Budapest Process

Working Group on the Black Sea Region

Report on Border Guard Cooperation[1]

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[1] This Report was drafted in conjunction with the 2nd Meeting of the Budapest Process Working Group on the Black Sea Region that took place in Sofia, Bulgaria on 9-10 February 2011

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Black Sea Region serves as a bridge to and a division between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and is therefore of geostrategic importance for a variety of stakeholders. Although a single regional identity does not exist, the last twenty years have seen an expansion of activities specifically targeting the region and with it increased multilateral and bilateral cooperation.[2]

Regional cooperation between border guard authorities in the Black Sea Region has been primarily driven through multilateral projects driven by the EU or other international groups, but also other cooperation initiatives have been established for this purpose: The littoral Black Sea states have developed a functioning maritime border cooperation through the Black Sea Border/Coast Guard Cooperation Forum, which is being operationalised through the Border Coordination and Information Centre in Burgas. The Eastern Partnership launched by the EU in 2008 may be seen to represent a renewed "Europeanization" process for Black Sea countries through intense bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) has been fostering multilateral political and economic interaction among its Member States since 1992, and is one of the more institutionalized regional cooperation initiatives.

1.1.   Working Group on the Black Sea Region

In 2008, the Budapest Group of Senior Officials decided to establish the Budapest Process Working Group on the Black Sea Region (hereinafter the Black Sea WG).[3] At the 1st meeting of the Black Sea WG it was decided that, for the purpose of this WG, the Black Sea region should not be given a narrow definition. Instead an inclusive and flexible character should be kept, welcoming the participation of interested states according to topic and relevance. The geographical scope should in this sense be defined to include all states affected by the relevant migration routes around the Black Sea, mainly originating in the East or Middle-East. It was acknowledged that irregular migration rather takes place along the land routes around the Black Sea than across the sea itself. In the light of the number of activities in the region, the participating countries also underlined that this WG has a technical nature, giving a framework for concrete substance discussion in a wide range of migration related priorities. Such a perspective represents an added-value and was seen to contribute to other activities of the region.

The Black Sea WG met for the first time in Sofia on 13-14 November 2008 to discuss cooperation in combating irregular transit migration in the Black Sea Region. It was established that 1) all countries of the region are faced with challenges due to irregular migration and 2) that efforts to further strengthen concrete cooperation between the Black Sea region countries to counteract irregular migration is a priority.

Among the conclusions made were the following:

1. It was commonly agreed that the situation, needs and responsibilities of all states participating should be taken into account and given equal importance in the future work, no matter if they are states of origin, transit or destination. It was stressed that all participating states are on equal footing.

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[2] Manoli, Panagiota, 2009, "Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation: A Policy Discussion Policy Report III"

[3] Budapest Group of Senior Officials, 15-16 May 2008 in Trabzon, Turkey

2. The rapidly changing realities of migration management were acknowledged, especially in the light of EU enlargement and extension of the Schengen area. The need for preparedness for shifting migration pressures in this regard was underlined. In this process it is imperative to also consider the situation and priorities of countries outside the EU and Schengen areas.

3. In creating efficient migration responses, the importance of inter-agency and international cooperation was underlined using and involving existing structures and networks in the region.

1.2. Purpose of this report

Following up on the 1st meeting of the Black Sea WG, this report on border guard cooperation has been drafted in conjunction with the 2nd meeting of the Black Sea WG, which convened in Sofia on 9-10 February 2011 to discuss opportunities for improving cooperation among the border management authorities of the wider Black Sea Region. This report is based on available background information (including information provided by the relevant countries for the ICMPD Yearbook 2009), the results of a short information request (questionnaire) sent to concerned countries focusing on their experiences regarding integrated border management and cooperation between border administrations from the other Black Sea countries, as well as on the presentations made at and discussions that took place at the 2nd meeting in Sofia.

2.   COMMON BORDER MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The countries of the Black Sea Region follow different socio-economic and political tracks and depending on their geographical location they also face different challenges relating to the irregular migration flows originating, transiting and targeting the region, but they all share the common goal of maintaining secure borders, protecting their citizens and preventing irregular migration, related crime and other cross-border crime.

The table[4] inserted below shows that the total number of border apprehensions in 2009 in 19 countries was 168.614, a decrease by 12% from the previous year. The number of border apprehensions in the Back Sea Region[5] decreased by 13% in 2009. Nevertheless, experience shows that irregular migration flows can adapt rapidly to changing circumstances, which could be the case once the littoral Black Sea states Romania and Bulgaria accede to the Schengen area. This means that the countries of the region need a heightened sense of preparedness for changing migration flows, which presupposes effective and efficient cooperation between the border guard authorities.

Reporting country	2008	2009	Change in %	% of total 2009
Armenia	104	78	-25%	0%
Azerbaijan	408	355	-13%	0%
Bulgaria	1 864	1 833	-2%	1%
Croatia	2 366	1 868	-21%	1%
Czech Republic	168	190	13%	0%
Estonia	59	62	5%	0%

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[4] Tentative results from the ICMPD Yearbook on Illegal Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking in Central and Eastern Europe in 2009 (forthcoming)

[5] At the time of writing, figures were not available yet from all countries of the wider Black Sea Region

Bosnia and Herzegovina	543	381	**-30%**	0%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1 080	1 111	**3%**	1%
Georgia	350	232	**-34%**	0%
Greece	146 337	126 145	**-14%**	75%
Hungary	5 684	8 197	**44%**	5%
Latvia	7 520	4 639	**-38%**	3%
Lithuania	3 226	4 709	**46%**	3%
Montenegro	672	n. a.	**-**	-
Poland	5 797	3 581	**-38%**	2%
Romania	2 315	2 011	**-13%**	1%
Serbia	1 514	3 218	**113%**	2%
Slovakia	1 034	611	**-41%**	0%
Slovenia	1 189	824	**-31%**	0%
Ukraine	9 922	8 569	**-14%**	5%
Total	**191 480**	**168 614**	**-12%**	**100%**
Total without Greece	**45 143**	**42 469**	**-6%**	
Wider Black Sea Region *	**14 963**	**13 078**	**-13%**	**8 %**

* Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Ukraine

2.1.   General overview of irregular migration in the region[6]

Today, the countries of the Black Sea Region function as source, transit and destination countries of international migration flows. The transit routes for irregular migrants is directed westwards; migrants entering the region usually do not have the intention to stay, but use countries along the way as a transit on their way to the Russian Federation and/or further to the Western European countries.

The Russian Federation has developed into a major destination and a transit country for irregular migration movements. The large stocks of irregular migrants mainly result from a visa free regime towards citizens of CIS countries, which allows for a comparatively easy entry into a country. In other words, the majority of irregular migrants residing and/or working in Russia are individuals who had entered the country legally and had overstayed the permitted duration of stay and/or are illegally employed in the country.

The irregular migration routes originate in various corners of the Eurasian and African continents: from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and South East Asia to the Middle East and North Africa. Countries specifically mentioned are Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and recently China as well as Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria and Morocco.

Irregular migration is facilitated by well-organised professional human smuggling networks and bogus travel agencies. Attempts to illegally cross the state border include single cases of illegally crossing the border, facilitated illegal migration across the green border and attempts to use forged and falsified travel documents to cross official border crossing points.

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[6] ICMPD Yearbook on Illegal Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking in Central and Eastern Europe in 2009 (forthcoming), "Building Migration Partnerships" project

Migrants typically enter the countries legally, with valid documents and visas, and later overstay their visas or try to leave to enter another country illegally. The most commonly given purposes to enter a country on visas of legal migrants who later become part of the growing illegal migration, are work, tourism, visits and studies. Some irregular migrants arrive legally as students but then either never appear at the university or attend it only for a few weeks or months. It should also be noted that some migrants fail to make their way to the West and get 'stranded' along the way.

3.   MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

Initiatives to improve border guard cooperation have already been taken in the Black Sea Region; some of these could be further strengthened or replicated to cover a larger number of countries and stakeholders.

3.1.   Multilateral cooperation initiatives

The following paragraphs give a short overview of some of the latest developments and existing initiatives in the area of border cooperation in the wider Black Sea Region; it is by no means intended to be exhaustive.

3.1.1.   *Black Sea Littoral States Border/Coast Guard Cooperation Forum (BSCF) and the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre (BS BCIC) in Burgas*

Since 2000, the leaders of the Black Sea Littoral States Border/Coast Guard Agencies have been meeting annually regarding maritime regional border cooperation in the Black Sea (Bulgaria, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine). The purpose is to enhance interaction among border/coast guard agencies in order to prevent smuggling by sea, illegal migration and other kinds of illegal activities, as well as strengthening the safety and security of navigation in the Black Sea.

This interaction includes common operations and search and rescue activities, as well as an automated information exchange system (AIES), which enables rapid information flow regarding illegal activities in the Black Sea. Information is shared through an online computer network between the littoral states. AIES is operated by the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre (BS BCIC) located in Burgas, Bulgaria, which was established in 2004 on the grounds that a permanent acting coordination and information centre is more effective than the rotating one.

3.1.2.   *Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)*

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation was established in 1992 between eleven countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine and gained the status of an international organisation in 1999; in 2004, Serbia also joined.

Although BSEC's area of expertise falls into the economic cooperation sector, some of its activities in trade, transport infrastructure and customs cooperation have a direct impact on border management in its member states (e.g. cooperation with EUBAM). This year, for example, BSEC is promoting a system of real-time information exchange between the customs agencies based on standards set by the World Customs Organisation.

3.1.3. Southeast European Cooperation Initiative, Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime (SECI Center)

With 13 member states in Southeast Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey), the SECI Center brings together police and customs officers from a wide geographic area, which partly coincides with the Black Sea Region. Since its establishment in 2000, it has grown into an effective operational regional initiative strengthening its member states' law enforcement capabilities to combat organized crime. SECI Center facilitates real-time exchange of information on cross-border criminal cases and coordinates regional operations as well as seven task forces addressing issues of drugs smuggling and trafficking in human being, stolen vehicles, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and computer crime, terrorism and container security. It also issues analytical reports on organized crime and organizes training sessions for member countries' law enforcement representatives.

Currently the SECI Center is undergoing a transition period. A process of reorganisation of the Center has started with the signing of the SELEC Convention (the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center), aimed at enhancing the operational efficiency and analytical capacity. Up to now the Convention has been ratified by five countries and it will enter into force after the ratification by nine of its member states.

3.1.4. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

From the wider Black Sea Region, the CIS covers Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The latest Programme for Cooperation of the CIS countries in fighting Illegal Migration (2009-2011) proposes:

1. Practical cooperation in the following areas: conduct joint exercises and special operations in identifying and preventing channels for illegal migration; create a join database for functioning smuggling groups; provide all available information for these databases; analyse the effectiveness of the current border control situation in the CIS countries; create detention centres; recommend designing of national action plans for combating illegal migration.

2. Information exchange aimed at continuation of the exchange of information and good practices, conducting working-level workshops and a conferences on analysing the effectiveness of introducing biometrical documents in preventing illegal migration.

3. Capacity-building, exchange of experiences, consultations and exchange of training materials.

Based on the Concept on Coordinated Border Cooperation (2005), the Action Plan for implementation of the Concept on Coordinated Border Cooperation (2007-2010) aimed to further enhance cooperation of the border guard services. It calls for:

1. Creating mechanisms for adequate response to security threats: terrorism, organised cross-border crime, illegal migration, smuggling in human beings, guns, narcotics and precursors in the CIS.

2. Strengthening legal framework, harmonising national legislations on border protection, creating a common database of illegal migrants, and conducting annual joint border protection exercises

3. Creating a special database of all border armament of the border guard services of the CIS countries; annually analysing progress of the plan of action and develop new research methods for analysis and prognosis of joint across on the borders

4. Exchanging of information on the situation at the borders, main existing threats; and, annually analyse and update education material for vocational training and capacity-building of border guard services.

3.1.5. *Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI)*

Although this regional cooperation initiative only covers a few countries of the wider Black Sea Region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), MARRI, established in 2003, merits mention since it carries out work in the area of border management with special focus on promoting closer inter-agency and regional cooperation.

3.1.6. *Frontex*

Two of the littoral Black Sea countries, Bulgaria and Romania, form part of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex); the remaining littoral states either have or are currently negotiating bilateral working arrangements with Frontex as part of the agency's strategy to establish close operational relationships with the border guard authorities of countries situated outside the EU.

A concrete example of regional operational cooperation is the Western Balkan Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) between the Risk Analysis Units of the competent border-control authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Frontex Risk Analysis Unit. The workings of the WB-RAN are explained in more detail further below. Apart from this cooperation initiative, Frontex also conducts joint operations with the participation of non-EU countries, as well as regular meetings and common training activities.

On 1 October 2010, Frontex opened the pilot Operational Office in Pireaus, Greece, as the first of its kind to provide regionally-based support for its activities.[7] If the pilot in the Eastern Mediterranean region proves to be successful, the concept will be implemented also in other regions such as the Western Mediterranean, the Western Balkan and the Black Sea, and the Eastern land borders including the Baltic Sea. The purpose is to strengthen Frontex role as a coordinator in the joint operations, enhance situational awareness in the region and reinforce its contribution to increase and harmonise border management standards across the external borders of the EU.

3.1.7. *Black Sea Synergy (BSS)*[8]

A conference between the EU and Black Sea Foreign Affairs Ministers (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey) in 2008 led to a joint statement initiating the Black Sea Synergy with the overall aim of enhancing regional cooperation *within* the Black Sea Region and *between* the region as a whole and the EU. The BSS identifies key areas where regional cooperation could be promoted including, among others, energy, trade, environment, transport, good governance as well as contacts between local authorities. As the areas covered by the BSS overlap with BSEC's

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[7] Frontex Press Release: "Frontex Operational Office opens in Pireaus", 1 October 2010

[8] Tsantoulis, Yannis, (2009), "Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centres of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals?", *ICBSS Policy Briefs*, International Centre for Black Sea Studies.

mandate, an important role has been given to the organisation in the initiative. Border management is not specifically mentioned, whereas "managing movement and improving security", as well as transport and trade, are key target areas.

3.1.8. Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the IBM Flagship Initiative

The Prague Summit in 2009 led to a joint declaration on the Eastern Partnership (EaP), with the aim of improving bilateral and multilateral political and economic trade-relations between the EU and the European Neighbourhood countries Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia – each of these forming part of the wider Black Sea Region.

In 2010, an EaP Integrated Border Management Panel was established and attached to the EaP Platform "Democracy, Good governance and Stability". This Panel decided on an Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management Flagship Initiative project with the overall objective to facilitate the movement of persons and goods across borders in the six EaP countries while at the same time maintaining secure borders. During 2011 and 2012, the project will focus on the following five areas:

1. Support to the implementation of IBM Strategy and Action Plan
2. Risk analysis for border guards and customs
3. Document integrity and security, detection of forgeries and imposter recognition
4. Detection of drugs and smuggled cigarettes/tobacco products
5. Protection of intellectual property rights
6. Fight against corruption (horizontal thematic area)

3.1.9. EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM)

EUBAM was launched in 2005 following a joint request made by Moldova and Ukraine. It is an advisory, technical body mandated to enhance the capacities of the border guard and customs authorities and other law enforcement and state agencies of Moldova and Ukraine. Implemented by UNDP, EUBAM provides on-the-job training, technical assistance and advice to the Moldovan and Ukrainian border guard and customs services, reinforcing their capacity to carry out effective border and customs controls and border surveillance. The Mission's mandate was extended twice, in 2007 and 2009, and is currently foreseen to last until 30 November 2011.

With the support of EUBAM, Moldova and Ukraine have reached considerable results in the area of integrated border management, such as joint border control operations, production of common border security assessments, joint public information activities, pilot projects on jointly operated border crossing points and joint patrols, confidence building measures and exchange of customs pre-arrival information.[9]

3.1.10. South Caucasus Integrated Border Management programme (SCIBM)

SCIBM, implemented by UNDP, has since 2009 been supporting the implementation of integrated border management strategies by the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Implementation of project components is delegated to border management agencies in the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, as well as to ICMPD.

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[9] Burkholder, Udo, (2010) "Integrated Border Management: Achievements and the Way Ahead", EUBAM

3.2.   Legal framework for border guard cooperation

The basis for establishing effective and efficient border guard cooperation is found in the legal agreements, protocols, regulations and memoranda of understanding between the different countries in the Black Sea Region. Some bilateral agreements currently in force detail specific and precise areas for cooperation, for example on one-stop control, whereas others are of a more general nature or in need of being updated.

In addition to the delimitation and demarcation of the state borders and the designation of official border crossing points, the legal framework should also regulate cooperation related to the management of the borders. This includes joint activities at border crossing points, the border line and in the immediate border zone, information and data exchange and mutual assistance agreements (for example, sharing intelligence in the fight against organised crime).

Examples of issues to be covered in agreements:

- Establishment of joint contingency plans;
- Coordinated or joint patrols;
- The possibility of establishing common border crossing points on the territory of one of the countries;
- Common operational procedures at the border crossing point;
- Harmonisation of day-to-day work practices at the BCP;
- A common routing slip covering the checks at both sides of the border;
- Control/checks in trains departing from the territory of the neighbouring country;
- Designation of official contact points or liaison officers;
- Establishment of common contact offices;
- Exchange of information and risk analysis;
- Cross-border surveillance;
- Joint investigations;
- Readmission procedures concerning persons and goods/consignments to which entry is denied;
- Hot pursuit and the creation of rapid intervention units composed of national border guards with the right to support the neighbouring country within its territory in case of exceptional or urgent situations, and;
- Joint training/exercises.

3.3.   Good practice examples in the region[10]

Listed below are a selected number of good practice examples of border guard cooperation in the wider Black Sea Region.

3.3.1. Common contact centres

Common contact offices, where officers from different countries work closely together in the same premises, have been established at various locations in the Black Sea Region. Such centres exist between Bulgaria and Greece (possibly to include Turkey), Bulgaria and Romania,

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[10] Questionnaires sent out to the countries of the Black Sea Region in January 2011, see the Annex for the template; "Guidelines for Integrated border Management in European Commission External Cooperation" (2010)

and Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. These centres can be both bilateral or trilateral and even quadrilateral and demand a high level of integration as they serve to speed up the exchange of information for routine cooperation as well as in the case of emergencies and violations of the law.

The main task of the contact office is information exchange on daily operations and responding to direct requests. This can include:

- Forgeries of travel documents, visas and stamps of border controls;
- Personal data regarding owners of means of transport, residence and ownership of means of communication;
- Means of transport: license plates, serial numbers, etc.;
- Ascertaining the identity of a person;
- Readmission of irregular immigrants;
- Special operations undertaken by border guard patrols for prevention and control;
- General sharing of intelligence[11,] for example on forms and methods of smuggling, on trafficking in human beings and other form of trans-border crime;
- Information regarding cross-border hot pursuit.

The contact offices are not limited to border policing tasks and can also include customs services as well as prosecutors and other authorities. If it is not possible to deploy liaison officers or establish common contact offices, a network of contact points at the local, regional and central levels in neighbouring countries should be established.

3.3.2. Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre in Burgas (BSBCIC)

In practice, BSBCIC or the so-called Burgas Centre is the only permanently functioning instrument for border guard cooperation in the framework of the BSCF in the Black Sea. BSBCIC ensures operational and technical cooperation with, as well as information exchange between, the national border coordination centres of the littoral Black Sea countries in the cooperation. Since its inception, cooperation has become more and more institutionalised between the participating states.

The main means for information exchange is the automated information exchange system (AIES) with restricted access, which provides a secure connection in real-time. BSBCIC also maintains a database of suspect vessels, based on evidence or suspicion of conducting illegal activities; human trafficking; illegal migration; drugs smuggling, weapons smuggling, smuggling of weapons of mass destruction, and smuggling of goods and fuel; piracy; illegal fishing; environmental pollution; and other illegal activities.

In 2008, information exchange was intensified to include a database on natural and legal persons suspected of illegal activities and to regularly exchange results by the individual states on the fight against and prevention of illegal activities in the Black Sea waters, based upon which the BSBCIC prepares quarterly analyses of the situation in the Black Sea Region.

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[11] Sharing of other than tactical intelligence may prove difficult, however, since it is usually the central authority that authorises the transfer of intelligence to other countries. A suitable mechanism has to be established to permit a fast transfer of intelligence to a foreign partner agency. The central level also needs to ensure that it has oversight on joint operations instigated internationally as a result of shared intelligence.

3.3.3. Risk Analysis Network: the WB-RAN

Based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2008 between the countries of the Western Balkan region, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia now exchange monthly statistical reports on irregular migration with the additional support of Frontex. This regular data collection exercise focuses on six key indicators, specific to the threat of irregular migration: (1) detections of irregular border-crossing, (2) detections of facilitators, (3) detections of irregular stay, (4) refusals of entry, (5) asylum applications and (6) detections of false documents. The data collected is categorized by border type (land, air and sea) and by land border sections.

In 2009, Frontex proposed to establish a permanent Western Balkan Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) between the Risk Analysis Units of the competent border-control authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Frontex Risk Analysis Unit (RAU). In order to facilitate the exchange of data between the Western Balkan countries and Frontex, the European Commission and Frontex set up a secure Internet platform on the European Commission's Circa server.

The WB-RAN is structured as follows:

1. Regular information exchange
2. Common definitions
3. Common platform
4. Joint analytical activities
5. Annual product
6. Annual event

The results of the WB-RAN, and the establishment of siminalr risk analysis networks in general, are:

- Increased common situational awareness
- Improved common understanding of threats and risks to border security, their causes, likelihood and impact
- More careful consideration of different risk mitigation options and strategies
- Data analysis and sharing provides all partners useful tool to deal with migration phenomena in their own countries
- More justified and targeted allocation of common funds and other resources

4.   SUMMARISING REMARKS

The Black Sea Region has important geostrategic weight, located in the borderlands between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. From a geographical perspective, it constitutes the easternmost part of Europe. From a social, cultural and historical perspective, it is one of the most heterogeneous regions in this part of the world. Nevertheless, the past years have seen a steady growth of multilateral initiatives that emphasize unity more than diversity and that underline the value of cooperation and coordination. Effective and efficient regional cooperation has the potential to generate benefits that states and their institutions alone cannot achieve through their own independent actions.

Irregular migration takes place mainly – but not solely - along the land routes around the Black Sea and not across the sea. Efforts should be taken to strengthen cooperation between the Black Sea region countries in order to be better prepared for potential future challenges. The

figures show that currently irregular migration flows along the land routes around the Black Sea are relatively stable. Nevertheless, border authorities need to be prepared to effectively and efficiently respond to shifting migration pressures, particularly in the light of the forthcoming extension of the Schengen area which may have an immediate impact on irregular migration routes and modus operandi.

4.1. Recommendations for the future

The 2nd Meeting of the Black Sea WG identified the following areas as opportunities for improving border guard cooperation:

1. Establishing new or expanding upon existing common contact centres/offices between two or more countries – bilateral, trilateral or quadrilateral – at strategically relevant border crossing points in order speed up the information exchange for routine cooperation as well as real-time communication in case of emergencies or illegal activities or early warning information.

2. Conducting joint and/or coordinated border patrols at green and blue borders, for example, dividing the border into sub-sections and alternating border patrol in a chess-board pattern.

3. Regularly updating and strengthening the implementation of bilateral border guard cooperation action plans.

4. Establishing joint border crossing points, sharing facilities/equipment and introducing joint controls/checks and eventually so-called one-stop control, where all controls at a BCP are coordinated by the agencies of both countries and partly carried out jointly.

5. Deploying liaison officers and/or sharing liaison officers with countries who have deployed them. Where such liaison officers do not exist, other national contact points should be known to all.

6. Drawing up a common contact manual for the Black Sea Region, with a list of national single points of contact available 24/7, or, when a single point of contact is not possible, a list of national contacts according to topic and competence in the area of border management. A functioning network of national contact points is also the first step to make it possible to communicate early warning information.

7. Conducting regular meetings according to pre-determined protocols and according to need. For example, weekly meetings between chiefs of border crossing points (operational), meetings every three months at the regional level (operational and strategic) and yearly meetings at the central level (strategic).

8. Conducting joint training on issues of common interest, especially joint language training.

9. Implementing bilateral staff exchanges.

5.   ANNEX

5.1.   Questionnaire template

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information about bilateral and multilateral border management cooperation between the countries of the Black Sea Region in preparation of a background paper for the second meeting of the Working Group in Sofia on 9-10 February 2011. We invite you to please answer the questions listed below as detailed as possible (feel free to add as many rows as needed).

A. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **How is your bilateral and multilateral cooperation organised with the countries of the Black Sea Region and in what form and frequency?**

    For example, with which agencies across the border do you exchange information? What kind of information is shared? How is information shared? Do you have regular high-level meetings? If yes, on which topics?

2. **What agreements regulate cooperation between your agency and your counterpart from your neighbouring states (in the Black Sea Region)?**

    On what topics? How are the agreements implemented in practice?

3. **In what types of cases do you get in contact with your counterparts in neighbouring states? With which agencies and at what level? Informally, formally, regularly?**

    For example, do you coordinate the opening hours of your border crossing points with those of your neighbouring countries? How do you consult with your neighbouring state(s) when building/upgrading your border crossing points?

4. **Do you have liaison officers posted in the countries of the Black Sea Region? If so, in which countries and why? Who do the liaison officers represent?**

5. **Do you have a bilateral or regional early warning system in place? How does it function? What areas are covered?**

6. **What border management areas are mostly in need of improved regional cooperation and why? Please differentiate between the strategic and operational level, as well as types of cooperation** (joint activities, harmonised training curricula, data exchange, common contact offices, etc.)

B. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Please provide a description of (an) established good practice(s) on border management cooperation in the Black Sea Region. With good practice examples we mean any processes/procedures/approaches

that have helped your agency to work more effectively/efficiently/successfully. Please fill in the empty table below, duplicating it for each new good practice example.

Name of the good practice:
Location(s) where the good practice is implemented:
Brief description of the good practice:
Reason(s) for adopting the good practice:
Biggest benefit(s) being realised from this good practice:
What must be in place before adopting the good practice/Prerequisites?