



2004

Annual Report

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATTF	Anti-Terrorism Task Force
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova
ICMPD	International Center for Migration Policy and Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
CEI	Central European Initiative
JCC	Joint Cooperation Committee
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSD	Operational Support Department
RACVIAC	Regional Arms Control and Verification Information and Assistance Center
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SECI Center	Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime
SEE	South East Europe
SEEPAG	South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group
SEESAC	South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
SPOC	Stability Pact Initiative against Organized Crime
TF	Task Force
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
USSS	United States Secret Service
WCO	World Customs Organization
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
ZKA	German Customs Investigation Office (Zollkriminalamt)

1 Forewords

1.1. JCC Chairman, Dr. Ferenc Banfi



The SECI Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime, with the support of the 12 Member Countries, the two Permanent Advisors (Interpol and World Customs Organisation), together with the Observer Countries and organisations, has achieved in quite a short time considerable success in tackling organized crime in the region.

The future development of the SECI Centre, outlined in our Strategy for the period 2005-2010, describes a flexible and effective regional law enforcement tool, capable of assuming a leading role in South-Eastern European response to cross-border crime. In line with the Strategy, the SECI Centre will adjust its operational emphasis to better combat all forms of criminal activity, including drug trafficking, financial and computer crime, terrorism, smuggling of people, and others.

I would like to thank all our Member States, as well to our partners, for their valuable contributions and efforts throughout 2004.

In addition, I would like to emphasise that the Joint Cooperation Committee has accomplished a very instrumental role by adopting the recommendations included in the Assessment Report of the European experts, regarding the future developments of the SECI Centre and the facilitation of the European Integration process of the law enforcement authorities from the Southeast European countries.

All the recommendations are a solid basis for setting up priorities and a common understanding. Although much progress has been achieved in the last period, we still need a comprehensive approach against cross-border organized crime for the next coming years.

Considering that two of our Member States – Hungary and Slovenia - have joined Greece within the European Union and for all the other Member States the **European integration** represents the strategic goal, it should be our ultimate target, too.

1.2. SECI Center Acting Director, General Alexandru Ionas, PhD



It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword for the Annual Report on SECI Center's activities for the year 2004.

After four years of activity, I can tell you in all honesty that all the facts reported in these pages and the numerous achievements of 2004 are the products of hard work and dedication of the police and customs liaison officers. Among these accomplishments, I would like to underline the way in which SECI Center targeted, with increasing effects, the types of operational priorities in cooperation with its law enforcement partners.

Last year was marked by two important developments for the SECI Center: the change in the operational concept of several important Task Forces and the prospect of organizational reform and capability upgrade following the Assessment Report prepared by European Union police and judicial experts, sponsored by the European Commission.

The key objectives for the SECI Center in 2004 included effective international exchange of criminal information and intelligence among the 12 Member Countries and support the identification and dismantling of organized crime groups operating in South East Europe through the Task Force activities. Progress has been made in both above-mentioned areas and further efforts will be made in order to optimize these developments.

Few years ago it was simply a dream to bring all the countries of the region together and to make them to exchange information. This unbelievable dream became reality and the SECI Regional Center is the only existing institutionalised law enforcement cooperation in the region. I strongly believe that its capacity will be further developed and used more and more for combating organized crime, in a common effort with all European states.

Our overall goal is to support the member states in their efforts to improve democracy, rule of law in Southeast Europe, and make it more attractive for investments, with the declared aim of reaching economic and political stability in the region. The SECI Center is able to contribute to the creation of a safer environment for all Europe.

2 Introduction

2.1. Brief history of the SECI Center

On 26 of May, 1999 ten Southeast European countries signed and ratified the “**Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Trans-border Crime**” (also known as the **SECI Agreement**).

They were later joined by an additional two countries bringing the total to twelve: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey.



The headquarters of the SECI Regional Center is located in the Parliament Palace, Bucharest, Romania

The SECI Agreement entered into force on February 1, 2000. The same year, the Center became operational, assisting each member Country in preventing, detecting, investigating, prosecuting and repressing trans-border crime.

The SECI Center has modern meeting, communication and training facilities, and serves as a Clearing House for intelligence sharing and cooperation, by providing a venue for discussions for its Member and Observer Countries.



National police and customs experts preparing a regional operation at the SECI Center's Headquarters

The **Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC)** is the decision-making body of the SECI Center. It is comprised of two national members representing the Ministry of Interior and the Customs Authority. Each of the Member Countries has one vote in the decision making process.

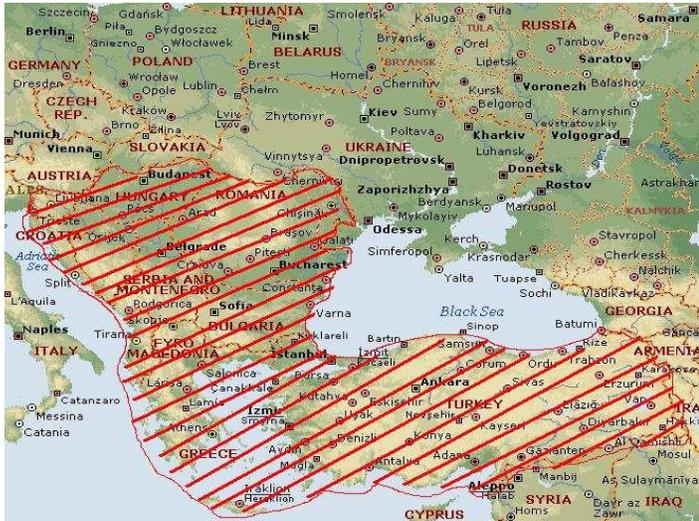
The management of the SECI Center is elected by the JCC at it consists of a Director, a Deputy Director/Head of Operational Support Department and the Head of Legal/Internal Department.

The mission of the SECI Regional Center is to support the joint trans-border crime fighting efforts of the SECI participating countries, in order to contribute to the overall security and political stabilization in the region.

A primary objective of our organization is to improve regional cooperation in combating trans-border organised crime. In order to achieve this objective, the enhancement of coordinated efforts between law enforcement agencies within the individual participating states is also required. Furthermore, taking into account the global aspects of trans-border

crime, cooperation with countries outside the region and representative international organizations is critical. In this respect, the SECI Center is a catalyst for efficient working relationships in making such cooperation possible.

2.2. Member States of the SECI Center



The SECI Center has 12 Member States, which are as follows: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey.

2.3. Permanent Advisors

ICPO-Interpol and the World Customs Organization are Permanent Advisors to the SECI Center.

The participation of INTERPOL and WCO representatives in the Center's meetings ensures a continuous coordination, in order to prevent any duplication of resources and efforts.

2.4. Permanent Observers and partners

The Permanent Observer status is granted by the Joint Cooperation Committee, on the basis of an exchange of letters, which define the terms and conditions of cooperation. Currently, 15 Observer States and several International Organizations and Bodies which closely cooperate with the SECI Center on the basis of Agreements of Cooperation or Memoranda of Understanding.

Observer States: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

International Organizations and Bodies: United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo, International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Center for Migration Policy and Development (ICMPD), Southeast Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), Central European Initiative (CEI), and the Special Coordinator Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, concerning the initiative to fight organized crime (SPOC).



Permanent observers at the SECI Center's day (26 May 2004)

3 Operational activity

3.1. Task Forces

The operational activity of the SECI Center is conducted in accordance with the **Regulations of the SECI Center**, the **Strategic Plan** and the **Annual Action Plan**. The Center provides a venue for the member countries to exchange law enforcement-related information in a quick and timely manner, as well as to coordinate multi-national investigations in the SEE region, in the framework of the Task Forces.

There are two operational dimensions at the SECI Center, which complement and support each other: information exchange and the Task Forces.

The information exchange is done through the Liaison Officers, who work permanently at the SECI Center premises in Bucharest.

The SECI Center network is composed of police and customs Liaison Officers co-located with the SECI Center's headquarters. They communicate with their domestic authorities through the National Focal Points set up in the 12 Member States. An encrypted virtual private network over internet is connecting the National Focal Points and the SECI Center.

The second working method is the Task Force. It is a regional operational mechanism designed for effective planning and common action, allowing the experts from the region to take joint action. The Task Forces focus on the main trans-border crime issues that affect South-eastern Europe and employ special methods such as regional operations, coordinated investigations, strategic analysis and trainings.

National experts bring their specialized contribution and are supported by the SECI Center Liaison Officers in the following Task Forces: Anti-Drug, Trafficking in Human Beings and Migrant Smuggling, Financial and Computer Crime, Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling, Stolen Vehicles and Anti-Terrorism.

1. The Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings

The THB Task Force was established in 2000 and is coordinated by the initiating country, Romania. It is actively cooperating with U.S. agencies, such as: FBI, Department of Homeland Security, as well as international organizations and institutions: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), OSCE, INTERPOL and EUROPOL. This TF focuses on coordinating regional efforts aimed at identifying the criminal groups that are

trafficked persons, as well as taking efficient measures to their repatriation.

dealing with trafficking in human beings, conducting common investigations against those groups and identifying



Throughout the time, this TF acquired remarkable success and constantly extended its cooperation network.

Regional Action Plans were developed in 2002, 2003 and 2004 for the region to implement Operation MIRAGE. During these operations, which were intended to be the vastest operations ever executed in the region, the police forces acted as a single body, implementing raids and controls in public places (night bars, hotels, discos) in all the participating countries.

The continuation of Operation Mirage, code-named **Mirage 2004**, was conducted in between May 28 and June 06 last year and focused exclusively on trafficked women. During this operation, there were 601 identified victims of trafficking, and 102 victims assisted by IOM and NGOs.

Through the operation, a total of 302 persons were charged with human trafficking crimes. Cases were coordinated through each country's prosecutorial authority. Some of the individuals charged are currently still pending prosecution in national or local jurisdictions.

Operation Mirage 2004 allowed countries to exchange already available information that otherwise would not have been exchanged through any other channels. Moreover, the quantity and quality of information exchanged through the SECI Center clearly demonstrated its ability to channel information that may subsequently be used to launch multinational investigations.

For example, the operation code-named "Flash Hotel" started as an investigation initiated by Romania and pursued through information exchange during the preliminary phase of Operation Mirage 2004. Then surveillance measures were implemented focusing on the traffickers and victims in Romania and Turkey. Through international coordination, traffickers were arrested in both countries. These arrests allowed a Romanian prosecutor and police officer to travel to Turkey at the end of Operation Mirage 2004 for interviewing the victims. During these cooperative efforts, 6 arrests were made and more than 20 Romanian victims were identified; 6 of them were assisted by IOM for repatriation. The investigative officers estimated that the proceeds of the crimes were in excess of 1.5 million Euro.

In the framework of this Task Force, in cooperation with different Member or Observer States, the SECI Center supported the movement of trafficking in human beings from their origin country to Bosnia Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia

Montenegro as witnesses in trial against their traffickers. 26 traffickers were sentenced to prison as a result of those testimonies.

2. The Anti-Drug Task Force

The coordinator of the Anti-Drug Task Force is Bulgaria. This TF was established in 2000 and it works in close cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the German Customs Investigation Office (ZKA) and with other related institutions.



The main goal of this Task Force is to focus on impeding trafficking in drugs bound to Europe, on the various branches of the Balkan Route and the Silk Route, as well as to enhance the existing regional counter-drug collaboration. The activity of the Anti-Drug Task Force has changed dramatically after the decisions made at the West Asian Heroin Conference held in Ankara in 2002.

As much of the responsibility fell on the countries in the Balkans, the SECI Center, through its Anti-Drug Task Force, was requested to take the lead in a region-wide interdiction initiative, code-named Containment. Thus the SECI Center acted as an Operations Center and a Communications Platform. Five such operations were carried out in the region in the period 2002-2004, targeting separately trucks, buses, trains or airports.

Operation Containment III, known as **Operation Safe Haven**, aimed at combating trafficking in drugs, was conducted in 2004 on the basis of shared intelligence between participating countries.

During a period of 11 days, law enforcement authorities in Southeast Europe targeted air passengers, airfreight and express mail.

The most significant seizure during this operation occurred on June 14, 2004, when the Turkish customs authorities seized 25.2 kilograms of cocaine at the Istanbul Ataturk Airport. The drugs were concealed in luggage of the arrested female US citizen. Other two persons were subsequently arrested during investigations. The offender was travelling from Frankfurt to Istanbul by a Lufthansa flight. Overall there were 9 persons arrested.

Other noteworthy airport non-drug seizures included 13,000 counterfeit Euro in two separate cases in Bulgaria. In a separate seizure in Romania, 1,700 undeclared Euro were confiscated by the customs authorities.

In 2004, SECI Center prepared two regional reports regarding trafficking in synthetic drugs and heroin, based on the information provided by the Member States. They were very useful tools for decision making on future regional operations.

Separately from these reports, the Center is gathering post-seizure information from the member countries and releases a South East Europe Drug Seizure Report every 6 months. These reports depict the latest trends in drug trafficking in the region, and can be used for both strategic and operational decisions by the national anti-drug agencies.

3. The Task Force on Financial and Computer crimes

Financial and computer crimes are some of the most sophisticated and advanced criminal phenomena. The current trend in the scheme of financial crime shows that criminals exploit HI Tech for illegal purposes, thus causing important damages not just to individuals,

but also to businesses and institutions around the world. In order to develop the most effective law enforcement cooperation, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia initiated the establishment of a Financial and Computer Crime Task Force, which is supported by the US Secret service, the US Department of Justice, the Italian Guardia di Finanza, as well as

representatives of the payment cards industry (Visa-Master Card), Interpol and Europol. This TF aims at exchanging information on counterfeit currency and payment cards, money laundering cases, computer crimes and training of law enforcement officials in the region on these issues.



The SECI Center is aiming to give an impetus to efforts against financial and computer crime in Southeast Europe, by setting up regionally specialized and integrated mechanism for joint decision and action among its member law enforcement agencies.

In 2004, the following specialized Task Force Sub-Groups were established: counterfeit currency, plastic card fraud, cyber-crime, intellectual property theft and money laundering.

Today the SECI Center is carefully looking to initiate activities in these sub-groups, and the first step is to develop a well-connected network of national investigators to represent their agencies and work together in support of the SECI Center-coordinated sub-groups.

According to the needs and requests of the SECI Countries, advanced training will be given in the fields of the five TF subgroups, based upon the specialties of the several US Agencies and the Italian Guardia di Finanza.

4. The Task Force on Stolen Vehicles

Many of the stolen vehicles smuggled out of the European Union are transported to the recipients on roads via Southeast European countries, and this is a real challenge for the law enforcement agencies.



That is why a specialized Task Force on Stolen Vehicles was established at the SECI Center. This Task Force is coordinated by Hungary. Its goals are to exchange information regarding national vehicle registration, to review the vehicle originality system in every SECI member state, and to increase the control over and the activity rule of vehicle trade companies, by establishing a database.

Based on the success of Operation Road Show 2003, it was decided that a second similar operation should be coordinated by the SECI Center in August 2004.

The primary goal of the operation was the interdiction and seizure of stolen vehicles transiting regional countries, deterrence and apprehension of traffickers. The secondary goal was to gather intelligence aimed at criminal enterprises which regularly use Southeast European route to move the vehicles to the region and beyond.

The field results were outstanding. The **two-days operation** resulted in 167 vehicles seized (valued in excess of 1,250,000 Euro), which is 54% increase compared to results in Operation Road Show 2003. Also 132 offenders were identified and 17 arrested, representing 88% and respectively 142 % increase compared to the results last year.

5. The Anti-Smuggling & Anti-Fraud Task Force

The Anti-Fraud & Anti-Smuggling Task Force is jointly co-coordinated by Albania and Croatia. This Task Force is the result of a merger, at the beginning of June 2003, between two previously established Task Forces on customs-related crimes.



As cigarette smuggling is serious problem in the South-eastern Europe, Hungary proposed an operation targeting this type of offence. The operation was code-named Shadow and it was implemented for three months, at the end of the year 2004.

The general aim of Operation Shadow was to improve the existent knowledge on the real extent and mechanisms of cigarettes smuggling in the region, alongside with an enhancement of cooperation among the participants via SECI Center through a three-month program of information collection, analysis and dissemination on cigarette seizures.

There were 476 significant seizures (at least 20,000 pieces each) reported by countries to SECI Center, amounting to 145,910,273 pieces (150 tons). The final product of this operation is intended to ensure equal and balanced knowledge among regional law enforcement actors at various levels on the latest trends of cigarette smuggling in Southeast Europe, thus contributing to raised awareness and increased efficiency of anti-smuggling strategies in the region.

The SECI Center had an excellent cooperation with WCO during this operation, through its Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) for Western Europe.

6. The Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF)



This Task Force was established in February 2003, under the coordination of Turkey, by the approval of the Joint Cooperation Committee. It includes three sub-projects, namely:

- * *Task Force on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW);*
- * *Task Force on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD);* and
- * *Task Force on Anti- Terrorism*

which are led by Albania, Romania and Turkey, respectively. The aim of this Task Force is to organize law enforcement activities and carry out regional coordination to prevent, detect,

investigate and combat terrorism related crimes. The goals are to identify and analyze information on terrorist groups who participate in terrorist activities. Additionally, the Task Force will concentrate to discern the nexus between terrorism and organized crime groups dealing with drugs, human beings, SALW and WMD trafficking. By so doing, proactive initiatives will also be developed on financial resources and assets of terrorist networks in order to disable the financial resources of terrorist organizations.

3.2. Coordinated investigations

Significant steps toward regional specialization of the cooperation mechanisms were made in 2004. Several coordinated investigations were carried out last year in the SECI Center framework. The most successful coordinated investigations culminated with multinational operations, such as Operations *Flash Hotel* and Operation *Bus* (in the THB and Migrant Smuggling field), Operations *FOG* or *Priest* (Drug Trafficking), and others. Those coordinated investigations resulted in a large number of criminals being apprehended, arrested and eventually convicted in various SEE countries.

4 Trainings/seminars

The SECI Regional Center offers an excellent framework for joint police or customs trainings, as it is endowed with modern equipments and includes a training area for approximately 80 participants. In 2004, the Center hosted various specialized training courses, covering different domains of interest for law enforcement specialists from the Member Countries, as follows:

- 1st Workshop on “Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat Illicit Trafficking and Criminal Use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Substances and Weapons”, organized by SECI Center in cooperation with EUROPOL and UNICRI;
- 2nd Meeting of the South East Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG);
- Conference on “Strategic Planning for a Regional Border Security Exchange”, organized by George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies;
- Twinning Project on “Fighting Drug Trafficking and Abuse”, organized by the Romanian Ministry of Administration and Interior and the Spanish Governmental Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs;
- Meeting of the Chiefs of Anti-Drug Units from Southeastern Europe, organized by SPOC;
- Police Forum Meeting and SPOC Board Meeting;
- Seminar on “Setting up EUROPOL National Unit”, organized by Romanian Ministry of Administration and Interior;
- ✓ “International Training Systems Approach to Training Design and Delivery Workshop” – courses organized in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
- ✓ Preparatory meetings and investigative operations on matters related to drug trafficking, counterfeit currencies, combating human beings trafficking, small arms and light weapons trafficking, customs valuation fraud, and smuggling of cigarettes.



National experts attending a training course at the SECI Center

5. Public Relations

In 2004, new efforts were made to establish an active and broad-based marketing plan and to raise public awareness on the activity of the SECI Regional Center. This significantly increased the SECI Center's PR and Communication capabilities, as we now issue regular press releases and information updates, we have a quarterly newsletter and organize frequent press events, all of which led to a bigger number of requests for interviews from the local and international media.

Throughout 2004, 28 press releases and information documents were issued to the local and international media; the Center also organized 10 press conferences and more than 35 press inquiries, made via telephone, email or fax received timely answers. The Public Affairs Officer coordinated and facilitated 23 interviews with various media outlets for the members of the SECI management team, as follows:

- ❖ 11 broadcast media interviews, including CBS, BBC World Service, South Eastern Europe TV Exchanges, TVR International, Bosnia and Herzegovina Public TV Channel, New Moment Video House (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and others;
- ❖ 12 print press interviews, among which 'Washington Post' 'International Herald Tribune', Capital (France), Hayat, and the electronic journal 'Global Issues,' edited by the US Department of State.

A special information brochure was prepared and translated into all the languages of the Member States to create awareness on SECI Center's role in combating organised crime among the law enforcement representatives in the region.

The Public Affairs Officer established, maintained and developed contacts with various local and international journalists, and public affairs officials of national law enforcement agencies and international organizations. Various queries and information requests reaching the SECI Center's website received assistance for different projects.

6 International Cooperation

Numerous high level visits took place in 2004, as the activity of the Center and its excellent operational results continued to draw more and more attention and interest from both Member Countries officials, as well as from other countries.

Thus, there were organized and facilitated visits to the SECI Center paid by high representatives from Member and Observer countries, such as: Ms. Paula Dobriansky, USA Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and SECI Special Coordinator of Coordinator, Dr. Erhard Busek, Mr. Mariano Simancas, Acting Director of Europol, Mr. Michel Gaudin, General Director of the French National Police, H.E. Gheorghii Baramidze, Minister of Interior of Georgia, H.E. Monika Lamperth, Minister of Public Order of Hungary, Mr. Ljubisa Perovic, Assistant to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Stehfan Prager, Romania referent with the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs of Germany, Ambassador Richard Shifter as well as visits of Ambassadors of the SECI Member or Observer Countries accredited in Romania and high level representatives of international organizations.



Hungarian Minister of Interior, Monika Lamperth

In 2004 the following **Memoranda of Understanding** were negotiated and signed:

1. Co-operation Agreement between the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime and the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat; and
2. Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime and Association of Legal Career Women from the Republic of Moldova - Project Center for Prevention of Trafficking in Women;

The text of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime and EURISC Foundation – European Institution for Risk, Security and Communication Management was approved by the JCC and the SECI Center will organize the signing ceremony during the year 2005.

The relations between the SECI Center and ICPO Interpol and World Customs Organization continuously improved. During 2004 it was negotiated and signed the Co-operation Agreement on Communication Connectivity for the Exchange of Information between ICPO Interpol and SECI Center. The Agreement entered into force on 14 December 2004. The WCO, through its Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) for Western Europe, supported the Center's anti-smuggling activities by sharing expertise and information on cigarette smuggling matters.

The Center also continued to implement the assistance program to the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) project. Experts from SECI Center and from some of its Member Countries provided technical expertise and advice to the two working groups, the GUUAM working group in **Baku** and the one in **Tashkent**. The know-how offered consisted in the preparation of legal documents, IT and network connectivity matters and others.

An important step in the efficient fight against cross-border crime is the coordination of the law enforcement authorities' efforts; it is equally essential to set up good relations between law enforcement authorities and prosecutor's offices in the region. This is part of a strategy for ensuring close cooperation between the Law Enforcement Authorities and Judicial Authorities. In this respect and according to an initiative of Serbia and Montenegro for setting-up a Regional Prosecutorial Group, the SECI Center supported and facilitated the activities of the **South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG)**. In December 2004, the General Guidelines of the SEEPAG were adopted, which regulate the activities of the Group and mark a new stage of its development.



The Fourth Conference of SEEPAG – Belgrade, December 2004

In the fourth year of its existence, the SECI Center faces a turning point of its further development – the beginning of the European integration and the transformation of the SECI Center in accordance with the EU standards and best practices.

In order to improve regional co-operation in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) field, the European Commission (EC) proposed and carried out an assessment on the functioning of the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-Border Crime.

The overall objective of this assignment was to provide technical assistance to European Commission services, in producing an assessment of the SECI Center, which includes recommendations concerning the state-of-play, or possible partnerships with the SECI Center.

According to the EC experts, SECI member countries are on the front-line of every major area of crime which is ultimately targeted for the EU; it is therefore in the best interest of the European Union to support the SECI Center.

Recommendations were made on short, medium and long term aimed to improving the activity of the SECI Center.

The SECI Center management has started already to implement the recommendations included in the EC Assessment Report.

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