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Answer given by Ms Kos
on behalf of the European Commission
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For EU candidate countries, aligning with the EU *acquis* is key to tackling illicit trade. This includes alignment with the customs union, notably on controls of counterfeit and pirated goods, as well as with the EU anti-money laundering framework. Together, these measures help prevent and detect the financial flows linked to illicit trade. In accession negotiations, candidate countries must also prepare a rule of law roadmap covering organised crime, other serious cross-border crime and border management, of which illicit trade is a part.

One concrete measure supporting the fight against illicit trade is EMPACT, the EU Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats. As the EU framework for addressing serious and organised crime, it enables the Commission to support the participation of non-EU countries in operational actions against excise and customs fraud, as well as intellectual property crime and the counterfeiting of goods or currencies, which are identified as priorities for the current cycle 2026-2029.

Trade facilitation, fair competition and a predictable business environment are key to the stability of candidate countries. Through targeted financial and technical support under the Instrument for Pre-Accession, the Commission can strengthen administrative capacity, improve enforcement and support reforms that increase market transparency. This helps candidate countries integrate gradually into the EU single market and creates a more stable and attractive environment for investment and growth.

The Commission remains engaged, as appropriate, in accompanying reform efforts and in encouraging progress in areas of particular importance for the accession process.