



CARDS 2001

Country
Croatia

Implementation period
2002-2004

Funding (€)
€ 500,000

Results

New Border Protection Act adopted and implemented by new organisation, equipment and training for border police force completed

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Partners

German Border Police
Slovenian Border Police

Boost for border policing

The Republic of Croatia has land borders totalling 2,197km with Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, with over 1,000 islands on its Adriatic shores, Croatia's coastline extends to almost 6,000 km. With such extensive external frontiers, it is critical that the country has adequate and efficient border policing.

According to Zlatko Miletić, head of department for neighbouring countries at the Ministry of Interior, a new strategy was needed to upgrade both personnel and equipment to comply with European Union standards, in particular the Schengen Agreement. As a result land, maritime, railway and airport transport will all benefit from improved police co-operation both internally and with neighbouring countries.

New Border Protection Act

Within the context of co-operation between the Croatian border police and their neighbours, legislation complying with EU standards but fulfilling Croatian legal principles is essential. Consequently, the primary objective of the 'Integrated Border Management: Border Police' project, funded through the EU's CARDS programme, was to draft a new law for border policing. With the draft law prepared by the project accepted by both the Ministry of Interior and the government, the new Border Protection Act was adopted by the Croatian parliament in October 2003.

From the very outset of the project it was evident that the personnel structure and hierarchy – from staffing at the smallest border post to the top border police ranks – had to be reorganised and the roles re-designated. The success of such a task depends to a large extent on the implementation of staff retraining facilities across the board. So, the next step was to provide training for 250 police officers to be supplemented by on-the-job training in specific tasks at a later date. This advanced programme was developed within the working education group and in the framework of the twinning project for border police.



Ensuring adequate equipment

However, even well-trained personnel cannot function efficiently without modern, specialist equipment. An analysis carried out during the project identified what was needed to comply with EU standards. A priority list was then drawn up covering urgent equipment requirements for all types of border police station. The complete list of technical equipment, including thermo-vision cameras, document-checking instruments for boats and ships, and an IT strategy plan, was put together by a working group for technical equipment within the project with support from the Croatian government.

Successful implementation

Border police are now much happier with their better-defined roles, improved training opportunities and equipment upgrades. However, in the current climate, where terrorism, asylum seekers and the movement of refugees are all adding pressure to border controls throughout the enlarged European Union, the Croatian authorities will need to co-operate even still further with their neighbours to maintain high EU-level standards.

Yet, Croatia will still have to work to ensure the harmonisation of equipment to EU standards and develop a national border information system. And to reach the staffing numbers recommended by the project a significant recruitment drive will be necessary.