



**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

**NEWSLETTER** *January — March 2020*

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, in 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 involves the **UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (CCP)** and **the UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP)** under the umbrella of **the RP SEE**

and is carried out in:

- ◆ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (land border crossings Bijača and Gradiška and international airport of Sarajevo)
- ◆ **Montenegro** (port of Bar)
- ◆ **North Macedonia** (Skopje International Airport)
- ◆ **Serbia** (Belgrade Airport)
- ◆ **Kosovo** under UNSCR 1244 (land border crossing Vermicë).

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 under UNSCR 1244.

Conversely, AIRCOP is new to the region. 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 international organized crime and illicit drug trafficking and prevent terrorism.

The action 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. The action **improves effectiveness** and **develops 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 supporting the Albanian authorities, the **work in Albania** in this field is ongoing and is supported by other sources.

## ACTION AND PARTNERSHIPS

To assess and monitor the project's progress and achievements, the action will be governed by **an Action Steering Committee** which will meet annually with the presence of the relevant stakeholders including the national authorities, the project partners, including the European Union Law Enforcement Agency (**EUROPOL**) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (**FRONTEX**), as well as the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG **NEAR**), donor of the action, and other EU institutions.

The action is aligned with **UN and EU strategic priorities** and includes regular updates and briefings to DG NEAR in Brussels, Belgium in consultation with the UNODC Brussels Liaison Office (BRULO), which fosters policy exchange and operational partnership with the EU institutions and provides guidance to UNODC field offices in the successful delivery of the joint initiatives. During the first update in February 2020, the UNODC project team briefed DG NEAR on

the advancement of the project, including the coordination meetings with internal and external stakeholders such as EURO-POL (in November 2019 in advance of the action launch) and FRONTEX (in January 2020), the roll-out of the scoping missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, the preparations for the first Action Steering Committee meeting scheduled for mid-2020 and the visibility and reporting arrangements to date. The meeting concluded with the mutual reiteration of support in the implementation of the project.

**The visibility** forming an important element of the action is ensured in accordance with the contractual agreement, as such UNODC uses every opportunity to promote the EU as the donor of the action, which includes regular press releases and newsletters covering the project activities, the production of visibility items and updates and invitations to the EU Delegations in the region. In addition, in January 2020, UNODC BRULO delivered a seminar to better pre-

pare the HQ and field staff of the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe in ensuring the best implementation of the EU contribution agreements in the region and provide an enhanced understanding of the most relevant rules and procedures facilitating smooth cooperation with the EU.

Cooperation with relevant EU institutions continues to be a priority of the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe. With this in mind, in March 2020, UNODC provided a briefing to the **European Union Delegations in the region** on the launch of the new action.

A short introduction to the action, based on the above summary, will be part of each of **the action's quarterly newsletters**, of which this one is first. The introductory part will be more concise. The below stories describe the action's work and results from January to March 2020. The project is referred to as **border control action** below.

## UNODC KICKS OFF A NEW INITIATIVE ON BORDER CONTROL IN SEE

**16-18 September 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia; 2-4 October 2019, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; 5-6 December 2019, Belgrade, Serbia; 20-23 January 2020, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** UNODC met with the national authorities in the region to discuss the ongoing cooperation and the future initiatives under the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (2020



-2023), particularly in the area of border control and illicit trafficking, including the

upcoming border control action, the related involvement of UNODC and areas of increased cooperation. In this context, UNODC formally introduced the Regional Serious and Organized Crime Advisor and Head of the enhanced UNODC Programme Office in North Macedonia, who will be involved in the coordination of the borders project with the national authorities in the region. Following these consultations, UNODC kicked off the action by conducting the first AIRCOP assessment mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which the project team met with the national authorities, i.e. Ministry of Security, Ministry of Communications and Transport, Indirect Taxation Authority, Border Police, Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies, State Investigation and Protection Agency, Service for

Foreigners' Affairs, and Directorate for Civil



Aviation, to formally introduce the project and its objectives and discuss the coordination of activities. The UNODC project team also met with the Sarajevo Airport Authority and carried out a technical assessment of this airport.

The next key step is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNODC and the national authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will set the framework for the future implementation of the project.

## UNODC, FRONTEX STEP UP COOPERATION IN SEE

**17 January 2020, Warsaw, Poland:** UNODC organized senior level consultations with FRONTEX on future cooperation in South Eastern Europe in line with the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (2020-2023). The consultations are directly following the overall strategy line of the UNODC-EU relations, which encour-



ages a closer dialogue between the Office

and relevant EU institutions. The talks in Warsaw focused on potential cooperation in the area of border control, including in the context of the **border control action**. As a result, UNODC and FRONTEX agreed to step up coordination, exchange of information and mutual engagement into practical work in South Eastern Europe and beyond.



## CCP LAUNCHES ACTIVITIES IN NEW LOCATION IN SEE

**14-18 February 2020, Gradiška, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The UNODC-WCO CCP successfully conducted a technical assessment mission of the land border/customs terminal at Gradiška, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This activity represents a continuation of



the excellent cooperation between the CCP and the Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA) and the Border Police, the main stakeholders in the implementation of the CCP in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Border Ins-

pection Point (BIP) at Gradiška is an important entry point to Bosnia and Herzegovina's customs territory, with some of the highest volumes in the traffic of goods and passengers. BIP Gradiška has been selected as a designated site for the establishment of a PCU, which will be a joint effort between the CCP and the national authorities towards strengthening border security and countering transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking. In preparation to the establishment of the PCU, UNODC met with the senior officials of the ITA and Border Police and visited BIP Gradiška to familiarize with the current situation of the recently relocated customs terminal, as well as to review the general state of affairs with regard to major threats, challenges and prospects of goods trafficked through this



BIP between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. UNODC also observed the work of frontline officers in conducting documentary profiling and risk-analyses, as well as physical risk controls, including x-ray scanning of cargo. The technical assessors and the Bosnian officials discussed the establishment of the PCU as part of the new border control action, its operationalization and the follow-up arrangements for cooperation between the national stakeholders.

## CCP PROVIDES ON-THE-JOB MENTORING IN REGION'S PORTS

**25-27 February 2020, Bar, Montenegro, and Bijača, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The UNODC-WCO CCP performed an initial series of monitoring visits to the PCUs in South Eastern Europe, during which the PCUs maintain their regular activities and present the daily work conducted at their respective seaports and land-border/customs points.

The CCP concept of monitoring visits is based on partnerships with customs adminis-

trations of member states, through the principles of mutual cooperation and responsibility, as well as sharing of knowledge on new experiences and approaches to specific themes in the fight against transnational organized crime. During the visits, the CCP used the opportunity to present activities planned throughout 2020 for the PCUs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Amongst other topics, discussions were also

held concerning current challenges faced by the PCUs staff in their daily work.



## CCP SUPPORTS COOPERATION OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS IN SEE

**3 March 2020, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Cooperation between the ITA of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Customs Administration of the Republic of Serbia via efficient information exchange represents one of the most important activities in preventing cross-border criminal activities and

increasing efficiency of revenue collections for both states.

With the support of the UNODC-WCO CCP, ITA and the Serbian Customs Administration organized a technical level meeting to discuss the continuation of cooperation aimed to facilitate detections and successful interdictions of various forms of cross-border

criminal activities. Such meetings aim to further enhance functional professional links between officials of the partner customs administrations. The meeting resulted in several conclusions concerning future points of cooperation within the border control action.

## UNODC ASSESSES THE BORDER CONTROL SITUATION IN SERBIA

**11-13 March 2020, Belgrade, Serbia:** UNODC conducted a second scoping mission during which the project team met with the national authorities, including the Ministries of Interior, Transport, Communication and Infrastructure (Civil Aviation), the Customs Administration, the Border Police Directorate and the Criminal Police Directo-



rate to formally introduce the border control action and discuss future implementation, in particular the air cargo aspect of the CCP project component. The project team also visited Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport and carried out a technical assessment through further discussions with customs and border police structures on site.

## FURTHER ACTION IMPLEMENTATION

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, activities under this action were postponed until further notice.

UNODC remains committed to keeping all project stakeholders and partners abreast of the planned activities and continues consultations with the Governments of the region on future implementation of the project. The next activities planned to take place subject to the normalization of the global situation linked to COVID-19 include:

- ◆ Provision of the COVID-19 response tools;
- ◆ Finalization of the scoping missions (AIRCOP component in Serbia, CCP/AIRCOP in North Macedonia);
- ◆ Basic theoretical training for Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) at Sarajevo International Airport;
- ◆ Mentorship visit to PCUs of Bijaca, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bar, Montenegro;
- ◆ Joint technical assessment missions of Skopje and Belgrade international airports;
- ◆ Signing of the Letters of Agreement and Memoranda of Understandings with the national counterparts;
- ◆ Support missions: discussion with relevant airport stakeholders on Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records (API/PNR) data gathering for analysis and profiling;
- ◆ Roll-out of the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force (JAITF) Initial trainings;
- ◆ First meeting of the Action Steering Committee.