Southeast European Law Enforcement Center

Annual Report 2017
Summary
Summary

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Foreword
It is my honor and pleasure to introduce the annual report of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center for the year 2017.

Since the entering into force in 2011 of the new legal framework of SELEC we have witnessed the growth of the Center as a renewed treaty-based organization. The valuable and particular organizational structure which includes Police and Customs authorities working together, the exchange of information in a timely manner and the high mobility in organizing operational meetings are just a part of the key elements of a synergy that brings together resources from 12 countries aiming to efficiently tackle and dismantle organized crime groups in Southeastern Europe.

Preventing and countering trans-border organized crime is of crucial importance, thus the regional cooperation should focus on challenges that can be better addressed through common approach, enhanced cooperation and strengthened partnerships.

As an example of excellent cooperation in the Southeast European region, SELEC continues to support, enhance and strengthen the activities of the competent authorities of our Member States in their efforts of preventing and combating organized crime, this being reflected in the excellent results obtained, namely the increase of the number of exchanges of information and requests of assistance from 11,320 in 2011 to 26,463 in 2017, and of the number of joint investigations from 60 in 2011 to 108 in 2017.

The outstanding results achieved could not be obtained without the support and dedication of the law enforcement institutions of our Member States, National Focal Points, Liaison Officers, Staff, as well as our Partners, and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for their support and hard work.

Snejana MALEEVA
Director General of SELEC
At A Glance
At A Glance

Bucharest/Romania
SELEC is a law enforcement, treaty-based organization, headquartered in Bucharest/Romania

12 / 3 / 20
Currently SELEC has 12 Member States, 3 Operational Partners and 20 Observers

6th Anniversary
In 2017 SELEC celebrated its 6th anniversary

26,463
SELEC facilitates the rapid exchange of information and requests of assistance, the number increasing from 11,320 in 2011 to 26,463 in 2017

108
108 joint investigations developed by the Member States and supported by SELEC were conducted in 2017

OCTA SEE
Organized Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA SEE) shall be finalized and released in 2018

45%
In 2016 it was recorded a 45% recovery rate of the stolen vehicles in the SELEC region

CDM
Controlled Delivery Manual, jointly developed with OSCE, regularly updated, is a useful tool for practitioners

Project SIRAS
SELEC is a partner in Project SIRAS – Strengthening the fight against firearms trafficking in Southeastern Europe, to be executed until the end of 2018

Project F.A.I.T
Project F.A.I.T- Fight Against Illegal Trade shall be implemented during 2018-2019

Eclipse II/ Spare Parts
Two regional operations were developed in 2017 by the Member States, namely Eclipse II targeting smuggling of cigarettes and Spare Parts targeting illicit trade and trafficking of vehicle spare parts

555,000
One of the findings of the Report on Illegal Migration was that the number of migrants detected substantially decreased (around 555,000 detections in 2016)

1,592
According to the key findings of the Report on Trafficking in Human beings, the number of victims identified at regional level has dropped each year since 2013, reaching 1,592 identifications in 2016

Drugs Seizures
Among the conclusions of the Report on Drug Seizures: the opium-based drugs seized in Southeast Europe weighted more than 7 tons, cocaine-3,500 kg, cannabis products- over 200 tons

3.9 billion
The Member States of SELEC seized close to 3.9 billion cigarettes in 2016, as it is revealed by the Annual Report on the Situation of cigarettes and tobacco smuggling
Who We Are
About SELEC

The Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) is an international treaty-based law enforcement organization, gathering Police and Customs representatives from its twelve Member States, established to provide support and to enhance the coordination in preventing and combating crime, including transnational serious and organized crime.

The founding document of SELEC is the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center that entered into force in 2011. As the successor of SECI Center established in 1999, SELEC has an extensive expertise in successfully coordinating joint investigations and regional operations, supporting operational meetings, facilitating the swift exchange of information and drafting analytical products.

7th of October 2017 marked the 6th year from the establishment of our Center that is committed to further develop its capacities in order to offer a proper response to the emerging threats to the security of the countries from Southeastern Europe.

Headquarters

SELEC Headquarters is located in Bucharest/Romania, within the Palace of Parliament, where the Liaison Officers of the Member States are posted for the purpose of ensuring the cooperation in preventing and combating trans-border organized crime in the region.

Member States

The twelve Member States of SELEC, parties to the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center, are:

- Republic of Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Republic of Bulgaria
- Republic of Croatia
- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Hellenic Republic
- Hungary
- Republic of Moldova
- Montenegro
- Romania
- Republic of Serbia
- Republic of Turkey
# SELEC Structure

**The Council** is the highest decision-making body of SELEC, comprising of high-level representatives of SELEC Member States.

In 2017, **the Council Chairmanship** was held by Montenegro.

**The Management of SELEC** consists of:
- Director General
- Director for Operations
- Director for Legal and Internal Affairs

The Member States appoint **Liaison Officers** from Police and Customs to work together at the Headquarters of SELEC, being the direct link with the national law enforcement authorities.

The activity of the Liaison Officers is supported by the **National Focal Points** set up in each Member State.

## Partnership with SELEC

Cooperation with SELEC is available to any state or international organization or body which has an interest in law enforcement cooperation in the Southeast European region. The SELEC Convention provides two possibilities of establishing partnerships with SELEC, namely as Operational Partner or as Observer.

**The Operational Partner status** grants the right to exchange personal data, to participate in all SELEC meetings and activities, including operational meetings, and to post a representative at the SELEC Headquarters with the purpose of implementing the cooperation agreement concluded between SELEC and the respective Operational Partner.

## Operational Partners

- **INTERPOL**
- **Italy**
- **USA**

## Observers

**The Observer status** entails the right to receive strategic information, to participate in the events organized by SELEC and to place, at its cost, a delegate to SELEC.
International Cooperation

Besides ensuring the effective successful cooperation among its Member States, also one of SELEC’s priorities in 2017 was expanding the relations with other countries, organizations and bodies, in order to create a synergetic approach in the fight against transnational organized crime.

Except the cooperation in the framework of Operational Partner or Observer status, SELEC has established numerous other partnerships. For example in 2017 two new Letters of Intent were concluded, with eBay and with GIE ARGOS.

Events, trainings and courses

Apart from the three Council sessions, the Task Force meetings, the External Audit of the financial records of SELEC, the meeting of the Financial Consultative Group that gathers experts assigned by the Member States to advise on budgetary matters, SELEC hosted in 2017 various meetings, among them we mention:

During 16-18 of March 2017, the Conference on preventing and detection of the illicit traffic of tobacco products organized by the Romanian Customs General Directorate with the participation of heads of Customs services from Republic of Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Serbia and Ukraine, as well as Customs attachés to Romania, directors of the regional Customs directorate of Romania, representatives of EUBAM and of the main cigarettes’ manufacturers.

SELEC organized at its Headquarters during 11-12 of April 2017, the 5th meeting of the Working Group on Controlled Deliveries with the participation of expert representatives from Council of Europe, Europol, Eurojust, Interpol, Ministry of Justice of Czech Republic and OSCE.

The working group was established in order to develop a wide-ranging handbook on controlled deliveries that is intended to be a “living” product, straightforwardly updatable, so as to be a useful tool for practitioners.

During May 16-18, 2017, SELEC hosted at its training center, CEPOL/SELEC Heroin Smuggling Course 18/2017 organized by CEPOL with the participation of law enforcement officers and prosecutors from EU and non-EU states. SELEC representatives delivered presentations and shared expertise, introduced the key findings of the Report on Drug Seizures in Southeast Europe and presented SELEC’s cooperation mechanism, as well as the successful joint investigations conducted within SELEC’s framework in the area of drug trafficking.
Project SIRAS-Strengthening the fight against firearms trafficking in Southeastern Europe, financed by European Commission, was launched in 2017 with the first meeting of the Steering Committee back-to-back with the End-user group meeting, held on 8-9 June. Project SIRAS, with a duration of 23 months, will be implemented by the Romanian Police, as lead partner, together with SELEC and law enforcement authorities from Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria and Italian Republic. The main objectives of the project are creating a network of experts in the field of combating the dark-net traffic of firearms, drafting a standard in this field that will be translated in all SELEC Member States’ languages and opening a specialized training center.

SELEC implements Project F.A.I.T- Fight Against Illegal Trade that aims increasing the operational capacity of SELEC and its Member States in order to create an efficient response in fighting against smuggling phenomena, in particular tobacco smuggling. The duration of the project is 2 years and the implementation will start at the beginning of 2018. One of the project’s main objectives is setting up SELEC Operational Centre Unit in order to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement agencies in fighting illegal trade. Project F.A.I.T is financed by PMI IMPACT – a global grant initiative by Philip Morris International to support projects dedicated to fighting illegal trade and related crimes.

Project A.T.H.E.N.A on Addressing Training to SPOC as Hub of a European Network of Law Enforcement Agencies under the Funding mechanism HOME/2015/ISFP/AG/LETX - Law Enforcement Training. SELEC is co-partner in this project together with Italian Criminal Police, State Police Latvia, General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, Belgian Federal Police, CESIE - Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo.

During 2-4 October, the 3rd Interpol Counter Terrorism Committee for the MENA region was held with the participation of officers from six Middle East and North Africa countries as well as representatives of international organizations such as SELEC, Europol, NATO and UNODC.

The three-days meeting provided an opportunity to create synergies between national and international institutions involved in the fight against terrorism.

The Paris Pact Initiative Expert Meeting on Precursors organized by UNODC and SELEC during 23-24 October 2017 under the framework of the Paris Pact Initiative was attended by specialists from Paris Pact partners countries and organizations including SELEC Member States and Partners, Afghanistan, People’s Republic of China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan as well as representatives of the European Union EU-ACT, Europol, GCC-CIC, INCB, Interpol and SCO.
SEEPAG

SEEPAG, the prosecutorial network operating in Southeast Europe since 2003, continues to function successfully under SELEC auspices, having regular meetings, good connections established and providing swift cooperation among the prosecution offices of its Member States.

In the framework of the Romanian Chairmanship of SEEPAG, the 28th SEEPAG Conference having as a topic "Collecting evidences in terrorism offence investigations" was organized by SELEC jointly with Romanian Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism, on 26 September 2017, in Sinaia/Romania, with the participation of the General Prosecutor of Romania, Head of DIOCT, prosecutors from the SEEPAG countries, Kingdom of Belgium, Italian Republic, United States of America and several organizations, such as Eurojust, European Judicial Network, OPDAT and Regional Cooperation Council.

The representatives of the prosecution offices from the participating countries addressed legal and practical matters regarding investigating terrorism related offences, an issue of worldwide concern.

It was concluded that, having in view the importance of the fight against terrorism, the competent authorities have to seek for more effective ways to address this emerging threat and tackle it in a proactive manner. The appropriate legal framework, swift cooperation and timely and comprehensive exchange of information should remain a priority for SEEPAG Member States.

In line with the rotation procedure regulated by the General Guidelines of SEEPAG, the Chairmanship for 2018 was transferred to Republic of Serbia.

Internship

SELEC’s Internship programme provides an insight on the way of functioning of an international organization, thus offering the opportunity to experience working in a multicultural environment, to have a better understanding about the organization’s mission and activities, at the same time giving Interns the possibility to put in practice their knowledge and abilities.
Operational Activities
Under SELEC’s umbrella, six Task Force meetings were organized in 2017 covering our main priorities of the fight against organized crime, providing forums of discussion for experts from SELEC Member States and partner countries and organizations. Moreover, during the Task Force meetings, the experts have the opportunity to share good practices and challenges, to initiate joint investigations, to evaluate the activities conducted and to decide upon further steps to be taken at regional level, as part of a common and more efficient endeavor for tackling cross-border organized crime.

SELEC’s operational activities are conducted within the framework of eight specialized Task Forces:

- **Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration Task Force**
- **Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force**
- **Financial and Computer Crime Task Force**
- **Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force**
- **Stolen Vehicles Task Force**
- **Anti-Terrorism Task Force**
- **Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force**
- **Container Security Task Force**

**Exchange of information**

One of the main roles of SELEC is to provide the platform and facilitate the swift exchange of information and requests of assistance among the Member States and Partners, through the Liaison Officers from Police and Customs Authorities of the Member States posted at SELEC Headquarters in Bucharest/Romania. Throughout 2017 a number of 26,463 requests and information were exchanged in the framework of SELEC, this being the highest number since the establishment of the Center. Most of the requests shared through SELEC channel were related to drug trafficking, illegal migration and smuggling and customs fraud.
The information flow within SELEC is described below:

Any request or information sent by an investigative team must be addressed to the National Focal Point (NFP), as the single point of contact in the Member State for communications with SELEC, which must redirect it to its Liaison Officer (LO) posted at SELEC Headquarters. All information exchanges or requests of assistance follow this pattern. The support of SELEC’s Analytical Unit can be requested in any stage of this process.

Joint investigations

SELEC continued to provide tailored operational support to its Member States in investigating active organized crime groups operating in the region, 108 joint investigations being carried out last year under SELEC’s coordination.

These joint investigations, aiming to tackle transnational organized crime in the region, are initiated on the proposal of one or more Member States, through their respective Liaison Officers posted at SELEC.

In 2017 most of the joint investigations were carried out in the framework of the Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force, followed by the Task Force on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, and the Financial and Computer Crime Task Force.

Regional operations

Regional operations are representing a key segment in the activity of SELEC and of the Member States law enforcements agencies joint efforts.

SELEC Member States and its Partners initiated and developed two regional operations in 2017:

- **Operation ECLIPSE II**: targeting smuggling of cigarettes, raw and smoking tobacco
- **Operation SPARE PARTS**: targeting illicit trade and trafficking of vehicle spare parts, and also trafficking of stolen vehicles.

The results of these regional operations are presented at the relevant chapters.
Analytical products

Strategic analysis present an early warning of threats and a wide-range overview on various crime areas in Southeast Europe, in order to support stakeholders in better understanding the situation at regional and international level and take the necessary measures in order to tackle the emerging crimes.


12 such analytical products were developed by SELEC in 2017.

The most comprehensive product developed by SELEC is the Organized Crime Threat Assessment for the South East European Region (OCTA SEE) which represents an instrument for decision makers in setting up common strategies in combating trans-border organized crime.

The OCTA SEE covering the period 2013-2017 shall be finalized and disseminated in 2018.

Capabilities

Analysis, including collecting, processing, validating, collating, dissemination of data, as the basis of intelligence-led policing, is an indispensable component of the operational activities.

The main task of the Analytical Unit is elaborating analytical reports in order to support the activities of the Task Forces, drafting threat assessments, as well as regional operations’ evaluation reports. Additionally, the Unit is providing operational analytical support to SELEC Member States during regional operations and joint investigations, upon request.

The Operational Planning, Coordination and Support Unit is responsible for planning and organizing operational activities, supporting the preparation of plans for regional operations and joint investigations, preparing meeting reports, assisting the development and implementation of projects, collecting the national reports necessary for drafting the analytical products, providing support to the Liaison Officers, and liaising with the member countries’ institutions.
Awards

The Bi-Annual Awards programme, destined to encourage, motivate and appreciate the professionalism of the law enforcement authorities of the Member States, is developed and implemented by SELEC based on a decision of the SELEC Council.

The awards are a recognition and appreciation of their efforts in conducting successful operations in the framework of SELEC.

In 2017, nine joint investigations developed by the Member States were prized due to the excellent results obtained.

SELEC provides the platform for the Member States and Partners to exchange operational information in a timely manner through the secure information exchange network that enable the communication among the law enforcement authorities of the Member States and Partners.

The fully-equipped Training Center located within the SELEC Headquarters hosts various trainings and events organized by SELEC or by its partners, offering also a secure venue due to its location.
Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration Task Force

The 24th meeting of the Task Force on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration was held in Bucharest, Romania on 23rd of May 2017. Representatives of SELEC Member States and of Europol, EUBAM, IOM Romania, Italy, Netherlands, OSCE, Spain and USA attended the meeting.

During the meeting the Report on Illegal Migration in Southeastern Europe for 2016, Report on Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeastern Europe for 2016 and the Evaluation Report for Regional Operation Mirage 2016 were presented and discussed.

The Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration Task Force was established in 2000 and is coordinated by Romania.

Report on Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeast Europe

The extent of trafficking in human beings in the region continues to represent a serious matter that most countries are facing, either internally or at international level. SELEC Member States remain mainly countries of origin of the victims of trafficking exploited in other countries, particularly in Western Europe, the organized crime groups involved being characterized by flexibility and adaptability.

The indicators of trafficking in human beings in Southeastern Europe, such as the number of identified victims, traffickers investigated, as well as the number of investigations are following a descending trend. The number of victims identified at regional level has dropped each year since 2013, reaching 1,592 identifications in 2016, while 664 police investigations related to trafficking in human beings were initiated, 503 perpetrators were charged or prosecuted and 314 were convicted.

Report on Illegal Migration in Southeast Europe

In 2016, SELEC Member States continued to be transited by the migration flow coming mainly from the Middle-East and Asia, intending to reach the countries of Western Europe. After 2015, when record numbers were registered on all migration indicators, in 2016 additional measures were undertaken by the law enforcement authorities at the borders of SELEC Member States as well as improvements into national law provisions in this regard were made. Thus, the general pressure posed by the migration flow over SELEC Member States has dropped significantly (a 74% decrease being registered in terms of illegal migrants detected in SELEC Member States). Citizens of Syria and Afghanistan represented, for the fourth year consecutively, the most important share (close to 60% together) of the total illegal migrants detected in SELEC Member States.

Although the number of migrants detected has substantially decreased (around 555,000 detections in 2016), a significant threat continues to be posed by the organized crime groups engaged in smuggling of migrants throughout SELEC Member States. At regional level, the organized crime groups display strict hierarchic organization structure, clear defined roles for each member, as well as adaptability, paying increased attention to the conspiracy during their communication. Moreover, the investigated organized crime groups were reported as part of larger regional network, with connections in the countries of origin, destination as well as neighboring countries, thus facilitating the migrants through the entire route. Additionally, an intensive use of fraudulent documents was reported in connection with illegal migration, members of the organized crime groups are also producing high quality forged travel documents.
Joint investigations

A total number of 18 joint investigations were supported by SELEC under the umbrella of this Task Force. Among them we mention:

Joint investigation JASTREB/FALCON

In July 2017, the competent law enforcement authorities from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia undertook multiple measures and activities to arrest the members of an organized crime group constituted of nationals from Republic of Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and individuals from the Middle East, who were dealing with smuggling of migrants. 23 individuals were charged on serious grounds they've committed the criminal acts of “Smuggling migrants” and “Organizing a group and encouraging someone to commit the crime of trafficking in human beings”.

The members of the organized crime group led by foreign illegal migrants from the Middle East countries, in collaboration with members of the organized crime group from Republic of Albania, Hellenic Republic and Republic of Serbia, organized the smuggling of migrants from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Hellenic Republic to Republic of Serbia by using illegal crossing points. Most of the migrants originated from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, as well as from the Middle and Far East.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’s Police intercepted an illegal transport of 12 migrants transported by car, driven by one of the organizers. House searches were performed and 2 more migrants were found in the villages’ area. At the same time, 14 individuals, members of the organized crime group, were arrested, 6 vehicles, many telephone devices and SIM cards, almost 30,000 €, and 1 pistol being seized.
Joint investigation COCKTAIL/ASPERA targeted dismantling an organized crime group involved in the smuggling of migrants predominantly coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The *modus operandi* was using facilitators and guides, the migrants being transported by cars on certain parts of the routes, via Republic of Serbia to Hungary, Austria and Germany. Several transports were stopped, part of the smugglers apprehended and close to 200 migrants were rescued by the Hungarian and Serbian authorities.

A joint investigation on illegal migration was carried out following 5 months’ exchange of information between Bulgarian Police and Turkish National Police, through SELEC. Turkish authorities succeeded rescuing 400 migrants while attempting to cross the border from Republic of Turkey to Republic of Bulgaria by either land or river (by boat). A number of 20 migrants’ traffickers were arrested in this case.

Joint investigation DARDANELI conducted among the competent authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia and Montenegro targeted an organized crime group involved in smuggling of migrants from Republic of Turkey through Bosnia and Herzegovina to Republic of Croatia and then further to the countries of the European Union. During May-June 2017, this organized crime group smuggled more than 100 illegal migrants, mostly citizens of Republic of Turkey, but also a group of Syrian citizens. The following *modus operandi* was identified: migrants were illegally smuggled across the border line bypassing border crossings with the help of local guides who were members of the organized group. Turkish citizens legally entered into Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the free visa regime. The operation was successfully finalized, 21 persons being arrested.
Drug Trafficking
Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force

The 23rd Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force meeting was held on 17th of October 2017 in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives of SELEC Member States and Partners, as well as other institutions (such as EUBAM, France, Germany, INTERPOL, Israel, Spain, USA, Ukraine) attended the meeting.

The 2016 draft Report on Drug Seizures in Southeast Europe was presented and discussed with the participants, so as to be finalized and distributed. The Report introduced the methodology and the analysis results for different types of drugs presenting also characteristics of the organized crime groups and controlled deliveries carried out.

The Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force was established in 2000 and is coordinated by Republic of Bulgaria.

Key findings of the Report on Drug Seizures in South Eastern Europe

The Report on Drug Seizures has been prepared in order to provide a wide-ranging overview on the drugs situation in Southeast Europe and to support the competent law enforcement authorities in completing the overview of the situation at regional level. It represents an enlarged and compiled overview of the drug trafficking situation, trends and routes, as it includes data about the markets and demand, with a focus on Southeast Europe.

**Opium-Based Drugs/Heroin**
- The opium-based drugs (opium, heroin and morphine) seized in Southeast Europe weighted more than 7 tons
- In terms of quantities, opiates are at the lowest level in the past five years
- Opiates seized decreased by 32.5%
- Heroin represented 95.2% of the total quantity of opiates, being the most smuggled opium-based drug
- Heroin considerably dropped by 31.7%
- Opium-based drugs were transported by land touring vehicles
- 59.7% of the total quantity seized was based on risk analysis and 38.8% on intelligence
- 56.5% of total amount seized was related to passenger cars and 30.7% to lorries
- The estimated value of the seized heroin: approximately 210 million Euro

**Cocaine**
- Cocaine smuggled from South America producers
- The cocaine seized amounts 3,488,279 kg
- The total detained quantity increased by 297.7%
- 2,307,951 kg of cocaine recorded as seized in one case involving SELEC Member States
- 99.4% of the seized quantity was based on intelligence
- 93.4% of quantities seized are directly related to maritime transport
- The estimated value of the cocaine: around 300 million Euro

**Synthetic Drugs**
- The following quantities of synthetic drugs were seized:
  - Amphetamine: 4,612,947 kg in an approximate value of 40 million Euro
  - Ecstasy: 1,590,795 kg in an approximate value of 60 million Euro
  - Methamphetamine: 260,017 kg in an approximate value of 5 million Euro
Joint investigations

A total number of 50 joint investigations were supported by SELEC in the framework of the Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force. Among them it worth to be mentioned:

Joint investigation ALIAS involved the competent authorities of Republic of Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Hellenic Republic and targeted an organized crime group dealing with drug trafficking. Using the green border, the organized crime group was trafficking cannabis from Republic of Albania directly to Hellenic Republic or through The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Based on the swift information exchange done through SELEC, the joint investigation succeeded with the arrest of 27 persons and seizure of 251 kg and 418.29 gr. cannabis sativa, 425 cannabis seeds, 1 kg 3 gr. heroin, 247, 3 gr. cocaine.

Cannabis
- Cannabis is the most commonly produced and trafficked illicit drug in the region
- The total amount of cannabis products (marijuana and hashish) – over 200 tons. This represents an increase by 178.8%
- 82.3% were herbal cannabis (marijuana) and 17.7% hashish
- Marijuana - 165 tons - snowballing by 159.1%
- Hashish – 35.4 tons - increased by 331.7%
- At regional level, cannabis was mainly transported by truck/trailers (38.0%), speed boats (25.6%) and passenger cars (21.2%)
- 44.8% of the marijuana seized was based on risk analysis and 39.2% on intelligence
- The estimated value of seized marijuana was around 1.5 billion Euro and of hashish was around 500 million Euro

Other Drugs
- New Psychoactive Substances – more present in the region
- People’s Republic of China – main source country for New Psychoactive Substances
- KHAT present in the region in the last several years
- Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria are the main departure countries for KHAT transiting Southeast Europe

Organized crime groups (OCG)
- 6% of the members of the dismantled organized crime groups are foreign citizens (mainly from neighboring countries)
- 8% of the dismantled organized crime groups were multi-drug type
Joint investigation VECTOR/FRANKLIN conducted among the law enforcement authorities of Republic of Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Hellenic Republic targeted dismantling two organized crime groups dealing with illegal trafficking of drugs in the region. As a result of the intensive exchange of information done through SELEC channel, the competent authorities of Republic of Albania arrested 4 persons and seized 10,762 kg heroin and 10 kg of cannabis, the law enforcement authorities from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia arrested 8 persons and seized, in two cases, a total of 40,955 kg marijuana, while Hellenic Republic authorities recorded 38 arrests and seized 316,181 kg of cannabis, as well as 166 cannabis plants, 2 speedboats and 70 cell-phones used to coordinate the illegal drug trafficking. The investigation is still ongoing in two of the involved countries, additional results being expected to be reported.

Joint investigation PICASSO was successfully concluded following the swift exchange of information and 24/7 support provided by the Liaison Officers posted at SELEC, in July 2017 the Bulgarian and Turkish authorities succeeded dismantling an organized crime group dealing with drug trafficking from Republic of Turkey to Western Europe via Hellenic Republic, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other countries on the route. Following the checks, 10 kg of heroin were found in a special concealment of a car, the traffickers being detained and the amount seized by the competent authorities. The following day, Turkish Police confiscated an additional amount of 34 kg heroin and 9 kg marijuana, as well as a handgun and ammunition. 18 persons were arrested in this case. This joint investigation is still ongoing, further results being expected.

Joint investigation COORDINATION/KOORDINIMI involved competent authorities of Republic of Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and targeted dismantling an organized crime group dealing with drug trafficking. In Republic of Albania 9 persons were arrested, 998 kg 815 gr cannabis sativa, as well as 12 firearms and ammunition being seized. 258 kg 650 gr of cannabis sativa, as well as rifles and ammunition were seized by the law enforcement authorities of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. SELEC channel proved to be one of the fastest and most reliable tools, building favorable conditions for the law enforcement agencies from the involved countries.
Joint investigation EMANUIL

In November 2017, the competent authorities of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Serbia dismantled an international organized crime group involved in the production, trade and transport of synthetic drugs, as well as illegal trafficking in precursors, with destination Republic of Turkey and probably Middle East. The exchange of information in this case was done through SELEC channel, which also supported several operational meetings between the involved case officers.

During the searches that were carried out in Tetovo/The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Police found a laboratory with sophisticated equipment for illicit production of synthetic drugs, a large quantity of pills and other raw materials, as well as a gun, two pistols and ammunition. Two additional searches in the area of Skopje were performed during which other equipment was found, as well as 64 pills, 98 bags with powder substance, one pistol and ammunition. The illegal laboratory discovered in Tetovo is one of the biggest laboratories for illegal production of precursors and synthetic drugs discovered lately in Southeast Europe.

Following the forensic examination it was determined that the active component is amphetamine, the pills being marked as “Kaptagon”.

The total amount of different substances seized is to be determined, until now 204,696 pills and 67 packs with a net weight of 35,044 gr. were examined.

At the same time, within the coordinated joint action, in Republic of Serbia another illegal laboratory was found where the members of the organized crime group produced synthetic drugs, which were subsequently smuggled to The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to be processed as pills.

7 members of the organized crime group are presently detained, the judicial procedures are still ongoing.
Financial and Computer Crime Task Force

The Financial and Computer Crime Task Force, coordinated by The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was established in 2001, and has the following sub-groups:

- **Credit card fraud** coordinated by Romania
- **Cybercrime** coordinated by Romania
- **Money laundering** coordinated by Republic of Moldova
- **Intellectual property** coordinated by Republic of Bulgaria
- **Counterfeit currency** coordinated by The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### Joint investigations

A total number of 9 joint investigations were supported by SELEC in the framework of the Financial and Computer Crime Task Force. Among them it worth to be mentioned:

**Joint investigation PRATKA/VIRUS** targeted dismantling the organized crime group that consisted of Bulgarian nationals having connections in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hellenic Republic, Romania and Republic of Serbia. The *modus operandi* used was corrupting Customs officers in all involved countries with the purpose to infiltrate a virus in the Customs’ computerized systems in order to avoid the payment of taxes. The Bulgarian authorities have searched more than 100 addresses, suspects and vehicles. A large quantity of money was seized, as well as equipment, devices for communication, computers, tablets, bank documents, etc. 23 suspects were arrested, 5 of them acting or being former Bulgarian Customs officers. As result of this criminal activity the damages recorded by the Customs Agency, only for year 2015, was around 5 million Euro. It was determined that the members of the organized crime group invested the money obtained from these illegal activities in bitcoins; around 200,000 being found in the virtual space.

**Joint investigation KIPE** was an investigation developed between Romania and Republic of Moldova conducted against several suspects of Moldovan and Romanian nationality involved in installing skimming devices at ATMs in Bucharest. The purpose was to clone the information contained on credit cards and illegally withdraw money from the victims’ accounts, the estimated loss amounting 100,000 USD. During the searches three skimming devices and all necessary items for performing the fraudulent collection of data from ATMs were found at the suspects’ residence. The data obtained illegally was transferred to other members of the organized crime group that performed illicit withdrawals in USA, Peru and Australia. Five members of the organized crime group were detained.
Stolen Vehicles
Stolen Vehicles Task Force

The 14th meeting of the Stolen Vehicles Task Force was held on the 29th of March 2017 at SELEC premises in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives of the Member States and of Belgium, EUBAM, France, GIE ARGOS, Italy, Spain, Ukraine and USA attended the event.

During the meeting the outcome of the Operation Spare Parts was presented, operation that primarily focused on combating illicit trafficking of vehicles and spare parts, acquired mostly (but not only) in Western Europe (EU) by committing criminal offences of various kind with the purpose to later have them legalized in SELEC Member States or via SELEC Member States in other countries of Europe and Asia.

The Task Force on Stolen Vehicles was established in 2002 and is coordinated by Hungary.

Analytical Report on Vehicle Crimes in SELEC Member States

The Report highlights the key findings for all types of vehicles and separately for passenger cars and motorbikes in relation to the number of misappropriated and recovered vehicles/cars, offences, most misappropriated brands and, where relevant, comparative analysis of the situation reported for the previous years.

Some key findings resulting from the statistical data are summarized below, as follows:

ALL TYPES OF VEHICLES:

- Vehicles subject of a crime in South East European region:
  - In 2012 - 62,378 vehicles
  - In 2013 - 57,304 vehicles
  - In 2014 - 61,086 vehicles
  - In 2015 - 56,572 vehicles
  - In 2016 - 101,464 vehicles

- The estimated value of the vehicles subject of a crime in the region:
  - 623,780,000 Euro in 2012
  - 573,040,000 Euro in 2013
  - 610,860,000 Euro in 2014
  - 565,720,000 Euro in 2015
  - 1,014,640,000 Euro in 2016

- The proportion of different types of vehicles subject of a crime:
  - In 2012, compared to the previous year, the percentage of the passenger cars went slightly up to almost 66%, while the percentage of the motorbikes and trucks remained similar (22% motorbikes and 11% trucks)
  - In 2013, the ratio of the passenger cars slightly increased to 67%; the percentage of the trucks remained similar (11%), while the percentage of the motorbikes decreased to 21%
  - In 2014, close to 68% of the vehicles were passenger cars, followed by motorbikes and trucks, each representing 15% of the total number of vehicles
  - In 2015, the percentage of the cars decreased to 56%; the percentage of motorbikes rose (34%), while the percentage of trucks also dropped (9%)
  - In 2016, the percentage of motorbikes increased significantly up to 51% of the total, while passenger cars decreased to 38%, and the percentage of trucks subject to a crime remained at 9%
- In 2016, after the slight decrease recorded in 2015, the number of misappropriated vehicles increased sharply by 79%.
- During 2012-2016, theft was the main method to misappropriate a vehicle in the region (90% in 2012, 89% in 2013, 95% in 2014, 84% in 2015, and 92% in 2016).
- Vehicles recovered by the authorities in SELEC region:
  - In 2012 - 22,732 vehicles (36% recovery rate)
  - In 2013 - 21,455 vehicles (37% recovery rate)
  - In 2014 - 29,093 vehicles (48% recovery rate)
  - In 2015 - 20,015 vehicles (35% recovery rate)
  - In 2016 - 45,287 vehicles (45% recovery rate)

**PASSENGER CARS:**
- The situation of passenger cars subject to a crime in the region in the period 2012-2016:
  - In 2012 - 40,855 cars
  - In 2013 - 38,618 cars
  - In 2014 - 41,451 cars
  - In 2015 - 31,932 cars
  - In 2016 - 38,975 cars

- The estimated value of the passenger cars is:
  - 408,550,000 Euro in 2012
  - 386,180,000 Euro in 2013
  - 414,510,000 Euro in 2014
  - 319,320,000 Euro in 2015
  - 389,750,000 Euro in 2016

- 38,975 cars were reported for 2016, an increase of 22% compared to the level registered in 2015, but 6% lower than the numbers reported in 2014.
- Theft was the main method used for passenger cars in the period 2012-2016 in the SELEC region (85% of total number of cars in 2012, 93% in 2013, 93% in 2014, 85% in 2015 and 87% in 2016).
- Passenger cars recovered by the authorities in the SELEC region:
  - In 2012 - 14,493 cars (35.5% recovery rate)
  - In 2013 - 15,290 cars (39.6% recovery rate)
  - In 2014 - 21,192 cars (51.1% recovery rate)
  - In 2015 - 12,314 cars (38.6% recovery rate)
  - In 2016 - 19,857 cars (50.9% recovery rate)

- In 2016, the number of recovered passenger cars increased by 61% compared to 2015.

**Evaluation Report of Regional Operation SPARE PARTS**

Operation SPARE PARTS was initiated by the Hungarian authorities and organized by SELEC during 16th and 17th of May 2017 with the participation of all SELEC’s Member States. The Operation focused on combating illegal trafficking of vehicles and spare parts, acquired mostly (but not only) in Western European countries (EU), by committing criminal offences of various kind with the purpose of having them later legalized in SELEC Member States or via the Member States, in other countries from Europe and Asia.
The **key findings** resulting from statistic data are summarized as follows:

- Around 21,464 personnel were deployed during the Operation
- 149,604 vehicles, 190,188 persons and 198,582 documents were checked
- Regarding vehicle checks, 26 positive hits encountered in the ASF, a number of 49 hits in SIS and 77 in the national databases
- 178 vehicles were seized/detained during the Operation
- The three most seized brands of seized vehicles were Opel, Mercedes and Renault
- Highways represent the place where most of the seized vehicles were detected, followed by the Registration Office/Authority and Scrap Yards
- Regarding type of offences, theft ranked first, followed by vehicles with altered identification marks and financial fraud
- The most indicated country of offence from Southeastern Europe was Hellenic Republic
- The most indicated country of offence from outside SELEC region was Italian Republic
- In almost all cases the reporting countries (as countries of seizure) mentioned themselves also as destination countries for the stolen vehicles
- Regarding the country of destination, reporting Member States indicated a country from the SELEC region in most of the cases
- The estimated value of the seized vehicles by SELEC Member States is 1,780,000 Euro.

**Joint investigations**

A number of 6 joint investigations were initiated and conducted in 2017 by SELEC Member States and supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Stolen Vehicles Task Force.

**Joint investigation PANAMERA** was developed by the Bulgarian and Turkish law enforcement authorities in order to recover a luxurious vehicle evaluated at 400,000 Euro, that was stolen from Republic of Bulgaria. The vehicle was located through GPS, the coordinates showing that the vehicle is located in Istanbul/Republic of Turkey, in the harbor area. The Bulgarian Chief Directorate of the National Police and the insurance company's representatives were deployed to Istanbul to support the Turkish Police and Turkish Customs in this investigation. The next day, using a special locating device, the vehicle was discovered in a container, prepared for departure, with changed car plate numbers. The whole operation finished in less than 24 hours, as SELEC channel of information exchange was used in real time, constantly, through the Liaison Officers of the countries involved.
Fraud and Smuggling
Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force

The 17th meeting of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force was held on 9th of November 2017 in Bucharest, Romania, with the participation of SELEC Member States and Partners.

During the meeting the Draft 2016 SEE Report on Tobacco Products Smuggling, the Evaluation Reports of Operation ECLIPSE II and KNOW HOW II, as well as the outlines of the project Fight against Illegal Trade (F.A.I.T) were presented.

The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force was established in 2003 and is being coordinated by Republic of Albania and Republic of Croatia.

Annual Report on the Situation of cigarettes and tobacco products smuggling in Southeast Europe

In 2016, the Member States of SELEC altogether seized approximately 3.9 billion cigarettes, leading to a drop of 11% compared to the level recorded in 2015 when 4.4 billion pieces of cigarettes were detected and seized.

The amount of cigarettes detected last year represents the sum of all quantities seized in a number of 57,632 cases. Compared to the number of cases registered by SELEC Member States in 2015, there was an increase of 39%. Furthermore, in 2016, 3,584 seizures were related to quantities above 10,000 cigarettes, while those mentioning less than 10,000 cigarettes were over ten times more, counting up to 36,298 cases.

The vast majority of the seizures of cigarettes in the past three years were primarily based on intelligence gathered by law enforcement authorities from SELEC Member States. In 2016 alone, the total number of cigarettes seized based on intelligence was close to 700 million, rising by 61% compared to 2015, and 93% above the level recorded in 2014 when 362 million cigarettes were detected.

The total amount of raw tobacco seized in 2016 in the SEE region reached close to 880 tons, up with 167% from the quantities recorded during the previous year. Over the same period, the number of reported seizures went down sharply from 2,257 in 2015 to 282 in 2016, marking a considerate decrease compared to the previous year, but increased with 35% compared to 2014.

Regarding the means of transportation used for smuggling tobacco related products (cigarettes and smoking tobacco), the highest number of cases and quantities seized was related to road transportation. The number of cigarettes transported via road accounted for 67% of the total quantities reported for this category, and the most used type of transport was by lorries/trucks.

Evaluation Report of Operation ECLIPSE II

Throughout the 10 days’ operational phase of Regional Operation ECLIPSE II that took place during the period 6-17 March 2017, 205 seizures were reported, totaling close to 40 million pieces of cigarettes (estimated at more than 14 million Euro), 5.6 tons of smoking tobacco, 970 kg of water-pipe tobacco, 155 kg of cut filler tobacco, and 27 kg of raw tobacco.

Most of the detections reported were made either inland or at border crossing points, and to a lesser extent in airports or at the green border. The highest number of seized cigarettes was based on risk analysis, while intelligence was the main reason for detecting smoking tobacco.

The ports in the region are used for smuggling large quantities of cigarettes concealed in maritime containers arriving from the source countries.

A number of 1284 pieces of information were exchanged by Member States during Operation ECLIPSE II.
Analysis Report of Operation KNOW HOW II

Operation KNOW HOW II took place during the period 7-18 November 2016 with the participation of eleven SELEC Member States. The main aim of the operation was the detection and confinement of counterfeited goods entering SELEC region, both in commercial and non-commercial consignments transported by all means of transport (air, postal traffic, road, railway, sea, etc.). The operation required intensive exchange of information which led to a various selection and identification of high risk deliveries.

A total of 113 seizures met the criteria established by the Operational Plan, i.e. seizures of goods infringing intellectual property rights. This total is slightly higher than the one registered during the previous regional operation KNOW HOW.

The report is based on the analysis of the above-mentioned cases involving the detection of goods infringing intellectual property rights of globally-known brands. The analysis was performed in particular with respect to places of seizures, methods of concealment, countries of departure and destination, means of conveyance used, etc.

Most of the seizures were reported to be made inland, followed by seizures made at border crossing points. Perfumes accounted for the largest number of seizures made within the timeframe of the regional operation whilst cigarettes accounted for the biggest quantity of goods seized. A significant quantity of counterfeit toys was also seized by the participating law enforcement authorities.

Joint investigations

A total number of 12 joint investigations were conducted by SELEC Member States and supported by SELEC under the umbrella of Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force.

**Joint investigation BLACK GOLD** developed between Republic of Serbia and Republic of Bulgaria targeted the smuggling of oil derivates into Republic of Serbia. The investigation is related to export of goods from Republic of Bulgaria, total invoice value being 4,5 million Euro. With the support of the Bulgarian Customs Administration it was discovered that the Serbian company makes a false import documentation to avoid paying the proper excise, Customs and tax duties in Republic of Serbia.

**Joint investigation P.O.BOX** was conducted between Republic of Serbia and Republic of Bulgaria in relation to a tax felony of falsely claiming VAT refund of Serbian companies. The investigation was related to the export of goods from Serbia to Bulgaria, the total invoice value being 750,000 Euro. With the support of the Bulgarian Customs it has been discovered that the Serbian companies reported unrealistically high price of goods as a basis for a higher VAT refund from Republic of Serbia.
Project F.A.I.T- Fight Against Illegal Trade aims increasing the operational capacity of SELEC and its Member States in order to create an efficient response in fighting against smuggling phenomena.

The main objectives of project F.A.I.T are:

- Setting up state-of-the-art SELEC Operational Centre Unit (OCU) in order to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement authorities against illegal trade
- Training for 120 specialists on the latest technology, special techniques and special investigative methods for better results in the fight against smuggling of goods
- Social-media awareness campaign against smuggling activities
- Virtual Reality Platform Training
- S.I.R.A.T- SELEC Intelligence Reporting Application Tool

Implementation period: 24 months (2018-2019)

*Project financed by PMI IMPACT – a global grant initiative by Philip Morris International to support projects dedicated to fighting illegal trade and related crimes.*
Anti-Terrorism Task Force

The 7th meeting of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force was held on 4th of May 2017 in Istanbul/Republic of Turkey, with the participation of experts from SELEC Member States.

In the discussions’ session several topics were addressed related to the possible turns terrorism might have in the future, as well as the difficulty to intercept the communication through electronic means among terrorists. Therefore, coordination and meetings should continue in order to better understand the ideology, define terrorism and find faster responses. The entire community should fight together against terrorism as global threats need global approach, considering that any country may become target.

In terms of prevention there is a need to have a global approach of the community not only Law Enforcement and Intelligence Services but also private companies. In this respect, SELEC made steps for concluding letters of intent with private companies such as Western Union, American Express, eBay etc. which can provide useful information to law enforcement authorities.

The Anti-Terrorism Task Force was established in 2003, is coordinated by Republic of Turkey and has the following sub-groups:

- Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons coordinated by Republic of Albania
- Trafficking in weapons of mass destruction coordinated by Romania
- Terrorist Groups coordinated by Republic of Turkey

INTERPOL Counter Terrorism Committee meeting

In October 2017 SELEC hosted INTERPOL's Counter Terrorism Committee for the MENA Region gathering Heads of Counter Terrorism Units and Heads of National Central Bureaus from the Middle East and North Africa and representatives of international organizations such as Europol, NATO and UNODC.

The purpose of the meeting was to find ways to improve the exchange of information between counter-terrorism experts from the Middle East and North Africa, and to provide a better understanding of INTERPOL’s projects in the region. Further developing the law enforcement cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism was also a topic of the discussions.

Joint investigations

A number of 6 joint investigations were conducted by SELEC Member States and supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force, among them we mention:

A joint investigation related to terrorism was developed between State Investigation and Protection Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ministry of Interior of Republic of Turkey which conducted an investigation against Foreign Terrorist Fighters originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina who have joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Following this investigation two Bosnian citizens were recognized as Foreign Terrorist Fighters as they attempted to cross the Turkish-Syrian border in order to join ISIS. The respective persons were deported back to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Joint investigation KABATAS targeted dismantling an organized crime group based in Istanbul, dealing with migrants’ smuggling. This transnational organized crime group consisted of smaller entities, with various *modus operandi*, the migrants being smuggled either across land borders or by plane, while bribing airport officers and using forged travel documents or a facilitator. In furtherance to the results reported last year, namely 168 migrants and 11 persons detained, during a subsequent operation 35 persons involved in the smuggling of migrants were arrested, ammunition, almost 100 passports and materials used for producing fraudulent documents being seized. Most of the detained Turkish migrants were wanted, as being involved in various factions of idiosyncratic terrorist organizations. Turkish law enforcement authorities cooperated in this investigation with the police departments of Republic of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Federal Republic of Germany, Italian Republic, Hungary, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Romania, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Slovenia.

Another joint investigation connected to Foreign Terrorist Fighters was conducted between Bosnian and Turkish authorities in 2017 based on the information exchanged through SELEC. Close to the Turkish-Syrian border, the Turkish Police arrested one person originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 4 persons from Kyrgyzstan. During the investigation, police authorities also found a bomb vest. The detained persons were identified as members of terrorist organization.

Project SIRAS on Strengthening the fight against firearms trafficking in Southeastern Europe implemented by SELEC, as a co-partner, together with Romania, as Lead Partner, Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Bulgaria has as main objectives:

- Developing, disseminating and promoting interoperability and data collection through the use of a common set of indicators and specialized infrastructure/databases for tracking, investigation and analysis in the field of firearms control
- Identifying, building and sharing best practices, and developing common investigation capacities for the use of Internet (deep-web/darknet markets) for trafficking in firearms
- Promoting networking, mutual learning and cooperation through promotion of multinational and interdisciplinary team work, establishing and developing a regional firearms experts network in Southeast Europe and a standard in firearms deactivation in Southeast Europe

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICI Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.*
CONTAINER SECURITY

The Container Security Task Force was established in 2005 and is being coordinated by Hellenic Republic.

Regional Assessment on Container Security for 2015- 2016

Acknowledging the challenges that Customs authorities are facing, the Regional Assessment on Container Security for 2015-2016 developed within SELEC Container Security Task Force aims bringing useful conclusions to complete the understanding over the regional situation in Southeast Europe including the general current overview of the container traffic, container security objectives, drivers for sharing risk based data, barriers for not sharing commercial and logistic data, major security threats and challenges, as well as the future priorities expected from SELEC Container Security Task Force.
Environment and Nature Related Crimes
Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force

The 7th meeting of the Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force was held on 5th of April 2017 in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives of SELEC Member States, Partner countries and organizations attended the event.

The current situation and the activities developed in the past year in the framework of the Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force were presented, as well as the key findings of the Evaluation Report of the Regional Operation ORION 3 targeting illegal hunting of protected bird species and trafficking of endangered and protected animals, operation carried out in October 2016 with the participation of all SELEC Member States.

The main objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for presenting the national situations in this area, discussing regional approaches in preventing and countering environment and nature related crimes and exchanging experiences in this field.

The Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force was established in 2009, is being coordinated by Hungary and has one sub-group entitled *Crimes against Cultural Heritage Goods* coordinated by The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Analytical report of Regional Operation ORION 3

Regional Operation ORION 3 targeting illegal hunting of protected bird species and trafficking of endangered and protected animals was carried out between October 3-10, 2016 with the participation of all SELEC Member States.

Regional Operation ORION 3 is the third regional operation of this kind coordinated by SELEC following the proposal of Hungary. For a period of 8 days, all SELEC Member States conducted coordinated counter-measures against illegal hunting of bird species and trafficking of endangered and protected animals. A high number of resources, 26 national authorities along with other institutions with responsibilities in environment protection which provided their support during the operation, were brought together for the success of the regional operation.

The joint efforts of SELEC Member States’ law enforcement authorities resulted into eight seizures, a number of 213,297 inspections conducted, two investigations, four persons arrested and other criminal proceedings initiated against ten persons. Additionally, within the timeframe of the Regional Operation, 91 pieces of information were exchanged, consisting in shared seizure notifications and warning messages.
Joint investigations

A number of 4 joint investigations were conducted by SELEC Member States and supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Environment and Nature related Crimes Task Force.

Joint investigation PEKOM conducted by the Bulgarian and Turkish authorities targeted dismantling an organized crime group dealing with cultural heritage objects’ smuggling. The joint investigation was initiated based on the intensive exchange of information done through the SELEC channel and organization of several operational meetings supported by SELEC, during which the Bulgarian and Turkish law enforcement officers and prosecutors met in order to coordinate and decide on the proceedings. In furtherance to the seizures performed in the previous year namely 1400 historical and archeological artifacts that were found in Republic of Bulgaria and 1600 in Republic of Turkey, in the last phase of the operation, in May 2017, in Republic of Bulgaria, around 1500 additional artifacts were seized and 29 suspects have been detained, including the main organizer. As an official estimation was not yet performed, from experts’ evaluation the value of the smuggled objects, on the black market, consist in millions of Euro.
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