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Key project data

Project name	Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans (CSC WB)
Project website	www.cscwb.info
Beneficiary Countries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia
Partner Institutions	Ministries of justice; Ministries of Interior/Security; Public Prosecution Offices; Police; Other law enforcement agencies.
Funding	European Commission (DG NEAR): EUR 15,8 million German Government (BMZ): EUR 1,5 million Italian Ministry of Interior: 900,000 EUR
Duration	07/2020 – 06/2023
Implementing Partners	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), Italian Ministry of Interior, Center for International Legal Cooperation (CILC)

Project objectives

The overall project objective is to support partner institutions in the Western Balkans in overcoming barriers on their path to EU accession and to enable them to arrest or prosecute criminals in line with EU rules and regulations. The project achieves this by (1) providing operational support, by (2) strengthening strategic cooperation and by (3) boosting the inter-operability of information systems.

Main project activities

Operational support: Countering serious crime across borders requires international experience, a multidisciplinary approach and the use of special techniques. Therefore, together with the partners in the region CSC WB experts work on concrete investigations, promoting relevant investigation tools such as the Joint Investigations Team (JIT) or the use of Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). The experts support partner institutions to participate in the European Multidisciplinary Platforms Against Criminal Threats (EMPACTs), a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify, prioritise and address threats posed by serious crime. Aiming to accomplish the operational support, CSC WB offers EU wide expertise (flexible and on demand) through its Technical Assistance Facility (TAF). 2. **Strategic cooperation:** As the fight against serious crime can only be successful when working together across borders, CSC WB facilitates the cooperation with EU agencies such as Europol and Eurojust and networks such as the European Judicial Network (EJN) or the Regional Network on National Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (P/CVE). In order to operate more strategically, the project provides support in developing Regional Integrated Threat Assessments on serious crime (RITA) and Terrorism (WB TE.SAT). 3. **Interoperability of information systems:** Secure and efficient communication and exchange of data is a key factor to prevent, detect and investigate terrorism and other forms of serious crime. Thus, CSC WB supports the upgrade and extension of the already existing systems as well as the implementation of two EU directives on advanced Air Passenger Information (API) and the use of air Passenger Name Records (PNR).

Project Approach

The project is unique in its practical approach. Each country is supported by a prosecutor and a police officer from EU member states as well as legal advisers and assistants from the respective countries. These six so-called Embedded Country Teams advise the partner institutions in their ongoing operations and support them to better investigate and prosecute serious and organised crime cases. This approach is advantageous because it allows the partner institutions to receive quick, high-quality advice that takes EU best practices into account.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.