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BOMCA | БОМКА
BORDER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL ASIA | ПРОГРАММА СОДЕЙСТВИЯ УПРАВЛЕНИЮ ГРАНИЦАМИ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3

July - September 2022



BOMCA 10 IN FOCUS

Dear BOMCA readers,

On behalf of the European Union, it is my pleasure to share with you the third issue of the BOMCA Newsletter. It will provide you with an update on the Programme's activities and progress across all five Central Asian states for the third quarter 2022 in the field of integrated border management.

Since the very first EU Strategy on Central Asia in 2007 and the renewal of the Strategy in May 2019, the EU and Central Asia cooperation has been strengthened by the principles of partnering for resilience, prosperity and supporting regional cooperation, which are also closely linked with efficient and integrated border management.

A lot has been done at the regional and national level and more is to come and during the autumn. Another milestone in our cooperation will be the Samarkand EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference to be held on 18 November 2022 - the first regional conference on connectivity since the EU's new Global Gateway Strategy, which was adopted on 1st December 2021.

It will provide a platform for intra- and inter-regional dialogue on shared concepts that will help translate the goals of resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation into action. It will be part of the EU efforts to support the countries of Central Asia to modernise, boost investment, digitalise, facilitate intra-regional trade and diversify their transport and trade routes.

The European Union and Uzbekistan recently successfully concluded negotiations on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), which will provide a new, modern and ambitious framework to step up the EU-Uzbekistan partnership. This agreement includes new areas of cooperation and significantly upgrades the regulatory framework for trade and economic relations, political cooperation and reforms, enhanced cooperation in foreign and security policy, with a focus on regional stability and international cooperation, security cooperation, covering data protection, migration, the fight against money laundering and terrorism, organised crime and corruption, and tackling illicit drugs.

BOMCA, as one of the EU's flagship programmes in Central Asia, bringing all the expertise of the EU Member States in integrated border management to our five Central Asian partner countries continues to be key in supporting national and regional efforts for stability in the region. This is more relevant than ever and shows that EU is keen to support regional cooperation and facilitating fruitful and positive cross-border relations in Central Asia, including by enhancing the role of civil society in cross-border relations as vectors for peace and sustainable development in border areas.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Governments of Central Asian countries and other BOMCA partners for their constructive dialogue and active participation in the framework of the Programme and invite you to follow BOMCA newsletters, which provides updates on a quarterly basis.



H.E. Charlotte Adriaen,
Ambassador of the European Union to Uzbekistan

Dear BOMCA partners and colleagues,

We are pleased to present to you the 3rd issue of BOMCA Newsletter, which provides an overview of the Programme's progress during the past 3 months.

Improvement of detection capacities facilitates the cooperation between law enforcement and border guard agencies within and between the Central Asian countries, one of four thematic areas BOMCA concentrates its efforts on in the current phase. Led by the State Border Guard Service of the Republic of Lithuania, this thematic area aims to support law enforcement agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the advancement of evidence based investigations, specifically dealing with detection and investigation of cross-border crime.

The global socio-political situation proves the importance of coordination and information exchange between law enforcement and border guard agencies in the area of cross-border crime detection and investigation. The exchange on best practices and training in the application of state-of-art investigative methods in pre-trial investigations of cross-border crime are of high significance for efficient border management.



Mr. Donatas Skarnulis
Component 2 Leader

Thus with its dedicated thematic activities, the programme has been continuously supporting the investigation units of the law enforcement agencies in Central Asia, by enhancing their capacities in timely and effective detection of cross-border crime. Our efforts provided a foundation for increasing bilateral, regional and international information exchange on cross-border crime and creating a modus operandi to allow for the review of legislation and improvement of cooperation mechanisms.

ABOUT BOMCA 10

Since its launch in 2003, the various phases of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) funded by the European Union with the contribution of Latvia and Lithuania have focused on capacity building and institutional development, developing trade corridors and the facilitation of trade, improving border management systems and eliminating drug trafficking across the Central Asia region.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Enhancing security, stability, and sustainable growth in the region, as well as supporting cross-border cooperation and improving living conditions for people living in border areas of Central Asia

BUDGET



21 650 050

DURATION



April 2021 - September 2025



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

COMPONENT 1
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BORDER CONTROL AGENCIES

Adopting international security standards, integration of best practices and/or compliance with integrated border management models where applicable



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

COMPONENT 2
IMPROVEMENT OF DETECTION CAPACITIES

Enhancing detection, coordination and investigation effectiveness within and between Central Asian countries



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

COMPONENT 3
FACILITATION OF TRADE

Harmonizing institutional, technical and normative practices related to the facilitation of legitimate flows of people and cargo across borders



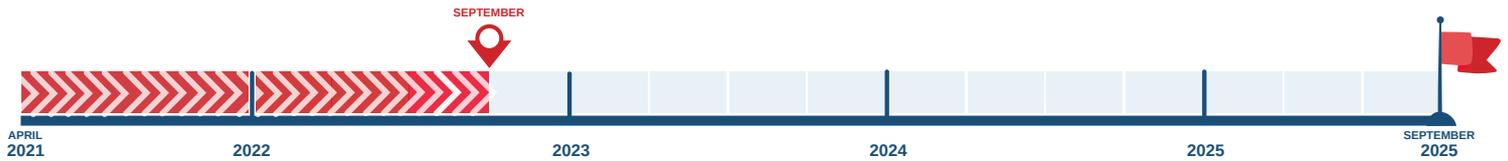
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

COMPONENT 4
IMPROVEMENT OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Improving living conditions in border areas through local economic development, with a focus on human rights, gender equality and vulnerable groups (such as women, children and victims of human trafficking)

BOMCA 10 PROGRESS IN A NUTSHELL

Project implementation timeline



From July 1 till September 30, the Programme implemented 31 activities in the Central Asian region. These include regional and national activities of differing complexity within all four BOMCA components.

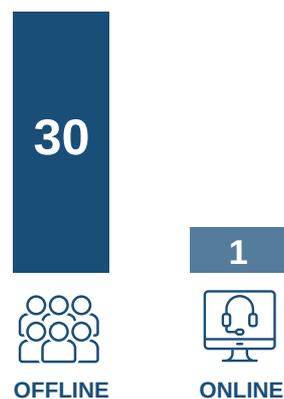
In September, BOMCA started the first round of National Project Steering Group meetings (NSG) in Central Asia, to review progress of the past year and define plans for the upcoming period. This round of these national meetings will be followed by the online Regional Steering Group meeting later this year. From September 5 till 9 NSG meetings were held in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Steering Group meetings at the national and regional levels present the programme with a unique platform for upcoming Regional Projects to evaluate progress on implementation and to agree on the next steps. For an overview of the outcomes of these meetings, we invite the reader to check out our next issue.

Project implementation in the period of July - September 2022



FORMAT OF THE IMPLEMENTED EVENTS



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES ACROSS CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

	80		80
	111		123
	80		

THEMATIC ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS



COMPONENT 1 INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BORDER CONTROL AGENCIES

In the past quarter this thematic component prioritised efforts on the establishment of risk analysis, strengthening identification and profiling mechanisms, advancing cooperation on border checks, development of a legal basis and procedures on the return of irregular migrants, as well as continuous efforts on strengthening training capacities in the region. Depending on the topic, experts from the EU MS, building upon good practices, either trained or provided technical advisory support to the national counterparts.

Risk analysis is the starting point for all activities in the area of border management, from high level strategic decision-making to planning and implementation of operational activities. National workshops on risk analysis took place for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in concrete recommendations on the legal basis. In Uzbekistan, where strategic level of analysis was in focus, national and EU approaches were discussed through a comparative perspective.

On the strengthening of identification and profiling mechanisms component, the programme conducted two national Training of Trainers in cooperation with LEICA, another EU-funded initiative in the region and UNODC. Being the final session in the series of the national trainings in the region, these activities trained 27 national training experts in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully transfer gained knowledge further to their colleagues. The training manual for trainers on preparation and implementation of the training activities, finalised in the past quarter, will support trainers along this path.

In the past quarter the component undertook other efforts which contribute to improved border checks. Border Guards and Customs, being the main stakeholders, can delegate to each other their functions, which allows them to manage resources more effectively with the same level of quality of control procedures. In Turkmenistan, as a result of the meetings of the EU experts and national counterparts, recommendations were proposed on approaches to implement delegations of functions for the consideration of the national counterparts.

Cooperation in the area of training in the region maintained its prominent role. Building upon results of activities earlier this year – namely conclusions reached among the consortium of training institutions of Border Guards and Customs agencies from all five countries on cooperation and the earlier agreed implementation plan– the first regional distance learning session was successfully conducted by the national expert of Kazakhstan, involving all Central Asian countries.

In the past quarter the Component 1 completed activities towards the review and establishment of an effective migration policy. Technical assistance in Kazakhstan completed the series of activities in the region. Recommendations were provided to the national counterparts on the improvement of migration management related legislation and procedures, including facilitating the rapid and effective return of migrants.



COMPONENT 2 IMPROVEMENT OF DETECTION CAPACITIES

The efforts of this thematic component in the past quarter targeted the improvement of investigation methods on evidence-based principles, increased investigation capacities and information exchange on border crimes, as well training on cynology. Experts from the EU MS worked with the counterparts at the regional and national levels, in the countries of Central Asia and in EU MS.

At the national level, in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan national forensic experts were introduced to modern evidence collection methods, principles of evidence as well as cooperation between investigators and forensic experts. Results of these activities include concrete proposals on the advancement of the legal basis on collection and submission of evidence. At the regional level Heads of the Border Guards and Law enforcement investigation units of all five countries of the region looked into tools and various forms of cooperation and channels which could enable it. This activity resulted in proposed action points on information exchange on crime investigation.

The advancement of cooperation on exchange of information on border crimes was further discussed at the regional level, where the representatives of the investigation units were introduced to the EU concept of joint investigation teams. Guidelines on the successful adaptation of the EU concept to national needs, as well as establishing of the joint teams, were among the key results of this regional activity.

To increase law enforcement capacities to investigate crimes, this component envisages a series of the national activities to look into novel methods of investigation, related to trafficking of such as trafficking of firearms, their parts, explosives, ammunition, currency and other goods. The activities shall result in the developed standard operating procedures. The series of activities in the region was launched in Turkmenistan in September.



THEMATIC ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS



COMPONENT 3 FACILITATION OF TRADE



In the past quarter, Component 3 aimed at trade facilitation, supported Central Asian national counterparts in the digitalisation of customs and improvement of transit procedures, implementation of an e-learning methodology, as well as strengthening inter-agency cooperation between customs and veterinary and phytosanitary services. A special emphasis was laid on the efforts to achieve standards set by World Customs (WCO) and World Trade Organisations (WTO) in customs control operations.

With the support of the component's expertise the Tajik and Kazakh customs authorities analysed their existing customs information systems, electronic services provided by the agencies and integration of a "single window" into the customs clearance mechanism. They developed recommendations that will serve as a guidance point for further digitalisation of the national customs declarations systems, as well as the optimization of the related customs processes.

As the harmonisation of national legislative acts is a key prerequisite for ensuring effective electronic exchange of information between customs authorities of the Central Asian countries, the experts analysed the Tajik customs legislation in transit area and offered specific recommendations for further improvements, including application of the TIR and ATA Conventions. Following the same technical assistance earlier performed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, this will contribute to enhancing cooperation between Central Asian countries in international movements of goods, rapid border crossings and smooth customs controls.

In the framework of the technical assistance provided within Component 3, the Uzbek partner agencies involved in border control at border crossing points also benefited from a review of the existing related legislation and were offered recommendations for the improvement of inter-agency cooperation and communication tools. Furthermore, the capacities of the Uzbek national experts responsible for the development and maintenance of e-learning courses and evaluation of training results in the Uzbek Customs and Veterinary and Phytosanitary training institutions were enhanced through the dedicated workshop. Specific guidelines were developed on the development of the e-learning modules in line with the best EU practices, taking into account actual needs of particular agencies. This will support Uzbek partners in establishing e-learning courses in specific areas of border control.

In addition, aiming at facilitation of trade while ensuring the flow of legitimate goods across the borders, the Programme supported the customs administrations of all Central Asian states in building skills and capacities in analysing X-ray images and the application of X-ray scanning systems widely used in the European Union during customs controls. The experts from Latvia and Lithuania shared best EU practices and principles with the representatives of the Programme's beneficiary countries, thus advancing achievement of WCO and WTO standards.

Building on the efforts and the results of the previous phases, BOMCA provided support to the Kyrgyz customs, phytosanitary and veterinary agencies in the application of the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences principles (GSP+). The experts developed recommendations based on the evaluation of existing legislation and practices in Kyrgyzstan, including monitoring and control of REX, which will advance the integration of the Kyrgyz market into international trading systems and allow for an ultimate increase in exports to the EU Member States.



COMPONENT 4 IMPROVEMENT OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Throughout the last quarter, component 4 focused on providing further support to local authorities and line ministries to raise their service capacities to local border areas population in all five Central Asian states.

In line with the approved National Action Plans on Capacity-Building for Implementation of Cross-Border Activities, BOMCA 10 has focused on the following activities:

In Kazakhstan, the Programme has developed a Technical Questionnaire to identify the baseline to establish a platform for better awareness raising mechanisms in the border regions, in close cooperation with the Border Service of the National Security Committee.

The development of reintegration programmes and improvement of cooperation with the diaspora was the focus for the work in Kyrgyzstan, where the training activities and the development of the subsequent recommendations were conducted in July. A special emphasis was placed on harnessing the potential of diaspora members and returnees for the development of Kyrgyz border regions.

BOMCA 10 focused on the mapping of gender policies in Tajikistan, identification of leading NGOs, and governmental partners, that are active in the Tajik border regions.

The analytical document (forthcoming) will be a vital reference point for the upcoming training activities for the local authorities in the border regions on two thematic areas: optimising the potential of women in the peacebuilding processes; as well as the identification of support mechanisms for the local female led businesses.

As part of the efforts to contribute to better awareness raising in the Turkmen border regions, the Programme established a pool of international experts for the development of a Mobile Application for the State Customs Service of Turkmenistan. The preliminary technical specifications have been developed that will be further fine-tuned in collaboration with the beneficiary agency.

In Uzbekistan, BOMCA 10 has been building up the efforts to support women, employees of the line ministries involved in the work and development of the Uzbek border regions. The Programme has developed a flagship training series exclusively for female employees, with the next one scheduled for the late October this year to take place in Tashkent and one of the border regions.

In parallel to support offered to the governmental bodies, the Programme has been finalising the selection of NGOs, that have participated in the Call for Proposals for the EU funding administrated by BOMCA 10 to implement small scale projects directly targeting the population of border areas. The results of the Call and the selection will be released in the next issue of the Newsletter.





MODERN TEACHING METHODOLOGIES AS ESSENTIAL TOOL OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN CENTRAL ASIA

The strengthening of national training capacities including, among others, through exchange of expertise within the region is among the core objectives of the Component 1.

Earlier this year the Consortium of the border guards and customs training institutions agreed on the training plan for the region, including exchange of the national experts and concrete thematic, on-line and offline activities.

The first activity initiating implementation of the agreed plan was a regional workshop on "Modern teaching methodologies" implemented from 5-8 September. During the workshop national expert from the Border Guard Academy of Kazakh National Security Committee in Almaty concentrated on the upgrading of skills in planning, developing training materials, organising training, and enhancing trainees' skills in teaching, based on modern training methodologies. As a result of this activity the participants know the basic training methodologies, are able to conduct distance learning lessons and have the skills to develop methodological training materials. In addition, participants have received relevant knowledge on learning environment and training tools.



IMPROVED COOPERATION ON BORDER CRIME ANALYSIS AMONG AGENCIES OF CENTRAL ASIA

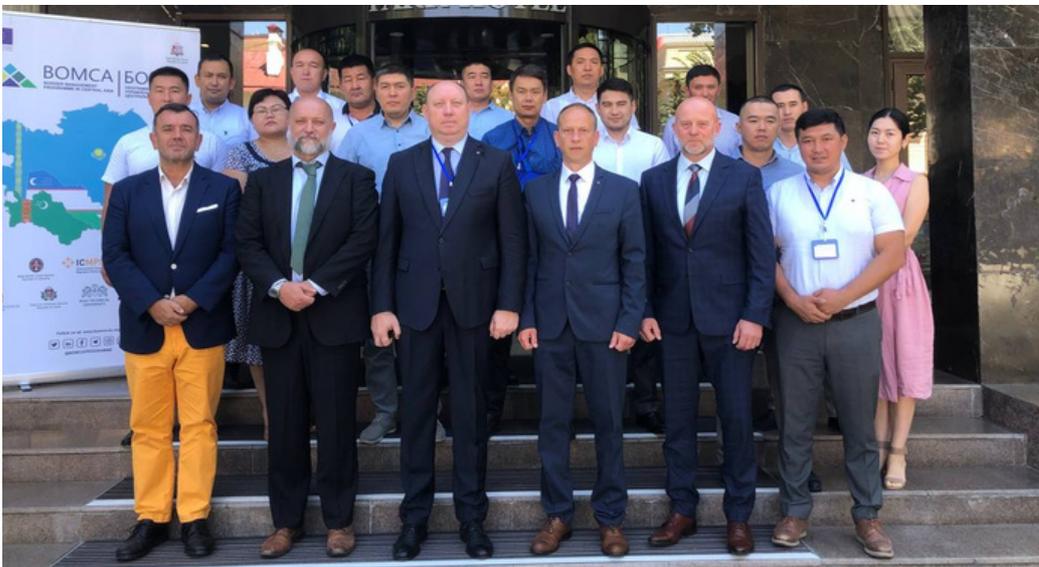


As part of efforts aiming for increased bilateral, regional and international information exchange on cross-border crime and modus operandi, the Programme, among others, looks into cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), which is an international organisation that facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control.

A series of national workshops is planned to raise awareness on and principles of cooperation with Interpol. The latest workshop was implemented for Kyrgyzstan for representatives of the border guard and law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan on cooperation with Interpol. The participants familiarised themselves with legal, procedural and technical solutions for cooperation with and running of activities through Interpol.

This activity aimed at supporting law enforcement agencies in evidence-based investigations, specifically dealing with the detection and investigation of cross-border crime and continues a series of activities in each country of Central Asia on the topic.

As a result, group of experts from the International Liaison Office of Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau jointly developed recommendations with participants on strengthening legislation and international legal instruments, regulating cooperation in this area, as well as for issuing proposals for improving the interaction mechanisms in the use of the Interpol services and database in border control.





STRENGTHENED COOPERATION BETWEEN CUSTOMS AND PHYTOSANITARY AND VETERINARY SERVICES AT BCPS



Successful cooperation among the agencies at the border is among the core pillars of the integrated border management. Recognising this, the Component 3 pays special attention to advancing cooperation among customs and phytosanitary and veterinary services.

From 5-7 July 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan BOMCA experts met with Customs and Sanitary and Phytosanitary agencies. They presented good practices on inter-agency cooperation at the central level and common forms of cooperation between customs authorities and sanitary and phytosanitary agencies at the border control points in EU countries, key elements of mutual cooperation model with a focus on methods of mutual information exchange, the importance of risk based controls, technical tools, control infrastructure, and training and control procedures.

As a result of this technical assistance, recommendations will be developed by the expert team for the improvement of cooperation and communication tools among these institutions. Successful implementation of these recommendations increases cooperation among the relevant agencies and thus facilitates international trade.





EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON MIGRATION FLOWS FROM CENTRAL ASIA TO THE MAIN MIGRANT DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The migration flows within Central Asia and especially from and within its border regions remain largely overlooked and understudied. To bridge this gap, the component 4 of the BOMCA 10 Programme supported the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic to conduct a study of migration flows in the Fergana Valley. The expert team organised a research coordination mission to Bishkek in July 2022 and presented a roadmap for the study on migration in Fergana Valley on 5 July. The modalities of the study were preliminarily agreed on and the way forward established.

The evidence based data and information on migration flows within the Central Asian border regions would be an essential knowledge source for the governmental bodies to develop their local policies to positively contribute to the lives of the population in the border regions.



THEMATIC AND METHODOLOGICAL FOCUS IN THE NEXT QUARTER (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022)



Regional workshops



Thematic meetings



Distance learning



National workshops



Exchange of trainers



Other targeted capacity building activities



Training of trainers



Technical assistance



COMPONENT 1

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BORDER CONTROL AGENCIES

- Training of trainers on identification and profiling techniques
- Exchange of trainers of Central Asian border agencies
- Facilitation of rapid and effective return of irregular migrants
- Facilitation of the distance learning
- Support in the development of risk analysis systems
- Support to the international initiatives (International Border Police Conference)



COMPONENT 2

IMPROVEMENT OF DETECTION CAPACITIES

- Facilitation of cooperation within investigation units, prosecutor's offices
- Training of Trainers in the field of cynology
- Contributing to the improvement of forensic methods
- Enhancing cooperation with Interpol



COMPONENT 3

FACILITATION OF TRADE

- Inter-agency cooperation between Customs and Phytosanitary and Veterinary services
- Analysis of the current customs legislation in transit area
- Development of training capacities in car and truck searches
- ToT on the alignment of national legislation with the provisions of HACCAP standards and national Plant legislation
- Improvement of customs processes and e-services related to electronic submission and development of "single windows"
- Short term ToT of CA training institutions to the EU Member States



COMPONENT 4

IMPROVEMENT OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

- Project implementation capacity building
- Research and analysis in the area of migration, cross-border and related areas
- Awareness raising on irregular migration, as well as on issues of concern for populations affected by migration
- Assistance to vulnerable population groups affected by migration and border proximity (in particular to children and women left behind by migrants)
- Support to entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship initiatives, for all population groups and among women, as a special category

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