Introduction

This Seminar was a continuation of the border security and management events and it was conducted by RACVIAC in partnership with DCAF Office Ljubljana.

The purpose of the Seminar was to continue addressing the challenges in border security and management, to identify current and future challenges and to support the implementation of the Border Security and Management Concept of the OSCE Participating States in South East Europe as well as the DCAF Integrative Internal Security Governance Concept and its Western Balkan Border Security Initiative.

The aim of this activity was to improve the efficiency of the border management authorities in SEE and foster mutual cooperation in mitigating current and potential security threats.
The participants were police officers and civil servants responsible for border security and management from the ministries of interior, ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of defence, ministries of security and the customs administrations. In total, there were 15 participants: three from the Republic of Albania, three from Bosnia and Herzegovina, four from the Republic of Croatia, two from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, two from Montenegro and one from the Republic of Turkey. In addition, there were eight speakers and lecturers: one from the Austrian Ministry of Interior, one from the German Federal Police, one from the OSCE Border Security and Management Unit, two from DCAF Ljubljana, one from Slovenian Police and two from the Croatian Ministry of Defence.

**Activity Overview**

The Seminar was opened by H.E. Ambassador Haydar Berk, Director of RACVIAC, who emphasized in his Opening speech that in spite of the fact that the intensity of migrant flows has diminished, the challenges to the law enforcement and migration authorities caused by the developing dynamics of migration are becoming increasingly diversified. He also pointed out that cross-border security challenges nowadays can be effectively prevented and tackled through interagency and international collaboration only. In that sense sharing of good practices, cross-border cooperation, transparency and confidence-building constitute the first logical steps towards generating solutions for the benefit of all. In his introductory speech the Austrian Ministry of Interior Attaché to Croatia and Slovenia Mr Andreas Pichler stressed the importance of border security and management as a key factor for European security today. The Liaison Officer of the German Federal Police to Croatia and Slovenia Mr Marco Weiser informed the audience about German experiences related to irregular migration from the legal and practical point of view. DCAF Ljubljana Director Mr Anton Travner presented the concept of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) in the Western Balkans. He stressed that IISG is an approach initiated by the EU and owned by WB beneficiaries, EU actors, and regional and international donors aimed at facilitation of internal security policy reforms. The development of this joint process was a response to the lack of sustainability and long-term planning, lack of efficiency, challenge of terrorism and related phenomena in Europe and the need to ensure an efficient EU approach towards Western Balkans as a region of strategic importance. Mr Travner stressed that the developments of drafts of the Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative Integrative Plan of Action (WBCTi iPA), the Western Balkan Counter Serious Crime Initiative Integrative Plan of Action (WBCSCI iPA), and the Western Balkan Border Security Initiative Integrative Plan of Action (WBBSi iPA) are the current task that ISSG partners are working on. Greater sustainability, optimal use of two regional legal bases for cooperation (the Police Cooperation Convention and the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center), modern UN, EU and other international standards in the region, are recognized as IISG policy objectives.

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* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
On behalf of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department Mr Simon Deignan expounded on the importance of passenger data exchange in border management and irregular migration, and on guidelines on how to establish a Passenger Data System. He stressed that the API (Advance Passenger Information) and PNR (Passenger Name Record) systems are crucial in preventing irregular migrations. The API and PNR systems could possibly detect “broken” travel patterns. Mr Deignan also presented OSCE’s support for API/PNR systems noting that implementing an effective API/PNR system requires close inter-agency co-operation.

Mr Rok Derenčin (DCAF Ljubljana) presented the Risk Analysis in mitigating irregular migration. The Operational Cooperation that is focused on targeting illegal migration and cross-border crime has progressed since 2012. In order to protect Western Balkans’ borders and beyond the Beneficiary states, EU Member States, EU agencies (Europol and Frontex) assumed their role in common and coordinated operations. Mr Derenčin also stressed that the lack of capacities for data gathering, inadequate personnel, poor resources planning and late identification of threats such as changes in migration routes are all a part of everyday reality. However, he pointed out that the way forward is long-term development planning of a national police interoperable information system that will require decades to create but is a priority.

Mr Peter Skerbiš presented readmission agreements, unsuccessful and successful returns, and significance of good cooperation with neighbouring authorities. The return decision, he noted, must be issued to every third-country national staying illegally in the EU. Voluntary departure must occur between 7 and 30 days at the latest. Otherwise, a Member State must undertake all necessary measures to enforce the return decision after the period has expired. However, the deportation or return of a person to a country in which her/his life would be endangered on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a special social group, or to a country in which the person would be exposed to torture or to inhumane treatment or punishment, is not permitted. In case of emergency situations - for example, in case of overcrowded detention facilities - measures shall be taken in the best interest of the person.

As a legal adviser in the Croatian Ministry of Defence Mr Josip Mandić presented the constitutional role of the Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) in border security and management. He also explained the importance of the Croatian defence law and the EU and International laws in regards to CAF’s role in border management. Finally, he highlighted Croatian Navy’s participation in the successful EU operation Triton that resulted in a rescue of 2500 migrants arriving from Libya and the Middle East.

Col Suntešić (the Croatian Armed Forces) presented CAF’s role in the migrant crisis such as establishing the temporary migrant camps. The Winter Camp “Bijeliš” in Slavonski Brod was taken as a valuable example of successful mission in which CAF provided accommodation, food, transport and medical support to
migrants. The camp was built from scratch and it consisted of a check point, hospital, restaurants, toilets and all necessary objects fit to host migrants. Mr Peter Skerbiš, the Head of the Border Management Section of the Slovenian Police Directorate, also explained the role of migrant interviews. In order to collect information for risk analysis purposes an officer of a competent national authority interviews a person having crossed or having attempted to cross an external border irregularly. That method is used for raising operational awareness, and facilitating operational decision-making which may be used for supporting national measures of the host state.

**Conclusion**

Irregular migrations have changed the European demographic map and still pose societal and security challenges to the European countries. This Seminar successfully addressed the most important border security issues such as risk assessment, return and readmission, the role of the military in border management, and interviews with migrants. The presented national and international policies and mechanisms in mitigating irregular migration were a framework for participants to share their national experiences in. According to the feedback received via the RACVIAC Questionnaire the participants proposed that the topics such as the role of customs in irregular migrations and the role of military in border management be widened in the future editions of this activity.