

BOMCA 9

Border Management Programme in Central Asia (9th phase)

Newsletter №10 (2019)

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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 Asian region. Each new phase of BOMCA has been designed to gradually build upon and consolidate the results achieved in 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 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 capacities of Border and Migration Agencies, thereby contributing to enhanced security at the national and regional levels.

The 9th phase of BOMCA programme was launched in June 2015 for 36 months with a total budget of almost 5mln Euros. In June 2018, the Programme was extended until December 14th, 2019 with an additional funding of almost 1,6 mln Euros.



Dear Friends,

Four years of intensive and (most importantly) successful co-operation in the Central Asian and EU countries within the framework of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA 9) have passed quickly, and I can say we have received great benefit from each other and established close relations which have set the solid background for our continued dialogue.

The Component 3 'Adoption of trade facilitation regimes at borders' aims to increase the effectiveness of border management in Central Asia, contributing to the overall objective of BOMCA 9. The Lithuanian Customs, together with the Latvian Food and Veterinary Service, contributed to the implementation of activities under the Component by transferring expertise via the introduction of measures to increase the efficiency of procedures regarding the smooth flow of goods necessary for the regional and international trade facilitation.

Customs strategies encouraging the facilitation of trade have been introduced in the form of national and regional workshops, the analyses of legal acts and practical exercises leading to fruitful discussions and the exchange of the best practices.

Bilateral cooperation was integral to the success of the programme. Establishment of new divisions, revision of

legal bases and the adoption of new legal acts, development of customs activities related to the IT systems, etc. show the effectiveness of the common work by the Central Asian and EU experts as well as the involvement of trade organisations and state authorities whose decisions have been a critical success factor for the mentioned changes to take place.

I strongly believe that the Component 3 deliverables will have a long-term impact on trade facilitation in the Central Asian region paving the way for efficient border procedures, enhancing licit trade, which is valued by the authorities and by the citizens as well.

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Component 1: Institutional development of border management agencies

National workshops on E-learning

The objective of Component 1 is to sustain the institutional development of border guard agencies in their transition to more effective methods of border management. The first half of 2019 was marked by numerous events, including training, technical missions and study visits, which aimed to strengthen and sustain capacity of border agencies in the region.



Workshops on E-learning methodology in training institutions of border guard and customs agencies took place on 22-24 January, 18-20 March in Kazakhstan and 9-11 April in Tajikistan. The workshops were facilitated by the expert team from the Latvian State Border Guard College and the State Revenue Service of Latvia, and gathered representatives of different training institutions of Kyrgyzstan for forming and retraining border guards and customs officers, as well from the Kyrgyz State University.

During theoretical sessions and practical exercises in groups, trainees reviewed the existing e-learning methodology, studied its role and importance in detail to examine the features, forms and differences in e-learning. Using the example of Moodle (learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a system to create personalised learning environments), trainees learned how to create user

accounts, add resources, create lessons and evaluate students.

This activity supported strengthening cooperation and academic exchange between customs and border guard training institutions in Central Asia and EU MS counterparts. The activity also served as a platform to facilitate intellectual exchange and discussions on the topic of border guard and customs officer education and training.

Central Asian border agencies are reinforcing ethical standards and anti-corruption measures

On 12-14 February 2019, a team of European experts held a multilateral workshop in Dushanbe for the border agencies of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on law enforcement ethics and the fight against corruption.

The expert team composed of international and national experts looked at how the agencies can implement a comprehensive, balanced and tai-

lored package of measures. They reviewed the available range of mechanisms to establish a culture of integrity, deter and detect unethical behaviour, take corrective action and build public trust; which were ethical codes, risk-based strategies, laws and regulations, anti-corruption agencies, ethics training, disclosure of income, assets and interests, ad-

ministrative simplification, control and audit, whistleblowing, investigation, prosecution, and sanctions.

This BOMCA activity contributed to increasing the effectiveness of the border management system in Central Asia by introducing anti-corruption measures in accordance with international law enforcement standards and norms.



Training of trainers on fight against corruption in Kyrgyzstan

A training of trainers (ToT) session on anti-corruption measures for the representatives of the State Border Service, State Customs Service and the State Inspection of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Security took place from 11-13 September 2018 in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. During the three-day workshop, the experts reviewed the organisational structure and the regular duties and procedures of the relevant agencies in Kyrgyzstan, and carried out a consistency assessment in organisational tasks, competences and the rights and obligations of employees. Real and potential risks of corruption were reviewed; the resilience of institutions against corruption was assessed and specific cases of corruption were analysed. During the practical exercise, participants defined the highest-risk zones as well as factors and circumstances contributing to corruption.

The ToT format of the event was

chosen for this activity in order to increase the sustainability of the results. ToT equips national experts not only with knowledge on anti-corruption measures, but also with skills to be able to effectively transfer this knowledge.

Previously, the programme had conducted several technical advisory missions in Kyrgyzstan to support the adoption of an anti-corruption

plan for law enforcement agencies. Therefore, this ToT session further contributed to the introduction of anti-corruption measures in accordance with international law enforcement standards and norms, and thereby increased the effectiveness of border management in Central Asia.



Uzbek customs officers studied Kazakhstan's experience in customs risk management



On 27-29 March in Tashkent, a seminar on improving the efficiency of the customs control system was held. Representatives of the State Revenue Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan presented their experience

in introducing a risk management system to practitioners of the State Customs Committee teaching staff of the Customs Institute of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Participants looked at the experience of organis-

ing effective risk management at all levels of customs service (checkpoint, regional and central levels) and familiarised themselves with the legal basis for the application of a risk management system, information collection and processing tools. Building upon the example of Kazakhstan, experts presented effective methods of assessing and minimising risk and identifying indicators to participants.

This BOMCA initiative reinforced cooperation between the educational institutions of the border and customs departments of the Central Asian countries.



Component 2: Institutional framework for management of mixed migration flows at borders

Strengthening interagency cooperation for effective contingency planning

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, the equipment purchased and transferred to beneficiaries



On 12-14 March a workshop was held in Almaty on contingency planning at border checkpoints, gathering representatives of different state agencies of Kazakhstan; namely the Border Service CNS RK, State Revenue Committee, Ministry of Interior, Emergency Situation Committee, Border Guards Academy of the CNS RK and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

During the seminar, resources and operational procedures of a standard border checkpoint were presented by participants. An example of an advanced coordination mechanism was shared by the Latvian expert team, demonstrating how to ensure appropriate and effective cooperative response measures. A draft of joint instructions on inter-agency operating procedures was

created specifying roles, responsibilities and working methods for different emergency situations at checkpoints, including a mass inflow of migrants.

This BOMCA activity assisted in establishing and strengthening effective mechanisms to facilitate the prompt exchange of information between institutions involved in border security.

Central Asian border management agencies advancing border check standards



European standards for border checks were the focus of a regional workshop held in Ashgabat between 19-21 February. A total of 15 border guards and customs officers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were trained to use modern techniques and apply international standards in carrying out border checks and to manage mixed migration flows in accordance with international standards. Partici-

pants shared their experiences and discussed the organisational issues of border control in their countries - administrative rules, regime, tools and methods of control with a focus on flow management. FRONTEX experts presented the latest technological solutions in border control. The participants also broadened their knowledge of international standards in the provision of basic services to vulnerable migrant groups crossing the border. This means that border guards and customs officers must be able to correctly identify migrants and assess their needs, provide services or refer them to a service provider and establish cooperation for effective migrant referral. A separate session was dedicated to border check ethics and public service

standards, which include gender and ethnicity sensitivity, protecting migrants' data and respecting migrants' rights and dignity.

During the visit, participants had the opportunity to visit the airport of Ashgabat, where the Turkmen Migration Service demonstrated integrated IT border control technology.

This BOMCA activity, conducted in cooperation with FRONTEX and UNHCR, strengthened the capacity of border and customs control officers to better categorise the different types of persons crossing borders while also respecting document security, ethics and human rights.



Regional workshop on EU standards on identification, detention and return of irregular migrants

A regional workshop on the identification, detention and return of irregular migrants was held in Tashkent on 16-18 April 2019, organised by BOMCA in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The event was organised as a mixture of a workshop and round-table discussions between international experts and Central Asian national experts working on the topics of identification, detention and return of irregular migrants.

The main goal of the event was to introduce the best international and European practices for the detention, accommodation and return of irregular migrants. CA participants described their national procedures in the areas of return, detention and readmission, and Euro-

pean experts in turn introduced international and European standards and approaches. Special attention was paid to the cooperation between institutions in the fight against irregular migration at the state border and within the country, as well as to detention procedure standards. Practical examples of the identifica-

tion of migrants with irregular statuses, including vulnerable groups, were discussed and analysed.

Based on discussions with national experts, the EU experts developed recommendations on aligning specific parts of the national legislation with international best practices.



Component 3: Adoption of trade facilitation regimes at borders

International practice on criminal investigation in risk management is introduced to Customs officers of Kazakhstan

Component 3 aims to introduce measures to improve the efficiency of controls and procedures applicable to goods and means of transport, thus facilitating regional and international trade

From 29 January – 1 February 2019, a technical assistance mission for risk management in criminal investigations was held in Astana. International and local experts gathered to discuss practical applications of criminal investigations in customs control.

By reviewing and consolidating various existing national and international regulations, national and European experts exchanged experi-



ence and practices on criminal investigation, its principles and the interconnectivity of e-intelligence with risk management.

The integration of risk analysis in criminal investigations will promote

a more harmonised approach to customs control and create a more transparent, up-to-date and effective system of import controls, allowing more coherence in- and integration of the different control mechanisms in place.



The Central Asian Customs Officers Trained on Modernized Customs Procedures



On 12-15 March 2019 a regional workshop on the modernisation of customs procedures took place in Tashkent.

Customs officials from all five BOM-CA countries and international ex-

perts shared their experiences in using modern customs clearance methods, such as completing and processing simplified customs declarations, priority clearance of express consignments, transit simplifications and application of financial

guarantees, facilitations related to the assessment and payment of customs duties and taxes, the use of ATA books and the functionality of free economic zones.

In order to become acquainted with the local processes for declaration and customs clearance of goods in Uzbekistan, participants visited a customs terminal.

During the workshop, the experts assessed the current situations in the Central Asian countries concerning the modernisation of customs procedures. Recommendations were developed and disseminated based on the findings.

Workshop on Prevention and Detection of Illegal Trafficking of Goods and Means of Transport



On 14 -16 May, a three-day bilateral workshop was held at the Kuryk sea port in Aktau, Kazakhstan, and aimed to improve the practical skills of the customs authorities of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the field of the prevention and detec-

tion of illegally trafficked goods and means of transport. The event was organised in cooperation with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and was facilitated by BOMCA experts from Customs Department under the Ministry of

Finance of Lithuania.

The customs officers and border guards of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were familiarised with the Lithuanian experience in assessing risk factors when selecting ships and containers for customs inspection. Participants learnt about the types of sea containers, methods for verification and compliance with safety regulations during inspection. European experts also shared experiences on the "Rip-off" method of smuggling narcotic drugs in containers. Typical places and caches in ships and containers were highlighted during practical exercises.

The activity contributed to improving the skills of customs officers and border guards, and to the mutual exchange of experience and best practices between the EU and local levels.



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Consultative support to Kyrgyz Customs in the field of Implementation of TFA Action Plan



A technical consultative mission for the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) Action Plan was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on May 20-23.

Experts from the Customs Department of the Ministry of Finance of

Lithuania held a number of consultations with Kyrgyz customs regarding the implementation of the TFA Action Plan, namely, looking at its articles concerning international experience, and analysing the current legislation on border cooperation, cus-

toms cooperation and information exchange.

Together with the Kyrgyz colleagues, the experts analysed the current situation regarding cooperation and coordination within customs agencies, studied international agreements and provided international experience in this field. Based on the findings of the mission, an analysis of the regulatory framework will be done by the Lithuanian experts and proposals will be made to amend the relevant regulatory and legal acts of the Kyrgyz Republic to be in line with TFA provisions.

Strengthening risk analysis system in Uzbekistan



On May 28-31, a series of expert consultations on risk analysis and the development of new anti-smuggling tools were held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. A group of BOMCA experts in customs (forensic specialists) from the Ministry of Finance of Lithuania assessed the

existing risk management system used by Uzbek customs and its compliance with international practices and standards. These consultations provide a basis to make recommendations for further development and improvement of the system.

The working group analysed the main documents regulating risk management in the Uzbek customs. This allowed for an in-depth look at the risk management and information analysis system in order to evaluate the development of risk profiles and their effectiveness. In a practical assessment during a visit to the checkpoint, the stages of submitting and processing declarations, as well as the interconnection between the risk management and customs clearance systems were also reviewed.

Using the findings and results of this advisory mission, the experts will prepare a package of recommendations for the further development and improvement of the risk management system in Uzbek customs, in order to better its compliance with international practices and standards.



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