: Are the effects achieved under the Schengen Facility in Croatia likely to be long-lasting?

Findings: The overall effects achieved under the Schengen Facility are likely to be sustainable in the long-run, but there are also indications of problems due to decreasing national funding resulting in inability to maintain and upgrade all the acquired equipment and the need for continuation of training. Due to intensive use of some equipment and vehicles, they need to be replaced by new ones earlier than planned, which reduces the sustainability of the Schengen Facility actions even in the short-term. The Internal Security Fund is often used as a way of ensuring the sustainability of the Schengen Facility actions.

The effects achieved under the Schengen Facility are likely to be sustainable in the long-run, but there are also exceptions where the useful life of acquired assets has proved too short. During the evaluation, the equipment, systems and facilities acquired and developed through the Schengen Facility were in use, with a few exceptions.

The evaluation also revealed, to a certain extent, that the acquired equipment was not maintained and upgraded on a regular basis, as well as the fact that there were not sufficient human resources to utilise the assets acquired through the Schengen Facility.

The financial resources required for the exploitation of the acquired equipment, systems and facilities have been made available from the Croatian national budget, however decreasing in the last 10 years. In some cases this may result in insufficient funds for maintaining the equipment and systems acquired through the Schengen Facility and may put their sustainability under risk.

The sustainability of large acquisitions, such as vehicles, information systems and helicopters, stationary systems for border surveillance, seems to be heavily dependent on EU financing (mainly ISF Borders). This would require the allocation of national funds to support the sustainability of the acquisitions through the Schengen Facility.

An important action that contributes to the sustainability of the investments is the training of end users who are operating and maintaining the acquired equipment and systems. The evaluation revealed that a significant proportion of the staff has received training related to the equipment and systems acquired through the Schengen Facility.

In order to ensure that the effects achieved under the Schengen Facility will be long-lasting, both national and EU financing are used to support operational and maintenance costs.

EQ 5.2: Were the actions funded by the Schengen Facility in Croatia designed to further strengthen and upgrade external border control?

Findings: The actions funded by the Schengen Facility had a significant positive impact on strengthening the control at the external borders by providing the necessary equipment, information systems and skills to prepare Croatia for joining the Schengen area. There is a decreased number and share of detections of illegal crossings close to the border as a consequence of using the thermal imaging cameras and ground surveillance systems.

A significant proportion of the opinions and collected information indicate an increase of the waiting times at the BCPs, although these were expected to decrease due to the technological improvements.

Access to SIS II and the national information systems enhanced interoperability and increased the efficiency of border officers performing border checks. The Schengen Facility contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the relevant staff.

In line with the Intervention logic of the Schengen Facility (see section 2.4.1), the general objective of contributing to compliance with the Schengen acquis was to be achieved through the following specific objectives:

- Enhance control and surveillance of the borders
- Implement the principle of IBM at national and international level
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of the Croatian Border Police and employees at consular and diplomatic mission in relation to the Schengen acquis

An assessment of the achievement of the specific objectives is presented below.

Enhancing control and surveillance of the borders

The activities contributing to strengthening of the external borders control included the construction of new BCPs and the upgrade of existing BCPs at the external borders, the improved surveillance capacities at both the land and sea borders through the acquisition of vehicles, vessels and helicopters, and specialised equipment for surveillance.

The Schengen Facility had a positive impact on border control, emphasising improvements of surveillance and the green and blue borders, including higher capacity to detect illegal border crossings, improved communication infrastructure and BCP facilities.

Overall the border surveillance improved, as surveillance coverage increased considerably, while reaction times decreased, mainly due to the new mobility equipment (vehicles, helicopters, vessels) and the performant surveillance systems and devices operating at the external borders.

To a certain extent, the pattern and size of the illegal crossings have changed due the implementation of the Schengen Facility. Still, a clear connection with the developments funded under the Schengen Facility cannot be established, as these could be influenced by a variety of other factors.

As shown in Table 4, there is a significant change in the pattern of occurrence of illegal border crossings between 2013 and 2018:

- a decreased number and share of detections of illegal crossings detected close to the border confirms, as a consequence of the upgrading of the surveillance systems (e.g. installing thermal imaging cameras at the green borders);
- a significantly increased number and share of illegal border crossings detected at BCPs, which may be seen as a displacement effect of the strong surveillance at the green borders, forcing irregular migrants to attempt illegal entry through BCPs instead;
- an increased number and share of illegal crossings detected by neighbouring countries.

Table 4. Place of detection of illegal border crossings

Place of detection	2013	Share	2018	Share
BCPs	603	14%	2 541	31%
Close to the border	1 363	31%	583	7%
Deep inside the territory	1 664	38%	2 699	33%
Detected by other countries	740	17%	2 384	29%
Total	4 370	100%	8 207	100%

The number of irregular third country nationals found in Croatia also increased compared to the baseline, from 4150 (2013) to 5580 (2018), similarly to the trend in illegal crossings.

Concerning the waiting times on BCPs, there is no hard data, but only the responses received in the online survey carried out as a part of the evaluation. Although there isn't a clear opinion, it seems that the better equipment and faster checks which are due to the Schengen Facility contributed to the decrease of the waiting times in some BCPs, while in other BCPs several internal and external factors (slow internet speed, increased traffic, shortage of human resources, insufficient trainings etc.) led to increased waiting times.

Exploring another aspect of the baseline - trafficking in human beings, the data show an increase in the registration of such cases during the implementation of the Schengen Facility (more than double). Even though a direct link cannot be drawn between the enhancement of border security achieved through the Schengen Facility and this increase

in registered human trafficking cases, the data show positive development in detecting these serious crime.

Implementing the principle of IBM at national and international level

The largest contribution of the Schengen Facility to the implementation of the principle of IBM was performed through Objective 3 - Development and upgrading of information systems and computer networks and Objective 6 (Development of the Croatian Visa Information System and connection to the EU Visa Information System (VIS)). As the targets of both objectives were achieved, the necessary changes to the NBMIS application were realised in order to ensure the introduction of the SIS II. Access to SIS II and the national information systems enhanced interoperability and increased the productivity of border officers performing border checks.

Enhancing skills and knowledge

The Schengen Facility financed training courses on the Schengen acquis for border police officers and employees at consular and diplomatic mission. In addition, language training and training for the operation and maintenance of newly acquired equipment and information systems was provided to end users. The training of border police officers in using the equipment and systems acquired through the Schengen Facility is part of the police academy curriculum. Sustainability in terms of skills and knowledge is also supported by the low level of turnover among Border Police officers.

EU-added value

EU-added value is a criterion that is exploring changes which it can reasonably be argued are due to the EU intervention, beyond what could reasonably have been expected from national actions by the Member States.

EQ6.1 What is the likelihood that the positive effects of the Schengen Facility in Croatia would have occurred without the EU support?

Findings: There is a very small likelihood that the positive outcomes of the Schengen Facility would have occurred without the EU support. No similar effects would have been achieved in terms of both scope and speed.

There are several positive effects of the Schengen Facility in Croatia, including: improvement of quality during border control, improved surveillance of green border and blue border, improved connection of BCP and Police Stations to MoI central IT system, and higher quality in data exchange collected by NBMIS between police-security and other relevant bodies in Croatia and other EU member states. The increased level of security on EU external borders brought safer environment for citizens and consequently better prospects of Croatia joining the Schengen zone.

It would have been extremely difficult to have the similar outcomes without the EU support. One of the major advantages of the Schengen Facility was that it allowed for a wide scope of actions that could be financed under a single programme. The Schengen Facility also created a quality foundation for integration with EU IT systems before Croatia joining the Schengen zone.

On the other hand, the EU added value is diminished by the fact that the positive effects of the improved IT systems on visas will not be functional before Croatia will have entered the Schengen zone.

EQ6.2 To what extent has the support provided by the EU helped to improve the ability of Croatian authorities in strengthening and upgrading external border control compared to what they could do at national level without the support?

Findings: The support provided by the EU helped to a great extent improve the ability of Croatian authorities in strengthening and upgrading external border control and similar effects could not have been achieved only with national financing. National financing is marginal as compared to the Schengen Facility, but the Schengen Facility also significantly exceeds any other EU support allocated to Croatia in the area.

The national financing for the management of borders is very limited as compared to the support provided by the Schengen Facility.

The national financing (excluding salaries) was rather small as compared to the Schengen Facility financing - 23% of the Schengen Facility in 2014 and just 3% in 2015. Furthermore, the Schengen Facility financing was significantly larger than other support provided by the EU to the management of the borders. Even though this is a positive conclusion when it comes to the Schengen Facility itself, what if of concern is that after the completion of the Schengen Facility, none of the subsequent EU programmes/instruments (ISF, AMIF etc.) is matching its scale.

The national budget would most probably have not allowed for the scope that the Schengen Facility had, most notably in terms of equipment and infrastructure. Furthermore, based on national funding only it would have taken more time to achieve same outputs and results.

The Schengen Facility also allowed for more exchange of experience with the other Member States, which would have not been prioritised in the case of national financing.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

To a large extent the objectives of the Schengen Facility were relevant both to the needs of the EU and Croatia. There was a strong link between the needs identified in national strategic documents and those expressed by stakeholders during the evaluation and the objectives of the IP 2013-2014. Relevance was ensured by having beneficiaries drafting the IP by taking into account existing national strategies related to external border control and surveillance. The objectives setting of the Schengen Facility showed flexibility in light of newly identified needs. Thus, the original objectives were supplemented, which was considered as one of its advantages compared to other EU assistance programs that offer less opportunities for adding and changing objectives. Furthermore, funds under the Schengen Facility were provided before the commencement of the project, whereas for post-Schengen Facility financial instruments the resources are usually given based on fulfilment of the applicable rules, after a certain period of implementation, which is another factor that contributed to the high relevance of the Schengen Facility.

At the same time, new needs have been identified later, such as the trainings for border police in human rights protection and interactions with immigrants, as highlighted by NGOs and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia in their Annual Report for 2017. In spite of the high relevance of the Schengen Facility, there are current outstanding needs, identified by the Council and stakeholders consulted during the evaluation: land border surveillance of the green border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, further trainings on how to use the equipment and infrastructure needs at BCPs.

Effectiveness

The implementation of the Schengen Facility can overall be considered as effective. At the level of objectives defined in the IP of the Schengen Facility, out of a total of 11 objectives, 5 have been fully achieved, 4 have been achieved to a large extent and 2 have been partially achieved. While some modifications did not necessarily have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility (e.g. acquisition of helicopter instead of aircraft under Objective 1), equipment and services that were planned but not procured/delivered hampered the effectiveness (most notably under Objectives 5 and 8).

Hence, the operational objectives of the Schengen Facility were achieved to a large extent. Two operational objectives relating to development and upgrading of IT systems and contributing to support cost and logistics were fully achieved, while acquisition of new equipment for border control as well as construction/renovation of existing border infrastructure were achieved to a large extent. The only operational objective that was partially achieved concerned the qualification of border police and consular staff.

The targets that were not achieved and the corresponding reasons are provided below:

- The complexity of procurement procedures resulted in a proportion of stationary systems for day/night supervision not procured, as these would not have been procured within the eligibility period (Objective 1).
- Unresolved property-legal relations have proven challenging on two occasions. In one case a small share of concrete pillars for closing road routes were not procured because the properties (i.e. routes that were to be closed) could not be used (Objective 1). In a second case, the inability to acquire a land use permit resulted with one less TETRA base station installation (Objective 2).
- The cancellation of the reconstruction of the police academy, which was funded under another programme resulted in targets not being met under the Schengen Facility (Objective 5).
- The organisation of trainings for the consular staff during the summer period resulted in a smaller number of training participants in trainings (Objective 7).
- The need for reallocation of certain premises and lack of permission to perform adaptations to diplomatic missions' infrastructure disabled the fulfilment of these targets during the eligibility period (Objective 8). Moreover, additional staff that was intended for performing project management tasks could not be hired due to the complexity of the employment procedure and the government's decision on limits for new employment in civil service.

Even though the above mentioned cases influenced negatively the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility implementation, they constitute a minor share of measures that were not achieved.

Positive outcomes that contributed to the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility implementation include improved mobility and efficiency of border control, upgraded communication and information systems, improved working conditions for Border Police, and improved capacity and working conditions of staff at consular missions in third countries.

Both internal (limited administrative capacity and insufficient guidance in the beginning of the implementation of the Schengen Facility) and external factors (complex procurement procedures and time required to acquire permits) have influenced the implementation of the Schengen Facility. The negative effects are not judged to be significant, but should be considered in similar future operations.

The Schengen Facility for Croatia has been designed and contributed to the broad EU priorities on border and internal security. As expected considering the objectives of the Schengen Facility, its measures are aligned and contributed to all specific areas of the Schengen acquis, in particular external borders policy. The Schengen Facility did not directly affect only issues related to police cooperation, but Objectives 5 (Increase of the qualification of the border police) and 7 (Improvement of Schengen related knowledge and skills of the consular staff) contribute to the implementation of this part of Schengen acquis.

Efficiency

The results of the Schengen Facility were achieved at a reasonable cost due to the conducting of competitive procurement procedures, which guaranteed fair prices for the goods and services procured. The eligible costs represent 95,2% of the programmed allocations, while the contracted projects amount to 97,3% of the programmed allocations, which suggests a reasonably high absorption rate.

Most of the expected benefits of the Schengen Facility were achieved at a cost below the allocated funds, while a comparison with similar Schengen Facility investments in Bulgaria and Romania indicate that costs of acquisition were in line with prevailing market prices.

Considering the achieved savings and future cost reductions (e.g. surveillance systems at the green border reduce the need for border patrols) the outcomes of the Schengen Facility for Croatia represented good value for money. The management costs were very low (representing about 0,2% of the total eligible cost of the Schengen Facility) compared with management costs of other EU funds. While certain areas benefited from improved productivity (communications, exchange of information, mobility in surveillance), other areas, such as border checks, management of BCPs or use of acquired equipment had to comply with additional operational and reporting requirements which slowed down the work and created new administrative tasks.

Coherence

The implementation of the Schengen Facility has been to a large extent complementary to the overall border control measures in Croatia. The Schengen Facility has been complementary with national actions, when it comes to investments in police infrastructure (for example national budget was used for facilities of the regular and special police, while the Schengen Facility was used for facilities for the border police,

within the same police station building), but also access roads and other communal infrastructure near the border crossing points. Since 2009, Croatia has had a well elaborated Strategy and Action plan for Integrated Border Management (significantly revised and re-adopted in 2014), managed by an inter-ministerial steering group, which ensured complementarity and coherence of measures and sources of funding used to improve its border management.

The implementation of the Schengen Facility was to a large extent complementary and consistent with measures financed by other EU instruments. High coherence and complementarity has been identified in particular for investments starting from CARDS and PHARE programmes (e.g. in the field of institutional capacity building, strengthening of the border police, NBMIS, modernisation of surveillance system on blue and green border). Currently there is good complementarity with the ISF (on IT equipment and vehicles, vessels, trainings and operational costs) and with the AMIF (on migrants and asylum seekers).

The measures/actions implemented under the Schengen Facility were internally coherent (i.e. without overlapping) and very often had significant synergies. As mentioned in the analysis on Relevance, differences between the initial and final version of IP should be considered as fast adaptation to changing needs.

Sustainability

The overall effects achieved under the Schengen Facility are likely to be sustainable in the long-run, but at the same time, the decreasing national funding could pose some problems to the ability of the Croatian Authorities to maintain and upgrade the acquired equipment and continue the necessary training (in particular on using BCP equipment). Thus, the EU funding, in particular ISF, remains the most important alternative for sustaining the Schengen Facility achievements and further strengthening of the external borders control. Due to intensive use of some equipment and vehicles, they already need to be replaced by new ones earlier than planned, which reduces the sustainability of the Schengen Facility actions. The ISF is often used as a way of ensuring the sustainability of measures implemented under the Schengen Facility (e.g. for purchase of vehicles, helicopter equipment, and trainings).

The actions funded by the Schengen Facility had a significant positive impact on strengthening the control at the external borders by providing the necessary equipment, information systems and skills to prepare Croatia for joining the Schengen area. There is a decreased number and share of detections of illegal crossings close to the border as a consequence of using the thermal imaging cameras and ground surveillance systems. The maritime surveillance systems have now the capacity to detect smaller vessels and therefore avoidance of border controls at the blue borders has been decreased.

There is no available hard data on the actual waiting times at borders, which is why it is not possible to verify whether waiting time increased, or decreased. Based on results of the survey with border police staff, it can be concluded that in some cases the Schengen Facility contributed to decreasing waiting time at BCPs thanks to technological improvements. However, in other cases the waiting time increased due to insufficient trainings on the operation of the equipment, as well as due to insufficient internet connection and staffing.

Access to SIS II and the national information systems enhanced interoperability and increased the productivity of border officers performing border checks. The Schengen Facility contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the Croatian Border Police and employees at consular and diplomatic mission by financing training courses on the Schengen acquis.

EU added value

In general, the evaluation of the Schengen Facility of Croatia showed that there was a very small likelihood that outcomes (in terms of both scope and speed) similar to the Schengen Facility achievements would have occurred without the EU support.

The Schengen Facility allowed for a wide scope of actions financed under a single programme (for example not only building of centres, but also buying furniture, clothes, salaries of border police, etc.). This provided thus an extended scope of action to the Croatian Authorities.

The strengthening and upgrading of the external border control achieved through the Schengen Facility could not have been achieved to the same extent and the same timeline only with national financing. The national financing (excluding salaries) was rather small as compared to the Schengen Facility financing - 23% of the Schengen Facility financing in 2014 and just 3% in 2015. Furthermore, the Schengen Facility allocation is significantly higher than any EU funds allocated to Croatia for the purpose of strengthening the management of external borders⁴³.

Overall conclusion

The Schengen Facility had a significant positive impact on strengthening the control at the external borders by providing the necessary equipment, information systems, and trainings to prepare Croatia for joining the Schengen area. This strengthening and upgrading of the external border control could not have been achieved to the same extent and the same timeline only with national financing. Even though the Schengen Facility effects are likely to be sustainable in the long-run, the decreasing national funding may be challenging to maintain and upgrade the acquired assets. In this context, the Croatian authorities will continue to rely on the availability of EU funding, such as ISF, as an essential resource. The objectives of the Schengen Facility are relevant to the EU and Croatian needs and relevance was constantly reinforced via the flexible approach of the Schengen Facility. The targets of the Schengen Facility have been largely met and the results were achieved at a reasonable cost through competitive procedures, although the monitoring posed some problems in the first years of the implementation of the Schengen Facility.

⁴³ IPA, ISF, FRONTEX etc.

ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

1. LEAD DG, Decide PLANNING/CWP REFERENCES

The Evaluation Roadmap for the initiative was published by DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) on the Commission's 'Have your say' webpage on 6/4/2018. The Terms of Reference for engaging a contractor to carry out the external study as part of the evaluation were drawn up by DG HOME and validated by the inter-service steering group and a request for service was issued in July 2018, and a contractor selected by an evaluation committee consisting of staff from DG HOME in November 2018. The study commenced in November 2018 and ended in July 2019. The agenda planning (Decide) reference assigned to the evaluation is PLAN/2018/2434.

2. ORGANISATION AND TIMING

As per the Better Regulation Guidelines, an inter-service steering group was set up in June 2018 within the Commission to oversee the evaluation. Several Directorates-General (DGs) within the Commission were invited to nominate representatives to the steering group.

The steering group had 3 meetings, which were chaired by DG HOME. The steering group was regularly consulted over the course of the evaluation, typically in conjunction with the submission of specific draft reports by the contractor responsible for carrying out the external study. These consultations took place both in the context of regular meetings, via email and telephone.

Finally, the steering group was consulted during the drafting of this staff working document.

3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE BETTER REGULATION GUIDELINES

In conducting the evaluation, no exceptions from the usual procedural requirements described in the Better Regulation Guidelines were required.

4. EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND QUALITY

The evaluation drew on different types of documents which were examined through an extensive desk research. More information on sources is provided in Annex 3.

Besides a review of the relevant documents, the evaluation also relied on extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. These consultations served as opportunities to collect new data or to confirm the validity of already collected data. Additional information concerning the stakeholder consultations is provided in Annex 2.

ANNEX 2: SYNOPSIS REPORT OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

1. OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

A broad range of stakeholder consultations were carried out as part of the evaluation of the Facility. The aim of the consultations was to gather different views that could be useful in answering the evaluation questions concerning the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value and sustainability of the Facility. The Synopsis Report aims to describe and summarise all formal consultation work, any ad hoc contributions directly linked to the preparation of the evaluation, as well as any relevant input received through the feedback mechanism for the Evaluation Roadmap.

2. METHODOLOGY AND CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

The evaluation of the Schengen Facility of Croatia included consultations with several stakeholders. The consultations were conducted by the Commission and by an external consultancy specialised in evaluation in the framework of their contract with the Commission to provide a study on the ex post evaluation ('the external evaluators'). This annex provides an overview of the consultation processes and the type of stakeholders consulted. Moreover, it presents the results of these consultations.

The consultation activities were defined in cooperation between the European Commission (EC) and the Contractor (Ecorys). Stakeholders were mapped to identify all relevant groups and to identify suitable consultation activities to reach out to these groups. The objective of the consultation was to collect factual information, data, knowledge and opinions. Information was collected on all evaluation criteria of the study: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, Sustainability and EU added value.

The consultation activities took place between December 2018 and April 2019 and included the following activities, which are further presented in the next sections:

- Online public consultation;
- Interviews;
- Survey with end recipients.

The key stakeholder groups identified in the Stakeholder Consultation Strategy include: competent authorities at the Member State level; beneficiaries of the measures of the Facility; end users academia and think tanks; the general public; and the relevant Directorates-General within the Commission.

3. CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION

CONSULTATIONS ON THE ROADMAP

The Roadmap, published in April 2018, served to inform stakeholders and citizens about how the Commission intends to carry out the evaluation of the Directive. There was only 1 answer as feedback to the Roadmap.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION

The public consultation ran for 12 weeks between the 4th of January 2019 and 29th of March 2019. EU Survey was used to manage the OPC. The questionnaire targeted the following stakeholder groups:

- the general public;
- all non-government/private organisations/entities with an interest in the implementation of the Schengen Facility for Croatia;

The questionnaire for the public consultation consisted of mainly closed questions along with a limited number of open questions to allow for clarifying remarks and/or remarks of a more general nature. While the questionnaire itself was only available in English, French, German and Croatian, respondents were free to complete the ‘open’ elements of the questionnaire using any recognised EU language.

Only two responses were received to the OPC – from EU citizens, one from Germany and one from France.

Due to the small number of responses, it is not possible to include results of the closed-end questions.

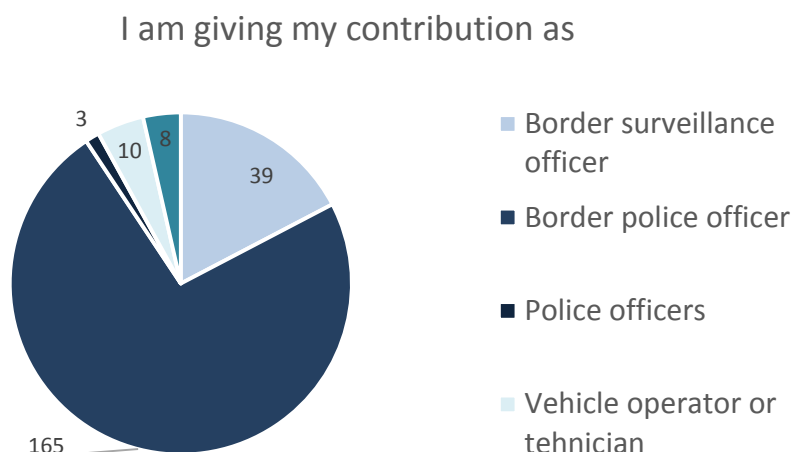
4. TARGETED CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey was set up to gather additional information from end users benefiting from the Schengen Facility funding and it was live in the period January-February 2019. The survey was translated to Croatian and distribution was done online via beneficiaries as it became clear after the first couple of field visits that all employees have official email addresses. The distribution of the survey on the ground, in parallel with the field visits, was seen as an effective way in reaching the stakeholders.

The total number of responses was 232. The majority of respondents indicated they are contributing as border police officers, followed by border surveillance officers (such as for instance employees of the National Coordination Centre).

Figure 6 Distribution of respondents



The results of the on-line survey were integrated in the main report of the consultant.

INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from different instances, including senior public officers able to respond to general issues and strategic level questions as well as those responsible for implementation, and beneficiaries. Interviews carried out during site visits enabled reaching respondents who were directly benefiting from the implementation of Schengen Facility, such as users of equipment and infrastructure. On-site visits enabled the assessment of the usage and management of equipment/infrastructure implemented through Schengen Facility measures.

In total, five interviews with Croatian stakeholders at central level have been conducted:

- the Responsible Authority [Ministry of Interior (MoI) - Independent Sector for Schengen coordination and EU funds];
- MoI - Border police Directorate;
- MoI - Sector for Real Estate Management of Directorate for Material and Financial Affairs;
- MoI - Development, Equipment and Support Directorate, ICT Sector;
- Ministry of Foreign and European affairs (MFEA) - Directorate for IT security and Consular Affairs Sector.

Two NGOs (Centre for Peace Studies - CSD and Croatian Law Centre) were interviewed in order to complete the triangulation process. CSD was chosen based on their work on migration and asylum issues and their experience with EU funding schemes, but also due to the fact that they provided feedback on the evaluation roadmap⁴⁴. Based on the recommendation of CSD and their collaboration with the Ministry of Interior on projects related to protection of migrants and asylum seekers, the Croatian Law Centre was chosen as the second NGO.

⁴⁴ Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-1850784/feedback/F11415_en?p_id=222299

The outcome of the interviews is the following:

- The stakeholders judged the Schengen Facility as extremely relevant. Without the Schengen Facility, it would not have been possible to finance all the measures and actions needed to prepare Croatia for entering the Schengen Area. The national budget would most probably have not allowed for the scope that Schengen Facility had. However, due to the specificities of the external border in Croatia, outstanding needs remain and financial resources are still required and additional financial means would be beneficial. The NGO added needs related to trainings for border police in human rights protection and interactions with immigrants.
- The stakeholders were of the opinion that the objectives of the Schengen Facility have fully achieved in an effective manner. It was pointed out that modifications were made to certain measures and objectives, which did not however hamper the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility implementation. With regards to unintended outcomes resulting from the Schengen Facility implementation, no major outcomes were reported. Stakeholders mentioned external factors that had an effect on the Schengen Facility implementation. These relate to specific projects, particularly construction projects, where unexpected issues occurred during construction (e.g. finding groundwater on site). Acquisition of construction permits was mentioned as another external factor influencing the implementation as it was in the hands of local authorities. Projects with more complex procurement procedures saw more unexpected events than others (procurement of thermo-vision system). Lack of administrative capacity in combination with lack of guidance on operational aspects of the implementation, were mentioned as internal factors that hampered the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility implementation. In addition to limited capacity, a high turnover at managerial level did not contribute to smooth implementation. Monitoring systems were judged as adequate and enabled prevention of potentially inappropriate use of funds.
- Stakeholders reported that the benefits of the Schengen Facility are palpable and were very visible during the 2015 migration crisis. The absorption rates were stagnant at the beginning of the implementation period due to limited experience with implementation of financial instruments that were time bound (i.e. implementation period of two years). As concerns the procurement procedures, stakeholders stated that public procurement parameters were very strictly defined, and in the specific case of purchases made through the Schengen Facility, the selected procurement is considered as executed in accordance with the ZON (Croatian public procurement legislation) if the product fulfils all technical specifications and has the lowest price. It was therefore difficult to comment on whether it is possible in all cases to get the best value for money at all.
- Stakeholders reported that there was complementarity between the Schengen Facility and other funding programmes with similar objectives precisely due to the fact that the general objective is the strengthening of borders and accession to the Schengen area. All the projects that were implemented under the Schengen Facility presented a logical continuation to those implemented with funds before the Schengen Facility. Stakeholders stated that currently they observed complementarity with the ISF (IT equipment and vehicles, vessels, trainings and operational costs) and with the AMIF (on migrants and asylum seekers). The

Schengen Facility was complementary to national actions, as these were used to finance non-eligible costs (e.g. reconstruction of facilities used by both the regular and border police).

- Stakeholders stressed that the varied geographical terrain and long border have a direct effect on the equipment used, the resources are used rather quickly. The turnover of employees at BCPS and police stations is not that high so sustainability is supported. Training at the Police Academy adapted to the needs of the new equipment and therefore newly trained police officers are taught how to use the new equipment. The stakeholders pointed out that the system is sustainable by design and sustainability will be ensured through maintenance.
- One of the major advantages of the Schengen Facility was that it allowed for a wide scope of actions that could be financed (e.g. salaries for Border Police officers). Without EU support, it is questionable when and at what level positive effects would be achieved.

Annex 3: Methods and analytical models

In this annex, the methods and sources that were drawn upon in carrying out the evaluation are described, as well as the limitations that were encountered.

1. METHODS AND SOURCES

1.1 DESK RESEARCH

The desk research was carried out throughout the entire evaluation process and included the analysis and extraction of relevant information from secondary sources (IPs, CR, annual reports, audit and monitoring reports) necessary for the analysis on evaluation questions. Furthermore, relevant legislation, national strategies and action plans were reviewed. Statistical and administrative data were gathered from public sources such as the Croatian MoI's website, the EBCGA and Eurostat. Internal data related to allocation of funds and investment procurement was provided by the Responsible Authority.

1.2 FIELD RESEARCH

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of different institutions, including senior public officers able to respond to general issues and strategic level questions as well as those responsible for implementation, and beneficiaries. Interviews carried out during site visits enabled reaching respondents who were directly benefiting from the implementation of Schengen Facility, such as users of equipment and infrastructure.

Two NGOs were interviewed in order to receive an external perspective of the needs of the border police. They were chosen based on their work on migration and asylum issues and their experience with EU funding schemes.

Case studies

The evaluation was supported by eight case studies. The selected case studies covered 75% of all expenses eligible under the Schengen Facility for Croatia, 9 objectives and a variety of measures set out in the IP. The topics selected for the case studies included: acquisition of technical equipment (vehicles, helicopters and special equipment), development of national IT systems (SIS II, VIS), (re)construction of border infrastructure, trainings, costs for management of the Schengen Facility and salaries for additional border police officers. On site visits were performed at different locations, as part of the 8 case studies.

2. LIMITATIONS

Although the overall assessment of the availability and robustness of data is that they provide sufficient basis to answer the evaluation questions, the data collection and analysis faced some limitations.

The desk research was based on the analysis of various documents in Croatian and English. Differences in presented measures were identified in the various versions of the IP. The changes in planned measures were justified by the Responsible Authority, however they hampered a clear comparison between planned and achieved measures/allocations. This had an impact on determining the effectiveness of the Schengen Facility potentially anchoring conclusions towards a more positive outcome. However, such flexibility allowed for taking into account evolving needs of the country with regard to objectives. The review of a large number of strategic documents provided sufficient grounds for the analysis of Relevance and Coherence. The existing data allowed the establishment of a baseline (2013) and for the following of main trends along similar indicators: e.g. number of passengers and illegal crossings. Nevertheless, there is no hard data available on the waiting time at BCPs for example and the data on the place of occurrence of illegal crossings is inconsistent. As pointed out in Table 5, these issues affect the robustness of the findings on Sustainability (impact).

The semi-structured interviews were informative, even though as expected (considering the limitations of interviews as a data gathering technique) often presented anecdotal data rather than hard numbers (e.g. reliance on IT systems in border management and comparisons with other EU Member States). The lack of hard data gathered during interviews was filled in via government reports (e.g. on the number of illegal crossings). Overall interviewees were very positive concerning the Schengen Facility. The scope of information received through interviews was negatively affected due to a high turnover within the Responsible Authority. This inevitably led to loss of information, particularly information related to management issues (e.g. on the preparation of implementation guidelines). Follow-up interviews were arranged so that the Responsible Authority would have enough time to ask for information that was needed for the evaluation. In spite of the limitations, the overall quality of the information from the interviews is satisfactory and provided valuable input for all evaluation questions.

The sample of respondents provided a good geographical coverage of the beneficiaries of the Schengen Facility interventions. Even though the outreach amounts to more than 200 responses, the majority of respondents are border police officers or staff otherwise involved in border control, which indicates limited outreach to different types of end users. However, the respondents were in most cases affected by more than one objective, which ensured a broader coverage of issues that were explored within the scope of the evaluation. The feedback received through the online survey provided valuable input on issues like EU added value.

While the field visits within the scope of the case studies have been conducted successfully and provided insight into good practices and lessons learned, beneficiaries did not always have sufficient knowledge to provide all the information that was requested such as data on waiting time at BCPs, life-cycle costs and requirements for maintenance of acquired infrastructure, equipment, information systems etc.

The Public Consultation provided only two responses, which does not allow for a comprehensive analysis and input of the closed questions. Still, the open-ended responses were included in the analysis of the consultant.

Considering the above limitations of the data collection process, the consultant provided an assessment of their effects on the robustness of the findings, presented below (Table 5).

Table 5 Assessment of the robustness of the findings per evaluation criterion

Evaluation criterion	Assessment of the robustness of the findings
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues have been identified with the availability of information as the analysis of this criterion relies mostly on strategic documents. • Participants in the interviews, field visits, and online survey respondents provided coherent answers that confirmed the findings on relevance
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that the IP has been changed throughout the implementation period, the planned outcomes have continuously been updated, which did not allow for a classical analysis on effectiveness – in terms of comparing targets to achievements. • The lack of a structured indicator system also hampered the analysis of effectiveness. • In spite of the above difficulties, the CR provided sufficient grounds for analysing effectiveness (at the level of procurement targets in EQ2.1) • Case studies provided useful insight into practical elements of the implementation of the Schengen Facility (EQ2.2) • The review of EU priorities and their juxtaposition with the Schengen Facility actions/measures contributed the most for EQ2.3 • The review of monitoring arrangements and feedback gathered through interviews were a good basis for answering EQ2.4
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues were identified with the financial data on the implementation of the Schengen Facility (EQ3.1 and EQ3.2) • Although not very detailed, the available information on procurement procedures was enough for the conclusion on the performance and achievements of competitive bids, while the comparison with the efficiency of the BG/RO Schengen Facility was useful in answering EQ3.1 • The available data on the management costs gives enough grounds for the findings on their efficiency • The most useful input for EQ3.3 was provided by the respondents to the online questionnaire and case studies (8 in particular)
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly to the findings on Relevance, no issues were identified with regards to the availability of strategic documents at EU and national level (EQ4.1 and EQ4.2) • Case studies were also useful in responding to the evaluation questions (in particular EQ4.2 and EQ4.3)
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering that the Sustainability evaluation criterion relies mostly on information acquired through field work and the fact

Evaluation criterion	Assessment of the robustness of the findings
	<p>that it also included the impact dimension of the Schengen Facility, answering questions 5.1 and 5.2 proved the most challenging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variety of sources (desk research, case studies, interviews, and online questionnaire) used for the assessment on whether Schengen Facility effects can be expected to be long-lasting (EQ5.1) provided consistent information, which was sufficient for robust findings on sustainability • For EQ5.2 the findings can be considered robust in terms of qualitative assessment of the impact of Schengen Facility actions/measures. However, quantifying the impact of these actions/measures proved very difficult due to the interplay of external factors (e.g. the introduction of systematic checks, the changes in passenger and migration flows) and data that is not specific enough (e.g. on BCP waiting times and the place of occurrence of illegal crossings). This is why, the evaluation of the impact relies mostly on qualitative information gathered via different sources.
EU added value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional issues were identified with the assessment of EU added value, considering that it relies mostly on the assessment along the above criteria and includes data on the planned financing for the management of state borders per year, which was readily available.