



**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** *October — December 2021*

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**<sup>1\*</sup> (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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 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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## AIRCOP ORGANIZES ITS 7TH GLOBAL MEETING IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

**4-7 October 2021, Budva, Montenegro / online:** As part of its continued efforts to counter illicit trafficking and terrorism across the globe, UNODC, in partnership with WCO and INTERPOL, organized the 7th AIRCOP Global Meeting. The meeting was held virtually for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, while participants from the Middle East, North Africa and South Eastern Europe gathered in Budva, Montenegro.

The 7th AIRCOP Global Meeting brought together over 40 beneficiary, associate and interested countries from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and South Eastern Europe; trainers and mentors from national law enforcement agencies; regional and international partner agencies such as CARICOM IMPACS and Europol; as well as donors, in particular the EU.

The Global Meeting aimed at exchanging experiences and good practices among AIRCOP countries in their fight against illicit trafficking and terrorism via air routes in the entire airport platform (passengers, cargo and postal mail) as well as in deterring the travel of high-risk passengers, including foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), with

a view to strengthen coordination of actions and sharing of information in the network of AIRCOP Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITFs). Topics such as new psychoactive substances in postal parcels, firearms trafficking, falsified and counterfeit medicines in the context of the COVID pandemic, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, trafficking in cultural property as well as human rights and ethics and integrity were discussed. The international experts presented the various communication tools and databases, the role of analysts and post-seizure investigations and ways to improve regional and international cooperation.

A significant part of the event was dedicated to the gender mainstreaming. During the global sessions and sessions specifically for South Eastern Europe, the gender expert extensively elaborated on gender to increase understanding of the participants on the topic as well as the role of women in law enforcement at airports. To this end, many supporting solutions to address the unbalanced representation of men and women in AIRCOP task forces were promoted during the event. Over the last few months, AIRCOP

has been actively engaged in developing a number of initiatives to promote gender equality in its programming and practical tools, to facilitate the understanding and implementation of gender equality in the airport context. To enable female leadership roles the right physical environment needs to be created, with adequate facilities, internal policies, paramen-



ters in recruitment selections, career advancement and evaluation of gender, but also actions to counteract gender-based verbal and physical violence in the workplace.

The Global Meeting further aimed at identifying any challenges and proposing viable operational solutions with concrete recommendations.

## UNODC HOLDS A COORDINATION MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN MONTENEGRO

**8 October 2021, Podgorica, Montenegro:** A UNODC coordination meeting was held with the national authorities of Montenegro, including the Police Directorate (Border Police, Criminal Police) and Customs as well as international stakeholders, namely the US International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program – ICITAP and the UK Border Force.

The meeting aimed at providing an overview of the support provided by UNODC, US and UK to enhance the country's capabilities at the borders in the spirit of non-duplication of efforts and keeping coordination among UNODC, US and UK respective actions while highlighting complementarities between the implementation plans. During the meeting,

the participants shared objectives, results achieved and plans, gathering inputs and suggestions from the national counterparts to better support their efforts in border security. The main discussion was focused on the establishment of the Passenger Information Unit (PIU) in Montenegro, which is currently mainly supported by US and UK and the added value of the operational synergies with the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group, the establishment of which would provide a capillary coverage of the air border at Podgorica and Tivat airports.

The AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group would represent an important complementarity with the PIU, both during the establishment and the operationalization period.

According to its structure and functions, the potential AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group should build the know-how for the PIU, providing an operational structure to be fully involved in the border clearance process once the PIU will be established and fully operational and will build the capacity of officers of Police (Border Police and Criminal Police) and Customs by addressing threats related to drug trafficking, money laundering, forgery, contraband, falsified products and terrorism among others.

The possible expansion of the AIRCOP and CCP-Air components to Montenegro has been presented by the UNODC team to the EC DG NEAR for future consideration.

## AIRCOP MEETS THE AUTHORITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS IN NORTH MACEDONIA TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTER-AGENCY GROUP AT THE SKOPJE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**27-29 October 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia:** A series of meetings was held with senior officials from the Border Police and Customs Administration of North Macedonia, the EU Delegation, as well as airline companies operating in the country and the private company TAV, which manages the Skopje International Airport. The discussions focused on the ongoing establishment of the inter-agency airport group at the Skopje



International Airport. During the meetings, the importance of adopting the Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the inter-agency group and establishing the National Steering Committee to oversee and evaluate the results of the group's work was underlined. Furthermore, the parties explored the possibility of extending UNODC activities to the second international airport in North Macedonia, the Ohrid Airport. In the same token, the meeting with the airlines' representatives allowed to discuss the passenger



information access modalities, including data protection and the different levels of cooperation among various stakeholders needed

for a successful prevention and fight against transnational crime and terrorism. Following the selection of the suitable premises for the

inter-agency group, the construction work is planned to start soon to meet the infrastructure and IT requirements.

## CCP CONDUCTED A PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR THE INTER-AGENCY GROUP AT THE SKOPJE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**1-5 November 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia:** As part of the ongoing capacity building efforts to reach full operational status of the inter-agency group at the Skopje International



nal Airport, CCP delivered a basic practical

training for customs and border police officers forming part of the group.

The training focused on practical skills that are an essential part of daily customs and police routine at the airport, with emphasis on risk-based profiling of cargo, postal and other shipments; identification and interdiction of high-risk consignments, smuggling modus operandi and insider threats.

An interactive session followed and was organized in panel and work groups settings, with practical exercises and real-time work in the cargo facility of the Skopje Airport, comple-



mented by discussions on contemporary modus operandi used by criminal groups in trafficking of drugs and chemical precursors, firearms and other illicit goods.

## AIRCOP MEETS THE AUTHORITIES IN SERBIA TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTER-AGENCY GROUP AT THE BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**8-11 November 2021, Belgrade, Serbia:** AIRCOP held a series of meetings with senior officials from the Ministry of Interior, including Border Police, Customs, as well as international stakeholders in the country including OSCE and IPA2019. The discussions focused on the ongoing establishment of the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group at Belgrade International Airport. During the meetings with the national counterparts, the importance of prompt actions such as the designation of staff

and the evaluation of premises for the inter-agency group has been underlined as part of the key steps in initiating the process of operationalization of the group and enabling targeted capacity building activities for the officers. The drafting and adoption of inter-agency agreements, and SOPs have also been discussed together with the establishment of the National Steering Committee overseeing the inter-agency group under establishment. In the same token, the bilateral meetings held with OSCE and IPA2019

allowed to discuss synergies and cooperation frameworks between the AIRCOP/CCP inter-agency group and programs supporting the establishment of a Passenger Information Unit (PIU) in Serbia and the region. The counterparts agreed that the role of the inter-agency group at the airport will generate inputs for the future PIU for an effective coordination of efforts providing thereby a full coverage of the wide range of potential threats targeting the air border.

## CCP CONTINUES THE TRAINING CYCLE FOR THE AIR CARGO CONTROL UNIT AT THE SARAJEVO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**17-19 November 2021, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** CCP organized the next session of the theoretical training for the officers of the Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) established at the Sarajevo International Airport.

During this session, the customs and border police officers were trained on the implementation of measures under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), deli-



vered by the WCO technical experts. The participants were also trained in identification of species often found in illegal trade,

with reflections on Bosnia and Herzegovina rich wildlife diversity. Additionally, the training covered the CITES Appendices, including the level of threat of certain species by international trade and the degree of protection they need. These activities represent the continuation of the training cycle for appointed officers of the joint inter-agency group at the Sarajevo International Airport.

## CCP DELIVERS THE ICAO COURSE FOR THE INTER-AGENCY GROUPS AT THE SARAJEVO AND SKOPJE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

**25-29 October 2021, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and 22-26 November 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia:** CCP in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) organized two training courses for the customs and border police officers of the joint-inter agency groups at the Skopje and Sarajevo International Airports.

This five-day Air Cargo and Mail Security

Course provided integrated knowledge to the officers on the context of their designated role in carrying out the national responsibility to secure air cargo and mail against acts of unlawful interference, through 10 training modules. The course covered Secure Supply Chain, Facility and Personnel Security & Training, Chain of Custody; Oversight and Compliance, and Security of Mail.

The trainings will contribute to building a strong working framework between customs and border police officers and further enhance collaborative work through continuous exchange of information, ultimately improving regional and international cooperation for secure borders, with special emphasis on air safety.

## UNODC ATTENDS 22ND MEETING OF THE PCC SEE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

**30 November 2021, Skopje, North Macedonia:** UNODC attended the 22nd Meeting of the Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe (PCC SEE) joining regional actors and part-

ner international organisations including OSCE, Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the

Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) in attending the event. The participants discussed the 'Enhancement of cross-border cooperation related to illegal immigration and the return of foreign terrorist fighters.'

During the discussions, the UNODC Regional Serious Organised Crime Advisor expressed support to PCC SEE initiatives as a partner agency and echoed IISG remarks on the value of mapping international technical assistance in this field, as well as presented the

border control project and its achievements to date. UNODC addressed the seriousness of the threat whilst detailing support to North Macedonia and the other Western Balkan jurisdictions through current programme activity in the framework of the

UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe addressing trafficking in persons, border control and countering terrorist financing among other areas.

## AIRCOP ORGANIZES THE ROME 2021 CONFERENCE AND A STUDY VISIT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE TOWARDS ENHANCED INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

**29 November-3 December 2021, Rome, Italy:** “Law enforcement coordination and inter-agency cooperation are key for the efficient deployment of efforts and resources towards strategic objectives” and “fighting against criminal organizations needs multilateral approach, enabling multiple expertise to synergically disrupt organized crime networks” were two of the important highlights made during the AIRCOP Rome 2021 Conference, organized by AIRCOP in Rome.

In cooperation with the Italian Central Directorate for Anti-drug Services (DCSA) who coordinated the engagement of qualified experts of the main Italian law enforcement agencies (Guardia di Finanza, Polizia, Carabinieri), 24 delegates from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia were given the opportunity to attend expert-led

sessions on key aspects, case studies, best practices and tangible results related to coordinated efforts against serious threats targeting air borders and initiating investigations. The theoretical part of the capacity building activity was followed by a study visit to key locations, namely the premises of the Central Directorate for Anti-drug Services, the forensic labs, and the Rome Fiumicino International Airport. During the study visit, the participants were able to explore structural and operational aspects of the main Italian law enforcement agencies, learning on operational methodologies, tools, techniques, and capabilities, enhancing their awareness against new trends of drug trafficking, money laundering, forgery of ID and “insider” threats that occur at air borders.

The AIRCOP Rome 2021 Conference also



served the purpose of fostering best practices related to post-seizure investigations, illustrating the role of the operational units at airports, including techniques and prerogatives of “first responders” according to the national and international frameworks. A special emphasis was put on the forensics and its relevance, from the inception phase and throughout the evidence’s preservation chain.

## CCP CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE WITH JOINT ACTIVITIES

**December 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia:** CCP continued to support the customs authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, in implemen-

ting joint operational activities during 2021. Functional links and cooperation with the Customs Administration of Croatia have been supported as well, as a non-direct beneficiary of the CCP implementation in the

region. The CCP support aims to contribute to further advancing the operational data exchange, credible information and tactical intelligence to facilitate the selection of high-risk containers and other shipments on the



move through the region of South Eastern Europe, and therefore significantly improve the chances of successful interdiction and minimization of all forms of illegal activities region wide. It also contributes to building functional professional links among the customs officers and strengthening their personal capacities. During 2021, CCP supported the implementation of bilateral operational activities conducted between the Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA) of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Customs Administrations of Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. Specific and targeted operational activities were conducted over September, October and November 2021. During the operational phase, interactive cooperation and information ex-

change among the participating administrations registered more than 140 information requests, notifications and alerts. Based on the post-operational reports provided by the ITA, these collaborative exercises resulted in the seizure of 431 boxes of cigarettes and 23 pallets of shisha tobacco by the Customs Administration of Croatia. Likewise, following information received from the Croatian counterparts, ITA conducted activities and seized 26,5 tons of tobacco molasses (non-excise good) of the value of approximately EUR 105,000, and undeclared goods with the total value of EUR 25,000. Most significantly, ITA presented criminal cases before the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina proving damage to

the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the total estimate of BAM 13.8 million (approximately EUR 7 million). Furthermore, targeted activities with the revenue and Customs Administration of Montenegro resulted in the seizure of 170 kg of cannabis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to these results, many activities conducted in the course of 2021 also had a preventive impact with elements of targeted prevention of cross-border smuggling of firearms and ammunition, tobacco and related products and other. Finally, joint operational activities between the ITA and the Customs Administration of Serbia resulted in the seizure of two trucks with 40 tons of shisha tobacco by the counterparts in Serbia.

### Seizures by the PCUs and ACCUs in 2021

Type of goods	Seizures	Quantity
<b>Cocaine</b>	1	1400 kg
<b>Undeclared cash</b>	1	\$45,000
<b>Goods violating Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)</b>	1	376 pieces
<b>Tobacco</b>	14	1124.6 kg
<b>Cigarettes</b>	13	1,647,220 pieces
<b>Molins Tobacco Line production Machinery</b>	1	1 piece
<b>Narghile tobacco flavored paste</b>	1	33,86 kg
<b>Textile, shoes, garments</b>	42	6894 pieces
<b>Undeclared/smuggled medicines</b>	2	25 pieces of ampoules of medicine Genotropin; 33 pcs of undeclared dental products (implants, tools and equipment)
<b>Silver jewelry</b>	9	1871 gr
<b>Electronics, mobile phones and equipment, IT and photo equipment, households' electronics</b>	5	5304 pieces
<b>Motor vehicles, motorcycles</b>	12	15 pieces
<b>Motor vehicles spare parts</b>	2	Large quantities
<b>Smuggled goods</b>	2	2971 kg
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	