## Summary

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SELEC also produces the Organized Crime Threat Assessment for Southeast Europe (OCTA SEE), the most comprehensive strategic report drafted by SELEC, developed with the full support of our Member States, covering a five years period. OCTA SEE is a qualitative assessment strategic report, illustrating the current situation and trends, identifying threats in SELEC Member States, highlighting vulnerabilities and opportunities revealed by various types of crime.

In order to further increase the effectiveness of the operational activities and capacity building of the law enforcement authorities, we are developing a new Operational Centre Unit with cutting-edge technology, being also permanently interconnected with SELEC Member States, as well as an upgraded training center.

The excellent results achieved throughout all these years are owed to the contribution, efforts and dedication of the law enforcement authorities of our Member States, National Focal Points, Liaison Officers, Staff, as well as our Partners, and I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for their commitment, devotion and continuous support.

Snejana MALEEVA
Director General

It is my pleasure to present the 2018 Annual Report of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) in the year when we celebrate 20 years of ever growing law enforcement cooperation in Southeast Europe through SELEC.

Considering today's criminality, more than ever, the competent authorities from around the world must have a proactive approach, enhanced cooperation and common strategy in order to coordinate their efforts and join synergies for an effective and enhanced fight against organized crime.

In this aspect, SELEC continues to support the endeavors of the law enforcement authorities of its 11 Member States through coordinated efforts for combating trans-border organized crime, which during these years, yielded ever growing number of the operational activities and successful results.
In 2019 SELEC, as successor of SECI Center, celebrates 20 years of successful law enforcement cooperation in Southeast Europe.

“Crime Steers Online” is the motto of the new OCTA SEE 2018 covering a five years period.

SELEC has 24 Partner Countries and Organizations.

Regional operation KNOW-HOW III targeting counterfeit goods entering SELEC Member States.

1,886 victims of human trafficking identified and 979 traffickers prosecuted in SELEC Member States.

Establishment of SELEC Associated Firearms Experts Network (SAFE-N) in the framework of Project SIRAS.

Regional operation ECLIPSE III targeting smuggling of cigarettes.

Approximately 2.5 billion cigarettes seized by the Member States.

Drugs seized in the region:
- more than 19 tons opium-based drugs
- 1.8 tons cocaine
- 300 tons cannabis products

113,074 migrants detected inland or attempting to illegally cross the borders of SELEC Member States, over 4,000 smugglers prosecuted.

27,172 exchanges of information and requests of assistance.


Joint investigation SUNSHINE finalized with a total of 8.4 tons marijuana seized and 66 persons arrested.

A new Operational Center unit, with cutting edge technology, created within Project FAIT.

The Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory group (SEEPAG) is functioning under SELEC’s auspices since 2003.

109 joint investigations conducted by the Member States with SELEC’s support.
Who we are
About SELEC

The Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) is a law enforcement, treaty-based international organization bringing together the resources and expertise of Police and Customs authorities that join efforts in combating more effectively trans-border organized crime in Southeast Europe.

SELEC, as successor of SECI Center founded in 1999, is established to provide support to its 11 Member States, to enhance the coordination in preventing and combating crime, including transnational serious and organized crime. Thus we now celebrate 20 years of successful cooperation in the region.

The founding document of SELEC is the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center, entered into force on 7th of October 2011, date when SECI Center became SELEC, while its operational and strategic capabilities were transferred to SELEC.

Member States

The 11 Member States of SELEC, parties to the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center and its Protocol on privileges and immunities:

- Republic of Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Republic of Bulgaria
- Hellenic Republic
- Hungary
- Republic of Moldova
- Montenegro
- Republic of North Macedonia
- Romania
- Republic of Serbia
- Republic of Turkey
- Hungary
- Republic of Moldova

Area of expertise

In the constant effort to support its Member States, SELEC provides a multinational expertise to law enforcement authorities across Southeast Europe offering the necessary platform for exchanging information and requests of assistance, supporting operational meetings, joint investigations and regional operations, as well as delivering quality analytical products.

Since 2003, under SELEC’s auspices, complementing the work of Police and Customs, is functioning the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) having the mission to facilitate and speed up the cooperation in transborder crime investigations and cases.

SELEC also provides a platform for trainings, having a fully-equipped Training Center, as part of its Headquarters.

With a view of further enhancing the capacities of law enforcement authorities, a new Operational Centre Unit, with cutting-edge technology, will be opened in 2019.
Organizational structure

The Council is the highest decision-making body of SELEC, consisting in high-level representatives of SELEC Member States, having the authority to act on behalf of their States. The Council takes decisions related to strategic and financial matters, elects the SELEC Management, decides the memberships and partnerships, approves the conclusion of agreements, a/o.

The Management of SELEC consists in:
- The Director General, the chief executive officer and legal representative of SELEC
- The Director for Operations
- The Director for Legal and Internal Affairs

The Director General and the Directors are elected by the Council following an open and public procedure.

The National Focal Points act as the single point of contact in the Member States for the communications with SELEC, through the Liaison Officers of the respective Member State, ensuring the rapid information flow by collecting and distributing the information requests and answers from and to the law enforcement agencies. The Member States and the Partners posted Liaison Officers, from Customs and Police, at SELEC Headquarters, officers that work together on a daily basis, thus facilitating the real-time exchange of information and requests of assistance.

SELEC Partners

Besides the 11 Member States, SELEC also has 24 partner countries and organizations, and has established numerous partnerships with other organizations, bodies, as well as with the private sector.

Cooperation with SELEC is available to any state or international organization or body which has an interest in law enforcement cooperation in Southeast Europe, the SELEC Convention providing the possibility to be granted the status of Operational Partner or Observer. The request for these statuses are addressed to SELEC Director General.

The Operational partner status grants the right to exchange personal data, to participate in SELEC activities and attend the meetings, including operational meetings, as well as to post a representative at the SELEC Headquarters in order to implement the cooperation agreement that is concluded between SELEC and the respective Operational Partner.

The Observer Status entails the right to receive strategic information, to attend the events organized by SELEC and to post a representative at SELEC. Current Observers:

- Austria
- Czech Republic
- GCC-CIC
- IOM
- Japan
- Switzerland
- UNMiK
- Belgium
- EUBAM
- Germany
- Israel
- Spain
- Ukraine
- Belarus
- France
- Georgia
- The Netherlands
- Slovak Republic
- UK
- UNODC
- WCO
- INTERPOL
- Italy
- USA
- UNMiK
- IOM
- GCC-CIC
- Japan
- Switzerland
- Austria
- Czech Republic
- Belgium
- EUBAM
- France
- Germany
- Israel
- Spain
- Ukraine
- Belarus
- Ukraine
- WCO
Main events, trainings and courses held in 2018

In 2018, during INTERPOL’s Global Operation LIONFISH focused on illicit substances and drug trafficking, SELEC hosted and supported the regional Operational Coordinating Unit (OCU) involving participating European countries and also several Middle East countries, being one of the five OCUs set up for conducting this operation. Operation LIONFISH led to the arrest of 1,300 suspects and the seizure of more than 35 tons of cocaine, five tons of heroin, 15 tons of cannabis and 430,000 Captagon tablets.

The **SELEC Council** had two sessions in 2018 during which the financial annual documents were approved, Switzerland was granted the Observer Status with SELEC, and successful elections for the positions of Director for Operations and Director for Legal and Internal Affairs took place. Thus, Ms. Tanja Levajkovikj, Assistant Minister in Financial Affairs Department within the Ministry of Interior of Republic of North Macedonia was elected as Director for Legal and Internal Affairs and Mr. Valentin Niculescu, Director for European Affairs, Schengen and International Relations, General Inspectorate of Romanian Border Police, was successfully elected as Director for Operations of SELEC.

The Meeting of the **SELEC Financial Consultative Group**, held at the SELEC Headquarters on 17 of April 2018, was attended by experts from Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Turkey. The discussions of the expert meeting were related to the revision of the budget for 2018, the budget proposal for 2019 and the Five-year Financial Plan 2018-2022.

Two training sessions on **Narcotics Investigations and Virtual Currency on the Dark Web** were conducted during 17-20 July 2018 at the SELEC Training Center. In recent years, Dark Web market places and virtual currencies have emerged frequently in illicit drug investigations in Europe. The training included an introduction to the Virtual Currency Initiative, Building a Virtual Persona, TOR/DNM, Dark Web Analysis, Bitcoin Basics, Virtual Currency Drug Money Laundering Processes, PGP, Bitcoin Practices for Law Enforcement, and Best Practices for Executing Seizures and Search Warrants of Virtual Currencies and Dark Web Marketplaces. During the courses, participants actively participated and were keen to utilize and implement the protocol and techniques gleaned from the course.
The Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) at the U.S. Department of Justice jointly with SELEC, organized on 27-28 November 2018, at SELEC Training Center, the Workshop on Combating Intellectual Property Theft through Increased Container Security.

The event consisted of interactive presentations and practical exercises and demonstrations focused on container security training, identification and interdiction of counterfeit goods, new technology used to track containers around the world, risks associated with container transportation and best practices to reduce these risks, investigation and prosecution of intellectual property rights cases.

In the framework of CEPOL European Joint Master Programme on 26 September 2018 SELEC received the visit of the participants to this EU academic programme aiming to address common challenges of police cooperation in the frame of internal security. The participants, senior law enforcement officers or experts, were delivered extensive presentations about SELEC, its mission, activities, examples of successful joint investigations and analytical products developed by SELEC, with a focus on the new 2018 OCTA SEE.

SELEC hosted on 24th of October 2018 the visit of the participants to the annual meeting of the European Working Group on Non-Lethal Weapons and representatives of the Center for Criminal Justice and Security Studies (CJS).

The European Working Group on Non-Lethal Weapons and the SAFTE project-Studying the Acquisition of illicit Firearms by Terrorists in Europe, were introduced by the CJS experts.

During the meeting, SELEC representatives made an extensive presentation of SELEC, its mission, activities, way of functioning, cases involving SELEC Member States, as well as provided a brief description of project SIRAS- Strengthening the Fight against Firearms Trafficking in Southeastern Europe, project currently implemented by SELEC.

The headquarters of SELEC at the 10th floor within the Palace of Parliament of Romania was offered by the Government of Romania through the Headquarters Agreement concluded in 2000. The national Service of Protection and Guard ensures the security of the headquarters, which has a dedicated entrance.
Projects

**Project SIRAS on Strengthening the fight against firearms trafficking in Southeastern Europe** is implemented by SELEC jointly with the Romanian Police and law enforcement authorities from Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria and Italian Republic.

Project SIRAS aims strengthening the capacities of the law enforcement agencies in Southeastern Europe to fight against firearms trafficking. It has been designed to support the use in the EU member states and in the SELEC member countries of data collection/analytic capabilities regarding firearms, to consolidate the investigation capacity, as well as joint investigations, police cooperation and exchange of best practices between law enforcement authorities (LEA) in the region.

In the framework of this project SELEC carried out equipment developments, workshops, study visits, operational meetings, trainings, more activities being currently under preparation and/or implementation. In this context, the training center was equipped with cutting edge technology for supporting firearms trafficking investigations on dark net markets and hosting the first and second-level trainings on Firearms trafficking investigations on the Surface Web and the Dark Net.

**Project FAIT -Fight Against Illegal Trade** is financed by PMI IMPACT – a global grant initiative by Philip Morris International to support projects dedicated to fighting illegal trade and related crimes.

The project aims at increasing the operational capacity of SELEC and its Member States in order to create an efficient response in fighting against smuggling phenomena. Over the recent decades illicit trade has constantly increased in profitability for organized crime groups, subsequently causing significant financial losses for states’ revenue systems, especially those situated in the EU. As this illegal activity became more profitable in terms of financial benefits, it might risk the financial stability of EU and non EU markets.

The objectives of the project are:
- Setting up state-of-the-art SELEC Operational Centre Unit (OCU) in order to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement authorities in fighting illegal trade
- Training for 120 specialists on the latest technology, special techniques and special investigative methods for better results in the fight against smuggling of goods
- Conducting a social-media awareness campaign against smuggling activities

**Project ATHENA -Addressing Training to SPOC (Single Point of Contact) as Hub of a European Network of Law Enforcement Agencies**

SELEC is a partner in project ATHENA that aims developing an effective coordination of training on law enforcement information exchange for the Single Points of Contact (SPOC), the promotion of a common law enforcement culture and the creation of a consolidated proactive network of SPOC Heads and staff.

The Italian Ministry of Interior is the project coordinator, SELEC being a co-partner together with State Police of Latvia, Bulgarian Police, Malta Police Force, Romanian Police and Belgian Federal Police.

SELEC was involved in the national study visits that took place in Romania, events hosted by SELEC, during which the participants from the beneficiary countries were acquainted with SELEC, its mission and activities, and shared our experience and expertise in regional law enforcement cooperation. Also SELEC contributed to the curricula of trainings and thus a new section about SELEC was included.
Joint Investigations

Joint investigations aim to tackle trans-border organized crime in SELEC region. They are conducted under the coordination of SELEC based on the proposals coming from the Member States or the Operational Partners.

109 joint investigations were carried out in 2018 under SELEC umbrella, most of them in the area of drug trafficking, fraud and smuggling and trafficking in human beings and illegal migration. SELEC operational meetings, as part of joint investigations, are attended by law enforcement officers and prosecutors upon the request from at least two Member States, aiming to tackle criminal organizations and/or criminals acting in the field of trans-border crime. The objective of an operational meeting is to exchange additional intelligence, and to plan future operational and judicial activities on the territories of the involved Member States.
Regional operations

The regional operations are organized by SELEC based on the proposals of the Member States, discussed and agreed upon during the Task Force meetings. Regional Operations focus on trans-border crime and follow an Operational Plan drafted by the initiating Member State authority in cooperation with the Task Force Managers and SELEC Operational Directorate.

SELEC coordinated Regional Operation KNOW-HOW III which targeted the detection and confinement of counterfeit goods entering Southeast Europe by all means of transport, both in commercial and non-commercial consignments. The operation was conducted in the period 12 – 23 March 2018 with the participation of all SELEC’s Member States, and it required intensive exchange of information which led to a various selection and identification of high risk deliveries. In the operational (implementation) phase, intensified inspections and intelligence gathering activities were carried out by the participating countries, which resulted in the detection of illegal activities involving counterfeit products.

Regional Operation ECLIPSE III was conducted in the period 19-30 November 2018, with the participation of all 11 SELEC Member States. The Operation aimed at monitoring and combating illegal trade, with a focus on smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco related products. Intensive control measures on border crossing points and inland were carried out, by using shared intelligence and jointly coordinated investigations amongst participating Member States. Over the 10 days’ operational phase of Regional Operation ECLIPSE III, a number of 161 seizures were reported by the Member States. 1650 pieces of information were exchanged during the regional operation in relation to approximately 41.5 million seized cigarettes, 557 kg of raw tobacco, 362 kg of water-pipe tobacco and 354 kg of smoking tobacco seized.

Analytical products

SELEC has the capacity to provide both operational and strategic analysis in order to support its Member States. Strategic analysis is meant to provide a wide-range overview on different crime areas, that may support the decision-makers in completing their understanding on the situation at regional level, as well as to prepare their agencies to deal with emerging crimes e.g. efficient allocation of resources towards different types of crime, setting national priorities, etc.

Upon request of a Member State, SELEC may deploy on-the-spot analytical support for joint investigations and operational meetings, and provide real-time operational intelligence analysis meant to identify links within the criminal networks. SELEC delivers also evaluation reports of the regional operations carried out under SELEC’s OCU coordination.

The most comprehensive strategic report drafted by SELEC is the Organized Crime Threat Assessment for Southeast Europe, the latest one being OCTA SEE 2018, developed with the full support of SELEC Member States, covering 2013-2017. OCTA SEE is a qualitative assessment, a strategic report illustrating the current situation and trends, identifying threats in SELEC Member States, highlighting vulnerabilities and opportunities revealed by various types of crime. The report intends to cast more light on the understanding of crime, while supporting the decision-making bodies in further translating ideas into national/regional strategic priorities, goals and operational action plans.

The gathered information endorses the conclusion that crime has stepped up in complexity over time, while technology, mainly the Internet, has changed the face of crime forever. From drug trafficking to money laundering, the report’s motto “Crime Steers Online” applies today to all the major crime areas. The full version of OCTA SEE is for law enforcement and judicial use only; the public version of its key findings is available on our website at www.selec.org
SELEC developed and updated in 2018, in cooperation with OSCE, the Controlled Delivery Manual for South-East European Countries, a tool designed to assist law enforcement officers from South-East Europe in implementing controlled delivery operations.

SELEC also joined Council of Europe's efforts for creating an online global manual, designed for and restricted to law enforcement and judiciary, aiming to make more efficient the “controlled deliveries” of illicit commodities. The manual was developed in cooperation with Eurojust, Europol, Interpol, OSCE and the Council of Europe’s Committee PC-OC.

**Operational Centre Unit**

Within Project FAIT- Fight Against Illegal Trade, SELEC will open a new high-tech Operational Center Unit (OCU). The aim of the OCU is to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement authorities. The OCU will bring together information from the entire SELEC region, EU and non-EU countries, thus addressing a proper operational response to different threats. A real-time exchange of information and criminal intelligence among SELEC Member States and Operational Partners, subsequently analyzed and disseminated, will support better operational, tactical and strategic decisions and efficient actions against transborder organized crime.

As a part of the OCU, to ensure a fast collection, analysis and exchange of strategic and operational information among case officers, National Focal Points, SELEC Liaison officers, SELEC analysts, a customized SELEC Intelligence Reporting Application Tool (S.I.R.A.T.) will be soon launched.

**Task Forces**

SELEC’s operational activities are conducted mainly within the frame of eight Task Forces addressing issues such as drugs, human beings trafficking, migration, stolen vehicles, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and computer crimes, terrorism, container security and environmental and nature related crimes.

Task Forces assume joint cooperation and participation of SELEC Member States law enforcement representatives, aiming to share information, best practices and effective crime-fighting and prevention tools in the Southeast European region.

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.

The Task Forces are established and function based on the SELEC Task Force Rules and Procedures.

The Task Forces are:

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

SELEC has a fully-equipped training center within its premises located in the Romanian Palace of Parliament, with a capacity of 70 places. The training center is available to all SELEC Member States and Partners, its aim being to provide the necessary platform for organizing all kind of trainings, seminars, workshops addressed to law enforcement officers. Among the latest events held it worth mentioning:

- **DEA** training on Narcotic Investigations / Virtual Currency on the Dark Web
- **US DoJ/IPLEC** Workshop on Combating Intellectual Property Theft through Increased Container Security
- **Paris Pact** Expert meeting on Precursors
- **CEPOL/SELEC** Heroin Smuggling Course

SEEPAG

Under SELEC’s auspices, complementing the work of Police and Customs, in 2003 was established and is successfully functioning the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG), having the same 11 Member States. SEEPAG is an international mechanism of judicial cooperation, formed by the countries of the SEE region with an express intention of facilitating judicial cooperation in significant trans-border crime investigations and cases. SEEPAG has regular meetings organized in the framework of the rotating Chairmanship.

The 29th SEEPAG Conference having as theme “New mechanisms of investigating and prosecuting smuggling of persons” organized by SELEC in the framework of the Serbian Chairmanship was held in Belgrade on 8 of May 2018 with the participation of the Minister of Justice of Republic of Serbia, Republic Public Prosecutor of Republic of Serbia, Director General of SELEC, as well as experts of the Member States and Partners’ prosecution offices, and representatives of Center for International Legal Cooperation, European Investment Bank, Regional Cooperation Council and US Department of Justice.

Based on the provisions of the General Guidelines of SEEPAG, the Chairmanship of SEEPAG rotates in alphabetical rotation, for a period of 1 year, next being Republic of Turkey.
Trafficking in human beings and illegal migration
The meeting of the Task Force on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration was held on 24th October 2018, at the SELEC premises in Bucharest/Romania, with the participation of law enforcement experts in the field from SELEC Member States, representatives of the partners and of the private sector. During the meeting, the key findings of the SELEC Report on Trafficking in Human Beings and the Report on Smuggling of Migrants were presented.

Presentations regarding new trends and modus operandi, best practices and successful joint investigations targeting organized crime groups engaged in trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants were delivered by the experts of the Member States.

Report on Smuggling of Migrants in Southeast Europe

Key findings

The pressure posed by the migration flow over Southeast Europe, an important transit area due to the geographical location, has considerably decreased over the past two years. The closure of the Balkan transit corridor in 2016 had a decisive impact on the number of migrants transiting the region, bringing the pressure to manageable figures.

Starting with 2013, the number of migrants detected has constantly increased, reaching unprecedented figures in 2015, when more than 2 million detections were reported by SELEC Member States. After a significant drop of 74% reported for 2016, the number of migrants detected in 2017 has further decreased by 80%, down to 113,074 detections made by the SELEC Member States.

Citizens of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan represented, for the third year consecutively, the most important share (close to 43% together) of non-regional migrants detected inland or at the borders of SELEC Member States.

As a general rule, the border crossing and the transit along the routes is facilitated by criminal networks which are offering their services, including accommodation, the provision of fraudulent documents and information on contact points in other countries, while widely relying on social media and use of online platforms in order to arrange the facilitation of services.

Over 4,000 smugglers were charged/prosecuted by law enforcement authorities in SELEC Member States in 2017, the figure is highlighting a sevenfold increase compared with the previous year. The criminal networks operating in Southeast Europe generally consist in members of various nationalities. The leaders who are coordinating the smuggling process are in most of the cases foreigners (sharing the same country of origin with the migrants) with temporary residence or asylum seekers in the countries were the organized crime groups (OCGs) are organizing the smuggling process, while the other members are nationals of the Member States and mainly responsible of secondary logistical tasks such as accommodation of migrants, internal transportation, acting as guides or ensuring the money transfers related to the smuggling of migrants for the main organizers.
The additional countermeasures undertaken by law enforcement authorities at the borders of SELEC Member States have either led to displacements between the routes used by the migrants and smugglers or to the diversification of the *modus operandi*. Additionally, this has also led to the reorientation of the smuggling activities towards fraudulent documents at the border crossing points (BCPs), particularly air BCPs. While the use of this *modus operandi* might increase, this could also lead to the further development of the OCGs producing forged documents and of the printing equipment used. In addition to this, the countermeasures have also led to an increased number of migrants stranded in different locations along the route putting an increased pressure over certain areas and borders, including the Greek islands and the border between Serbia and Hungary.

**Report on Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeast Europe**

**Key findings**

SELEC Member States are both countries of origin, as well as countries of exploitation of victims of human trafficking. Nevertheless, within the countries facing a serious pressure in this regard, the trafficking process is focused on the recruitment and coordination of exploitation of the victims on the territory of other countries, particularly in Western Europe.

Up until 2017, a constant drop was observed in terms of victims of human trafficking identified, traffickers charged, as well as number of investigations conducted by law enforcement authorities in SELEC Member States. In 2017 however, the total of 1,886 identified victims at regional level is highlighting a 11% increase compared with the previous year when 1,692 such identifications were made. At the same time, increased figures were also reported for traffickers charged/prosecuted (from 502 in 2016 up to 979 in 2017), as well as for number of investigations conducted (from 680 in 2016 up to 990 in 2017). However, although the number of identified victims has increased compared with 2016, it does not exceed the number of identified victims before 2016. Therefore, the 11% increase observed for 2017, may not affect the established descending trend observed in this regard at regional level over the past years.

The social and economic vulnerabilities of the victims such as the lack of education or employment opportunities are acting as facilitating factors in the recruitment of victims of human trafficking, characteristic to all types of exploitation. Moreover, the traffickers are also taking advantage of the Internet and social media in particular to optimize the recruitment process as well to advertise the services provided.

The most common type of exploitation identified by the Member States is the sexual exploitation in terms of adults, as well as minor victims exploited both internally and at international level, mainly in Western European countries. The sexual exploitation is generally gender based, most victims of this type of trafficking being women. As a general rule, the traffickers are using soft methods of recruitment rather than physical violence which is currently very rarely used.

**Labor exploitation** is the second most common type of exploitation identified by the Member States, the victims of trafficking are mainly male adults. The targeted victims for the traffickers recruited through vague promises of employment and motivating income, luring the victims to voluntarily engage in the trafficking process and leave the countries of origin legally using their personal identity documents.

Other types of exploitation were also identified, the victims of human trafficking being also forced into begging, into committing crimes or for tissue and organs harvesting, while, in some cases, multiple forms of exploitation were organized by the traffickers.

The criminal networks investigated by law enforcement authorities in the region were mainly engaged in trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. In terms of organization structure, the criminal networks engaged in this type of crime are either displaying a defined hierarchic structure, with one or two leaders which are coordinating the entire criminal activity, either displaying a less organized structure with members generally linked on grounds of ethnicity, family ties, regional basis or financial interests.

The proceeds of crime are largely returned back to the country of origin of the traffickers, to family members, leaders or other members of the OCGs. Various ways of transfer were identified, either via international transfer systems or through couriers, the victims themselves or is submitted to a bank account of a third party.
Joint investigations

A number of 13 joint investigations were conducted in this area by the Member States in the framework and with SELEC’s support.

Joint investigation PASSPORT was concluded after 12 months of intensive exchange of information through SELEC channel among law enforcement authorities of Republic of Albania, Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia. On 17 of March 2018 joint investigation PASSPORT on illegal migration was finalized, with 53 persons arrested and 11 persons wanted.

Several organized crime groups were dealing with the smuggling of migrants from Republic of Albania to Great Britain, United States of America and Canada, by using forged documents. The Bulgarian authorities managed to dismantle the organized crime group, part of an international criminal network for smuggling migrants that was producing and proliferating fake documents. During the searches performed various pieces of equipment and ID documents (Bulgarian, Turkish, Danish, Romanian, Spanish) were found, as well as 5114 pieces of fake 100 Euro banknotes.

The activities of the organized crime groups were spread in Republic of Albania, Republic of Bulgaria, Kingdom of Spain, Dominican Republic and United States of America. In the last 2 years they’ve managed to smuggle to Great Britain, USA and Canada over 1,000 migrants, obtaining profits in an average amount of 15 million USD.

Joint investigation AURORA between Bulgarian and Turkish authorities targeting dismantling an organized crime group dealing with smuggling of migrants, 20 traffickers (Bulgarian and Turkish citizens) being arrested following this successful joint investigation. SELEC supported the investigation by organizing operational meetings and providing the necessary channel for real-time exchange of information.

Thus, on 17 of January 2018 the Turkish Police apprehended 400 migrants while they were attempting crossing the border, by boat, from Republic of Turkey to Republic of Bulgaria.

Joint investigation AURORA is an investigation conducted between Montenegro and Republic of Serbia against an organized crime group involved in the smuggling of persons through the state borders for financial gain. Serbian Police arrested the main organizer of the criminal group, a citizen of Afghanistan, along with two other members of the group, citizens of Serbia; while Montenegrin police arrested five persons. Based on the information exchange between the two countries, several transports had been performed, involving more than a hundred illegal migrants from Somalia and other African countries, from Montenegro via Serbia to the territory of Hungary and further to Austria and other countries of the European Union.
Drug trafficking
Drug Trafficking Task Force

This Task Force was established in 2000, is coordinated by Republic of Bulgaria and has regular experts meetings.

The Regional workshop “Links between firearms trafficking and drugs trafficking” was held during 12-13 of June 2018 in Sofia/Republic of Bulgaria with the participation of representatives of Police and Customs authorities of all SELEC Member States, SELEC Operational partners and Observers (France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom, United States of America, Europol, Interpol).

During the workshop the Member States’ representatives presented significant cases showing links between firearms trafficking and drugs trafficking (national and international joint investigations, challenges and best practices, latest modi operandi regarding transport and concealment of drugs and firearms, linked cases, etc.)

2018 Report on Drug Seizures in Southeast Europe

Key findings

Opium-Based Drugs/Heroin
- The opium-based drugs (opium, heroin and morphine) seized in Southeast Europe - more than 19 tons
- In terms of quantities, opiates at the highest level in the past five years
- Opiates detained increased by 186.12%
- Heroin represented 93.8% of the total quantity of opiates, being the most important opium-based drug smuggled
- Heroin considerably increased by 175.73%
- All the branches are exploited; yet, there is a focus on the Northern branch of the Balkan route
- Main destination outside the region: The Netherlands
- Iraq – more as departure point
- Opium-based drugs transported by land touring vehicles, mostly by trucks
- The most frequently concealment mode - “in freight”
- 81% of quantity is seized was based on risk analysis and 18% on intelligence
- The estimated value of the seized heroin: approx. 600 million EUR

Cocaine
- Cocaine smuggled from the producers from South America
- The cocaine seized amounts 1,808 kilograms
- The total detained quantity decreased by 48.15%
- Cocaine is shipped predominantly by maritime containers
- Smaller amounts are trafficked through the international airports
- The estimated value of the cocaine seized: around 150 million EUR

Synthetic Drugs
- Amphetamine: 2,422 cases 1,311.424 kilograms
- Ecstasy: 7,533 cases 2,757.836 kilograms
- Methamphetamine: 7,816 cases 665.294 kilograms
- 12 million EUR – Amphetamine; 100 million EUR – Ecstasy; 12 million EUR - Methamphetamine
Cannabis
- Cannabis is the most commonly produced and trafficked illicit drug in the region
- Cannabis products at the highest level in the past 4 years
- The total amount of cannabis products (marijuana and hashish) – approx. 300 tons; upsurge by 49.14%
- Marijuana - 210 tons - increase by 27.5%
- Hashish – 88.5 tons - increased by 149.94%
- Marijuana routes - a focus on the South West branches of the Balkan Route
- Western European countries - main destinations
- South West branches of the Balkan Route were exploited also in its reverse direction, from west to east
- The estimated value of marijuana: around 1.9 billion EUR, hashish: around 1.2 billion EUR

Other Drugs
- New Psychoactive Substances – still present in the region
- Not excluded that OCGs or individuals would try to produce such drugs in the region
- Khat - connected with smuggling by air cargo or express mail consignments

Controlled Delivery Manual
The Manual, designed to assist law enforcement officers in South-East Europe in launching and implementing controlled delivery operations to combat the trafficking of illicit drugs and their precursors, has been updated by SELEC in cooperation with the Strategic Police Matters Unit of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department.

The updated Controlled Delivery Manual for South-East European Countries provides practitioners from 17 SELEC countries and observers with the contact details of authorized officers in these countries who are responsible for controlled deliveries.

The Controlled Delivery Manual aims at improving knowledge of these specificities and promotes cooperation among countries and agencies by facilitating controlled deliveries as part of the joint efforts in fighting transborder crime. It describes briefly the legislation and the rules governing the requests related to the controlled deliveries in each of the countries that contributed to the Manual, also containing the contact details of the relevant competent authorities.

This Manual is designed for the use of law enforcement agencies and judiciaries.

Global online controlled delivery manual
SELEC participated within Council of Europe’s drug policy network – the Pompidou Group – joining the efforts for creating a global online handbook in cooperation with Eurojust, Europol, Interpol, OSCE and the Council of Europe’s Committee PC-OC.

Nowadays, in order to fuel the black markets, criminals transport worldwide illicit goods across borders of many states, therefore, to respond to these challenges in a proactive manner, the law enforcement authorities around the globe must apply special investigative techniques to elucidate the multifaceted investigations.

The new online guidebook is designed for law enforcement and the judiciary to make worldwide cross-border controlled deliveries of illicit goods more efficient.

The new online handbook is structured to provide information to law enforcement and judiciary in an easily accessible and constantly updated manner. The handbook is expected to enhance cooperation across borders, and improve the international coordination that is required to effectively carry out controlled delivery operations. The handbook has a global coverage and it is permanently under extension.
Joint investigations

A number of 41 joint investigations were conducted by the Member States in the framework of this Task Force.

**Joint investigation SUNSHINE** concluded following 14 months of intensive exchange of information through SELEC channel among competent law enforcement authorities of Republic of Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Hellenic Republic, Italian Republic and Republic of Turkey, with a total of 8.4 tons marijuana seized and 66 persons arrested.

The following results were recorded:
- In Republic of Albania: 4 operations were carried out, 1.4 tons marijuana seized and 25 persons arrested
- In Republic of Turkey: 3 operations were carried out, 3.2 tons marijuana seized and 22 persons arrested
- In Hellenic Republic: 2 operations were carried out, 1.6 tons marijuana seized and 17 persons arrested
- In Republic of North Macedonia: 1 operation was carried out, 80 kg marijuana seized and 2 persons arrested
- In Italian Republic: 1 operation was carried out, 2.2 tons marijuana seized.

**Joint investigation PHILIPP PLEIN** conducted between Bulgarian and Turkish authorities was finalized at the end of December 2018, a quantity of 64 kg synthetic drugs pills being seized at the Bulgarian/Serbian border.

The drugs were concealed among the legal cargo of a truck coming from The Netherlands with final destination Republic of Turkey.

The swift communication between the Bulgarian and Turkish law enforcement authorities ensured the success of this joint investigation code named “Philipp Plein” as the logo marked on the seized pills.

The judicial procedures in this case are currently ongoing.
Following a **controlled delivery**, the Moldovan law enforcement authorities seized 80 kg of heroin that was concealed in a truck, following a joint investigation supported by SELEC, developed among Bulgarian, Moldovan and Romanian authorities.

The case was connected with the international channel for heroin trafficking from Republic of Turkey via Republic of Bulgaria, Romania and Republic of Moldova, destined to West European countries. The controlled delivery was made from Republic of Turkey, via Republic of Bulgaria and Romania, the arrests and seizure being made in Republic of Moldova.

Following the successful cooperation within a **joint investigation** supported by SELEC, law enforcement authorities of Republic of Moldova and Republic of Bulgaria dismantled an organized criminal group composed of Moldovan and Bulgarian citizens involved in cultivation and trafficking of large quantities of cannabis.

As a result of this joint operation, a clandestine factory growing cannabis was discovered in Kicevo/Bulgaria, 2 persons were arrested and 500,000 EUR estimated worth drugs were seized.

**Joint investigation DISCUSSION**, related to trafficking of heroin, was successfully finalized in 2018 by the Bulgarian and Turkish authorities.

Following four months exchange of information through SELEC, the Turkish Police Istanbul Narcotic Department with the support of the Bulgarian Police seized 11 kg of heroin and apprehended 3 persons involved.

The heroin was planned to be transported by car from Republic of Turkey via Republic of Bulgaria, with destination Western Europe, but the transport was stopped in Istanbul and the heroin confiscated.
Financial and computer crime
Financial and Computer Crime Task Force

This Task Force was established in 2001, is coordinated by Republic of North Macedonia and has regular meetings, providing forums of discussion for experts from SELEC Member States and partner countries and organizations. During these meetings, the experts have the opportunity to share good practices and challenges, to initiate joint investigations, to evaluate the activities conducted and to decide upon further steps to be taken at regional level, as part of a common and more efficient endeavor for tackling cross-border organized crime.

The Financial and Computer Crime Task Force has the following sub-groups:

- **Credit card fraud** - coordinated by Romania
- **Cybercrime** - coordinated by Romania
- **Money laundering** - coordinated by Republic of Moldova
- **Intellectual property** - coordinated by Republic of Bulgaria
- **Counterfeit money** - coordinated by Republic of North Macedonia

On 25-26 April 2018, in the framework of Project SIRAS, SELEC organized in Tirana/Republic of Albania the Interdisciplinary regional workshop “Links between firearms trafficking and cybercrime” with the purpose of promoting networking, mutual learning and enhancing cooperation in firearms trafficking cases.

The regional workshop that aimed exploring the connection between firearms trafficking and cybercrime, gathered representatives of all SELEC Member States, of international organizations and the private sector. The participants presented significant cases investigated in the last years related to links between firearms trafficking and cybercrime (i.e. firearms acquired online – surfacelweb and darkweb; weapons acquired using crypto currency, organized crime groups/individuals using Internet as facilitating factor, organized crime groups/individuals using cybercrime as a crime catalyst, online investigations, undercover online investigations).

**Joint investigations**

A number of 11 joint investigations were supported in 2018 by SELEC in the framework of the Financial and Computer Crime Task Force.

**Joint investigation CORVUS** was conducted by Greek, Romanian and Turkish law enforcement authorities, with the support of Israeli authorities with the purpose of investigating a special case which initially started as a test for deep inserted skimming case.

During the investigation surveillance activities and wiretapping of almost 85 suspects, intelligence about other crimes too, such as drugs trafficking or extortion, was also collected. As a result of the investigation, 20 suspects were prosecuted for crimes such as setting up an organized criminal group, making fraudulent financial operations, illegal access to an informatic system, counterfeiting of bonds or payment instruments, circulation of counterfeited securities and money laundering.
Stolen Vehicles Task Force

The Stolen Vehicles Task Force, established in 2002 and coordinated by Hungary, has regular meetings, providing forums of discussion for experts from SELEC Member States and partner countries and organizations.


Additionally, within the OCTA SEE 2018, in the chapter dedicated to vehicle crime, the following trends and *modus operandi* were identified:

- The general route for vehicle trafficking in the region is still from Western Europe to Southeast Europe
- Considering the recent increase of motorbikes subject to a crime in the region, the OCGs involved in this type of crime may shift their focus from cars to motorbikes
- *Modus operandi* - theft of vehicles from rent-a-car agencies in Western Europe, afterwards smuggled into the region and sold under a false identity
- *Modus operandi* - theft committed with the use of hacked keyless devices, as well as using GPS signal blockers/jammers for misappropriating cars with anti-theft GPS devices
- Transnational organized vehicle trafficking is often linked to other criminal activities such as money laundering, drug trafficking, counterfeiting of documents, burglary, robbery, trafficking in human beings, or even illicit weapons trade.
Fraud and smuggling

FRAUD ALERT
Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force

This Task Force was established in 2003, is coordinated by Republic of Albania, has regular meetings providing forums of cooperation for experts from SELEC Member States, partner countries and other international organizations. During these meetings, the experts share good practices and challenges, initiate joint investigations, evaluate the activities conducted, a/o.

In the constant effort to strengthen the regional cooperation in the illegal trade field, SELEC organized on the 18th of April 2018 in Bucharest/Romania, the meeting of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force. Representatives from all SELEC Member States, as well as from France, Germany, Spain, USA, OLAF and private sector – British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Philip Morris International and The Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights attended the meeting in which participants discussed regional approaches in preventing and countering customs frauds and smuggling, overall aiming at strengthening regional cooperation between Customs and Police in this area, and set the common directions to be followed at regional level.

2018 Annual Report on the Situation of cigarettes and tobacco smuggling in Southeast Europe

Key findings

The total quantity seized by SELEC Member States during the period under analysis was approximately 2.5 billion cigarettes (2,505,503,926 pieces), representing a drop of 35% compared to the level recorded in 2016, when roughly 3.9 billion cigarettes (3,886,983,825 pieces) were detected and seized.

The amount of cigarettes detected last year represents the sum of all quantities seized in a number of 55,716 cases. Compared to the number of cases registered by SELEC Member States in 2016 (57,632 cases), there was a slight decrease of 3% or 1,916 less cases than the year before. Furthermore, in 2017, 12,318 seizures were related to quantities above 10,000 cigarettes, while those with quantities lower than 10,000 cigarettes were more than double in numbers, respectively 24,697 cases.

In 2017, the total number of cigarettes seized after routine checks was close to 800 million (786,557,244 pieces), rising by almost six times fold compared to 2016, and even more than seven times fold if compared to 2015. Regarding cigarettes seizures based on intelligence gathered by LEAs from SELEC Member States, there is an important decrease of 50%, counter-balanced by the sharp increase in seizures based on risk analysis. The other reasons of control section (x-ray, sniffer dogs etc.) registered a 22% decrease from 2016.

In 2017, the total quantity of smoking tobacco summed up to almost 1,000 tons (979,862 kg), an increase of 107% compared to the previous year when 474 tons of smoking tobacco was seized. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey accounted for 96% of the overall total.

Regarding the main types of transportation used for smuggling tobacco related products (cigarettes and smoking tobacco) the highest number of cases was related to Road transportation means - 13,324 cases and Other types (e.g. bicycle, pedestrian, inland markets) - 1,134 cases, which together account for 96.80% of the total cases reported, followed by Air Transport - 402 cases, Rail Transport - 40 cases, and Maritime/Water Transport - 35 cases. Despite the small number of cases for cigarettes smuggled via maritime/water transportation - only 0.23% of the total, the quantity of cigarettes seized accounted for 26% of the total reported (close to 260 million pieces of cigarettes), with an average of approximately 75 million cigarettes per seizure, whereas the quantity of cigarettes smuggled via road transportation (510 million pieces of cigarettes) – representing 50% of the total, was recorded in 13,324 cases, with an average of 65 thousands cigarettes per seizure.
Operation ECLIPSE III

Operation Eclipse III was initiated by the Albanian authorities and it took place in the period 19-30 November 2018, with the participation of all SELEC Member States. The Operation aimed at monitoring and combating illegal trade, with a focus on smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco related products. Intensive control measures on border crossing points and inland were carried out, by utilizing shared intelligence and jointly coordinated investigations amongst participating SELEC Member States.

Over the 10 days' operational phase of Regional Operation Eclipse III, a number of 161 seizures were reported by the Member States. 1650 pieces of information were exchanged during the Operation in relation to approximately 41.5 million seized cigarettes, 557 kg of raw tobacco, 362 kg of water-pipe tobacco and 354 kg of smoking tobacco.

In order to implement the operational plan, an Operation Coordination Unit (OCU) was established at SELEC Headquarters. The OCU was functional daily between 09.00 a.m. and 18.00 p.m. (EET) for the entire 10 days' operational phase. At the same time, for a swift implementation, National Contact Points (NCPs) were set up in all participating Member States.

Operation KNOW-HOW III

The Regional Operation KNOW-HOW III was coordinated between 12-23 March 2018 and lasted two weeks.

The aim of the operation was to detect and detain counterfeit goods entering SELEC Member States both in commercial and non-commercial consignments, transported by all means of transport (air, postal traffic, road, railway, sea, etc.). The operation required intensive exchange of information which led to selection and identification of high risk consignments, with a special focus on counterfeit pharmaceutical products, smuggled by express mail or postal parcels.

A total number of 2,398 exchanges of information were made during the Operation.

In order to implement the operational plan, an Operation Coordination Unit was established at SELEC Headquarters.

Information exchanged generally referred to detentions made by competent authorities within the Regional Operation timeframe and included data on location of seizures, type of goods, brands, routes, consignors and offenders.

Within the Regional Operation timeframe, over 350,000 checks were carried out by the relevant authorities in the Member States leading to 562 detentions of goods, while 466 turned into seizures, and the rest are under further investigation and authenticity evaluation. This total is much higher than the one registered during the previous joint operation KNOW HOW II (113). The value of the seized goods is estimated at about 9,647,000 EUR.

The report is based on the analysis of all 466 cases of detecting goods infringing intellectual property rights of globally-known brands. The analysis was performed in particular with respect to places of seizures, methods of concealment, countries of departure and destination, means of conveyance used, etc.

All SELEC Member States participated in the operation. The largest number of seizures was reported by Turkey (359 cases), followed by Greece (78 seizures). The largest quantity of counterfeit goods was detected by Turkey with 629,889 packages of cigarettes (12,597,780 pieces) of various brands.

Most of the seizures were reported to be made inland (376), followed by seizures made at BCP with 63 seizures.
A number of 24 joint investigations were conducted by the Member States in the framework of SELEC Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force.

**Joint investigation IRAQ** was initiated by Republic of Serbia with the aim of preventing smuggling of cigarettes, and involved the authorities from Republic of Bulgaria, Hellenic Republic, Romania and Republic of Moldova.

The Serbian Customs has identified an export of 11,3 tons of cigarettes without excise transported from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia, then to Romania, with final destination Iraq, via Pireus/Greece.

A **joint investigation** was initiated in 2018 by Republic of Turkey, following an exchange of information started among SELEC Member States that lead to a seizure of 61,000,000 pieces of cigarettes made by the Albanian Customs authorities in Port Durres. This joint investigation involved also the competent law enforcement authorities of Republic of Albania, Republic of Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of Moldova and Romania. It was established that through similar *modus operandi*, cigarettes are being smuggled into Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of Moldova and Romania, and then further distributed on local black markets or towards Western Europe countries.

**Project FAIT - Fight Against Illegal Trade**

Project FAIT - Fight Against Illegal Trade aims increasing the operational capacity of SELEC and its Member States in order to create an efficient response in fighting against smuggling phenomena. The project is financed by PMI IMPACT – a global grant initiative by Philip Morris International to support projects dedicated to fighting illegal trade and related crimes.

The project activities supported SELEC in developing operational actions in the field, especially in countering smuggling of tobacco products which is the most lucrative of all offenses.

*The objectives of the project are:*

**Objective 1 - Setting up SELEC Operational Centre Unit (OCU) in order to increase the operational capacity of the LEAs against illegal trade**

**Objective 2 - Training for 120 specialists on the latest technology, special techniques and special investigative methods for better results in the fight against smuggling of goods**

**Objective 3 – Conducting a Social-media awareness campaign against smuggling activities**

*Main activities implemented during 2018:*

10 operational meetings/joint investigations have been developed in order to exchange information related to illegal trade cases especially in relation to smuggling of tobacco products in the Southeast European region.

Following the above-mentioned operational meetings, the law enforcement authorities from SELEC Member States intensified their actions and managed to obtain important results.

With a view of strengthening the regional cooperation in the illegal trade field, SELEC organized, with the financial support of project FAIT, on the 18th of April 2018 in Bucharest/ Romania, the 18th meeting of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force. Representatives from all SELEC Member States, as well as from USA, France, Germany, Spain, OLAF and private sector - British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Philip Morris International and the Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights attended the meeting in which participants discussed regional approaches in preventing and countering customs frauds and smuggling, overall aiming at strengthening regional cooperation between Customs and Police in this area and set the common directions to be followed at regional level.

SELEC is actively working in order to set up a new Operational Center Unit (OCU) that will be equipped with cutting edge technology, in order to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement authorities by increasing mobility and capacity to collect better information from the Member States.
The OCU will bring together information from the entire SELEC region, EU and non-EU countries, helping in addressing a proper operational response to different threats.

A real-time exchange of information and criminal intelligence among SELEC Member States and Operational Partners, subsequently analyzed and disseminated will support better operational, tactical and strategic decisions.

The OCU will be permanently interconnected with SELEC Member States through National Focal Points (NFP) which are located within the national law enforcement authorities. In order to ensure mobility and dynamics of operations, the OCU can be connected directly with the case officers (during regional operations).

The OCU has to be fully operational and equipped with specific items. In the same time, an operational meeting room shall be equipped and fit for planning the actions in operational meetings among representatives of SELEC Member States.

As a part of the OCU, to ensure a fast collection, analysis and exchange of strategic and operational information among case officers, National Focal Points, SELEC Liaison Officers and SELEC analysts, a customized SELEC Intelligence Reporting Application Tool (S.I.R.A.T.) will be developed.

In order to increase the operational capacity of the law enforcement authorities in fighting against illegal trade, 3 (three) vehicles have been purchased for on-the-spot support of operational meetings, joint investigations, and regional operations. The vehicles are assets for analytical and operational mobility purposes, the mobile teams being deployed anywhere in the SELEC region for operational activities.

As one of the key objectives of Project FAIT is to create mobile teams to be deployed for supporting joint investigations and operational meetings, SELEC provided real-time operational intelligence analysis meant to assist the case officers in completing their understanding on the links within the criminal network, e.g. joint investigation on smuggling of cigarettes with the participation of law enforcement authorities from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Turkey; joint investigation on smuggling of goods conducted between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.

In order to ensure the efficiency of the trainings envisaged by the project SELEC started to identify the training needs. Subsequently to the assessment of these identified needs, the trainings were planned for 2019 with a view of defining, implementing and fine-tuning common or tailored procedures, applicable in SELEC region. Training session on the latest technology used in combating tobacco smuggling will be organized as well. For ensuring a continuity and knowledge-sharing, a train the trainers’ session is also envisaged in the project.

Training of respective officers is an added value in the fight against illegal trade and will offer the premises for efficient actions against organized crime groups involved in these types of illegal trades. Furthermore the trainers will ensure a continuous transfer of knowledge at national level using a regional and common approach.

Training sessions developed in tobacco-related issues will increase efficiency of personnel in identifying counterfeit and smuggled tobacco products across the region, either inland or at border crossing points.

Considering the awareness campaign that will be conducted within the project, SELEC identified the Member States of SELEC in which the campaign will be more focused, the assessment being made based on the analytical report prepared by SELEC with data received from the Member States. The campaign will have a very strong regional impact, resulting in a decrease in number of cigarettes smuggled into EU via SELEC region. The awareness campaign will be directed towards consumers and, amongst other things, will present the risks that smuggling of cigarettes represents.

*Project FAIT-Fight Against Illegal Trade* is an important tool for fighting against this type of organized crime, and it helps SELEC to develop and increase its Member States operational capacities in order to create an efficient response in fighting against smuggling phenomena.

The results achieved during the first year of implementation show an important improvement in strengthening the law enforcement authorities’ capacities in countering illegal trade and demonstrate that joint efforts and extended cooperation is the key for combating cross-border smuggling of cigarettes and other tobacco related products.
Terrorism
Anti-Terrorism Task Force

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

- **Trafficking in small arms and light weapons** - coordinated by Republic of Albania
- **Trafficking in weapons of mass destruction** - coordinated by Romania
- **Terrorist groups** - coordinated by Republic of Turkey

In the framework of project SIRAS - Strengthening the fight against firearms trafficking in Southeastern Europe, SELEC organized during 13-14 November 2018 in Sarajevo/Bosnia and Herzegovina, a regional workshop aiming at exploring various aspects related to the control and deactivation of firearms.

Experts in tackling firearms trafficking from the National Police forces and from the national authorities in charge of deactivating firearms from SELEC Member States, as well as by other relevant professionals from partner countries and organizations such as EUBAM, EUFOR, Germany, The HALO Trust, Italy, the Nordic Countries, OSCE, Small Arms Survey, Spain and the United Kingdom attended the meeting.

**The participants presented:**

- the regulations applicable in their respective countries regarding the control and deactivation of firearms
- the current procedures and particularities
- the problems experienced
- the databases used
- significant cases involving deactivated/reactivated firearms
- challenges and suggestions of improvements
- good practices
- technical issues
- research works related to the topic

During the workshop SELEC Associated Firearms Experts Network (SAFE-N) was presented, a network that is being created under Project SIRAS in order to provide a pool of experts and a platform for direct exchanges among professionals from various fields and environments related to firearms.

**Joint investigations**

A number of 6 joint investigations were developed by the Member States during 2018 in the framework of this Task Force, all of them are ongoing.
Container security
The Container Security Task Force was established in 2005, is coordinated by Hellenic Republic and has regular expert meetings.

The meeting of the Container Security Task Force organized by SELEC was held on 29 of November 2018 at the SELEC Headquarters in Bucharest/Romania, with the participation of law enforcement officers from SELEC Member States and representatives of partners, such as GCC-Criminal Information Center to Combat Drugs, European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), French Republic, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Slovakia, Spain and World Custom Organization (WCO).

A short overview on the Container Security Task Force and its latest activities, as well as the future expectations related to this Task Force were presented by the Hellenic National Coordinator of the Container Security Task Force.

Also, the Regional Assessment on Container Security prepared by SELEC was presented during the meeting, the assessment being drafted based on the information provided by the SELEC Member States.

During the meeting, the SELEC Member States’ experts presented the current situation as regards the Container Security field, in particular new trends and challenges, investigations, proposals a/o.

**Future priorities:**

- to coordinate with the other Task Forces
- to cooperate with other international organizations or bodies acting in this field
- to coordinate region wide operations, practical trainings and exercises
- to train experts on different topics
- to maintain a continuous evaluation of the regional situation
Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force

The Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force, established in 2009 and coordinated by Hungary has a sub-group *Crimes against Cultural heritage goods*, coordinated by Republic of North Macedonia.

**Joint investigations**

A number of 5 joint investigations were developed by the Member States during 2018 in the framework of SELEC Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force.

**Joint investigation Pedigree** involved the competent authorities of Republic of North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Hungary, being conducted in order to dismantle an organized crime group having members from Serbia, Hungary Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus who were dealing with illegal transborder organized crime with animals.

The head of this organized crime group was arrested in Republic of North Macedonia and 88 false animals’ passports were seized. As part of the joint investigation, a cargo with 11 dogs was captured at Larnaca Airport, in Cyprus. The profit of this illegal business is evaluated at hundred thousands of Euro.
The Organized Crime Threat Assessment for Southeast Europe (OCTA SEE 2018) provides valuable facts to the stakeholders and law enforcement bodies in general, hence the report may support the Member States in setting up national priorities and strategies.

From drug trafficking to money laundering, the report’s motto “Crime Steers Online” applies to all the major crime areas today.

In the region, organized crime threatens the society on many levels, from economy to security, with a negative impact on the citizens’ general safety and health.

The OCGs from the region work easily together, as the EU and non-EU borders do not represent a challenge for organized crime. It is acknowledged that OCGs are steered as a legal business. Organized crime and the business environment share many features nowadays and follow a similar financial management based on fast decisions, investment of proceeds, high profits and low risks and costs, as well as permanent readiness to take advantage of opportunities.

The Internet and technology are the emerging actors in the play. In line with traditional crime becoming more connected to cyberspace and criminals becoming more aware of its added value, we can expect to see more and more specialists hired to carry out cyber-attacks to complement the main criminal activity.

The markets are shifting towards the low-risk online markets. Part of the crime process is moving online, so the criminals are better protected by anonymity and difficulties in investigations.

Organized crime in the region and the business environment share many features nowadays and follow a similar management based on fast decisions, investment of proceeds, high profits with low risks and costs, as well as permanent readiness to take advantage of opportunities. OCGs, with few exceptions, remain profit-driven.

The last years featured, in terms of expression of criminal activities, an increased impact of terrorist actions, migrants smuggling, as well as more sophisticated cybercrimes. Furthermore, other types of serious crimes such as drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, trade and industry crime remained a serious threat in Southeast Europe, while money laundering goes along with all types of criminal activities.

Over the past years, OCGs have learned that the risk of detection can be decreased with every border crossed. This international dimension of organized crime, in conjunction with the fact that it seems to be always one step ahead of the game, due to its capacity to adapt to, and exploit the political, economic and technological changes, is a cause for great concern and requires extensive cooperation among all the actors involved.

OCTA SEE 2018 calls for 5 (five) key priorities, as follows: Terrorism, Cybercrime, Drug trafficking, Trade and industry crime, Trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants.

A special focus is on money laundering and the adaptability of the criminals to technology and the Internet.