



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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AIRCOP



EU AND UNODC JOINT ACTION PROMOTING RULE OF LAW AND GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH TARGETED BORDER CONTROL MEASURES AT PORTS AND AIRPORTS

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UNODC continues its partnership with the EU through the launch of a **new initiative** aimed at fighting organized crime, by supporting more effective and coordinated responses to illicit trafficking at seaports, land border crossings and international airports in the Western Balkans.

In January 2020, under the framework of the **Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (RP SEE) 2020-2023**, UNODC successfully initiated this EU-UNODC joint action promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports in South Eastern Europe. The action is implemented by the **UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (CCP)** and the **UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP)** in cooperation with the **RP SEE**

and is carried out in:

- ◆ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (land border crossings Bijača and Gradiška and Sarajevo International Airport)
- ◆ **Montenegro** (port of Bar)
- ◆ **North Macedonia** (Skopje International Airport)
- ◆ **Serbia** (Belgrade International Airport)
- ◆ **Kosovo**^{1*} (boundary crossing Vermićë/Vrbnica).

The UNODC-WCO CCP's mission is to build capacity in countries/jurisdictions seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation in seaports, airports and land border crossings in order to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods. CCP has been operating in South Eastern Europe since 2013 with Port Control Units (PCUs) established in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo.

AIRCOP initiated its activities in the region in early 2020 along with the action. It applies passenger controls to supporting airports in tackling multiple threats, including all types of illicit drugs, illicit goods (such as wildlife, counterfeit medicines, weapons and others), as well as terrorism and trafficking in persons among others.

With these two complementary components, the action's **objectives** are:

- (i) to support more effective national and international responses to illicit trafficking through strengthening the current PCUs in the region and establishing new units, and;
- (ii) to strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies active at the mentioned international airports to detect and intercept high risk passengers in an effort to counter transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking and prevent terrorism.

¹ All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

* For the EU, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

The action supports the implementation of **synergies** between law enforcement actors at the national, regional and international levels and builds **bridges between various thematic areas, as well as between the Western Balkans and other regions**, improving the security situation in **the Western Balkans and Europe as a whole**. While the action is not directly assisting the Albanian authorities, the **work in Albania** in this field is ongoing and is supported by other sources.

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UNODC CONDUCTED A MENTORSHIP VISIT TO PCU AT THE LAND-BORDER CROSSING BIJAČA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

19-22 January 2021, Bijača, Bosnia and Herzegovina: UNODC delivered the first in 2021 mentorship visit to the PCU at the land-border crossing/customs point Bijača. Mentorship visits provide PCUs worldwide with continuous support and the visit to the PCU Bijača aimed in particular to enhance the operational capacities of the PCU and address challenges specific to land-borders.

During the four-day visit, a CCP expert observed the daily routines of the Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA) and Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina officers assigned to the Unit and provided support related to risk

profiling of containerized shipments and identification of potential high risk assessments, as well as physical inspections. The mentorship also served as an opportunity for discussions on common challenges and emerging threats related to organized



crime and other criminal activities that frontline customs and border police offices encounter in their daily work.

Other topics addressed during the visit were the tracking and tracing of the movements of container shipments, trends in concealments and modus operandi used by criminal groups and further development of regional and global cooperation among customs and police administrations within the CCP framework. Several containers and trucks, that were entering or leaving the customs territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina were profiled and physically inspected.

UNODC AND NORTH MACEDONIA SEAL COOPERATION ON ENHANCED BORDER CONTROL IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

26 January 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia/online: In North Macedonia, the Government represented by the Ministry of Interior and UNODC formally agreed to pursue cooperation in the area of enhanced border control within the action by signing a joint Letter of Agreement (LoA), which stipulates that both entities agree on the implementa-

tion of AIRCOP and CCP in North Macedonia and in particular on the establishment of a nationally owned airport inter-agency group that will consist of a CCP Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) and an AIRCOP Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force (JAITF) at the Skopje International Airport.



The LoA was signed by Mr. Oliver Spasovski, the Minister of Interior of North Macedonia and Mr. John Brandolino, Director of the Division for Treaty Affairs of UNODC in the presence of Mr. Ljupcho Nikolovski, the Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia and Mr. Saso Tasevski, Director of Public Security Bureau of North Macedonia.



During the ceremony, the signees underlined the importance of such a commitment in the fight against cross-border movement of illicit goods and organized crime. The Minister of Interior expressed appreciation to UNODC for supporting the Government agencies through capacity building and stated that the LoA “reinforces the architecture of the fight

against organized crime” in the country while the Director of the Division for Treaty Affairs reiterated UNODC’s readiness to support North Macedonia in addressing cross-border illicit activity.

The signature of the LoA further supports the implementation of the UN Conventions on drugs and crime and the EU Acquis, notably Chapters 23 and 24 addressing serious organized crime, rule of law, good governance and security.

UNODC CONDUCTED A MENTORSHIP VISIT TO THE PCU AT THE LAND-BORDER CROSSING GRADIŠKA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

25-29 January 2021, Gradiška, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Building on its previous achievements, UNODC continued the implementation of the basic training cycle for the customs and border police officers of the PCU at the land-border crossing Gradiška.

As part of the staged training cycle provided by the CCP programming worldwide, the practical training component for the staff of

PCU Gradiška focused on risk analyses-based profiling of containers and other shipments, identification and interdiction of high-risk cargo, illegal cross-border movement of goods and other criminal activities observed in the international trade supply chain. The training offered practical exercises on real-time cases, complemented by interactive discussions on contemporary modus operandi used by criminal groups in trafficking of



drugs and chemical precursors, firearms and other illicit goods.

UNODC HELD MEETINGS WITH THE AUTHORITIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA FOLLOWING THE SIGNING OF THE LOA

4 February 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia: UNODC held a meeting with the new Director of Customs Administration and a meeting with the Director of Bureau for Public Security of North Macedonia.

During the meetings, the counterparts welcomed the signing of the LoA between UNODC and



North Macedonia on the establishment of an airport inter-agency group composed of an ACCU and a JAITF and concluded that an important milestone in increasing and fostering border security was achieved. Both offices also reiterated their support to the action, which provides the framework for this cooperation and expressed willingness to be actively involved in the action’s upcoming

activities in full capacity, recognizing its benefits for the country and the region.

In the same token, UNODC seized this opportunity to discuss details for the creation of the airport inter-agency group with a focus on the team composition, location of the

office space, and offered support for the development of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which will serve as an inter-agency cooperation agreement between all national law enforcement agencies to form part of the airport group.



UNODC PRESENTS COOPERATION WITHIN EU-UNODC BORDER CONTROL ACTION IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AS BEST PRACTICE

11 February and 30 March 2021, online: UNODC participated in regional meetings with international stakeholders and took part in the discussions to share the experience in implementing the action and present it as best practice. In February, UNODC chaired a panel at the SMI 14th Border Security Conference 2021 on Securing Land Borders, Improving Biometric Technology, and Optimising the Airport Security Experience.



The event brought together representatives from the EU Commission, law enforcement agencies from various countries, as well as international organizations including UNODC, INTERPOL, WCO and a representative from the UNODC Countering Terrorist (CT) Travel Programme.

With COVID-19 spreading across the globe, the security and integrity of a nation's borders has rarely been more important than now. Security protocols have been thrust into the global spotlight as border professionals have had to adapt and change their usual approaches while ensuring that their effectiveness is not compromised; a successful response has frequently hinged on the ability of a nation to prevent infected individuals from entering the country.

Amid this disruption, the problems of migration, cross-border criminality, and smart-borders have become even more critical as rogue elements seek to exploit the situation. Addressing these issues was at the core of this conference.

During the event, the panel discussion covered all the aspects related to the AIRCOP Global Programme and the key synergies with the CT Travel Programme, highlighting complementarities and operational procedures aimed at maximizing the impact of the operationalisation of inter-agency structures.

The key points of the discussion focused on

the benefits of the adoption of risk-led procedures aimed at integrating the law enforcement sector in the framework of a developing aviation industry, the establishment of strong inter-agency agreements and the enhancement of international cooperation to scale up efforts against criminal organizations at the regional/international level.

The UNODC AIRCOP expert made an intervention to present the ongoing EU-UNODC joint action as a best practice aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the One UN approach and action.

In the same token, in March, UNODC participated in the 2nd Western Balkans Stakeholder meeting, organized by the EU Western Balkans Training Project which provides a coordination platform for the international stakeholders operating in South Eastern Europe to enhance synergy of efforts and avoid duplications.

Building on the outcomes of the previous meeting held in January 2020, the meeting, which was attended by the Center for International Legal Cooperation (CILC), EUROPOL, INTERPOL, International Organization for

Migration (IOM), the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat (PCC SEE), UNOCT, UNODC as well as UK and US focused on ongoing and planned activities in the area of border security as well as on the related challenges in South Eastern Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the meeting, the UNODC expert con-

tributed to the discussion by presenting the action as best practice and an effective way to counter illicit cross-border activities. The JAITF component has been indeed widely recognized as a relevant synergy with the international stakeholders engaged in the development of Advance Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record (API/PNR) programs in the Balkan region, as well

as a valid operational asset aimed at tackling threats targeting airports.

The UNODC representative also outlined the relevance of such fora as an effective tool to facilitate communication, coordination, and cooperation between international stakeholders while capitalizing on the impact of EU-funded programmes in the region.

UNODC COORDINATES ACTIVITIES WITH PARTNERS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

8 and 16 February 2021, online: UNODC participated in the donor coordination meeting organized by the US Embassy in Skopje, providing an opportunity for international organizations and donor countries to share details of the planned activities for 2021 in North Macedonia and ensure coordination of efforts. Representation at the meeting included the German Development Agency (GIZ), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), OSCE, UNODC as well as the UK among others. The counterparts representing OSCE, GIZ, and the UK shared in-

formation on future work in the areas of anti-corruption, asset recovery, and digital evidence while UNODC presented its work on enhanced border control, asset recovery, and firearms.

In the same token, UNODC met with the counterparts from the regional project “IPA 2017 Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans” implemented by GIZ, Italian Ministry of Interior, and CILC to discuss the coordination of activities and possible synergy related to the introduction of API/PNR in North Macedonia within the action. The

counterparts agreed that, the establishment of mutual trust, institutionalized cooperation, and the timely exchange of information remain critical elements in the further development of the international fight against serious crime and terrorism across the region and pledged to continue working together in this direction.

These meetings further contribute to an improved coordination of efforts on the ground in the spirit of non-duplication and synergy of efforts with the international partners in North Macedonia.

UNODC LAUNCHES THE 2021 TRAINING CYCLE FOR THE OFFICERS OF THE AIRCOP/CCP INTER-AGENCY GROUP AND ACCU AT THE SKOPJE AND BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

1-5 March and 8-10 2021, online: UNODC organized the online theoretical training for the customs and border

police officers of the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group at the Skopje International Airport, which will be composed of a JAITF and

an ACCU as well as officers of the ACCU at the Belgrade International Airport.

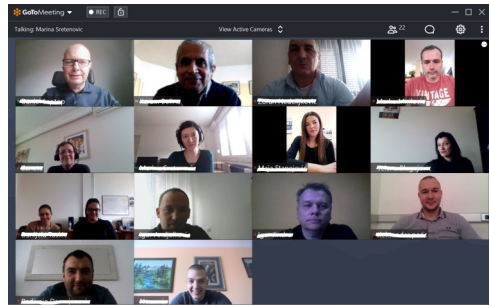
The training was delivered online (due to the current COVID-19 restrictions) to 31 officers from the Customs Administration and the Ministry of Interior / Border Police Directorate of North Macedonia and 14 officers from the relevant authorities in Serbia.

During the first part of the training, CCP delivered a three-day Basic Theoretical Training

(part 1) presenting topics such as risk indicators, profiling and targeting, detection of smuggling of illicit goods, air cargo safety and other relevant matters concerning air cargo shipments. This part of the training was followed by the two-day AIRCOP delivery of the module “World of Drugs - 1”, organized for the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group in North Macedonia, which enhanced the knowledge of the participants on cocaine trafficking, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the current counter-measures and current detection methodologies, raising the awareness towards the adoption of a risk-based approach against the threats targeting international airports.



These activities represent the start of the training cycle for the officers of the two components of the joint AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group in North Macedonia and the ACCU in Serbia, and were delivered by experienced international experts from WCO and UNODC.



UNODC ASSESSES THE SKOPJE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND CONDUCTS CONSULTATIONS WITH THE AUTHORITIES

14-17 March 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia: UNODC met with officials from the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office in charge of Fight Against Corruption, National Coordination Center for Border Management, Border Police, Customs Administration, Public Security Bureau Director, and the EU Delegation in Skopje, to discuss and promote the next steps of the establishment of a JAITF at the Skopje International Airport to form part of the inter-agency group .

During the meetings, the counterparts discussed the development of the SOPs, the staff selection of the inter-agency group, as well as the allocation of office space at the Skopje International Airport for this purpose.



During the visit, UNODC also performed a technical assessment of the Skopje airport for the selection of the suitable premises at the passenger terminal, which would enable the settlement of the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group and the subsequent UNODC procurements aimed at its operationalization. The physical assessment of the airport was postponed by a year due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the related travel restrictions.

The EU Delegation considered the visit and meetings as excellent progress in terms of effective action implementation, particularly during the ongoing pandemic. The government counterparts also highlighted the benefits of the action as an effective solution to address threats targeting airports and expressed their commitment to actively participate in improving border security systems.

