



# CEFTA

Central European Free Trade Agreement  
SECRETARIAT

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# 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## 1.1. Partner parties

The Signatory Parties of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 (“Agreement”) (“CEFTA Parties”).

## 1.2. Contracting Authority

The Secretariat of the Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 on behalf of the CEFTA Parties (“Secretariat”).

## 1.3. Background

The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) is a trade agreement established to facilitate free trade among its Parties. The original agreement dates back to 1992, while the new multilateral agreement was signed in Bucharest in 2006 (CEFTA, 2006). CEFTA free trade area today covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo<sup>1</sup>.

On 10 November 2020, the leaders of the Western Balkans adopted a more ambitious framework for regional economic integration – **Common Regional Market Action Plan<sup>2</sup>** (hereinafter CRM AP) for the period 2021-2024. The Action Plan built on the results of the Multiannual Action Plan for Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) and contributed to the implementation of the European Commission’s Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans by building a common market of 18 million people in the Western Balkans. Its activities were divided in four major pillars: Regional Trade Area, Regional Investment Area, Regional Digital Area and Regional Industrial and Innovation Area.

Regional Trade Area is structured around the four freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital and people). The CRM AP represented a stepping-stone to integrate the region more closely with the EU Single Market before accession. This was key for the region to leverage its privileged relation with the EU. Regional economic integration based on EU rules and closer association to the EU Single Market aimed to help the Western Balkans in the accession process. At the same time, the accession process and the gradual compliance with the EU *acquis* aimed to help strengthen intra-regional integration.

Building a common market of 18 million people – potential game changer for the region. The CRM AP aimed to address the current economic fragmentation of the region.

Building on the progress made in the past four years, the Western Balkans leaders adopted on 14 October 2024, a **new Common Regional Market Action Plan for 2025-2028<sup>3</sup>** (hereinafter CRM2.0), which sets the direction for enhancing trade, mobility, and investment across the region and integration with the EU Single Market. The new four year plan is divided in six major pillars: Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services, Horizontal Trade Measures, Human Capital Development, Business Enabling Environment and Competitiveness and Digital Transformation. With its scope and ambition of going beyond four freedoms provisions, it contributes to the long-term economic growth of the region, supporting its fair, green and digital transition, fostering regional cooperation and convergence with the EU.

CRM 2.0 is a regionally driven initiative grounded in EU rules and standards, aiming to boost competitiveness, deepen economic cooperation, and align the region more closely with the EU Single Market. Expanding on the previous Action Plan, CRM 2.0 goes beyond the four freedoms, promoting

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<sup>1</sup>This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>2</sup> <https://cefta.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Common-Regional-Market-2021-2024-Action-Plan.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cefta.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Common-Regional-Market-Action-Plan-2025-2028.pdf>

long-term economic growth, supporting fair, green, and digital transitions, and fostering regional cooperation and EU convergence.

As an integral part of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, CRM 2.0 operationalizes its second pillar: regional economic integration through the Common Regional Market. The Growth Plan promotes regional cooperation, a necessary stepping stone to access the EU Single Market (first pillar). Strengthening regional cooperation attracts investors, creates opportunities for businesses and workers, accelerates alignment with EU standards, and advances reforms.

CRM 2.0 holds untapped potential to unlock the Growth Plan's goal of doubling the Western Balkans' economic size within the next decade and thus foster stronger economic convergence with the EU. For example, deeper trade integration akin to the EU Single Market could boost annual trade growth by 10% which contributes to generating growth and jobs.

Notable achievements of CRM 2021-2024 include a doubling of intra-CEFTA trade volume over five years, a 3-percentage-point increase in GDP per capita relative to the EU average (2017-2022), and a 500% rise in roaming usage. Additionally, reduced waiting times at crossing points through Green and Blue Lanes saved over 20 years in queueing time in 2023, while 1,200 new companies engaged in intra-CEFTA trade.

CRM 2.0 recognizes that trade reforms and improved infrastructure would yield even greater benefits if the Western Balkan economies joined the EU, potentially boosting welfare by 6%.

The **Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)** plays a key role in providing legal and institutional framework for the first three pillars of CRM 2.0:

- **Free movement of goods:** Streamlining procedures to make trade more efficient and cost-effective, fostering market integration and competitiveness.
- **Free movement of services:** Improving market access, reducing discrimination, and addressing regulatory challenges to support growth in service industries.
- **Horizontal trade measures:** Addressing trade underpinnings, such as Green Lanes, digitalization, paperless trade, intellectual property rights, dispute settlement, consumer protection, and environmental sustainability.

#### **Key CEFTA CRM 2.0 Deliverables by 2028:**

##### *FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS*

- **Free movement of agri-food products:** simplified trade procedures for live animals and animal products, harmonization and acceptance of relevant documents, and reduction of official controls for fruit and vegetables at crossing points. Trade in products from EU-compliant establishments will be facilitated, organic product procedures expedited with electronic certification, and diagnostic protocols unified to ensure recognition.
- **Free movement of (non-food) industrial goods:** enhanced trade by recognizing conformity assessment results for selected sectors like machinery and construction products, harmonizing labelling rules, and harmonised legislation for sectors not subject to EU harmonized legislation. Improved cooperation in the quality infrastructure, particularly among market surveillance agencies.
- **Strengthening customs and tax cooperation:** aligned rules of origin with the EU, extended benefits for Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), and simplified customs clearance for e-commerce. Improvements in VAT refund processes, anti-fraud measures, and tax governance will complement innovations like Single Window systems, 24/7 online payments, and a customs laboratory network.
- **Other trade facilitation measures:** trade-related fees and charges harmonized and reduced, while non-tariff measures and trade-distorting practices identified and addressed.

## *FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES*

- **Freedom to provide services:** establish freedom to provide services within CEFTA modelled after the EU Services Directive by removing obstacles like authorization or commercial presence requirements in some sectors; enabled freedom of establishment for service suppliers: establish Points of Single Contact to assist individuals and businesses.
- **Professional qualifications:** recognition expanded to new sectors, introduction of the experience-based recognition; developed database of regulated professions; introduction of a professional card to streamline mobility and professional recognition.
- **Financial and related services:** simplified provision of financial services through EU-based equivalence; enabled regional QR code-initiated payments; streamlined non-bank payment service licensing; recognition of Motor Third Party Liability Insurance to allow travel without green cards.
- **Audiovisual services:** Inclusion of audiovisual sector in the Additional Protocol 6 (AP6) Schedule of Commitments, and harmonized rules ensuring a level playing field between traditional television and online services.
- **Transport services:** The regional transport market will be liberalized by eliminating transport permits for Western Balkans partners, facilitating seamless movement of goods and people.
- **Electronic commerce and related information society services:** Expanded cooperation in digital services, enhancing fairness on online platforms, and improving parcel delivery and online content portability. Recognition of electronic signatures and trust services will be advanced, alongside updated telecommunications rules to harmonize authorisation procedures for electronic communications services.

## *HORIZONTAL TRADE MEASURES*

- **Green Lanes and reduction of waiting times at crossing points:** Crossing points will see reduced waiting times through increased capacities, improved inter-agency cooperation, and risk-based clearance procedures. Customs controls will be recognized across CEFTA (e.g. scanner images, data on truck/cargo weight etc.), pre-arrival checks enabled through electronic document exchange, and specific agri-food products excluded from controls at crossing points.
- **Digitalisation and paperless trade through CEFTA System of Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED):** Trade processes will become paperless with electronic data and document exchanges, e-certificates, and system upgrades to SEED based on the Internal Market Information System. CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal upgraded and expanded to widen the scope and quality of available information.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and quality schemes:** Legal frameworks further aligned with EU standards, supported by improved administrative capacities and the introduction of a single point for submission of applications for custom's action. Geographical Indications (GIs) recognized, and awareness of IPR's benefits for SMEs promoted.
- **Consumer Protection:** Consumers will benefit from better support mechanisms, improved enforcement cooperation, and alternative dispute resolution systems. Rules for the sale of goods and digital services harmonized across CEFTA.
- **Trade Statistics:** Harmonisation of the quality and scope of statistical data produced (e.g. e-commerce, tourism, etc.) and their timely exchange within the CEFTA Statistical Portal with increased scope of shared data.
- **Trade-related Environmental Issues:** Pre-empted possible barriers due to uncoordinated harmonisation with CBAM; Procedures for non-hazardous waste shipment will be aligned with EU best practices and fully digitalized.
- **Dispute Settlement;** Additional Protocol 7 on Dispute Settlement (AP7) fully implemented and supported by a CEFTA electronic communication system to streamline proceedings and enhance efficiency.

- **Promoting export in CEFTA and EU:** Efforts will focus on communicating regional market opportunities to businesses, empowering vulnerable groups, and providing training for EU-based rules. Export strategies will strengthen the region's competitiveness in entering the EU single market.

CEFTA has been tasked to deliver trade related activities which are namely part of the first three pillars: Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services and Horizontal Trade Measures. CEFTA framework is composed of multiple bodies made of representatives of the CEFTA Parties, supported and coordinated by the CEFTA Secretariat.

- ***CEFTA Secretariat***

Implementation of CEFTA 2006 is supported by a permanent Secretariat located in Brussels established in accordance with the Article 40.2 of CEFTA 2006. The overall function of the Secretariat is to provide technical and administrative support to the Joint Committee and any Body established by it, as defined by its mandate set out in the Joint Committee (hereinafter JC) Decision 1/2018 as amended by JC Decision 10/2024. The functions of the Secretariat can be summarised as follows:

- Support the supervision of the implementation of the CEFTA 2006 by deploying implementation monitoring mechanisms and recommending to the Joint Committee how to enhance the effectiveness of implementation of the Agreement and
- Facilitate the administration of the implementation of the Agreement by: preparing the initial drafts of all documents discussed and adopted by the CEFTA Bodies; supporting the Chair in Office of CEFTA in organisation and follow-up of all meetings of the Joint Committee and of other CEFTA Bodies; preparing and presenting technical opinions to the corresponding agenda items of the meetings of CEFTA Bodies or the ones organised by CEFTA Parties and other Regional or International Organisations; negotiating, co-ordinating, and reporting on donor funded assistance for regional trade related activities; acting as contracting authority by implementing procurement rules in tendering procedures; maintaining the official archive of the Agreement in liaison with the Depositary/Acting Depositary; supporting the implementation of the trade related components of the SEE strategy and the Common Regional Market Action Plans, and all other Actions in the context of any other economic initiatives or in trade related international organisations related to CEFTA; liaising with the European Commission and other relevant partners and donors to secure and manage technical and financial assistance on behalf of the CEFTA Parties in the implementation of any regional strategy or plan which involves CEFTA Bodies and informing regularly the Joint Committee thereof.

In the context of CRM 2.0 governance system, CEFTA Secretariat is in charge of preparing and coordinating of the CEFTA led actions within the Action Plan, mainly grouped in three Areas (Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services and Horizontal Trade measures) and together with the Secretariat of the Regional Cooperation Council it monitors and reports progress back to the Western Balkan leaders.

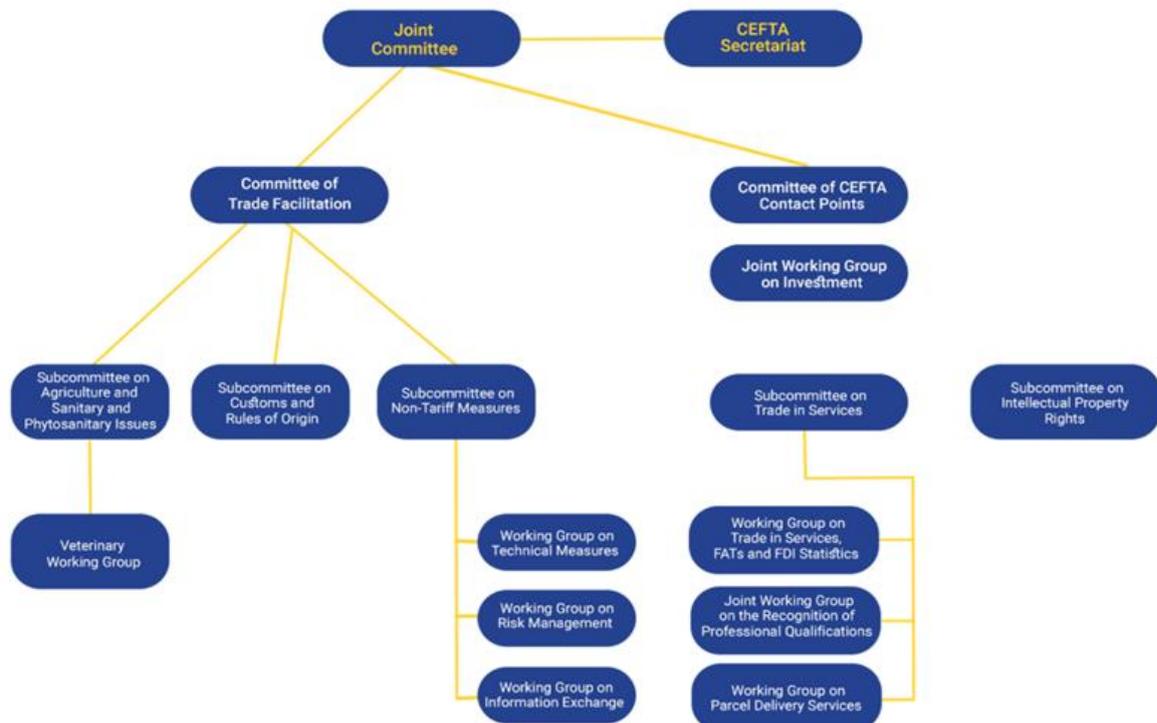
CEFTA Secretariat prepares input on CEFTA activities for regular reports on implementation of CRM 2.0. CEFTA Secretariat takes an active part in the coordination mechanism set for monitoring and governing of the Action Plan. This involves contribution to organisation and participation in the meetings of the Common Regional Market coordinators, which take place multiple times a year. Furthermore, it organises discussions of relevant CRM 2.0 Actions in the meetings of CEFTA Bodies or, when needed, contact points for different CRM activities or designates experts for particular activities. The CEFTA Secretariat may also participate in the meetings related to bilateral, plurilateral or global initiatives involving CEFTA Parties, where issues related to the implementation of CEFTA 2006 or CRM 2.0 may arise. Finally, the CEFTA Secretariat reports to the WB leaders, through active participation in the WB leaders' summits.

- ***CEFTA Bodies***

**Joint Committee**, hereinafter JC, (CEFTA 2006, Article 40) is the only decision-making body established in accordance with Article 40 of CEFTA 2006 which supervises and administers the implementation of the Agreement. It is composed of the ministers in charge of trade from each Party and it is entrusted to supervise and administer implementation of the agreement. The JC meets at least once a year and can adopt decisions and recommendations. The JC is chaired by one of the parties and this function revolves on an annual basis in order laid out in JC Decision 1/2007 as amended by JC Decision 1/2024.

**Committee of Trade Facilitation** (JC Decisions 7/2014 and 1/2015) is tasked to develop and broaden cooperation among CEFTA Parties and to address the issues which are related to facilitation of the trade in CEFTA with a view to reduce trade costs, while balancing trade facilitation with increasing requirements for safety and security measures in international and regional supply chain.

**Committee of Contact Points** (JC Decision No. 1/2015) is tasked to support the smooth functioning of the Agreement and the fulfilment of the decisions, conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Committee both within the Party concerned and with all CEFTA stakeholders.



### ***Subcommittees***

Subcommittee on Non-Tariff Measures is tasked to identify non-tariff measures that can potentially have an economic effect on international trade in goods, changing quantities traded, or process or both, review those identified measures and propose measures for their elimination.

Subcommittee on Agriculture including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues is tasked to contribute the promotion and facilitate trade in agricultural products and to discuss and coordinate to the maximum extent the policies on agriculture and protection of plant health, animal health and food safety and other relevant areas in accordance with articles 11 and 12 of CEFTA 2006.

Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin is tasked to simplify and facilitate customs procedures and to coordinate implementation of common rules of origin in CEFTA; (in accordance with article 14.4 of CEFTA 2006).

Subcommittee on Trade in Services is tasked to strengthen and deepen the intra-CEFTA cooperation in the field of trade in services by facilitating the implementation of the commitments in Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services.

Subcommittee on Intellectual Property Rights is tasked to develop and broaden cooperation among the CEFTA Parties in relation to Intellectual Property Rights for the purpose of the elimination of trade-related barriers.

### ***Working groups***

Working Group on Technical Measures deals with non-tariff measures stemming technical measures with a view of eliminating the discriminatory measures constituting non-tariff barriers to trade.

Working Group on Risk Management deals with management of public authorities and agencies involved in clearance of goods seeking to facilitate while improving the overall quality and deterrence of customs, security, and safety controls and inspections.

Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information covers issues related to IT capacities and to facilitate trade while improving the overall quality of customs, security and safety controls and inspections.

Veterinary Working Group contributes to the promotion and facilitation of trade in agri-food products within CEFTA, also discussing and coordinating the related policies on agriculture and the protection of animal health and food safety and other relevant areas in accordance with Articles 11 and 12 of the CEFTA 2006.

Working Group on Trade in Services Statistics, FATS and FDI Statistics is tasked to improve the quality of international trade in services statistics and harmonise statistics with those of the European Union.

Working Group on Parcel Delivery is in charge of activities aimed at facilitating parcel delivery within CEFTA, in particular through implementation of JC Decision 3/2024.

Joint Working Group on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications deals with mobility of professionals by facilitating and supervising the implementation and application of cooperation in the area of the recognition of professional qualifications.

Joint CEFTA-RCC Working Group on Investment Policy and Promotion is established with the aim to deepen trade and investment links, and support policies that are non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable and that enhance the flow of goods, investment, services and people.

### ***SEED+ project***

The purpose of this action is to develop and implement the system SEED+, which will enable electronic exchange of trade documents in the Western Balkans in line with the provisions and actions agreed in CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 (AP5). The Grant Contract was signed with the European

Commission in January 2024 for a duration of 3 years. Two SEED+ project staff are based in the CEFTA Secretariat in Brussels: Project Manager and Project Assistant.

#### **1.4. Current situation in the sector**

Trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals across the CEFTA Parties remains constrained by fragmented regulatory practices, divergent veterinary and phytosanitary procedures, and uneven implementation of risk-based official controls. Despite progress under CEFTA framework and the efforts to further improve the sector through the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028, inter-Party trade continues to face duplicative documentary requirements, inconsistent application of sanitary and veterinary measures, limited recognition of surveillance and monitoring programmes and varying approaches to sampling, testing, and certification. These differences translate into increased compliance costs, longer clearance times, reduced predictability for operators and missed opportunities for deeper market integration.

Official controls continue to rely predominantly on routine, consignment-based controls rather than harmonised, risk-based methodologies, resulting in disproportionate inspection levels and inefficient use of resources. In addition, the absence of harmonised veterinary certificates and the limited use of electronic exchange of trade documents further contribute to administrative burdens and operational delays at crossing points.

While several CEFTA Parties have made progress in aligning their respective regulation with EU veterinary and food safety acquis, practical implementation remains uneven. Trust-building mechanisms such as recognition of contingency plans, surveillance programmes, monitoring results, and registers of professional operators are not yet systematically applied across Parties. This limits the ability to rely on each other's controls and prevents meaningful reduction of official checks.

Against this backdrop, there is strong interest among CEFTA Parties to pilot a structured framework for facilitating trade in products of animal origin and live animals.

The CEFTA Secretariat is requiring external expertise to prepare the Draft text of the Decision on facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in a pilot sector. Particular focus should be given to demonstrate how aligned procedures, harmonised documentation, risk-based controls, recognition of professional operators and electronic data exchange can streamline inter-Party trade, reduce costs, enhance transparency and build mutual confidence while remaining fully aligned with EU principles and preparing the region for gradual integration into the EU Single Market.

#### **1.5. Related programmes and other donor activities**

The implementation of project activities will be closely coordinated with other regional initiatives and EU-funded actions that contribute to the execution of the CEFTA Bodies' Work Programme (notably the Subcommittee on Agriculture including SPS Issues and the Veterinary Working Group and Phytosanitary and Food Safety Issues Working Group), in alignment with Chairmanship priorities and under the guidance of the CEFTA Secretariat.

In particular, strong collaboration will be maintained with the following initiatives:

1. **SEED+ Project**, implemented by the CEFTA Secretariat in partnership with the Italian Customs Administration;
2. **Regio Trade Project**, funded by the European Commission and BMZ and implemented by GIZ.

More broadly, the project will engage with all ongoing and relevant initiatives to prevent duplication, promote synergies and ensure complementarity across activities.

## **2. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

### **2.1. Overall objective**

The overall objective of the Action Grant of which this contract will be a part is to support implementation of the CRM 2.0 based on CEFTA 2006 (specific objective), in order to (i) contribute to socioeconomic growth in the region and convergence with the EU through deeper trade integration and improved market access; (ii) foster the implementation of the EU *acquis* pertaining to the EU Single Market in order to accelerate accession to the EU across the region; and (iii) enhance good neighbourly relations (overall objective).

### **2.2. Specific objective(s)**

The purpose of this contract is to ensure smooth and reliable implementation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 and CEFTA 2006 and to support the CEFTA Parties in preparing a legally and technically sound Agreement/Decision that facilitates trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in a pilot sector as well as the scope for recognition of food-producing establishments in pilot sectors authorised for trade modelled after EU practices, delivering simplified procedures, reduced costs and improved predictability for economic operators.

### **2.3. Expected outputs to be achieved by the Contractor**

The expected outputs of this contract are as follows:

Based on the request of the CEFTA Secretariat, the Contractor will provide services resulting in:

#### **1. *Facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in a pilot sector***

- A draft CEFTA Joint Committee Decision (and annexes) on facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in a pilot sector, including implementation-oriented provisions for consideration by CEFTA Bodies and Joint Committee adoption.
- A structured assessment and comparative analysis of relevant sectors, leading to the selection of one or more pilot sectors based on specific criteria (trade volume, readiness, impact potential).
- A draft set of principles for recognition and acceptance of aligned documents (e.g. contingency plans, surveillance programmes and results, monitoring plans, sampling/testing results, registers of trustworthy/professional operators).
- A risk-based official control model for the pilot sector, including control criteria, risk indicators and guidance for reducing and harmonising controls, consistent with relevant EU Regulation principles.
- Draft harmonised veterinary health certificates for the pilot sector, aligned with EU model concepts (including, where relevant, elements from Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2235).
- Delivery of expert input through presentations, participation in technical/negotiation discussions, working groups and official meetings of CEFTA bodies, as well as responding to ad hoc queries from the Secretariat and CEFTA Parties. Facilitate consultations and technical workshops with CEFTA Bodies; incorporate comments and produce revised drafts.
- Any other output requested by the Secretariat supporting the overall objective in line with the capacities and skills of the service provider.

## **2. *Scope of the recognition of food-producing establishments in pilot sectors authorised for trade modelled after EU practices***

- Map existing CEFTA Parties frameworks for approval, listing and supervision of food-producing establishments across CEFTA Parties, including competent authorities, inspection regimes and authorisation procedures.
- Identify priority pilot sectors based on trade relevance, readiness, and impact potential.
- Review current bilateral and regional arrangements related to establishment recognition.
- Define a CEFTA recognition model reflecting EU principles, including conditions for eligibility, listing procedures, suspension/withdrawal mechanisms and safeguards.
- Propose criteria for determining equivalence of control systems and establishment compliance.

## **3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS**

### **3.1. Assumptions underlying the project**

Activities under CEFTA are performed without major delays and stalemates. CEFTA Secretariat has enough capacities to generate and absorb requests to the external service supplier

### **3.2. Risks**

The main risk is related to big disturbances in functioning of CEFTA institutional framework which would result in activities being blocked or significantly delayed, which would result in no need for rendering service. Risk probability: very low.

Insufficient institutional and administrative capacity to effectively participate in the drafting and development of the CEFTA Decision on facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals may jeopardise the planned processes. Additionally, changes in relevant agencies/administrations due to political or other circumstances may slow down the work. Risk probability: medium.

## **4. SCOPE OF THE WORK**

### **4.1. General**

#### **4.1.1. Project description**

The Contractor will provide technical and regulatory expertise to support the CEFTA Secretariat and CEFTA Parties in drafting the Decision and related technical instruments, participating at and facilitating consultations and negotiations and ensuring alignment with relevant EU principles and best practice.

#### **4.1.2. Geographical area to be covered**

CEFTA Economies

#### **4.1.3. Target groups**

Target groups are CEFTA Secretariat, CEFTA Structures and Beneficiary Administrations.

## 4.2. Specific work

### **COMPONENT 1**

#### **Facilitating Trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals (pilot sector)**

##### **Task 1 – Inception and sector assessment**

- Hold inception meetings with the CEFTA Secretariat and relevant bodies and review the existing CEFTA framework and current practices.
- Define objective criteria for sector selection (including trade volume, readiness, potential impact, SPS alignment and digital capacity).
- Conduct a structured comparative analysis of relevant sectors based on the agreed criteria.
- Submit an Inception Report outlining the proposed methodology, workplan, timeline, risk assessment and the recommended pilot sector(s) with justification.

##### **Task 2 – Draft CEFTA Joint Committee Decision and operational framework**

- Prepare an implementation-oriented draft CEFTA Joint Committee Decision, including relevant annexes for facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in the selected sector. Ensure the draft includes provisions related to recognition mechanisms, safeguards, digital exchange of information and operational implementation.
- Develop a set of principles for inter-Party recognition and acceptance of aligned documents, including surveillance programmes, contingency plans, testing results, monitoring systems and registers of operators. Define eligibility criteria, verification procedures and safeguards supporting such recognition.
- Develop a risk-based official control model for the pilot sector, including relevant control criteria and risk indicators.
- Propose guidance for the reduction and harmonisation of controls, ensuring alignment with the risk-based control principles of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.
- Draft harmonised veterinary health certificates, aligned with EU model concepts and incorporating relevant elements of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2235, and provide guidance for their use and potential digital adaptation.

##### **Task 3 – Consultation, negotiation and revision**

- Present outputs to CEFTA structures/Bodies and working groups.
- Facilitate consultations and technical discussions.
- Consolidate comments and submit revised drafts.
- Respond to ad hoc requests of the Secretariat.

### **COMPONENT 2**

#### **Recognition of Food-Producing Establishments (EU-Modelled Approach)**

##### **Task 1 – Mapping and review of existing regulatory and operational arrangements**

- Map the approval, listing and supervision frameworks across CEFTA Parties.
- Compare existing inspection regimes, authorisation procedures and withdrawal mechanisms applied by the Parties.

- Analyse existing bilateral and/or regional recognition practices relevant to the selected sector(s).
- Identify regulatory and operational gaps, including areas where further alignment or cooperation could facilitate mutual recognition and trade.

## **Task 2 – Develop a CEFTA recognition and equivalence framework**

- Develop a CEFTA recognition model defining eligibility conditions, listing procedures, as well as suspension and withdrawal mechanisms and relevant safeguards, reflecting EU equivalence principles.
- Propose a framework of criteria for determining the equivalence of control systems and establishment compliance among CEFTA Parties.
- Define verification and audit principles supporting the implementation and monitoring of the recognition and equivalence arrangements.

### **4.3. Project management**

#### **4.3.1. Responsible body**

The Secretariat of the Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 will be responsible for the management of the contract.

#### **4.3.2. Management structure**

The Director of the CEFTA Secretariat will oversee the implementation of the contract. The Project Manager in charge of the implementation of this contract is the Senior Trade Facilitation Expert.

#### **4.3.3. Facilities to be provided by the Contracting Authority and/or other parties**

No facilities will be provided by the Contracting Authority.

## **5. LOGISTICS & TIMING**

### **5.1. Location**

The expert(s) will perform their work from their own offices.

Where required, the expert(s) will be invited to participate in meetings or other events organised under CEFTA structures to present their work, including but not limited to negotiations/consultations, in order to ensure proper understanding by the participants.

When such meetings will take place in Brussels and in the CEFTA region, travel arrangements will be organised and related travel costs will be borne by the CEFTA Secretariat.

### **5.2. Start date & period of implementation of tasks**

The intended start month is April 2026 and the period of implementation of the contract will be until 31 December 2026.

The Contracting Authority may, at its own discretion, extend the project in duration and/or scope subject to the availability of funding. Any extension of the contract would be subject to satisfactory performance by the Contractor.

## 6. REQUIREMENTS

### 6.1. Personnel

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration, of the partners or of international organisations based in the Beneficiary, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

#### 6.1.1. Key experts

Key expert has a crucial role in implementing the contract. These terms of reference contain the required key experts' profile. The tenderer shall submit CVs and Statements of Exclusivity and Availability for the following key experts:

##### **Key expert 1: Senior Expert (minimum 25 working days)**

###### **Qualifications and skills**

- A Master degree in Veterinary Control of Foods of Animal Origin and Live Animals, Veterinary medicine/studies, Hygiene and technology of food of animal origin or a related discipline.

###### **General professional experience**

- Minimum 15 years of professional experience in the area of veterinary medicine, food safety, agricultural law or EU law.

###### **10 years of experience in:**

- Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) policy
- Veterinary public health
- Trade facilitation in animal products/live animals
- EU approximation processes

###### **Specific professional experience**

- Experience in intergovernmental negotiations;
- Ability to moderate technical meetings;
- Strong drafting and redrafting capacity under political sensitivity;
- Diplomacy and stakeholder management skills;
- A proven record of previous work in the CEFTA is an advantage;
- Excellent English communication and reporting skills;
- Knowledge of one or more of the languages used by the CEFTA Parties would be an asset.

All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

#### 6.1.2. Non-key experts

CVs for non-key experts should not be submitted in the tender but the tenderer will have to demonstrate in their offer that they have access to experts with the required profiles.

#### 6.1.3. Support staff & backstopping

The contractor will provide support facilities to their team of experts (back-stopping) during the implementation of the contract.

Backstopping and support staff costs must be included in the fee rates.

## 6.2. Office accommodation

Office accommodation of a reasonable standard and of approximately 10 square metres for each expert working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor. The costs of the office accommodation are to be covered by the fee rates.

## 6.3. Facilities to be provided by the Contractor

The contractor must ensure that experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular it must ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable experts to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. It must also transfer funds as necessary to support their work under the contract and to ensure that its employees are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

The Contractor shall provide all required supplies, services, documentation, logistical support, etc. for the implementation of the contract, and all the costs should be included in the fee rates of its experts.

## 6.4. Equipment

No equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the CEFTA Secretariat as part of this service contract or transferred to the CEFTA Secretariat at the end of this contract. Any equipment related to this contract which is to be acquired by the partner country must be purchased by means of a separate supply tender procedure.

## 6.5. Incidental expenditure

No provision for incidental expenditure, including the provision for expenditure verification, is foreseen under this service contract.

## 6.6. Lump sums

No lump sums are foreseen in this contract.

# 7. REPORTS

## 7.1. Reporting requirements

There must be a final report, a final invoice and the financial report at the end of the period of implementation of the tasks. The draft final report must be submitted at least one month before the end of the period of implementation of the tasks. Note that these interim and final reports are additional to any required in Section 4.2 of these Terms of Reference.

Each report must consist of a narrative section and a financial section. The financial section must contain details of the time inputs of the experts.

To summarise, in addition to any documents, reports and output specified under the duties and responsibilities of each key expert above, the Contractor shall provide the following reports:

Name of report	Content	Time of submission
Inception report	Analysis of existing situation and work plan for the project	No later than 2 weeks after the start of implementation
Draft final report	Short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations.	No later than 1 month before the end of the implementation period.

Final report	Short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations; a final invoice and the financial report; all legal opinions requested and provided; deliverables in annex.	Within 1 month of receiving comments on the draft final report from the project manager identified in the contract.
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## **7.2. Submission & approval of reports**

The reports referred to above must be submitted by electronic means to the Project Manager identified in the contract. The reports must be written in English. The Project Manager is responsible for approving the reports and the time-sheets of the experts.

## **8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **8.1. Definition of indicators**

N/A

### **8.2. Special requirements**

N/A

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