

Hercule III

Short general description:

Multi-annual action programme to promote activities against fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union.

Objectives:

General objective: Protect the financial interests of the Union, thus enhancing the competitiveness of the Union's economy and ensuring the protection of the taxpayers' money.

Specific objective: prevent and combat fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union.

Operational objectives:

- (a) *to improve the prevention and investigation of fraud and other illegal activities beyond its currently reached levels by enhancing transnational and multi-disciplinary cooperation;*
- (b) *to increase the protection of the financial interests of the Union against fraud, facilitating the exchange of information, experiences and best practices, including staff exchanges;*
- (c) *to strengthen the fight against fraud and other illegal activities providing technical and operational support to national investigation, and in particular customs and law enforcement, authorities;*
- (d) *to limit the exposure of the financial interests of the Union to fraud, corruption and other illegal activities;*
- (e) *to enhance the degree of development of the specific legal and judicial protection of the financial interests of the Union against fraud by promoting comparative law analysis.*

Supported activities (actions):

- a) Technical Assistance: grants for the purchase of:
 - equipment to detect illegal consignments of tobacco and cigarettes (x-rays scanners, sniffer dogs);
 - investigation support equipment;
 - databases and access to databases for gathering intelligence.

- b) Targeted specialised training, seminars, workshops, including digital forensics training, etc.
- c) Any other activity not listed under a) or b).

Support is provided under grants, where EU funding will be made available to cover up to 80% of the eligible costs (90% in exceptional and duly justified cases).

Eligibility (in the context of the ENP):

The Regulation identifies two types of eligible bodies:

- National and regional administrations in the Member States which promote the strengthening of the action at Union level to protect the Union's financial interests (in particular for Technical Assistance);
- Research and educational institutes and NPO located in the Member States which promote the strengthening of action at Union level to protect the Union's financial interests.

ENP can participate in accordance with provisions to be determined in the framework agreements concerning their participation in Union programmes.

Modalities of participation:

The Programme is implemented by annual financing decisions, which set out the priorities for the actions to be funded. The financing decisions also contain information on the number of Calls for Proposals and the procurement to be made in a given year. Grants are awarded to eligible bodies **located in the EU**, following Calls for Proposals. Procurement is organized following the procurement rules of the EU. Participants from ENP may attend Conferences, seminars and training funded under the Hercule programme.

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Examples of activities where ENP countries can be involved:

Participants from ENP countries can already participate in training sessions and Conferences or seminars organized in the EU or in third countries. The participation of organizations from ENP to Calls for Proposals is conditioned on the existence of a framework agreement with the EU. Procurement is regulated under the procurement directives.