Abstract

Border security is one of the key points of interest for the SSR. Therefore, in light of recent events connected with border security, great necessity for a conference on this topic was recognized. Thus, we are proud that the conference on “European Union External Border Regime” provided the first opportunity for the relevant countries to talk about the new border security situation after Croatia’s accession to the European Union.

During two working days, over 50 participants from 10 countries took part in the conference, including H.E. Ambassador of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ Daniela Karagjozoska, participants and a moderator from the German Embassy in Croatia, one participant from the US Embassy in Croatia, presenters and moderators from the Alumni

¹ Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
Activity Background

The purpose of this joint conference project lies in the original idea that Croatia’s accession to the EU border security system ought not to be perceived as closure of the individual transformation processes but rather as opening of the consequent full-member EU transformation phase in the area of border security system. The process of the Croatian EU accession is therefore to be continued and complemented by all the steps of national adaptation, particularly in view of the EU border security system development towards the emerging as well as less-than-apparent challenges to come. A complementary intention behind the conference concept was to draw general attention to the case of the Republic of Croatia as the most recent example of the EU internal border security system development. The conference was aimed at bringing together representatives of the countries of South Eastern Europe (SEE) whose international position would change after Croatia’s accession to the EU, as they would become front-line countries bordering the new EU area.

Activity Facilitators

The conference was initiated by the Alumni Association of the George C. Marshall Centre Republic of Croatia, while it was planned, organised and executed by RACVIAC, with kind support from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Zagreb Office.
Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC.
The working part of the conference started with opening remarks given by Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC; Mr Branko Kromar, M.Sc., PM, SSR Pillar; Dr. Gerhard Wahlers, Deputy Secretary General, KAS; and Mr Smiljan Ćubelić, President, Alumni GCMC.

Next, H.E. Ambassador of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ Daniela Karagjozoska addressed the participants emphasizing the importance of the conference agenda and wishing all a fruitful work, while Mr Nebojša Kirigin, Assistant Minister of the Interior, Republic of Croatia, welcomed participants on behalf of the Ministry.

¹ Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

The first working day consisted of two panels. The first one covered border security, with a special focus on security issues as connected with the implementation of the EU external border legislation in the Republic of Croatia, such as technical and operational security measures, trends in cross-border crime and illegal immigration, asylum seekers, etc. Dr. Filip Dragović, UNDP Croatia, highlighted dimensions of immigrant problems in the EU. Ms Vesna Pleša, Head of Border Cooperation Department, Ministry of Interior, Croatia, Ms Karmen Simčić, Head of Section for Justice and Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia, Mr Goran Mišković, Expert Adviser, Ministry of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina, updated participants on the infrastructural challenges, while Ms Alexandra-Ioana Andronache, Operational Coordination Centre, Border Police, Romania, pointed out that Romania had fulfilled technical requirements for entering the Schengen area.

The second panel dealt with customs procedures, issues related to the implementation of the EU external border legislation in the Republic of Croatia: standards, cross-border transportation of animals, fruits and vegetables, Border Inspection Posts, etc. Presentations were given by Mr Željko Franjić, Head of Service for Transit and Border Procedures, Ministry of Finance – Customs Administration, Croatia, Ms Vlatka Erman, Expert Adviser of the Department for Trade with EU Countries, Ministry of Agriculture, Croatia, Stojanka Milošević, Head of Department for Assessment of Value and Origin of Goods, Customs Administration Montenegro, and Mr Ognjen Pantelić, Assistant Director, Customs Administration Enforcement Directorate, Republic of Serbia.
The second day was dedicated to the regional trade/economy issues related to the EU external border regime: trends, problems and recommendations, CEFTA and EU, etc.

Introductory remarks were given by Mr Smiljan Ćubelić from the GCMC. After that, members of delegations gave their respective presentations: Ms Lidija Švaljek, Managing Director, Croatian Chamber of Economy, Ms Zada Muminović, Head of Unit for Trade Relations with EU, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Miljan Šestović, Secretary of Freight Forwarders Association Board, Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, Ms Tatjana Dinkić, Head of the EU and EFTA Unit, Ministry of Foreign and Internal Trade and Telecommunications Republic of Serbia, Mr Adem Emre, Customs and Trade Expert, Ministry of Customs and Trade, Republic of Turkey. This session prompted a lively discussion on issues concerning export, import and economy of the countries, with a special focus on the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The last panel dealt with perspectives and commitments of the Republic of Croatia concerning the Schengen area and border security lessons learned through the implementation of the Schengen Information System and Visa Information System. In that regard, there was a discussion on the experiences of the countries that joined the Schengen area before Croatia as well as on the experiences of those still waiting to join it. This session was closed with a conclusion that continuing with the improvements and reforms was as essential as the political will.

Substantial and useful presentations were given by Ms Vesna Pleša, Head of Border Cooperation Department, Ministry of Interior, Croatia; Ms Jelka Klemenc MA, Programme Manager, DCAF Ljubljana; Mr Antonio Miloshoski, M.Sc., Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy, Assembly of MK, and Ms Karmen Simčić. Dr Davor Božinović, Former Croatian Minister of Defence, who gave an outline of the challenges that lay ahead.

**General remarks**

The conference proved that there were many new aspects considering border security, customs and economy. It provided
an opportunity for the representatives of the countries to discuss changes and problems concerning the newly established Croatian border regime system with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as with the EU member countries. Discussions about the economic changes in the regional countries proved especially beneficial. Events such as this one are intended to help the countries overcome some of the issues raised during the conference. Representatives of various ministries had a chance to outline some outstanding questions and discuss them with the participants, as well as with their superiors later on and provide possible solutions.

In conclusion, it can be said that the conference achieved its main objectives:

- to outline border security system of the Republic of Croatia in view of the required implementation of the EU external border regulations,
- to discuss issues, challenges and problems concerning the newly established Croatian border regime system with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as well as with the EU member countries,
- to look into the rationale for the implementation of the provisions of the EU border system legislation in view of the present status of the Republic of Croatia as a country in the foreground of the Schengen area,
- to provide participants with the opportunity to outline national considerations regarding the new Croatian - EU border security system regime,
- to provide participants from the regional non-EU countries with a platform for discussions on further development and improvement of the current EU border traffic regulations and regime, to present individual cases of national border security system challenges in view of regional requirements and issues pertaining to respective countries,
- to exchange national experiences of the SEE countries in implementing the EU border regime at the national level
- Both at the opening and during the closing session Dr. Gerhard Wahlers expressed KAS willingness to continue supporting RACVIAC and Alumni GCMC Croatia in organising events of similar subject-matter orientation and relevance.

Compiled by RACVIAC SSR Pillar