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MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO

IPA/2017 Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans

The project provides permanent support to investigations and prosecutions and contributes significantly to the fight against organised crime in the Western Balkans.

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| Beneficiary Countries | Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia |
| Partner Institutions | Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Interior, Prosecution Offices and Police |
| Implementing Partners | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), Italian Ministry of Interior, Center for International Legal Cooperation (CILC) |
| Duration | 2018 – 2019 |
| Funding | European Union: EUR 13 million Germany: EUR 1.5 million |

About the Project



The peoples of the EU and the Western Balkans region have traditional, long-standing ties. The EU has supported many reform activities in the Western Balkans during the last two decades. Despite this, addressing reforms in rule of law, fundamental rights and good governance remains the most pressing issue for the Western Balkans and a great concern for the global community (European Commission, 2018).

Therefore, in order to strengthen regional security and reinforce judicial systems, GIZ (commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the Italian Ministry of Interior signed a Delegation Agreement with the European Commission in December 2017. According to this agreement, GIZ and IMol will implement the IPA/2017¹ Project 'Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans' along with the third implementing partner, Center for International Legal Cooperation, based in the Netherlands.



The EU has supported similar projects in the past such as 'IPA 2014 International Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Prosecutors Network of the Western Balkans' (together with Germany) and 'IPA 2013 Fight against Organised Crime: International Cooperation in Criminal Justice'. Consequently, the current project is to be seen as a joint follow-up to the previous projects. In order to better coordinate reform activities of all foreign states and international organisations, the EU and Western Balkan states jointly decided to create a single coordination mechanism called Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG). The project is a part of this framework.

*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.

¹The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the 'enlargement countries' with financial and technical help. IPA/2017 refers specifically to the 2017 budget of IPA II.

Implemented by



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The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

"The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".



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Objectives

The project's objective is to raise the effectiveness of and the cooperation among regional and national institutions in fighting serious and organised crime. Combatting illegal migrant smuggling and recovering illegal financial gains obtained through diverse criminal acts are two examples on which the project will focus. Cooperation among investigation institutions of the countries, of the region and of the EU is crucial to improve overall security. Therefore, the project will support the conclusion and realization of cooperation agreements and enhance the use of communication means to better investigate serious and organised crime across borders (for example, through so-called Joint Investigation Teams).

Joint Investigation Teams are now an established effective cooperation tool amongst national investigative agencies when tackling cross-border crime (Europol).

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 lawyers from the respective countries. These so-called embedded country teams advise the partner institutions in their ongoing operations and help them 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. In addition, short-term practical trainings on specific issues complement this support and empower police officers and prosecutors with specific capabilities and techniques they need in their daily work.

IPA/2017 Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans also supports activities in the areas of environmental crime and border security to help infiltrate serious crime from different angles.

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened cooperation of the Western Balkan countries with European and international police and judicial institutions
- An increase in the number of Joint Investigation Teams fighting serious and organised crime
- An increase in the number of relevant investigations leading to prosecutions