

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 Vermicë/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 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 **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**

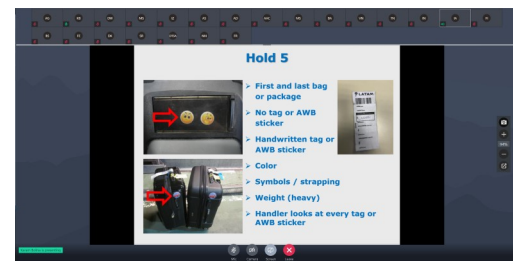
at the national, regional and international levels and builds **bridges between various thematic areas, as well as between the Western Balkans and other regions**, improving the security situation in **the Western Balkans and Europe as a whole**.

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.

CCP CONTINUES THE TRAINING CYCLE FOR THE INTER-AGENCY GROUP AT SKOPJE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

29 June-1 July 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia: CCP organized the next segment of the theoretical training cycle for the customs and border police officers forming the inter-agency group composed of a CCP Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) and an AIRCOP Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force (JAITF) to be established at the Skopje International Airport and supported by CCP and AIRCOP.

Delivered through an online modality, the three-day Basic Theoretical Training (part 2) provided an overview of profiling and targeting techniques, detection of smuggling of illicit goods, air cargo safety and other topics covered in the previous training. A special emphasis was put on issues of smuggling and detection as well as insider threats that would help customs and border police offi-



cers understand and apply the relevant regulations and practices in their daily work.

CCP CONTINUES TO SUPPORT EXCHANGE VISITS BETWEEN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND MONTENEGRO

6-7 July 2021, Bar, Montenegro: CCP supported follow-up technical level meetings of the customs officials from the Indirect Taxation Authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina and

the Revenue and Customs Administration of Montenegro.

The meetings in the Port of Bar in Montenegro allowed to further discuss enhancing cooperation between the two administrations and fostering most relevant and supportive technical assistance through information sharing and mutual technical assistance. The objective is to improve the quality and effectiveness of actions conducted with the aim of discovering, retaining and seizing counterfeit and/or illegally traded goods entering, or

being in transit through, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

The participants benefitted from an open exchange of ideas, knowledge, and sound practices resulting in several conclusions important for the future broader cooperation of customs and other officers. In addition to the site visit at the Port of Bar, the Revenue and Customs Administration of Montenegro also hosted a visit to the land-border crossing Sušobin, at the border between Montenegro and Albania.



The visit provided an insight into the joint work of Albanian and Montenegrin customs and border police services based on a special protocol signed between the Governments of Albania and Montenegro. During the visit to the border crossing Sukobin, the visitors were able to observe random inspections conducted by the Mobile Units of the Revenue and Customs Administration of Montenegro, as well as regular controls of passenger traffic conducted by the customs officers at the site.

CCP SUPPORTS PCUs AT GRADIŠKA AND BIJAČA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

30 August-3 September, Gradiška and 7-10 September 2021, Bijača, Bosnia and Herzegovina: CCP provided in-person mentoring to the PCUs at the land-borders Gradiška and Bijača, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following the completion of the basic theoretical and practical training in 2021, PCU Gradiška received the first CCP mentoring visit, engaging experienced WCO technical experts. This activity focused on the standards of the risk analyses and profiling of high-risk containers, as well practical aspects of the

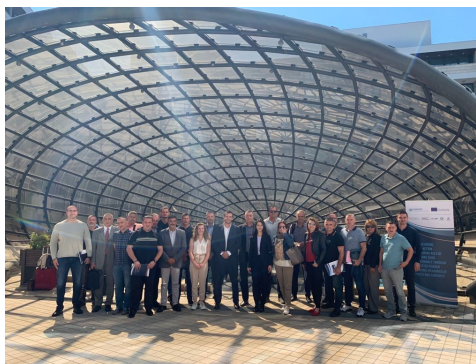
detailed cargo inspections performed by the border police and customs officers of the PCU. During this mentoring visit, several containerized and other shipments entering the customs area of Bosnia and Herzegovina were inspected using the knowledge acquired on establishing risk profiles and all available data and information sources.

In Bijača, CCP continues the delivery of in-person mentoring activities to promote the development of PCUs in specific areas of their work and facilitate further excelling of

the officers' performance. The mentoring visit to PCU Bijača also served as a succession planning tool aimed at ensuring further capacity building programming and CCP support to the frontline law enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mentoring visits contribute to an increased institutional knowledge and accountability in the work of customs and border police officers at land borders, particularly in the context of everyday challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

AIRCOP SUPPORTS SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE IN ADDRESSING THREATS TARGETING AIRPORTS

20-24 September 2021, Podgorica, Montenegro: With South Eastern Europe being a major commercial corridor handling a massive flow of goods and travelers, linking Western Europe with Asia, the region remains particularly vulnerable to organized crime and is used as a transit corridor for illicit trafficking. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the commercial development of airports and infrastructures, which can be easily exploited by criminal organizations, enhancing their possibilities for creating connections between sensitive areas. Against this backdrop, AIRCOP organi-



zed a regional workshop on the "Use of Passenger Information to Address Threats Targeting Airports" to support the authorities of South Eastern Europe in their efforts to disrupt criminal networks by targeting and in-

tercepting high-risk passengers (including foreign terrorist fighters), illicit drugs and other illicit commodities, while facilitating legitimate movements. The participants attending the workshop represented the relevant law enforcement agencies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia as well as Montenegro. Accordingly, the regional workshop aimed at raising awareness of the participating jurisdictions on the use of passenger information as a primary tool in the framework of risk-based processes implemented by the law enforcement agencies at borders.

The workshop covered several aspects of processing passenger information, including profiling and the analysis of case studies with the contributions of experts from Brazil, Portugal and Belgium. Keynotes on the legal background and best practices related to the implementation of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records (API/PNR) management systems have been also delivered, in line with the available instruments provided by the United Nations.

Among the discussed topics and techniques were the frameworks of use and relevance of passenger information; introduction to manual profiling, its advantages and constraints illustrated with case studies; decoding passenger information with passenger manifests and tickets; international legal framework and good practices to prevent, investigate and prosecute foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs); international framework and standards on API/PNR; legal requirements to regulate the collection, analysis, storage,

transfer, and protection of passenger data to prevent and counter terrorism and serious crime as well as the role, capabilities and working methodologies of the passenger information units. Furthermore, the participants discussed synergies between Passenger Information Units (PIUs) and field operations, highlighting the complementarities with the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group and the added value of intra/inter-agency cooperation as the key bolstering factor for the coordination of efforts.

UNODC AND SERBIA SIGN A LETTER OF AGREEMENT SEALING COOPERATION ON ENHANCED BORDER CONTROL

29 September 2021, Belgrade, Serbia: After North Macedonia earlier this year, Serbia has now formally agreed to pursue cooperation in the area of enhanced border control through the signing of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between the Government of Serbia and UNODC on the establishment of a nationally owned airport inter-agency group that will receive technical support from AIRCOP and CCP with the support of the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe.

The establishment of the inter-agency group at Belgrade airport is aimed at strengthening the capacities of law enforcement agencies in Serbia to counter transnational organized crime and terrorism through the improvement of analysis, detection and investigation capacities in intercepting cargo and passengers, thus contributing to enhanced national security, air transport safety and competitiveness in international trade.

The establishment of the

inter-agency groups constitutes a key step in fighting regional organized crime.

During the ceremony, Mr. Ketil Ottersen, Head of the UNODC delegation, underlined the importance of this commitment in the



fight against cross-border movement of illicit commodities through both passenger and cargo channels and organized crime and said: “Transnational organized crime and terrorism pose threats to the security of Serbia and to regional cooperation and economic stability. These law enforcement challenges can be efficiently addressed with stronger inter-agency responses, international cooperation and the development of a common

framework.”

Mr. Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Interior, signing the LoA on behalf of the Government of Serbia, highlighted that the long-term cooperation with UNODC was extremely successful and that the establishment of AIRCOP and CCP would contribute to achieving international standards at Nikola Tesla Airport. The Minister further acknowledged the efforts that Serbian Law Enforcement is investing in the fight against cross-border crime, which represent a powerful blow to organized criminal groups, and are of great importance for the security of the entire region and beyond. Additionally, the Minister underlined that Serbia is a reliable partner in the fight against all types of crime.

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.