



RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation



SECI Regional Center for Combating
Transborder Crime

Conference on

The Changing Face of Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe: Trends and Developments

03 - 04 May 2011

IRC-01-CF

EXTERNAL REPORT

Background

Looking back at the last 10 years, we may conclude that the beginning of the new millennium has brought a new understanding and perception of ways and approaches to combating trans-border organized crime. The new era has also seen the prevalence of the "free but secure" concept of trade. In light of these new approaches, concepts and developments, law enforcement agencies, such as customs authorities, the police and organized crime departments, have been involved in the process of revision and reorganization of their administrative structures with a view to increasing their administrative and technical capacities and improving national, regional and international cooperation.

Both the SECI Centre and RACVIAC, Centre for Security Cooperation with the mission to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South East Europe, recognized the necessity of building a more open, transparent and stable environment in the region by encouraging exchanges of information, views and ideas.

The aim of the Conference was to serve as a forum for open and constructive discussion on joint cross-border cooperation among SEE countries in tackling organized crime threats which endanger the overall security of the region and hinder economic growth and development opportunities.

The objectives were:

- To depict the regional dimension of organized crime threat as a serious obstacle to development and security of the region, assessing the national characteristics of each country involved;
- To highlight the national policies of SEE countries on tackling organized crime which, by increasingly transcending national boundaries, represents one of the major threats to security and therefore requires coordinated action at the international level;
- To identify legislative needs and challenges within the context of a more effective approach to fighting organized crime;
- To share experiences and best practices in police, customs and inter-governmental support in countering organized crime throughout South East Europe.

Acknowledgements

RACVIAC would like to express heartfelt appreciation to the SECI Centre for their collaboration in the successful organization of this Conference.

Conference co-organizers, venue, duration and participation

The Conference was planned, organized and executed as a joint event by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the SECI Centre. The event was held at RACVIAC from 3 to 4 May 2011. It was organized as a three-day event, two of which were working days. The event gathered a total of 43 participants from SEE countries.



Group photograph

Conference Agenda

The Conference agenda included speeches given by national representatives, as well as national presentations, exchanges of viewpoints and experiences on common priorities and challenges, followed by open discussions.

The working part of the Conference started with a Welcome address by H.E. Ambassador Nikola Todorčevski, RACVIAC's Director. Emphasizing that this event served as a forum for open and constructive discussion on joint cross-border cooperation among SEE countries in tackling organized crime threats which endanger the overall security of our region, Ambassador Todorčevski said that in the era of globalization, organized crime knew no borders and was becoming all the more and stronger networked. Therefore, it required close cooperation and a joint response of all security organizations in the world and South East Europe alike. This Conference, as Ambassador said, was a fruit of such increased cooperation of two organizations recognizing the importance of close cooperation on security matters in SEE.



Welcome address given by H.E. Amb. Nikola Todorčevski

On behalf of the SECI Centre, Director Gürbüz Bahadır delivered another welcome speech. Mr Bahadır emphasized that the SECI Centre was providing valuable support to national customs and law-enforcement agencies in the field of trans-border crime. Together with RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation it recognized the necessity of building a more open, transparent and stable environment in the region by encouraging exchanges of information, views and ideas. In line with that, he concluded, this Conference was an excellent result of the mutual readiness of the two Centres to support and improve open discussions on joint cross-border cooperation among SEE countries in an attempt to fight against organized crime, primarily by sharing information and best practices.



From left to right: Mr Gürbüz Bahadır , Mr Stanislav Veniger, Amb. Todorčevski and Col Željko Cepanec

After the opening addresses, the event proceeded with a presentation on "Promoting Regional Cooperation" by Mr Virgil Ivan Cucu from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Mr Cucu outlined the main needs of SEE countries and ways in which they could be supported in their capacity building process and their efforts to counter organized crime evolution and new trends. He drew attention to the following:

- Organized crime and corruption are perennial presences of the national/regional, political and social climate, publicly recognized and criticized;
- New forms of criminality have emerged, e.g. cyber, public money and EU funds frauds;
- Migration, both legal and illegal, increases pressure on borders and endangered post-visa liberalization process;
- Trafficking in human beings, drugs and stolen vehicles and smuggling of cigarettes, arms and other merchandise are flourishing;
- Radicalization and recruitment of terrorists especially in immigrant and impoverished communities or ethnic minorities is becoming a threat;
- Security and justice sectors reforms are slow;
- Public trust in justice and administration is diminishing.

- To facilitate cross-border surveillances by disseminating information about the legal framework;
- To be the point of contact which competent national authorities and authorities from the EU member states dealing with cross-border surveillance and controlled delivery could ask for expertise and information regarding different national legislative frameworks.

The next speaker in the course of the first working day was Ms Elizabeta Nikoloska, Specialized Crime and Analysis Directorate, ICPO Interpol. She delivered an informative presentation dealing with all the relevant issues related to the prevention and fight against organised crime.



From left to right: Mr Cucu, Amb. Todorčevski, Mr Bahadir and Col Capanec

The next speaker was Mr Stanislav Veniger from DCAF/PCC SEE. Mr Veniger's presentation covered the role of the PCC SEE Secretariat as an effective instrument for fighting against organized crime in Southeast Europe. As he explained, the main tasks of this network are:

- To collect and receive information about the best practices, as well as about obstacles and problems encountered in cross-border surveillances and controlled delivery, with a view to finding a regional answer to regional problems;



Working session

Following the mentioned presentations, the floor was open for questions and answers, which gave the participants and speakers an opportunity to present their opinions and comments and to engage in lively discussions.



Discussion & Questions & Answers session

The event proceeded with participating countries' presentations about the structure of their respective national systems.

Namely, different national representatives presented an overview of the measures / structures and instruments / capabilities established in their respective countries for the purpose of fighting against organized crime. The common topics of interest were:

- Necessity of a cross-border dimension;
- Necessity of identifying legislative needs and challenges within the context of a more effective approach to fighting organized crime;
- Enhancing cooperation in the fight against organized crime by improving and aligning countries' national regulations;
- Efficient cooperation through effective national point of contact officers;
- Promoting dialogue on organized crime and related security issues through these kinds of events.



Working session

Closing remarks

The Conference entitled "The Changing Face of Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe: Trends and Developments" was the first event co-organized by RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and the SECI Centre. The Conference successfully provided a comprehensive framework for exchanging experience and valuable information. At the end of the Conference, the participants agreed on the following final remarks and recommendations:

- The Conference brought together national representatives from the region with knowledge and experience in supporting the fight against organized crime.

During the event, comments and discussions were on a high, professional level;

- The event was successfully conducted and the aim of the Conference - to encourage and prepare the ground for further development of regional cooperation among the countries of Southeast Europe in the field of organized crime - was successfully accomplished;

- All the objectives were efficiently achieved;

- Satisfied with the RACVIAC - SECI Centre co-organisation of the event, participants recommended taking into consideration organizing similar joint activities in the future;

- With this event, RACVIAC and the SECI Centre effectively contributed to the overall security in SEE.

This event proved that RACVIAC's and SECI Centre's efforts and missions were complementary and part of the same capacity-building process in SEE, in terms of promoting peace and security matters in SEE and beyond.

Compiled by: Mr Milan Janicijevic (MK); IRC Pillar