

Prosecutors in partnership: Fighting organised crime and corruption

Organised crime is a worldwide problem; to tackle it, strong international cooperation is required. In the Western Balkans, countries need to build the appropriate structures and experience to investigate and prosecute complex criminal groups in an international context.

JOINT INVESTIGATIONS

In response to this situation, the European Union is helping the countries of the Western Balkans take action – starting with joint investigations. The project: ‘Fight against organised crime and corruption: Strengthening the Prosecutors’ Network’, helps foster cooperation among prosecutors in the Western Balkans.

Prosecutors from Member States are being seconded to the region in order to provide their counterparts with ongoing advisory services, with a focus on investigating and prosecuting cross-border cases of organised crime.

“International criminal gangs have efficient, well organised and adaptable processes with strong cross border networks and are able to transmit information very quickly. In general, we are always one step behind the criminals, but with well-functioning and strong networks we can minimise this gap,” said a representative from Austria’s Criminal Intelligence Service.

The impact of the project was felt across the Western Balkans on 12 April 2013 when special police forces from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia carried out operation “Šetač” (the walker). Hailed as the best joint operation to-date in media reports, it hit hard on the structures of drug mafia operating in these countries. Dozens of suspects were successfully apprehended and a large quantity of weapons and explosives were seized.

ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

All seven prosecutors from the beneficiary countries have visited the EUROJUST and EUROPOL offices where they learned how to improve cooperation with both institutions and gain exclusive access to vital resources and networks.



Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Western Balkans

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN RULE OF LAW.

“This experience has helped us to get expert opinions on things for which we do not have the right expertise in Montenegro,” said Mr. Blagoje Gledovic from the Ministry of Justice of Montenegro.

This project will not only benefit the prosecutors in the Western Balkans – it will ultimately protect citizens who have been affected by organised crime. Given the nature of modern organised crime, it is also highly beneficial

for neighbouring countries and those countries that are linked with the criminal operations as can be seen from operation Šetač.

“The Western Balkans Prosecutors’ Network yields excellent results in the fight against organised crime. It is fast and efficient and the different legal systems present no problem,” concludes Mr. Josip Čule, deputy Prosecutor General of Croatia.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Fight against organised crime and corruption:
Strengthening the Prosecutors’ Network

Partners:

CILC – Center for International Legal Cooperation (the Netherlands)
GIZ – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Germany)

Total cost in €: 5,263,158

EU Contribution in €: 5 million (95%)

Start date: November 2011

End date: November 2013

Results: Capacity building, effective crime investigations, access to agencies and networks such as Europol

Techniques: Secondments (temporary transfers), training

