

BOMCA 9

Border Management Programme in Central Asia (9th phase)

Newsletter №6 (2017)

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BOMCA overview

Since its launch in 2003, the various phases of the BOMCA Programme have focused on capacity building and institutional development, developing trade corridors, improving border management systems and eliminating drug trafficking across the Central Asia region. Each new phase of BOMCA has been designed to gradually build upon and consolidate the results achieved during the preceding phases. During its earlier phases, the Programme channelled its resources towards creating modern border management infrastructure in five Central Asian countries.

Capitalising on the success of the previous phases, this 9th phase intends to continue interventions in the area of institutional development, management of migration flows and trade facilitation. Its overall objective is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of border management in Central Asia by introducing advanced elements of Integrated Border Management (IBM), assisting governments in developing and reforming their migration governance, mobility and trade facilitation policies, and strengthening the capacities of Border and Migration Agencies, thus contributing to enhanced security and economic development at the national and regional levels.

The 9th phase of the BOMCA Programme was launched in June 2015 for 36 months with a total budget of 4 954 784.93 Euro.



Dear Friends!

The new millenium brought new capabilities to people, as well as new threats associated with globalisation and the growth in terrorism. International trade is rapidly growing, building new supply chains, creating new jobs, and enhancing national economies and welfare, however, at the same time, the threat to public security is also growing. The escalation in religious extremism, international terrorism, and military actions, and the corresponding increase in legal and illegal migration, intensified international organised crime in the area of trafficking and smuggling narcotic drugs, weapons and other illicit commodities, and kidnapping and trafficking in persons, pose a threat for each member of society and the state in general. Enhanced international trade and travel, and reduction and limitation of the relevant threats, are among the key objectives to be implemented in order to ensure security at state borders.

The EU spares no effort in both enhancing the security of its borders and proactively supporting other countries in this field. This assistance is provided in Central Asia (CA) within

BOMCA project implementation.

Before 2015, a number of experts from Riga Technical University (RTU) were involved in the project implementation, but since 2015, RTU has borne overall responsibility for implementation of Component 1 of the BOMCA Project. We would like to share our knowledge and skills with the national border agencies in CA through participation in this project.

To be continued on the next page

In this edition:

- First exchange of trainers in the region** p.3
- X-rays and their role in an effective customs check** p.3
- Border agencies of Central Asian states advancing border check standards** p.4
- Central Asian partners witnessed first –hand IBM advantages in Latvia** p.4
- Study visit on demarcation and delimitation issues** p.5
- Introducing E-Customs as effective customs instrument in Central Asia** p.5
- Facilitating trade through improving customs affairs** p.6
- Monitoring results and defining plans for the future together with national partners** p.6



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Since Latvia joined the EU, we have had extensive experience in working with foreign experts, and therefore clearly understand the expectations of participants attending seminars and technical missions. We have also gained considerable expertise in implementing similar projects in other countries, and our efforts have been internationally recognised.

The key objective of Component 1 of the BOMCA Project is the development of Integrated Border Management (IBM) within the border agencies. IBM means implementation of cooperation and communication both at the intra- and inter-agency levels, as well as at the international level. Why is this so important? Firstly, obtaining timely, accurate and complete information is the key asset of border agencies, and is critical for implementation of their

main goals. Secondly, cooperation and communication create a basis for increased efficiency and allow border agencies to avoid any overlap in activities.

Expert support in the area of development of a single personnel training and retraining system based on EU and World Customs Organization (WCO) best practices is of particular importance.

The BOMCA Project has several basic goals, but I would like to highlight that which covers the whole spectrum of the project activities, i.e. ensuring the sustainability of the achieved outcomes when implementing activities.

Our task is to effectively 'spin the wheel and facilitate its rotation'. This means that initiatives implemented by the project shall be sustainable and

continue to be implemented after the project completion. It is a complex problem as a lack of adequate funding often becomes one of the issues of concern; however, there are several different options to resolve such problems, and the funding needs are not the main factor affecting cooperation development in many cases.

I wish you a more enhanced cooperation and mutual understanding to implement the tasks in the area of border security improvement.

Normunds Rudzitis,

Associate Professor, Riga Technical University,

Component 1 Coordinator, BOMCA Programme

Component 1: Institutional development of border management agencies

First exchange of trainers in the region

The second quarter of 2017 was marked by a number of events aiming to strengthen the sustainable training capacity of the border agencies in the region. These efforts concentrated on developing cadre policies, enhancing training skills in accordance with international standards.

The first exchange of trainers from Central Asian customs training institutions was piloted in Dushanbe between 29 May-1 June, where trainers from the customs training institutions of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan facilitated training of trainers for their Tajik colleagues on the issues of radiation control and dual-use goods. The training gathered together 15 teachers and instructors from the Tajik customs training centre, who in turn will teach Tajik customs officers how to carry out radiation control and prevent illegal movement of radiation materials. During the training, experts presented a number of recommendations for their peers, and examples of practical exer-



cises and games, scenarios and tools that can be used in further trainings for employees. Thus, trained trainers will be able to train customs officers from Tajikistan in skills on using special equipment, and operational skills when checking cargo at different checkpoints - airports, railway sta-

tions and border crossing points. This pilot initiative was much appreciated by the beneficiaries and BOMCA is planning to further continue it in other countries in the region in order to encourage and support cooperation among the training institutions in Central Asia.



X-rays and their role in an effective customs check

The Higher Military Customs Institute of the Republic of Uzbekistan demonstrated best practices in X-ray image analysis by hosting between 13-15 June a regional training for trainers and customs officers from Central Asia.

During the training, experts presented a number of recommendations for trainers and examples of practical exercises that can be used in further training of customs officers. The team reviewed a special set of tools and functions that help to identify and search for suspicious objects during X-ray analysis. For example, such practices were discussed as varying brightness and contrast parameters, high-



lighting zones with high (or low) X-ray absorption levels, adjusting the sharpness, setting the colour display, using a measuring ruler to determine the size of the object, etc. The trainers are now able to train customs officers in their

respective countries in X-ray analysis skills when checking cargo at customs checkpoints. Similar study visits for training institutions of border guard agencies will be organised by BOMCA in the near future.

Component 2: Institutional framework for management of mixed migration flows at border agencies of Central Asian states advancing border check standards

Border agencies of Central Asian states advancing border check standards

Further development of the legal and procedural instruments, introduction of advanced practices of cross-border mobility and addressing the multifaceted challenges caused by mixed migration flows are the key objectives of Component 2. A series of workshops and technical missions were carried out.

Border control standards, with a special focus on ethics, were discussed during a regional workshop on border checks, which was held in Bishkek between 31 May-2 June. A total of 20 border guards and customs officers from all five Central Asian countries shared their experience and discussed the issues of border control organisation in their countries - administrative rules, regime, tools and methods of control with a focus on



flow management. Experts from Latvia, invited by the Programme, demonstrated examples of technical equipment at checkpoints and practices of optimisation of checkpoint activities. Also, the participants broadened their knowledge of international standards in provision of basic services to vulnerable migrant groups crossing the border - refugees and victims of trafficking. This means that border guards/customs officers must be able to correctly identify mi-

grants and assess their needs, provide services or refer them to a service provider, and establish cooperation for effective migrant referral.

This BOMCA activity, conducted in cooperation with IOM and UNHCR, aimed at strengthening the capacity of border and customs control officers, enabling them to better categorise the different types of persons crossing the borders while also respecting document security, ethics and human rights. Based on the workshop findings, the expert team is preparing a set of recommendations for advancing quality control at checkpoints and introducing cooperation agreements at border crossing points.



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Studying the Latvian experience of demarcation and delimitation issues



From 25 to 27 July BOMCA organised a three-day study tour of Latvia on border demarcation and delimitation for representatives of relevant state agencies from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The activity brought together delegates representing the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Border Services and the National Commissions on delimitation and demarcation

issues. The agenda of the study visit offered an opportunity to study the Latvian experience of issues involved in the processes of delimitating and demarcating the state border. During multilateral meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Border Guard, and the State Land Service, the participants received a detailed overview of the steps, challenges and solu-

tions identified by their Latvian colleagues while going through the demarcation and delimitation processes with Belarus, Lithuania and Russia. Particular attention was given to international and national legal bases, decision-making mechanisms and practical aspects of the work of the demarcation commission.

Both the guests and the hosting experts shared national experiences and best practices of bilateral cooperation on border delimitation and demarcation, and also the challenges encountered in the process of demarcation.

The goal of this BOMCA activity was to highlight the experience, challenges and practical examples of demarcating and delimitating the Latvian borders with neighbouring countries, which gives an opportunity to participating officials to build upon this experience and these practices in their national context.

Central Asian partners get acquainted with the advantages of IBM in Latvia



Between July 17-20 BOMCA organised a study tour of Latvia and Lithuania for representatives of border, customs, and veterinary and phytosanitary agencies from Central Asian countries. The activity gathered together 20 officers from border, customs and veter-

inary/phytosanitary institutions from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, who were given an opportunity to learn from the European experience and observe on the spot the advantages of intra- and inter-agency cooperation.

The participants were welcomed by the Latvian and Lithuanian border, customs, veterinary and phytosanitary agencies. They were then informed about the agencies' organisational structures, and the principles and advantages of intra- and inter-agency cooperation and exchange of information, which constitute key elements of Integrated Border Management. Practical aspects such as border control procedures and technical means, green border monitoring and joint investigative tactics were demonstrated to participants on the spot, during site visits to the border between Latvia and Belarus, as well as that between Lithuania and Belarus. The wider goal of this BOMCA activity was to highlight the best practices and examples applied by the EU on its external borders in order to introduce effective legal and procedural instruments for managing migration flows.



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Component 3: Adoption of trade facilitation regimes at borders

Introducing E-Customs as effective customs instrument in Central Asia

The 3rd component of BOMCA 9 aims to introduce measures improving flow of goods efficiency at the borders, thus facilitating regional and international trade. Workshops and working meetings are being held with national counterparts to reviews national legislation and its compatibility with international standards and agreements.



they were adapting to the growing e-commerce environment and respective practical experiences/best practices relating to the implementation of various Information Communication Technology (ICT) solutions.

The workshops were well-received by the participants and raised strong interest.

This BOMCA activity aimed to introduce measures improving the efficiency of controls and procedures applicable to goods and means of transport crossing the borders, thus facilitating regional and international trade.

In mid-May 2017, a BOMCA expert team visited Turkmenistan in order to discuss e-customs development in that country. European experts provided detailed information and explanation on developments within Europe, including opportunities, challenges, and

potential solutions in the area of Cross-Border E-Commerce and Digital Customs, and presented related tools and instruments, country examples, case studies, as well as work envisaged for this domain. National partners shared their perspective, in particular on how

Facilitation of international trade through effective customs value



Between 6-8 June Bishkek played host to a regional workshop for customs officers from Central Asia. Jointly with experts from European customs authorities, officers discussed the current methods of customs valuing, tariff classification and origin of goods and methods applied in their countries and

evaluated the international practices in this area based on the Lithuanian experience. During the workshop, the main principles of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and a number of technical issues were reviewed, including the linkage between customs valuing and pricing. The workshop provid-

ed an opportunity to compare national classification systems with the standards recommended by the WCO and consider possible improvements in national methods of establishing and applying tariffs. Based on the results of the workshop, the expert team will review the existing legal framework and the relevant arrangements applied in the Central Asian countries and elaborate steps for further advancement in this area taking into account the international experience and best practices. In the long-term perspective, this BOMCA initiative will facilitate the introduction of measures for improving the efficiency of controls and procedures applicable to goods and means of transport crossing the borders, thus facilitating regional and international trade.



Support to cooperation and coordination mechanisms

Evaluating results and defining future plans



The newest round of National Steering Group (NSG) meetings were held in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Key partners from the beneficiary agencies, as well as EU representatives, participated in these meetings and reconfirmed their commitment towards the implementation of the project and achievement of project goals. Together with the BOM-

CA management team, participants defined the directions for the upcoming activities in 2017.

The meetings once again reaffirmed that the project is on the right track towards achieving the set objectives, by looking at the progress and lessons learned during the past months of implementation in four CA countries. The beneficiaries, in turn, provided feedback on the BOMCA activities implemented so far and provided follow-up on the BOMCA recommendations that have been developed and shared. Partners were given the possibility to share their opinions and ideas that emerged

after participation in the BOMCA activities as well as provide their recommendations for successful implementation of the remaining activities planned for 2017. One of the important points raised during the NSG meetings was the intention of the European Commission to extend the current BOMCA 9 phase until the end of December 2019 by allocating additional funding of 1.6 million Euro. While official consultations are being held at the governmental level, preliminary discussions with the beneficiaries on country priorities for the extension period were also initiated during the NSG meetings.

For more information

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