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Answer given by Mr Gentiloni
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.11.2024)

As of 31 March 2024, Bulgaria is a part of the Schengen Area. Since then, controls at Bulgaria's internal air and sea borders with other Schengen countries have been lifted. The Commission has consistently underlined since 2011, that Bulgaria has met all the criteria for removing these controls. The decision to lift controls at the internal land borders rests entirely with the Council.

The security of the customs control equipment is of utmost importance and the Commission has taken action to ensure this in the framework of the Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI; Regulation (EU) 2021/1077¹). Regarding the Bulgarian CCEI grant agreement, the Commission is closely monitoring the implementation in its role of granting authority.

It is the responsibility of the Member States to carry out the procurement procedures in line with EU and national procurement rules in order to benefit from the Commission grants. The applicable procedures may differ, based on exceptions justified by specific circumstances. A Member State may use its prerogatives under the Treaties to protect its national security interests, an exclusive competence of the Member States, where it is deemed necessary and only when proportionate.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1077/oj>