



EVALUATION BRIEFS

Western Balkans Counter-Serious Crime Initiative (WBCSCi) in the context of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) mechanism including the European Union action “Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II/2017)”

Formative In-Depth Evaluation

Region: Western Balkan

Duration: 2016 to 2018

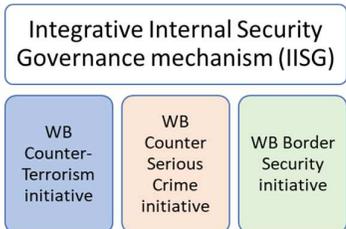
Evaluation team: Punit Arora (team leader), Jim Newkirk (RBM expert), Peter Allan (organized crime expert), Eleni Tsingou (Anti-Money Laundering expert), Katharina Kayser (Chief, IES), Katherine Aston (IES), & Emanuel Lohninger (IES).

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the context of the negotiations for accession to the European Union (EU) of the different jurisdictions in the Western Balkans (WB), and the changing criminal landscape in the region, challenges have been identified in combatting serious organised crime. To address gaps in regional cooperation mechanisms and reduce duplication in technical assistance, the WB Counter-Serious Crime Initiative (WBCSCi) was launched as one of three pillars under the aegis of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) mechanism in 2017 by the Ministers of Interior/Security of the Western Balkans (IISG Board). The Board endorsed the evaluation framework to ensure that evaluation results can feed into the further development of the IISG, constituting thereby a best practice for similar initiatives.

The immediate goal of the IISG is to integrate EU and international assistance in the three prominent



areas of internal security, to reduce duplication of actions among the existing and planned efforts of various actors, and to maximise the efficiency of achieving jointly agreed priorities. This is expected to lead to reduction in serious organized crime.

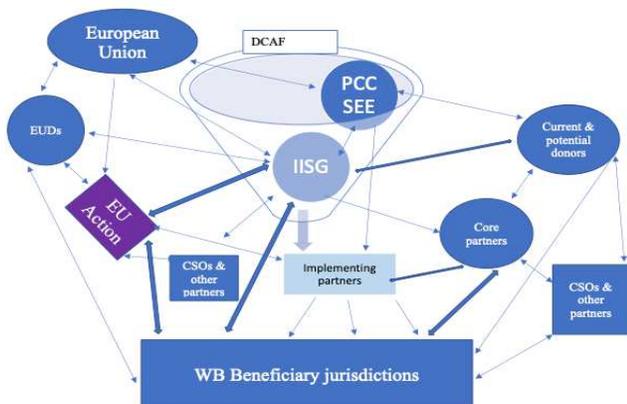
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This formative evaluation was undertaken using a mixed-methods, inclusive and participatory approach. It covers WBCSCi/IISG pillar II, in relation to the overall IISG, including its activities, outputs and outcomes, as well as its strategy and structure. It also covers the EU Action “Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) Multi-Country Action Programme 2017 - Support to the Western Balkan Integrative Internal Security Governance” in so far as it pertains to Pillar II for the period May 2016 to October 2018.

MAIN FINDINGS

The evaluation found that the IISG is best considered an early-stage entrepreneurial venture that has identified ‘the right customer needs’, but has yet to develop, establish and institutionalise formal systems and processes. The strategies and policies of the WBCSCi, as well as the EU Action, are largely aligned with the issues identified in the gap analysis (2014) on regional cooperation in the fight against serious and organized crime. However, there is a need for better prioritisation of the priorities themselves. There is wide support for the concept of the IISG as a potentially effective tool for regional coordination. IISG’s work is promoting informal collaboration and trust-building among beneficiaries across the region.

The IISG Support Group is operating on a small budget but appears to be contributing to increased informal coordination and collaboration within a complex system. The high-level political agreement among IISG Board members and beneficiary governments highlights the contribution of IISG to building partnerships and cooperation. However, IISG has not systematized the processes through which it identifies appropriate partners to deliver on its objectives. Also, feedback was less positive when it came to donor partnerships, notably Heads of EU Delegations (EUD) in Western Balkans jurisdictions. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in the





region also point to a lack of concrete engagement with the IISG. Given that the WBCSCi has been running for approximately one year there is insufficient data from which any definitive findings can be drawn regarding the long-term impact on improving overall security in the region (and Europe), nor a real sense of the sustainability of either the IISG itself, its initiatives or the EU Action.

LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE

The IISG, by engaging in extensive consultations, needs assessment and trust-building activities, has been very successful at earning the trust of beneficiaries and buy-in at the political level. This is a good practice.

A formative evaluation in the early stages of establishing an organization and its mechanisms indicates an interest in a culture of evaluation and organizational learning. Not only should other organizations, projects and programmes of similar nature use this as a good practice example, but the IISG itself should take steps to sustain this over the long run.

In terms of lessons learned, the need for greater institutionalisation of management systems and processes for sustainability is readily apparent. Other organizations, projects and programmes of similar nature, not to mention the IISG itself, would do better to focus on this aspect in their designs and structures.

Overall, the result of this evaluation can be summarized with the help of a SWOT analysis:

Strengths

- 'Proof of concept'
- Ability to bring decision-makers to the table
- High visibility and presence
- Operating on shoestring budget

Weaknesses

- Underdeveloped systems and processes
- Uneven stakeholder involvement
- Weak results-based monitoring systems
- Inadequate attention to HRGE issues

Opportunities

- High donor interest and funding in the region
- Visible need for better coordination
- Operational coordination
- Independent organizational structure

Threats/ Challenges

- Stakeholder impatience for quick results
- Organizational location: Limiting to stakeholders?
- Unclear and conflicting stakeholder expectations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Increased institutionalisation of norms and processes:** The IISG Support Group (SG) is encouraged, especially in view of impending leadership change, to establish more systematic management systems and processes.
2. **Stakeholder expectation management:** The IISG SG needs to clarify and manage stakeholder expectations on results as it takes time to build infrastructure and processes for effective coordination.
3. **Structural independence:** IISG is encouraged to re-examine the organisational set-up as well as objectives and mechanisms of the IISG, including structural independence, for the IISG SG.
4. **Strategic choices:** IISG, in close consultation with the WB jurisdictions, should make a greater effort at prioritisation of priorities.
5. **Partnerships:** IISG should develop and implement a mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of its current partnerships, including with EUDs and CSOs.
6. **Theory of change:** The IISG SG is encouraged to develop an overarching Theory of Change for the WBCSCi component of the IISG, incorporating all aspects of the EU Action.
7. **Ownership of the mechanism:** IISG needs to enhance the role, involvement and ownership of the IISG mechanism for the beneficiary jurisdictions, working via the mechanism of the IISG Board.
8. **RBM:** The IISG Support Group is encouraged to make a greater effort at systematically collecting data for monitoring and evaluation.
9. **HRGE considerations:** The IISG SG needs to make more explicit use of human rights and gender equality considerations in working with implementing partners on designing and implementing interventions.
10. **Donor reporting:** EU representatives and the IISG SG need to develop and agree on clear guidelines and expectations on results and reporting expectations along with pre-defined timelines.
11. **Harmonization:** The EU needs a clear and common theory of change with all implementers of EU Action on board for planning and coordination. They should all have clear and pre-determined contributions to impact and outcome targets, which will help plan, monitor and evaluate contributions to results.



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Independent Evaluation Section

unodc-ies@un.org

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/index.html>

