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NOTE

from : Presidency
to : Multidisciplinary Group on Organized Crime

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Subject : Conclusions from the Expert Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Frontex
Europol Report on the High Risk Routes of Illegal Migration in the Western
Balkan Countries within the Frontex Risk Analysis Network

Taking into account the Action-Oriented Paper on Improving Cooperation on Organized Crime, Corruption, Illegal Immigration and Counter-terrorism, between the EU, the Western Balkans and relevant ENP countries adopted by the Council on 12 May 2006¹, and the Report on the state of implementation by Member States and EU bodies of Action-Oriented Paper on Improving Cooperation on Organized Crime, Corruption, Illegal Immigration and Counter-terrorism, between the EU, the Western Balkans and relevant ENP countries², Europol and Frontex jointly produced the Report on the determination of High Risk Routes Regarding Illegal Migration in the Western Balkan Countries. This Report was discussed during the MDG meeting on 26 September 2007³.

¹ 9272/06 JAI 243 RELEX 312 ASIM 36 CATS 93 COTER 13.

² 15013/1/06 JAI 576 RELEX 802 COWEB 250 CRIMORG 166.

³ CM 2842/07.

Simultaneously, Europol and Frontex organised in Warsaw on 19 September 2007, the Expert Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Frontex Europol Report on the High Risk Routes of Illegal Migration in the Western Balkan Countries within the Frontex Risk Analysis Network.

Taking into account the importance of this meeting as well as its conclusions, the Slovenian Presidency would like to bring this report to the attention of the Member States that is attached as an annex to this note. In particular the Slovenian Presidency would like to stress the importance of the following conclusions presented in the report:

1. Frontex and Europol would like to continue the work on the region by delivering **smaller intelligence products with an operational focus** and involving both Member States and Western Balkan Countries. Frontex and Europol will explore the opportunities to proceed with operational follow up to the intelligence process, especially emphasising on the concept of **“Joint Teams”** as stated in the AOP);
2. Frontex aims at establishing a **network of cooperation with the Western Balkan Countries**. Frontex will prepare a **proposal on how to set up the system of exchange of information within the framework of Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN)**. In addition, Frontex in contact with the Hungarian FRAN representatives will see how the **results of the ANEAS Project on the system of exchange of information in the Western Balkan countries** could be used for information exchange between FRAN and the Western Balkan Countries;
3. Frontex and Europol will explore the possibilities of providing **training to the Western Balkan Countries**. In particular, Europol will check the possibilities of including representatives of the Western Balkan Countries in training on strategic intelligence analysis. Europol has already agreed to provide strategic analysis training to the SECI Centre. Frontex will look into the possibility of including Western Balkan representatives in training sessions organised for Frontex and Member States.

The Presidency invites the Multidisciplinary Group on Organised Crime to discuss aforementioned conclusions of the Report and agree on the future steps to be undertaken.



Warsaw, 3 October 2007

Summary Record

of the Expert Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Frontex Europol Report on the High Risk Routes of Illegal Migration in the Western Balkan Countries within the Frontex Risk Analysis Network

19 September 2007

GENERAL INFORMATION

The meeting was co-chaired by Frontex and Europol and attended by FRAN members, that is, representatives of 27 Member States, Norway, Switzerland representatives of the Commission and the Council. Special guests in the meeting were the representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Serbia, the EU Planning Team Kosovo and the MARRI Centre.

Mr Gil Arias, Frontex Deputy Executive Director welcomed the participants and presented the background of the Joint Frontex Europol Report as well as expected outcomes of the meeting.

The course of the meeting and issues discussed were based on the Discussion Guide distributed to the participants prior to the meeting.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

1. The main results of the Joint Assessment are mostly correct and still valid.
2. There are few changes in illegal migration in the region due to the enlargement of EU.
3. Frontex and Europol would like to continue the work on the region by delivering **smaller intelligence products with an operational focus** and involving both Member States and Western Balkan Countries. Frontex and Europol will explore the opportunities to proceed with operational follow up to the intelligence process. (by fine-tuning the concept of “Joint Teams” as stated in the AOP)
4. Frontex aims at establishing **a network of cooperation with the Western Balkan Countries**. For this purpose the representatives of the Western Balkans in the meeting are considered as obvious contact points. If the countries of the Western Balkans decide to nominate other persons as contact points for Frontex, they were asked to communicate the new names by 29 September. Mari Kalliala, Head of Analytical Planning Sector within Risk Analysis Unit and Szabolcs Csonka, Project Manager of Frontex Risk Analysis Network will prepare a **proposal on how to set up the system of exchange of information within the framework of FRAN**. In addition, Frontex in contact with the Hungarian FRAN representatives will see how the **results of the ANEAS Project on the system of exchange of information in the Western Balkan countries** could be used for information exchange between FRAN and the Western Balkan Countries. As a first step in the exchange of information, the **representatives of Western Balkan Countries were invited to provide Frontex** with already existing periodical reports on the migration situation in their countries.
5. Frontex and Europol will explore the possibilities of providing **training to the Western Balkan Countries**. In particular, Europol will check the possibilities of including representatives of the Western Balkan Countries in training on strategic intelligence analysis. Europol has already agreed to provide strategic analysis training to the SECI Centre. Frontex will look into the possibility of including Western Balkan representatives in training sessions organised for Frontex and Member States.
6. The representative of the Council agreed to distribute the conclusions of the meeting to the relevant working parties in the Council (such as the Multidisciplinary Group, the Frontiers Group and SCIFA). The representative of Commission agreed to communicate these conclusions to the meetings on Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the Eastern and South-eastern regions neighbouring the EU. The Western Balkan Countries are encouraged to keep close contact with the Commission delegations in their capital in order to obtain up-to-date information with regard to the available Community funds and open calls for proposals.



7. In the first half of 2008, **a meeting of Member States' Liaison Officers posted in the Western Balkan Countries** will be organised within the framework of Frontex Risk Analysis Network. This is likely to take place in Slovenia.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF DISCUSSIONS AS PER SUBJECTS

Comments regarding the joint Frontex/ Europol report on the determination of the high risk routes of illegal migration in the Western Balkans.

FYROM commented the report is excellent but it does not take into account the current situation in Bulgaria and Romania after the EU accession. It was explained that the tasking related to the report defined the country coverage, which did not include Bulgaria or Romania.

Hungary provided information on an ongoing regional project – development of the systems for the exchange of information and analysis in the Western Balkan Countries. The project is managed by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior, with the support of the Austrian Ministry of Interior, the ICMPS, and the MARRI Centre. The first phase of the project delivered a comprehensive report on the current situation of regarding illegal migration in the Western Balkan Countries, including national legislation on subject in place and identified gaps. For example, one of the findings is that data is collected and stored, but hardly ever used. **Frontex** stated that it would be good to explore the possibilities of building up a system of information exchange with the Western Balkan Countries, possibly based on the results of the project.

EUPT Kosovo gave an overview of the planning for Kosovo, which will include the secondment of 113 police officers to work in the border police department in Kosovo. There is no agreed timetable for the implementation of these structures yet, as it depends on the political decision regarding Kosovo. However, once the political decision is known, approximately 3 months will be needed for the structures to be in place. There is no specific plan for the system of exchange of information, and EUPT Kosovo is open to suggestions for the best solutions.

Croatia commented that p. 17 of the report mentioned two towns in Croatia stating their geographical location as southern Croatia, whereas in reality they are in the north of the country. It would be also good to include general information on third country nationals in the region which would include African and all Asian nationals, instead of focusing only on Chinese.



In response to the comment by **Serbia** that the report, though excellent, could provide more information about routes, it was explained that only the main routes were selected for presentation in the report.

In the assessment of **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the report was good, however they could not agree with the statement of Banja Luka airport used predominantly by Turkish nationals as the Sarajevo airport is busier. It was explained that the prominent position of Banja Luka airport was based on the interviews with Liaison Officers and police representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The impact of EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania on the migration situation in the region

Bosnia and Herzegovina commented that prior to the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the number of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria was very high, but now the number has decreased clearly. For the time being, majority of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina come from Kosovo, then Serbia, sometimes Iraq. Recent changes include change in size of groups from big (50 migrants) to small, and attempts of crossing with false passports of Serbia and Montenegro.

Serbia commented that the impact of EU enlargement on the migration situation was not as big as expected. In the first half of 2007 Romanian and Bulgarian nationals are the 4th and 5th top nationalities apprehended as illegal migrants in Serbia, which is comparable to 2006. Albanian nationals are the top nationality of illegal migrants apprehended in Serbia. Generally, approximately 60% of migrants to Serbia come from the direction of Kosovo. No displacement regarding routes has been noted. However, there was a 100% increase in the number of migrants in the municipality of Novy Sad, for reasons not known to date. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of FYROM nationals apprehended as illegal migrants. Serbia invited Frontex to contact directly if any more information regarding this particular phenomenon is needed.

Generally, **Serbia** expressed the interest in direct contact with Europol and Frontex and stated that investing in cooperation with the Western Balkan states meant investment in the security of EU borders.

FYROM stated that the persons apprehended in Serbia are most likely Albanian nationals travelling on false FYROM documents. FYROM has not observed any changes in routes linked with the EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria.

Hungary also experienced an increase in the number of illegal migrants from Serbia crossing the green border.



Albania is a country of origin, as large numbers of Albanian nationals cross illegally to FYROM, Serbia, then to Italy and further to the EU. In 2005, illegal crossings by sea from Albania to Italy were the gravest problem. Since then, Albania has stopped all sea traffic to Italy and the problem has ceased. The report mentions high migration flows from Albania to Greece, but Albania explained that this route is used also by nationals of FYROM and Kosovo.

Italy commented that the fact that some countries reported no detections does not mean that they are not affected by the flow from Albania. Italy has very good cooperation with Albania.

Greece stated that their cooperation with Albania is good, but indeed illegal migration from Albania has been an issue for over 10 years. Over 50% of all illegal migrants apprehended in Greece come from Albania. For most of them Greece is the final destination, some continue towards Italy. The most frequently used route is the one directly from Albania to Greece, though some migrants travel via FYROM. No changes in migration routes have been noted after the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

Croatia stated that their country is most often used for transit. The EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania has not caused any changes in the modality and structure of illegal migration. A major change took place in 2003 when the number of illegal migrants from Romania decreased drastically to almost nil, while the number of Albanian illegal migrants increased significantly. Generally, migration in Croatia is regional - 90% of migrants in Croatia are nationals of South-Eastern European countries. Large numbers of minors cross the border to Italy without parents or documents. In the perspective of Rijeka being identified in the report as one of the nexus points of illegal migration, Croatia explained that the majority of migrants enter Croatia by land, and then travel further from Rijeka by car to Italy. It cannot be excluded that at the Rijeka harbour some embark ships to Italy, but there is no precise information available on the subject.

Bulgaria is aware of the routes from Turkey via Bulgaria, Serbia to the EU. However, these routes were very active during 2001-2003 when many migrants from Afghanistan and Iraq were using them. This year Bulgaria has detected some migrants on the border with Serbia and FYROM, but these were single incidents. One of the current problems is migration by Turkish Kurds, and Moldovan nationals who enter Bulgaria legally but attempt to leave illegally. After the EU accession Bulgaria is becoming a destination country. The most common false documents are Romanian passports and ID cards.



Romania reported that Moldovan nationals mostly enter Romania legally, and afterwards attempt to cross the green border to Hungary and further into the European Union. Turkish nationals have been found using Turkish passports to enter Romania and subsequently attempt to cross the border to Bulgaria with the use of false Romanian ID cards. Somali nationals enter Romania illegally and attempt further illegal border crossing to other EU countries. There were cases of Somali nationals crossing illegally to Ukraine, and then further to Romania.

Austria commented that the figures of illegal migrants from the Balkan region have decreased since the EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria. Austria described the modus operandi of Serbian migrants who enter Hungary legally with visas and then cross the border illegally to Austria where they claim asylum.

Italy has had no visa regime with Romania and Bulgaria since 1 January 2002. Therefore Italy experiences problems with over-stayers from these countries rather than with illegal migrants.

Involvement of organised crime (OC) in facilitation of illegal migration

In the assessment of **Serbia** OC active in the country are very well organised networks which transfer migrants from Serbia to Croatia and countries of Western Europe. Perpetrators of human smuggling are usually from the same locality and form tight criminal groups with precisely defined roles. One criminal group comprises members of the same ethnicity, but various ethnic groups cooperate one with another.

Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that OC in the country is mainly represented by Bosnian nationals who form very well connected networks. Information is being exchanged with Croatia and Montenegro on OC networks cooperating across borders.

FYROM observed that OC groups (OCGs) have links with groups who are expecting migrants in the EU. The OC has divided FYROM territory in 5 sectors and the activities of each OCG concentrate in their own sector. On many occasions OCGs deal in multiple commodities: weapon/vehicle smuggling is often combined with human smuggling etc.

In **Croatia** the top detected facilitators/smugglers are Croatian nationals. However, the main organisers are the nationals of countries of destination/origin. OCGs cooperate well with groups from neighbouring countries. There were several detections of small criminal groups consisting of family or other related persons.



In **Albania** OCGs are one of the major problems. Albanian nationals need visas to leave the country and the OCGs exploit this situation by charging huge amounts for smuggling people out of Albania. Most of the times there are small OCGs which are cooperating with others as part of a network.

Hungary stated that the apprehensions of migrants at the border with Serbia are mostly small groups of migrants, but there is no prevailing nationality. Facilitators are mostly Hungarians because of their knowledge of the territory. In the assessment of Hungary, the OC at the border section Hungary- Serbia are prevalently small OCGs with international connections.

Detection of forged/falsified documents

Serbia has noted a substantial growth in the use of falsified identity. New recent phenomena are the falsified German residence/stay permissions, and falsified visas. There are numerous cases of “renting” documents, and photo substitution. The quality of documents is very good. One of the problems faced by Serbia is that only a limited, small number of border guard officers are trained in the detection of false documents.

In 2006 – 2007 **Bosnia and Herzegovina** observed a significant increase in the number false documents. The report mentions that the majority of false/ falsified documents come from Turkey, but the top detected documents are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro comes second. In the previous years OCGs obtained big numbers of falsified documents, which are circulating on the black market now. There is intelligence on stolen blank documents in which a personal data page is inserted at a later stage.

MARRI provided information on the United Kingdom funded project on document security. The beneficiaries of the project are all Western Balkan Countries; the timeframe is January 2006 – December 2007. The final result of the project will be the production of a manual on document security which will be distributed to all countries in the region.

The modus operandi regarding false documents in **FYROM** is the same as in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was an interesting case of 100 authentic Swedish passports (reported as lost/stolen) sent in a DHL parcel by an ethnic Albanian to Kosovo. The same passports were then re-used by numerous Kosovo nationals at Skopje airport.



In the assessment of **Croatia**, the most often falsified documents are passports (from Kosovo and Albania) and Schengen visas. Inside the territory of Croatia, OC is not involved in the production of falsified documents. Croatian ID cards (whose shape has recently been changed) are already accepted as valid travel documents in a number of countries.

Similarly, in the assessment of **Albania**, the most commonly falsified documents are passports and Schengen visas. In recent years Albanian Border Police has received a lot of training on detection of falsified documents.

Illegal immigration and facilitation of Chinese nationals and involvement of OC

No information on Chinese OC is available in **Serbia, FYROM, Croatia** or **Albania**.

A new service has been established in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** which will examine the dealings of foreigners in the country. At the moment there is little information available on Chinese OC. It seems that in the previous years there were more Chinese in the northern part of the country whereas currently there are more in the south, but there is no evidence that this shift could be linked to routes moving southwards to the Croatian border.

Information on Border Management authorities

The Border Directorate within the Ministry of Interior in **Serbia** inherited old military equipment, only some BCPs have new equipment at their disposal. Another problem for the border services is lack of clear definition of the border with Montenegro. Additionally, Border Directorate faces recruitment problems. Trafficking cases are not investigated by the border services, as trafficking is within the remit of a special section dealing exclusively with OC. The cooperation of border and police services is good.

Regarding the competences of border services in organising return of illegal migrants, the services in **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, and Serbia** are in charge of implementing re-admission agreements, while in Albania the removal of illegals is within the competence of the Aliens Office outside the border guard service. Additionally, **Serbia** remarked that out of numerous signed re-admission agreements, only two function in practice: with Hungary and Croatia.



Information from the Secretariat of the Council

The representative of Council Secretariat explained that AOP is a product linked to EU external strategy. It is a monitoring and informative document which deals with fighting terrorism, illegal migration and related crimes. The report on the high risk routes is to be discussed during meetings in Brussels, and also during the meeting of Member States' Liaison Officers posted in the Western Balkan Countries (30 October 2007).

Information from the Commission

The Commission provided information on various projects and initiatives within the framework of cooperation with the Western Balkan Countries financed from Community funds such as the CARDS, IPA and AENEAS programmes. These projects are aimed to assist the Western Balkan countries to implement an Integrated Border Management concept and to develop their administrative structure as well as to foster regional cooperation. This assistance resulted among other in the Inter-Agency Training Manual and the Integrated Border Management guidelines – produced and translated to Western Balkan languages.

The Commission is in the process of signing re-admission agreements with the Western Balkan Countries on behalf of the EU, which will take over the individual agreements which Member States might have with the Western Balkan Countries.
