Southeast European Law Enforcement Center

Annual Report 2014
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1. Foreword
This annual report provides a record of SELEC’s achievements, significant activities and events carried out during the last year. I am pleased to note that the tendency of operational outcomes to grow in statistical figures has continued also in this period: 23,222 pieces of information were exchanged in 2014 compared with 14,654 in 2013, and 70 joint investigations were coordinated in 2014 comparable to 58 in 2013.

This growth is a reflection of the overall increase in the Center’s experience and ability, which has provided law enforcement cooperation in the region for 14 years since it’s being operational.

The year 2014 had also a significant impact in respect to the conclusion of partnership processes with several countries and organizations: INTERPOL, Italian Republic and United States of America were granted Operational Partner status with SELEC. The Cooperation Agreements with these Partners reiterate our joint commitment in preventing and combating global and regional threats such as terrorism, money laundering and other forms of serious and organized criminality in order to offer a more secure environment to the citizens. SELEC also granted Observer status to 15 countries and international organizations, mostly Observers of former SECI Center.

I acknowledge that we still have a way to go. At the moment, the priorities are to maintain the Center’s operational functionality at least at the present level of success and to overcome the financial challenges expected for the years ahead. The devotion, reliance and enthusiasm of the law enforcement authorities from the SELEC Member States and Partners in their common efforts to combat trans-border criminality will bring us success, solidarity and security in the Southeast European region.

To conclude, I would like to thank the police and customs authorities of SELEC Member States, their Liaison Officers and the Center’s staff members for the great achievements in 2014, with my true appreciation.
In 2014, the Legal and Internal Directorate continued to exert its key role in the framework of the organization to provide legal and administrative support and to assist the implementation of the internal rules and regulations of SELEC.

Recognizing the important role of the law enforcement cooperation in promoting peace, stability and security in the Southeast European region, and in light of its new legal framework, the Center continued to establish strategic partnerships with other states, international organizations and bodies. In this context, year 2014 had a significant importance in the area of international cooperation as INTERPOL, Italian Republic and United States of America became Operational Partners of SELEC; Slovak Republic reiterated its willingness to continue cooperating with SELEC as an Observer; a Letter of Intent was signed with the Customs Administration of The Netherlands - just to name a few.

In order to further facilitate the capacity of the Center to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions in the host country, in 2014 the negotiations regarding the Headquarters Agreement with the Government of Romania were finalized. At present, this document is ready for signature, pending on the finalization of the national internal procedures of the host country.

It is worth mentioning also that the SEEPAG activities and relations developed through the year, the prosecutors' network becoming well-known in the region due to, *inter alia*, the excellent partnership with European Judicial Network, and the participation of representatives of SELEC partner countries in the SEEPAG Conferences with the scope to connect the international cooperation in criminal matters' experts and, ultimately, to speed up the cooperation in serious transnational criminal cases.

I express my belief that nowadays SELEC is successfully fulfilling the standards of a modern international law enforcement organization possessing a huge potential of development for the benefit of its Member States.
The report shows that the operational performance targets for 2014 have been achieved and, in some cases, exceeded. The operational activities of SELEC increased considerably throughout the years with a great number of successful joint investigations, aiming to provide a prompt support to the Member States’ law enforcement authorities, as well as to offer a more secure environment to the European citizens.

I consider relevant the fact that in 2014 there were 23,222 exchanges of requests and information disseminated in the framework of SELEC. At the same time, joint investigations such as “ANIMA”, “AVANTI” and “OSKAR” in the field of migrants smuggling or “BOSFOR” and “PHOENIX/BRUNO” on drug trafficking are a good exemplification of how can SELEC’s support to decrease the trans-border criminality in the region and to foster a proactive law enforcement cooperation.

I would like to mention also the Workshop on Tackling Drug Trafficking organized by SELEC in partnership with US/EUCOM in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 23rd - 25th of September 2014. During the event, 65 experts from SELEC Member States and US representatives came together to discuss advanced forfeiture investigations and money laundering activities related to drug trafficking cases as well as practical issues and aspects of cross-border illicit drug trafficking.

All these mentioned activities gave SELEC the opportunity to better fulfill its mandate of providing operational support to fight trans-border organized criminality in Southeast European arena.

SELEC will continue to be a platform to facilitate the exchange of information and support the efforts of Member States in disrupting the phenomenon of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, terrorism and other forms of organized crime, dismantling criminal networks, as well as investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators.

I am confident that SELEC will become more and more involved in fighting organized crime in Balkans region, a more efficient service provider for its Member States and the entire society.
MISSION

SELEC’s mission, within the framework of cooperation among competent authorities, is to provide support for Member States and enhance coordination in preventing and combating crime, including serious and organized crime, where such crime involves or appears to involve an element of trans-border activity.

12 MEMBER STATES

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 and Republic of Turkey.

The Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center was signed on 9th of December 2009 at Bucharest/ Romania
OBSERVERS AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERS

The following countries and international organizations were granted Operational Partner status:

- Italian Republic
- United States of America
- International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL

The following countries and international organizations and bodies officially confirmed their willingness to continue the cooperation with SELEC as Observers:

- Republic of Austria
- Kingdom of Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Georgia
- Federal Republic of Germany
- State of Israel
- Japan
- The Netherlands
- Slovak Republic
- Kingdom of Spain
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- EUBAM – EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
- UNMIK
- UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- WCO – World Customs Organization

HOW IS SELEC MANAGED

The Council is the supreme decision-making body of SELEC and consists of high level representatives designated by each Member State. Each country has one vote in the decision-making process. The Council elects the SELEC Management, in accordance with the terms and conditions established in the SELEC Convention. SELEC is headed by the Director General who acts as its chief executive officer and legal representative. The Director General is assisted by two Directors, namely the Director for Operations and the Director for Legal and Internal Affairs.
3. Who We Are

On 7th of October 2014, the 3rd Anniversary Day of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) was celebrated. In 2011, on this special day, SELEC Convention entered into force and a renewed dynamic and more efficient law enforcement organization was set up.

SELEC inherited the success of SECI Center – operational activities, joint investigations, meetings, workshops and strategic analysis covering the most sensitive trans-border criminal fields in the Southeast European region. Throughout this period, the intensive exchange of information through the Liaison Officers and Center’s communication channels successfully supported the efforts of the law enforcement agencies in the Member States.

SELEC maintains flexibility and operational effectiveness of the former SECI Center. Under the new Convention, SELEC possesses an international legal personality together with the authority to define and sustain cooperation with other countries and major international law enforcement organizations.
ADVANTAGES OF SELEC

UNIQUENESS

SELEC is the only international law enforcement organization which brings together Police and Customs authorities.
In order to obtain greater efficiency and optimization of its investigative activities, SELEC takes advantage of prosecutorial involvement and assistance for its operations through the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG).

COOPERATION

SELEC is a unique venue for the Member States to cooperate and exchange law enforcement related information and criminal intelligence.
SELEC is a successful link between the law enforcement agencies of its Member States, which include both EU and non-EU countries, and also its Observers and Operational Partners, many of them being major international and regional organizations.

EFFICIENCY

SELEC gathers the resources of the 12 Member States for the purpose of dismantling organized crime groups and trans-border networks.
The Liaison Officers posted by Member States meet every day in a secure and modern office atop the second largest building in the world to work with one another in a collaborative and collegial law enforcement environment.
The Convention of SELEC ensures that the necessary legal framework is in place for all types of cooperation in the law enforcement arena.

EFFECTIVENESS

SELEC has flexible working methods, such as daily information and intelligence exchanges.
SELEC Task Forces speed up the investigation process.
Statistics show that the real time information exchange mechanism of SELEC provides a choice which is highly faster than bilateral channels.

EXPERTISE

SELEC is one of the most cost-effective investment and the best governmental response in exchanging criminal intelligence, conducting joint investigations and operations, providing full analytical support along with its coordination capacity through its organization of regional operations, trainings, workshops and multinational meetings.

SECURITY

SELEC maintains a secure communication network. Its communication channel is fast, highly encrypted, and cost-effective.
HOW THE CENTER WORKS

The Center provides a unique venue for the Member States to exchange law enforcement related information and criminal intelligence and offer operational assistance in a quick and timely manner. SELEC coordinates multinational investigations and operations in the Southeast European region, putting together the resources of all Member States in order to dismantle organized crime networks.

The Member States appoint Liaison Officers from Police and Customs authorities who currently serve together in Bucharest at the SELEC Headquarters. These Liaison Officers meet and work together every day to develop investigative activities in a secure environment. The Liaison Officers are supported by the National Focal Points established in each Member State. The Liaison Officers stay in a permanent contact with the National Focal Points’ representatives and all competent national authorities of the Member States, in order to fulfill their specific tasks and ensure a competitive and productive level of cooperation.

The method is (see also the information flow diagram):

- Requests for regional assistance are sent to the Center from the individual country through its Liaison Officers;
- The Liaison Officers then disseminate it to the appropriate country Liaison Officers;
- The responses to the requests are forwarded by the involved Liaison Officers to the origin country;
- The information exchange with the Observers and Operational Partners is done through their accredited Liaison Officers.
SELEC provides the proper legal framework for all types of cooperation in the law enforcement area:

- Exchange of information on daily basis and in real time
- Joint investigations
- Regional operations

In addition, SELEC has developed analytical capabilities, issuing strategic documents and reports on specific areas of organized crime.

SELEC's operational activities are conducted within the frames of eight Task Forces addressing the issues of drugs trafficking, human beings trafficking, stolen vehicles, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and computer crimes, terrorism, container security and environment and nature related crimes.

SELEC builds operational capacity in the ranks of Police and Customs Officers by organizing and hosting specialized trainings and workshops available to all Member States' law enforcement representatives.

* Under the new SELEC, the Observer status shall not grant the right to participate in operational activities and to exchange personal or classified data
OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During 2014, the operational activities of SELEC were conducted based on the 2014 Annual Action and Working Plan, approved at the 7th Session of the SELEC Council held on 14th of November 2013, in Bucharest, Romania.

The operational performance targets have been achieved as of 31st of December 2014. The operational support of all Member States and partners was maintained at a high level along the year.

Regional Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Operational Outcomes</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Exchanges of Information</td>
<td>23,222 exchanges of information compared to 14,654 in 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Operational Activity Plans and Reports</td>
<td>3 delivered to time against a target of 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Task Force Meetings</td>
<td>7 organized against a revised target of 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Operational Plans</td>
<td>2 delivered to time against a revised target of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Regional Operations</td>
<td>2 implemented against a target of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Joint Investigations</td>
<td>70 supported 58 supported in 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Situation Reports</td>
<td>4 delivered to time against a target of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Evaluation Reports</td>
<td>5 delivered to time against a target of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Information Exchanges
**Topics of Daily Exchanges**

In 2014, most of the requests forwarded through SELEC channel were within the framework of Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force (417), Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force (269), Task Force Mirage on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration (199) and Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force (138). The highest number of initiated information was in the frame of Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force (863) and Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force (433).

Overall, there were 23,222 exchanges of information and requests circulated in the structure of SELEC during 2014. The daily exchange process among the Member States accounted for 21,828 requests and information exchanges, and the exchanges with Partners for 893.

Separately, there was a total of 501 exchanges of information and seizure messages shared during the Regional Operation “HIT” and Project “ANTS”.

An essential role in SELEC information process is the cooperation with Partners with whom an intensive exchange of information has been developed along the years. In 2014, SELEC Members addressed to Partners a total number of 116 requests and 443 pieces of information and, during the same period, it received from Partners 149 requests and 185 pieces of information.

**Comparative Total Exchanges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exchanges of Requests and Information</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among Members (Daily Exchanges)</td>
<td>9,372</td>
<td>14,641</td>
<td>13,092</td>
<td>21,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Regional Operations</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Members and Partners (Daily Exchanges)</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,320</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,722</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,654</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,222</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For the purpose of this report, the term “request” means an assistance request asking a foreign law enforcement agency for support of any type (e.g. asking to provide information), and it always needs an answer in order to be considered completed. The term “information” means any type of data, information or intelligence which is sent voluntarily to a foreign law enforcement agency, in general not asking explicitly for any answer (e.g. seizure notifications). Seizure notifications are included in the category of „information” in all cases, irrespective of the case when feedback was required from the addressees.*

In terms of completion of requests, 972 (78% out of a total of 1,246 received requests) were completed during 2014, while 274 requests (22%) remained to be solved in the next period.

The overall picture of the answered requests by terms of completion is the following:
- 87% (842 requests) were completed in less than 30 days
- 13% (130 requests) were completed in more than 30 days
7. Task Forces
SELEC Management, Liaison Officers and Staff, as well as Member States’ representatives participated in 138 international meetings during 2014. The majority of these activities were Task Force meetings (attended by the national experts from the countries), meetings for coordination of joint investigations, as well as various international meetings attended by the SELEC Management, Task Force Managers, Liaison Officers or Staff. The breakdown of activities by different fields is presented in the table below.

### International Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Drug</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THB and Migrant Smuggling</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen Vehicles</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Computer Crimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Terrorism</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container Security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Nature Related Crimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTA-SEE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Issues</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with the SELEC Task Force Rules and Procedures, the Task Forces are hubs of specialized counter crime methodologies and good practices, coordinated by one or more Member States, under the supervision and support of SELEC Operational Directorate, focusing on combating trans-border crime.

In order to enhance the communication among the Task Forces, a team consisting of all Task Force Managers was set up with the purpose to establish, coordinate, synchronize, update priorities and prepare the schedule of the Task Forces operational activities.
A total number of 199 requests and 92 pieces of information were initiated among countries in the framework of the Task Force Mirage on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. In 2014, SELEC was involved in the coordination of 17 joint investigations in this field and managed to organize or support participation in 20 meetings, out of which 1 annual task force meeting, 16 operational meetings dedicated to ongoing joint investigations within Southeast European region, as well as participating in 3 international meetings on THB and migrants smuggling related topics.

The 21st Meeting of Task Force Mirage was held in Bucharest, Romania on 19th of June 2014. The representatives of the law enforcement authorities from SELEC Member States and partners (EUBAM, The Netherlands, Regional Cooperation Council, Kingdom of Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) attended the meeting organized at SELEC premises. During the meeting, the 2013 Report on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants was presented and discussed. On the same occasion, the Evaluation Report for Operation Mirage 2013 targeting illegal migration, which was carried out in autumn 2013, was presented and adopted by participants.

Related to the involvement in activities carried out at international level, SELEC was represented at the Southeastern European Forum “Missing Children in the Context of Child Trafficking” organized by Southeast European Center for Missing & Exploited Children, under the auspices of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of European Union, the International Workshop “Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings - approaches and tools for monitoring and strategic analysis” organized by the General Police Inspectorate in Ministry of Interior of Republic of Moldova and EU High Level Police Advisory Mission; and received the visit of the UK’s Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Center in view to discuss about possible developments of future common projects.
Key findings of the 2013 Report on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in Southeast Europe

- A total of 2,284 victims were identified; this keeps the situation in the last three years relatively unchanged at regional level.
- A large proportion of them appear to be adults, three times more than minors.
- The number of foreign victims exploited in SELEC Member States in 2013 registered a significant increase by 56%, while the number of victims trafficked domestically decreased by 13% in 2013.
- At regional level, the countries from Western Europe appear to be the main destinations for the victims; as a particular case, the citizens of Republic of Moldova appear to be mainly exploited in the Russian Federation.
- Suspects investigated for human trafficking in 2013 were totaling 2,098 individuals, being noticed an increase by 14% comparing with 2012, but lower by 11% compared to 2011.
- The organized crime groups on human trafficking were conducting their criminal activities on business-like principles. Within the criminal enterprise, a division of tasks was established, each member conducting a certain type(s) of activities.
- It appeared that the violence was less used to convince victims of sexual exploitation; “soft methods” like emotional dependence, “lover boy” tactics, or sharing of profit with the victims prevailed.
- The number of detections of illegal migrants - 198,165 increased with 14% compared with 2012, the situation being closer to the one recorded in 2010.
- In 2013, the most reported citizenship of migrants was from Syria, followed by Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- Southeast Europe was largely a transit area for illegal migrants on their way to Western Europe.
- A total of 74,075 asylum applications were registered in the region (more than three times increase comparing with 2012).
- At least 3,755 suspects from 50 countries were reported as being investigated during 2013 (58.6% increase compared to 2012).
- The number of persons charged for smuggling of migrants was 2,284 persons in 2013 (increase with 27%).
- The total number of sentenced persons decreased to 364, by 23.5% comparing with 2012.
- Smugglers were ranged from individuals to well-organized trans-border criminal networks in Southeast Europe.
- The organized crime groups from the region involved in smuggling migrants are parts of larger international networks acting across the countries on the route, either as “support cells” or “services’ providers”.
Operation MIRAGE 2013

The Operation MIRAGE 2013 was carried out in two phases. First phase consisted in exchanging information and intelligence regarding the targeted phenomenon among Member States and lasted one month (September 2013). In the second phase, the region-wide one-time operation was carried out for a period of 7 days, during 14th – 21st of October 2013. Law enforcement authorities from 10 SELEC Member States took part in the operation (Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Turkey).

Subsequent to an intensive information exchange, a joint investigation has been set up (codenamed RADIO), being finalized with apprehending of 10 members of an organized crime group; 223 illegal migrant smugglers were investigated during the operation and 1,309 illegal migrants were detected. By far, the illegal migrants from Syria (42.4% of total) and Afghanistan (31.3% of total) have been the most detected migrants. Most of the illegal migrants (81% of the total) have tried to cross the borders through the green/blue border, as to avoid checks; 117 organized crime groups were identified and also intercepted.

During the operation, 758 persons and 1 company were identified and located, and 748 persons were arrested. The starting points for most of the detected illegal migrants were countries from Africa and Asia. Destination countries targeted were from West Europe i.e. Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Austria and Italian Republic. During the operation, it appeared that the illegal migrants from Africa preferred the route Republic of Turkey – Hellenic Republic - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Republic of Serbia - Hungary in the direction to Western European countries; while those from Asia (Syria, Iran etc.) were in favor of the route Republic of Turkey – Hellenic Republic – Republic of Bulgaria – Romania - Hungary in the direction to Western European countries.

Joint investigations

A total number of 17 joint investigations were supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Task Force Mirage.

Joint investigation AVANTI was a case between Republic of Serbia and Hungary initiated in 2013, targeting an organized crime group dealing with facilitation of illegal migration along the Hungarian-Serbian border. The organized crime group recruited and transported illegal migrants from Republic of Turkey and Syria to Federal Republic of Germany and Republic of Austria. The illegal migrants were gathered on the territory of Republic of Serbia and illegally crossed over the green border to Hungary where they were waited by car drivers who would have transported them further to the destination. Vehicles used for smuggling were equipped with counterfeit German or Austrian license plates and were driven by occasional drivers. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC. Investigation successfully finalized with the arrest of 15 persons and apprehension of 33 illegal migrants. This joint investigation was awarded a first prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.
Joint investigation ANIMA developed by Hungary and Republic of Serbia started in 2014 targeting an organized crime group dealing with facilitation of illegal migration along the Hungarian-Serbian border. During January and May 2014, the organized crime group recruited and transported illegal migrants from the territory of Kosovo* to French Republic, Switzerland, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Austria and Czech Republic. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. The investigation was successfully finalized with the apprehension of 14 persons (9 in Hungary and 5 in Republic of Serbia), being suspected of smuggling more than 50 persons, and seizure of mobile phones, SIM cards, notes and approximately 3,000 EUR in Hungary and 6 pieces of weapons and 3,011 cigarettes boxes in Republic of Serbia. 

This joint investigation was awarded a first prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

*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.

Joint investigation THE ADVISER was initiated in 2013 between the law enforcement authorities from Hungary and Romania, addressing an organized crime group dealing with smuggling of migrants from Nepal and Philippines. The leaders of the organized crime group were Indian citizens closely working with Romanian citizens for migrants smuggling. As modus operandi, the migrants were helped to get Schengen visas based on counterfeit documents or they were led to illegally cross the borders between Hellenic Republic, Republic of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, with the final destination in Western European countries, either hidden in trains or crossing the green border on foot. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with the prosecution of 7 persons, seizure of 200 forged passports, stamps, employment forms etc., dismantling counterfeiting laboratory in Romania and seizure of 18,000 EUR. The amount of 83,432 EUR remained to be paid by one of the perpetrators. 

This joint investigation was awarded a third prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

Joint investigation M5 was a case among Republic of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, which started in 2014 targeting an organized crime group dealing with trafficking of illegal migrants. Following a traffic incident on highway M5 in Hungary, with a minivan transporting 9 illegal migrants from Afghanistan (two migrants died, the rest being injured), a new investigation started. New modus operandi was identified in migrants smuggling, the perpetrators using reconstructed minivans having double back door. The case succeeded with the arrest of 1 person in Republic of Bulgaria and identification through DNA and finger prints analysis of a second perpetrator (arrest warrant being issued for him), identification of 7 other perpetrators (being under investigation) and detection of 140 illegal migrants. The perpetrator arrested in Republic of Bulgaria was extradited to Hungary. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. 

This joint investigation was awarded a third prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

Joint investigation OSKAR among law enforcement authorities from Hungary, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Austria was initiated in 2014 targeting an organized crime group dealing with smuggling illegal migrants from Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan on the route Hellenic Republic – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Republic of Serbia (including refugee camp in Banja Koviljaca), through Republic of Serbia to Hungary and further to Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Austria and Italian Republic. More transports of illegal migrants connected to the activity of this organized crime group were apprehended in Hungary and Republic of Austria. The case succeeded with the arrest of 19 perpetrators. Five migrants working for the organized crime group were also apprehended in Republic of Austria. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. 

This joint investigation was awarded a first prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.
Established: July 2000  
Coordinator: Republic of Bulgaria

Total of 417 requests and 433 pieces of information (including drug seizure notifications requiring feedback verifications) were initiated and exchanged in 2014 among SELEC Member States and partners (countries and organizations) in the framework of the Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force (ADT TF).

In 2014 SELEC was involved in the coordination of 27 joint investigations and managed to organize or support participation in 47 meetings, out of which 1 annual ADT TF meeting; 1 Evaluation Meeting of the Project on Cross-Border Deployment of Undercover Officers and Informants; 1 Training on Tackling Drug Trafficking organized by SELEC and funded by EUCOM, 15 operational meetings dedicated to ongoing joint investigations within Southeast European region, 22 supporting meetings related to the Project on Cross-Border Deployment of Undercover Officers and Informants, as well as participating in 7 international meetings on drug-related topics, organized by Paris Pact Secretariat, UNODC, OSCE, Embassy of French Republic in Sofia etc.

The 20th Meeting of Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force was held at SELEC Headquarters in Bucharest, Romania on 20th – 21st of May 2014. The meeting was attended by a total of 58 participants from SELEC Member States and from CARICC, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, INTERPOL, Regional Cooperation Council, Slovakia, SEEPAG, Kingdom of Spain, The Netherlands, Ukraine and United States of America. The 2013 SEE Drug Report was presented, being underlined the situation for each type of drugs in terms of cases, quantities seized, reason of control, method of trans-border transportation, routes, concealment methods, offenders.

Evaluation Meeting of Project on Cross-Border Deployment of Undercover Officers and Informants was held on 12th – 13th of March 2014 in Sandanski, Republic of Bulgaria with 45 participants from SELEC Member States and from United States of America. The Manual on Cross-Border Deployment of Undercover Officers and Informants was adopted during the evaluation meeting. Participants recognized the importance of the Project for the region, considering that the Project successfully achieved its aims, building trust and improving the cooperation among the experts in the Member States. This was one of the successful projects developed by SELEC having excellent practical results and creating real possibilities to implement them in future operations.
Anti-Drug Trafficking Training Course organized by SELEC with EUCOM support was held on 23rd – 25th of September 2014 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 68 participants (law enforcement officers and prosecutors) from SELEC Member States and from United States of America.

Related to the involvement in activities carried out at international level, SELEC was represented at: Paris Pact Expert Working Group on Improving Bilateral and Multilateral Information Sharing and Coordination of Investigation, UNODC Workshop on Afghan Opiate Trafficking through the Southern Route, Regional Round Table on "Cooperation between Law Enforcement and Forensic Officers on Illicit Drug Investigations in the Balkan Region" organized by OSCE, Inter-agency meeting "Networking the Networks" organized by UNODC and hosted by the GCC Criminal Information Center to Combat Drugs in Qatar, Fourth Informal Working Group Meeting on Heroin and AA Trafficking to/from Europe, organized by UNODC, Regional Seminar on combating drug trafficking organized by Embassy of French Republic in Sofia etc.

Findings of the 2013 Report on drug seizures in South Eastern Europe

- The opium-based drugs (including opium, heroin and morphine) seized in the region in 2013 amounted more than 16 tons (16,325.90 kilograms); compared to 2012, the total quantity increased by 9%. Heroin seizures significantly increased by 14% compared to 2012. Heroin represented 98.4% of total quantity of opiates seized. Republic of Turkey’s seizures, in terms of quantity, represented 95.6% of the heroin confiscated in the South East European region; 89% of total heroin quantity was seized based on risk analysis, 7% on routine checks and 4% on intelligence. The territory of Republic of Turkey continued to play a major role in the transit of heroin coming from Afghanistan towards South East and Western Europe; the main destination countries not being Member States were Kingdom of Belgium, The Netherlands, French Republic, Republic of Poland, Federal Republic of Germany and Italian Republic, all branches of the Balkan Route being used. 71% of total quantity was related to lorries and 24% to passenger cars. The most frequently used mode of concealment was “in transport”.

- South America remained the main source of cocaine. The cocaine seized in 2013 amounted 1,351.53 kg in 1,697 cases; the quantity increased with 63% compared to 2012 and the cases registered a decrease of 22% compared to previous year. Important amounts of cocaine (over 100 kilograms) were seized in Republic of Turkey and Hellenic Republic; quantities over 50 kilograms were seized in Republic of Serbia and Romania.
Cocaine seizures at the border crossing points represented 70% of the total quantity related to trans-border trafficking, while the cocaine seized inland represented 30%. 63% of total cocaine quantity resulted out of risk analysis, 30% out of routine checks and 7% out of intelligence. 79% of cocaine quantities were related to maritime transport, while 7% to air couriers.

→ Cannabis remained the first ranked drug in terms of cases and quantities seized. The total amount of cannabis products confiscated during 2013 was more than 323 tons. Cannabis products registered an increase by 48% comparing to previous year. Marijuana (herbal cannabis) increased by 31% (from 174,808.94 kilograms to 229,205.43 kilograms). Republic of Turkey seized 78.6% of the total amount of marijuana, Republic of Albania 9%, and Hellenic Republic 8.7%; hashish seizures increased by 117% (from 43,600.54 kilograms to 94,467.71 kilograms) and represented 29% of the total amount of cannabis products confiscated in the region, almost the entire quantity being reported by Republic of Turkey. Substantial quantities of cannabis were detained from illegal plantations, 795.27 kilograms and 139.194 pieces/plants. Exploitation by the traffickers of the South West branches of the Balkan Route was reconfirmed. At regional level, the most significant quantities of herbal cannabis were transported by lorries. 50% of total quantity confiscated resulted out of intelligence, 27% of routine control, and 23% of risk analysis.

→ The following quantities of synthetic drugs were seized in 2013: Amphetamine (179.09 kilograms and 7,571 pills), Ecstasy (207.81 kilograms and 5,056,647 pills), and Methamphetamine (135.44 kilograms and 126 pills). The biggest quantity of ecstasy was detained by Republic of Turkey, namely 136.77 kilograms and 4,962,967 pills. With respect to reason of control, 53% of the seizures of synthetic drugs were based on routine control, 33% on risk analysis and 14% on intelligence.

→ 26 "controlled deliveries" were reported, these leading to the arrest of 56 persons involved in drug trafficking.

**Joint investigations**

Total of 27 joint investigations were coordinated by SELEC under the umbrella of Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force.

**Joint investigation WALKER II** among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Montenegro and Republic of Serbia was initiated in 2013, targeting an organized crime group dealing with drug trafficking. After finalizing the analyses on results of Operation Walker, investigators from Bosnia and Herzegovina discovered existence of higher level criminals acting behind the organized crime group involved in Operation Walker. Investigation targeting new discovered organized crime group was initiated. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC.

The case succeeded with the arrest of 23 persons (15 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6 in Republic of Croatia and 2 in Montenegro) and arrest warrants for 4 persons, members of the organized crime group who escaped arresting, were issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During operation, searches were made in 27 locations which resulted in the seizure of 130.55 kilograms of marijuana Skunk (108.55 kilograms in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 22 kilograms in Republic of Croatia), 8 luxury cars, 2.5 kilograms of explosive, 4 military rifles, 1 rifle, 2 guns, 6 handheld radios, "Manuals" on the marijuana cultivation, dozens of mobile phones with SIM cards, a lot of excise stamps for alcoholic drinks, several personal computers and technical equipment.

*This joint investigation was awarded a second prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.*
Joint investigation BOSFOR was a case initiated in 2012 among Republic of Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Republic of Serbia, targeting an organized crime group consisting of Bulgarian, Serbian and Bosnian citizens dealing with traffic of heroin (between 3 – 5 kilograms) from Republic of Turkey through Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Serbia to Western Europe. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with the arrest of 20 persons (14 in Republic of Serbia, 4 in Republic of Bulgaria, 1 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 1 in Montenegro) and seizure of 7.325 kilograms heroin.

This joint investigation was awarded a second prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

Joint investigation LADUT among the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Bulgaria and Switzerland started in 2013 targeting an organized crime group dealing with trafficking of heroin from Republic of Turkey via Republic of Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Switzerland and other EU countries and marijuana from Republic of Albania through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Federal Republic of Germany. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC. The operation was finalized with seizure of 22.7 kilograms marijuana and arrest of 8 persons.

This joint investigation was awarded a third prize for the first semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.
Joint investigation **TREF** between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia was initiated in 2013, targeting an organized crime group dealing with drug trafficking. The organized crime group consisting of Bosnian and Croatian nationals was involved in trafficking of different kinds of narcotics, mostly marijuana from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Republic of Croatia and cocaine on the return route; the members of the organized crime group were suspected of being connected also with other different crimes: trafficking in human beings, counterfeiting money, murder etc. The case succeeded with the arrest of 11 persons and seizure of 6 kilograms of “skunk”, 3 pistols with 21 pieces of ammunition, 300 grams of speed, 8 grams of marijuana seeds, 42 pills heart-shaped, scales, equipment for jamming cell phone signal, 36 mobile phones, 35 SIM cards, 2 laptops, several planners and other items to be used as evidences in court. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC.

Joint investigation **MAVROVO** between Republic of Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was carried out in 2014, targeting an organized crime group dealing with transport of cannabis from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia through Republic of Serbia to the West European countries. Two seizures totaling 168 kilograms cannabis were made and 4 members of the organized crime group were arrested. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. **This joint investigation was awarded a second prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.**
Joint investigation VIBER was a case developed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, initiated in 2014 and targeting an organized crime group dealing with marijuana and heroin trafficking. Case succeeded with arrest of 53 persons (31 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 22 in Montenegro) and seizure of 33.9 kilograms cannabis, 657.3 grams of heroin, 1.35 kilograms amphetamine, 12 grams of cocaine, 2 automatic rifles, 5 handguns, 1 crossbow, ammunition, motor vehicles used for drug transportation, phones, SIM cards, 5,000 EUR cash etc. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. This joint investigation was awarded a third prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

Joint investigation PHOENIX/BRUNO between Republic of Bulgaria and Romania was initiated in June 2014, targeting an organized crime group dealing with cocaine trafficking from South America via Romania and Republic of Bulgaria to Republic of Turkey. The investigation started following seizure of 25.625 kilograms of cocaine made by Bulgarian Customs, in a vehicle registered in Romania. The case succeeded with the arrest of 5 persons and identification of the organizer, seizure of total of 55.625 kilograms cocaine in Romania and Republic of Bulgaria and confiscation of the vehicle used for drug trafficking. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. This joint investigation was awarded a first prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.

Established: September 2001
Coordinator: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Sub-groups:
Credit Card Fraud (Romania)
Cyber Crime (Romania)
Money Laundering (Republic of Moldova)
Intellectual Property (Republic of Bulgaria)
Counterfeit Money (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

A total of 138 requests and 26 pieces of information were initiated among Member States and partners in the framework of the Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force; in 2014, SELEC organized or supported participation in 10 meetings and activities at international level out of which 1 Workshop on Illicit Financial Flows in cooperation with UNODC, 6 operational meetings dedicated to ongoing joint investigations within Southeast European region, as well as participating in 3 international meetings on related topics.
Over 50 law enforcement experts gathered and discussed on the topic of illicit financial flows during a Conference jointly organized by SELEC, in the framework of the Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force, and UNODC on 27th – 28th of November 2014 in Bucharest at SELEC Headquarters.

The aim of the Conference was to bring together law enforcement representatives of the SELEC Member States and partners - Georgia, State of Israel, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of Spain, United States of America and UNODC, as well as from Iran and Transcrime - Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime, to discuss on the current situation in the field of countering money laundering and on assumptions and data to be used in UNODC’s upcoming study on estimating illicit financial flows, under the overall goal to enhance cooperation between countries along the Balkan route of heroin trafficking.

Related to the involvement in activities carried out at international level, SELEC was represented at the Technical-tactical course for strengthening euro protection against counterfeiting in Romania, SEE and Republic of Turkey as candidate country - organized by Directorate for Countering Organized Crime – SCFTSB – National Central Office for countering falsifying currency and travel checks, event developed within European Commission - OLAF Pericles Programme 2013; Regional Conference on Cyber Security on “The impact of the global cybernetic threats – developments and prospects at regional level”, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

**Joint investigations**

A total number of 6 joint investigations were supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force.

**Joint investigation SKYPE** between Republic of Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started in 2014 based on complaint for extortion over Internet. After coordinated activities through SELEC channels, the criminal activity was disrupted. Pre-trial proceedings were started against two perpetrators, while the computer system, used to carry out the criminal activity, was seized. On later stage through other channels, other several complaints were received for crimes committed by the same perpetrators using similar *modus operandi*. 
11. Stolen Vehicles Task Force

Established: 2002
Coordinator: Hungary
A total of 39 requests and 13 pieces of information were initiated among Member States and partners in the framework of the Stolen Vehicles Task Force. In 2014, SELEC was involved in the coordination of 3 joint investigations and managed to organize or support participation in 4 meetings, out of which 1 annual task force meeting, 2 operational meetings dedicated to ongoing joint investigations within Southeast European region, as well as participating in 1 international meeting on stolen vehicles related topics.

As involvement in other international initiatives on combating stolen vehicles, SELEC was represented at the 1st International Congress on Fake Documents and Illicit Traffic of Vehicles organized by InterDOCPOL.

The 11th Meeting of Stolen Vehicles Task Force was held on 27th of March 2014 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 45 experts from SELEC Member States and also partners - EUBAM, EUROPOL, International Association of Auto Theft Investigators European Branch - IAATI-EB, Kingdom of Spain and United States of America gathered in Banja Luka to present the national situation on the current vehicles crimes and related statistics – new trends and challenges, recent investigations and best practices examples, as well as to make proposals for future activities. During the meeting, there were discussed and presented the Evaluation Report of the regional Operation LEASE CAR II, targeting illicit traffic of vehicles, as well as the Statistical Report on Vehicle Crime for 2010 – 2012, the first statistical report prepared by SELEC in this field.

Operation LEASE CAR II

Operation LEASE CAR II was carried out during 29th – 31st of October 2013. National authorities from all SELEC Member States were involved in the operation, acting within the framework of their own national legislation: Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hellenic Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Turkey. EUBAM also participated in the operation.
• Overall, there were 190,073 checked vehicles, 133,557 checked persons and 120,087 checked documents.
• Regarding the vehicles, 28 positive hits were encountered in the ASF, a number of 133 hits in SIS and 210 in the national databases.
• A total number of 198 vehicles were seized/detained during the operation.
• The three most seized brands of seized vehicles were Mercedes, Volkswagen and BMW.
• Highways represented the place where most of the seized vehicles were hit, followed by parking place, shopping centers, registration office/authority, scrap yard, border crossing and service, car parts dealer and petrol station.
• Regarding the type of offence, theft placed first, followed by vehicles with altered identification marks and forged document(s) presented.
• Only 6 financial frauds were encountered (representing 4.3% of total).
• The reporting countries indicated as country of offence a country from outside the SELEC region in 52.2% of the cases and, in 47.8% of the cases, a country from the SELEC region.
• In most of the cases, the reported detainees were nationals/citizens of the reporting countries.
• Only 2 persons were citizens of countries from outside SELEC region (two from Ukraine reported by Republic of Moldova).
• The estimated value of the seized vehicles was 1,919,800 EUR.


→ Stolen vehicles in Southeast European region for each analyzed year were 58,153 vehicles in 2010, 63,426 vehicles in 2011 and 62,378 vehicles in 2012.
→ The estimated value of the stolen vehicles in the region was 581,530,000 EUR in 2010, 634,260,000 EUR in 2011 and 623,780,000 EUR in 2012.
→ The proportion of different types of vehicles was as follows: in 2010, almost 68% of the stolen vehicles were passenger cars, almost 22% motorbikes and more than 9% trucks; in 2011, the percentage of the stolen cars decreased to 65%; the percentage of the stolen motorbikes remained similar (22%), while the percentage of the stolen trucks increased to 11%; in 2012, compared to previous year, the percentage of the stolen passenger cars went slightly up to almost 66%, while the percentage of the stolen motorbikes and trucks remained similar (22% motorbikes and 11% trucks).
→ The number of the stolen vehicles increased by 9.1% in 2011 and dropped in 2012 by 1.7%.
→ Theft was the main method to misappropriate a vehicle in 2010-2012 in the region (92% of total in 2010 and 2011, and 90% in 2012).
→ Vehicles recovered in SELEC region by authorities:
  • In 2010 - 24,639 vehicles
  • In 2011 - 25,867 vehicles
  • in 2012 - 22,732 vehicles
Operation HIT

Operation HIT primarily focused on combating illicit trafficking of vehicles acquired mostly (but not only) in Western Europe by means of committing criminal offences of various kinds on purpose to later have them legalized in SELEC Member States or via SELEC Member States in other countries of Europe and Asia by taking into consideration that during the operation any SELEC member might also appear as a source country.

The operation was carried out during 3rd – 5th of June 2014 with the participation of SELEC Member States and partners - EUBAM, EUROPOL, Kingdom of Spain, Federal Republic of Germany, French Republic and Italian Republic. GIE ARGOS (French Insurance Companies Group) deployed 2 teams during the operation, one in Hungary and one in Montenegro.

During the operation HIT, a number of 75 requests/information/answers were exchanged among the participating parties.

Joint investigations

A total number of 3 joint investigations were supported by SELEC under the umbrella of Stolen Vehicles Task Force.

Joint investigation OKTOPUS among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia and Republic of Serbia was initiated in 2013 targeting an organized crime group dealing with trafficking of stolen luxury vehicles, the organized crime group being involved also in drug trafficking. The criminal investigation was carried out in Republic of Croatia against 34 persons and 10 persons were arrested. Several parts of motor vehicles and documentation, 4 illegal firearms, 300 grams of plastic explosives and ammunition were found and stolen vehicles were recovered in Republic of Croatia. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC.
12. Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force

Established: February 2003
Coordinators: Republic of Albania and Republic of Croatia

A total number of 269 requests and 863 pieces of information were initiated among SELEC Member States and partners in the framework of Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force.

In 2014, SELEC was involved in the coordination of 12 joint investigations and managed to organize or support participation in 11 meetings, out of which 1 annual task force meeting, 9 operational meetings dedicated to ongoing joint investigations within Southeast European region, as well as participating in 1 international meeting on related topics.

Related to the involvement in activities carried out at international level, SELEC was represented at the Regional Seminar on IPR in the South Eastern European countries, organized by Office for Harmonization in the International Market (OHIM) through the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights and the Romanian Prosecutor’s Office attached to High Court of Cassation and Justice, in cooperation with the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The 14th Meeting of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force was held on 11th – 12th of June 2014 in Bucharest, Romania, being attended by 50 participants from SELEC Member States and partners - EUBAM, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, RILO ECE, Kingdom of Spain and United States of America, as well as from private sector - British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International and Philip Morris Trading.

Key findings of the 2013 SEE Tobacco Products Smuggling Situation Report

The total amount of cigarettes seized in Southeast Europe in 2013 was around 4 billion pieces (3,865,548,722 pieces) in 64,625 cases. Comparing with 2012, the total quantity of seized cigarettes in the region slightly decreased with 0.1%, while the total number of cases increased by 24%.

The total smoking tobacco seized in Southeast European region during 2013 amounted 507,462 kilograms in 3,754 cases. Serious increase with 137% was observed on the smoking tobacco cases in 2013, while substantial decrease was observed in the total quantity seized.

The total quantity of raw tobacco seized in the Southeast European region during 2013 was of 58,715 kilograms in 362 cases. Comparing with 2012, the total amount of raw tobacco seized and the total number of cases increased both with 27%.

Tobacco products seizures detected inland represented 75%, at BCPs were made 19% and 6% at the green border.

The biggest amount of cigarette seizures was based on intelligence – 54%, followed by routine checks - 27%, risk analysis – 18% and other methods – 1%. The biggest number of smoking and raw tobacco seizures was as a result of routine checks, followed by those based on intelligence and risk analysis.

The highest number of tobacco products (cigarettes and smoking tobacco) cases referred to the road transport (1,848 cases), followed by air transport (74 cases), rail transport (52 cases) and maritime transport (50 cases).

In regards to the number of cases, tobacco products were mainly smuggled by road means of transport such as passenger cars, trucks/lorries and vans.

In 2013, vessels and maritime containers remained the most important modes of transport regarding large quantities of smuggled cigarettes while the trucks/lorries took second place.

The most often used concealment method was “in the construction of the vehicle”.

Household effects, construction materials, fruits and vegetables were the most frequently used cover loads.

During 2013, 247 different brands of cigarettes were detected, the top five most frequently smuggled cigarette brands being Ronhill, Corsair, Karelia, Raquel and Eva.

The main departure/transit countries/zones in 2013, in terms of number of seizures were: Republic of Moldova, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia while in terms of seized quantities were: Hellenic Republic, Famagusta free zone, Singapore and United Arab Emirates.

The most mentioned destination/transit countries were Romania, Hellenic Republic, Italian Republic, Republic of Bulgaria and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Bearing in mind that the South Eastern Europe is a transit region, it is unlikely to consider the Member States as final destination of the whole amount of seized cigarettes. The same principle applies to the departure countries.

The total number of offenders involved in cigarettes smuggling was 44,624 persons. 92% were citizens of the countries in the Southeast European region, most of them being arrested and investigated by their national authorities.
Regional Operation BLACK PEARL III

Operation BLACK PEARL III targeting illegal trade of petrol and petrol products in Southeast European region was carried out during 13th – 20th of November 2013. All 12 SELEC Member States participated in the operation.

During the operation there were exchanged 62 warning messages and 65 feedback messages. The majority of the shipments were transported by vehicles (77%), followed by vessels (16%) and trains (7%). No seizures were made during the operation but the exchange of information was very intensive. The results of the operation confirmed the essential role of SELEC in improving the international cooperation especially in timely exchange of information among its Member States.

Project ANTS

- 11 SELEC Member States (respectively 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 and Republic of Serbia) participated in the Project ANTS in one month monitoring of small cigarettes seizures.
  - During the operational phase, a total of 353 cases amounting 3,266,951 pieces of cigarettes following the threshold below 50,000 pieces per case were recorded.
  - 6 countries recorded seizures exceeding the established threshold, with a total of 53,891,703 pieces of cigarettes seized in 44 cases.
  - The highest number of cases was registered at the border crossing representing 76% of the total, followed by inland seizures with 22% and those made at green border 2%.
  - The biggest quantities of cigarettes were transported by passenger cars representing 72% of the total, followed by buses/coaches with 16%, lorries/trucks with 4% and ship/vessels and air planes 3% each.
  - During Project ANTS, there was detected a total of 93 brands of cigarettes. The most seized brands of cigarettes were Ashima, Victory, Karelia, Jing Ling, Marlboro and Viceroy.
  - The most frequently mentioned departure countries for seizures of small quantities of cigarettes were: Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Republic of Serbia.
  - The main countries of destination appeared: Romania, Republic of Bulgaria and Hungary.
  - Apart from SELEC region, a total of 203,702 pieces of cigarettes in 30 cases were destined to the market of the countries in Western Europe such as Federal Republic of Germany, Italian Republic, Republic of Austria, Switzerland etc.
  - The results of the Project ANTS confirmed that “ant smuggling” is very intensive in Southeast Europe. On the other hand, smuggling of bigger quantities of cigarettes also exists, especially in the countries having big sea ports.

Joint investigations

A total number of 12 joint investigations were supported by SELEC under the umbrella of Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force.
Joint investigation JOKER was a case initiated in 2014, involving Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia and Montenegro targeting an organized crime group dealing with illegal production of cigarettes and smuggling of tobacco and tobacco products. Two operational meetings were supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with the arrest of 21 persons and seizure of 1,694,300 pieces of cigarettes, different brands, 2.672 tons of tobacco, 108 bags of tobacco, two machines with equipment and materials for the manufacture of cigarettes, 3 cars, 46.7 grams of marijuana, three handguns, 40,165 EUR, 2,600 USD and 7,000 KM. 
*This joint investigation was awarded a second prize for the second semester of 2014 by SELEC Bi-annual Awards Committee.*

Joint investigation JTI among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia and Republic of Serbia started in 2014 upon information provided by JTI targeting an organized crime group dealing with cigarettes smuggling produced in illegal factory in Bosnia and Herzegovina and crossed over the river to Republic of Croatia. Wrapping materials for cigarettes were provided by a Serbian Company. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with dismantling of illegal factory and arrest of the owner.

Joint investigation MASTER was a case started in 2013 between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Hungary. The investigation targeted new identified organized crime group dealing with customs frauds, tax evasion, money laundering and smuggling, having the same *modus operandi* as the organized crime group targeted by the joint investigation BOS carried out in the previous years. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with the arrest of 18 persons.

Joint investigation MASTER I developed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Hungary was initiated in 2013. Following the meeting in November 2013 for Operation MASTER, another organized crime group with similar *modus operandi* was identified (customs frauds, tax evasion, money laundering and smuggling) and was under common investigation by the two involved countries. One operational meeting was supported by SELEC. The case succeeded with the arrest of 42 persons and seizures of documents to be used as evidences in court.

Joint investigation carried out between the Romanian and Bulgarian Customs authorities via SELEC communication channels in the period June – July 2014, which resulted in confiscation of 29,082,200 pieces of counterfeit cigarettes (1,454,110 packages) of 4 different brands transported by 3 maritime containers in 2 cases (respectively on 16th of June and 29th of July 2014) at the port of Constanta Sud - Agigea. The cigarettes from the first 2 containers were initially delivered to the port of Varna, Republic of Bulgaria in December 2012 from United Arab Emirates. In March 2013 the cigarettes were shipped from the port of Varna to the port of Poti, Georgia, where they were stored. Approximately 1 year later, the cigarettes were shipped again from the port of Poti via Hellenic Republic to the port of Constanta, Romania. The third container was lastly delivered from The Netherlands via Hellenic Republic to Romania. In the frame of the joint investigation it was established that the notify party mentioned in the shipping documents is one and the same Bulgarian company without current trade activities and frizzed bank accounts due to a debt of approximately 470,187 EUR. The value of the merchandize seized was estimated of around 3.35 million EUR if the cigarettes would be sold on the illicit EU market.
13. Anti-Terrorism Task Force

Established: February 2003
Coordinator: Republic of Turkey

Sub-groups:
Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (Republic of Albania)
Trafficking in Weapons of Mass Destruction (Romania)
Terrorist Groups (Republic of Turkey)
A total number of 21 requests and 15 pieces of information were initiated among Member States and partners in the framework of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force. In 2014, SELEC organized or supported participation in 4 meetings and activities at international level out of which 1 Project VELES, 1 operational meeting dedicated to ongoing joint investigation within Southeast European region, as well as participating in 2 international meetings on related topics.


The aim of the project was to increase regional cooperation and test the reaction capacities in a case of illicit trafficking of dual use commodities with possible use in terrorist activities, also testing and developing networking for information exchange at SELEC level in case of trafficking of dual use commodities destined to a terrorist group.

The event was a two-day activity: first day included a mix of presentations/training on dual use commodities, and the second day included scenario presentation, table top exercise and breakout sessions, intended to encourage discussions that shares insights and best practices.

The participants in the project were the representatives from 10 SELEC Member States (Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Hellenic Republic, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Republic of Serbia), as well representatives of International Atomic Energy Agency and US Department of Energy.

Related to the involvement in activities carried out at international level, SELEC was represented at the 6th International Symposium on Terrorism and Transnational Crime (UTSAM 2014) on the theme of “Regional Developments and Security” organized by the Center for International Terrorism and Transnational Crime.

**Joint investigations**

One joint investigation was supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force.

Established: November 2005
Coordinator: Hellenic Republic
A total number of 2 requests were initiated among countries in the framework of the Container Security Task Force. In 2014 SELEC supported participation in 2 meetings.

In accordance with the decision of the Member States, the Container Security Task Force is preparing every two years a Regional Assessment Report reflecting the current situation in the field. Such assessments were prepared in the years 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. In 2014 SELEC launched the questionnaire on Container Security with the view to prepare the 2014 Assessment in the field.

Container shipping is the most important way of bringing commercial goods from one place to another all over the world, but unfortunately containers are not exclusively limited to the transport of legal commodities. Organized crime groups might use containers for the transport of drugs, precursor chemicals, cigarettes, counterfeited goods, toxic waste, materials for terrorist use and even illegal migrants.

The aim of the 2014 Assessment is to bring useful conclusions for better understanding the situation and improving the existing methodologies of transnational cooperation for tackling containers with illicit cargos and combating relevant customs infringements and violations.

In the frame of the good cooperation developed with the US Department of Energy, SELEC hosted at its training facilities the Commodity Identification Training addressed to the Romanian Customs Experts, provided by USDOE on 26th – 29th of May 2014.
A total number of 17 requests and 20 pieces of information were initiated among Member States and partners in the framework of the Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force. In 2014, SELEC organized or supported participation in 2 international meetings, out of which 1 was the annual task force meeting.
During the 4th Meeting of Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force held on 13th of May 2014 at SELEC premises in Bucharest, 40 experts from SELEC Member States and partners (SEEPAG, Ukraine and United States of America) discussed on the current situation in the field of countering environment and nature related crimes and also about the future steps to be taken for developing the operational activities within this task force.

The Evaluation Report of the Regional Operation ORION II, targeting smuggling of endangered and protected species, was debated and approved during the meeting.

**Regional Operation ORION II**

The Operation ORION II, targeting smuggling of endangered and protected species, lasted 8 days and was carried out in two phases of 4 days, each including 2 weekend days: Phase I during 4th – 7th of October 2013 and Phase II during 8th – 11th of November 2013.

10 SELEC Member States participated in the operation, respectively Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Republic of Serbia. At the same time, 32 national responsible authorities from 10 countries were involved in the operation.

A total of 59,100 inspections were carried out during the operation.

A number of 5 cases were registered by 3 SELEC Member States (Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania), totaling 5,520 animals belonging to protected and endangered species.

Three seizures were made inland, one at hunting place and one at BCP.

Comparing the results with the previous edition of the operation, it should be noted that Operation ORION II achieved better results in raising the awareness that smuggling of endangered and protected species and illegal hunting activities exist and the criminals will probably expand their activities widely in more organized manner in Southeast European region.

**Joint investigations**

One joint investigation was supported by SELEC under the umbrella of the Crimes against Cultural Heritage Goods Sub-group.
The following 14 operational plans and reports were developed along 2014:

| General Plans and Reports                          | 1. 2013 Operational Activity Report (part of the 2013 Annual Activity Report) |
|                                                    | 2. First Semester 2014 Operational Activity Report                          |
|                                                    | 4. 2013 Report on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in SEE |
|                                                    | 5. 2013 Report on Drug Seizures in SEE                                      |
|                                                    | 6. 2013 Report on Tobacco Products Smuggling Situation in SEE               |
| Situation Reports                                  | 8. Operational Plan of Operation “HIT” on vehicle crime - in cooperation with Hungarian Police |
|                                                    | 12. Evaluation Report of Project “ANTS” on monitoring seizures of small quantities of cigarettes |
17. International Cooperation

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITH STATES, LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND BODIES

SELEC Convention creates the legal framework for international cooperation and establishes the principles and criteria on the basis of which a party can cooperate with SELEC either as Member State, Operational Partner or Observer.

Membership and admission to SELEC

SELEC is open for admission to any State which has a particular interest in law enforcement cooperation in the Southeast European Region and which applies for membership, agrees with the objective and tasks of SELEC and satisfies criteria established by the Council.

Partnership to SELEC

Operational Partner status in SELEC is open upon request to any State or international organization or body that expresses its readiness to cooperate with SELEC, agrees to provide support to SELEC, and concludes a cooperation agreement with SELEC. The cooperation agreement contains, inter alia, appropriate regulations on personal data protection, security measures, financial relations, and settlement of disputes between the SELEC and the Operational Partner. The Operational Partners have the right to participate in operational activities and exchange personal data or information.

Observer status in SELEC is open upon request to any State or international organization or body that expresses its readiness to cooperate with and to make a contribution to SELEC. Observer status gives the opportunity to receive strategic information and participate in SELEC’s different meetings, trainings and seminars.

SELEC Partners may post, at their cost, representatives at the Headquarters of SELEC for the purpose of cooperation with the Center.
In 2014, SELEC continued to develop bilateral cooperation with different states, international organizations and bodies, aiming to explore the great benefits of mutual cooperation in the law enforcement area and underpinning these cooperation opportunities by various Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, Letters of Intent etc.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States of America, which has been a stable partner of SELEC/SECI Center from its founding in 1999, was granted the Operational Partner status with SELEC on 29th of May 2014, during the 8th Session of the SELEC Council organized in Bucharest.

The Ceremony for Signing the Cooperation Agreement between SELEC and the United States of America took place on 9th of September 2014, in Bucharest, at the Center’s premises.

The purpose of this Agreement is to facilitate the use of the SELEC platform by the United States of America together with the law enforcement agencies of the SELEC Member States in their collective actions to prevent and combat trans-border criminality and to provide an effective framework for joint efforts in ensuring regional stability.
International Criminal Police Organization - INTERPOL was granted the Operational Partner status with SELEC on 29th of May 2014, during the 8th Session of the SELEC Council, held in Bucharest.

The Ceremony for Signing the Cooperation Agreement between SELEC and INTERPOL took place on 5th of November 2014, on the occasion of the 83rd General Assembly of INTERPOL, held in Monaco.

With this Cooperation Agreement the parties declared their commitment to coordinate their efforts in enhancing closer international law enforcement cooperation through exchanging data, analyzing the criminal phenomena, supporting operational activities, joint investigations, regional operations, Task Force meetings, sharing expertise, as well as organizing trainings, workshops, seminars and other events.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME - UNODC

UNODC was a partner to SECI Center and continued to collaborate with SELEC, having the status of Observer. In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded on 4th of December 2012, with the purpose to further develop the cooperation between SELEC and UNODC, a joint Conference on Illicit Financial Flows was organized in the framework of SELEC Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force, in Bucharest, on 27th – 28th of November 2014.

CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

A Letter of Intent was signed on 12th of May 2014 between SELEC and the Customs Administration of The Netherlands with the scope, inter alia, to share expertise and best practices, exchange information on activities, plan and implement law enforcement operations.

SELEC is committed to continue developing long lasting mutually beneficial relationships with other countries and European and international law enforcement organizations and bodies, in order to enhance the fight against trans-border criminality, through efficient law enforcement cooperation.
SEEPAG is an international mechanism of judicial cooperation, formed by the representatives of the judicial authorities of SELEC Member States with an express intention to facilitate and speed up the cooperation in trans-border crime investigations and cases.

SEEPAG was constituted in 2003 by the Declaration of the representatives of the General Prosecutors from the countries of the Southeast European region.

SEEPAG has 12 Member States, namely: 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 and Republic of Turkey.

**SEEPAG CONFERENCES**

In 2014, under Hungarian SEEPAG Chairmanship and in cooperation with the Office of the Prosecutor General of Hungary, two sessions were organized in Budapest, where - besides the SEEPAG Members and high level representatives from the Hungarian prosecution service - also representatives of partner countries attended the event.

The 24th Conference took place on 28th – 29th of April, having the theme “Protection of the witnesses and of the official members in criminal proceedings”. During the two-day meeting, the SEEPAG members and partners presented their national legislation, practices, procedures and cases related to this important topic of witness protection.

At the second meeting, the SEEPAG Members and the representatives of partners met during the 25th SEEPAG Conference (28th – 29th of October) in order to discuss the legal instruments and mechanisms which can simplify and accelerate the criminal procedure.
ADVANTAGES OF SEEPAG:

IT IS OPERATIONAL

- By linking together experienced prosecutors and judges, SEEPAG facilitates the prosecutorial cooperation in the region through the timely exchange of necessary information and evidence, whether through the proper execution of mutual legal assistance requests, or through more informal channels of communication.

IT IS COMPLEMENTARY

- The work of the SEEPAG Members complements the activities of the national competent authorities, by facilitating and speeding up the execution of assistance.

IT IS BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST

- The formal and informal cooperation among its Members is largely based on the personal contacts and relationships developed over time, which also foster collaboration between prosecutors and judges.

IT IS EFFICIENT

- SEEPAG enhances cooperation and coordination between national investigating and prosecuting authorities thereby improving the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in addressing trans-border criminality. This close cooperation achieves a swifter outcome for those facing criminal charges.

IT HAS NO HIERARCHY

- SEEPAG’s organizational structure is quite simple and practical, with a horizontal character.
- It has one contact point, the SEEPAG Member, a designated prosecutor or judge, appointed from each Member State.
- SEEPAG Members’ primary function is to ensure the necessary coordination at the national level.
- The Chairmanship of SEEPAG rotates in alphabetical order of the Member States for a term of 1 year. The rotating Chairmanship is offering the opportunity for all Member States to give their input and further refine and develop the SEEPAG network. In 2014 the SEEPAG Chairmanship belonged to Hungary, and in 2015, to Republic of Moldova.
- SEEPAG’s Secretariat and budget are managed by SELEC, the Secretariat being based at SELEC’s Headquarters.

COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION ARE ALSO INFORMAL

- The requests for assistance are exchanged directly between the Prosecution Offices, through SEEPAG contact points.
- The communication is also supported by SELEC’s secure channels and the forum of SEEPAG’s website.
SEEPAG continued to develop in 2014 its good cooperation with the European Judicial Network (EJN), including attendance at each other meetings.

In the framework of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, SEEPAG was invited to participate at the 43rd plenary session of the EJN (Rome, 19th-21st November 2014). On this occasion, SEEPAG was invited as a key speaker in order to brief the participants about the successful activities carried out under SEEPAG, as an important judicial mechanism in the field of international cooperation for combating and prosecuting trans-border organized crimes.

Through the European Judicial Training Network Exchange Programme, SELEC hosted in 2014 several visits of groups of prosecutors from different EU countries, being presented comprehensive information about SELEC and SEEPAG, their activities and achievements.

Under the Project “Fight against organized crime and corruption: Strengthening the Prosecutors’ network”, in April 2014, SELEC welcomed at its premises a delegation of 18 prosecutors from Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and Kosovo*, together with the project management team, who were briefed about SEEPAG and SELEC’s objectives and structure, as well as about the benefits of such law enforcement and judicial cooperation in the Southeast European region.

*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.