

# Keeping a closer eye on customs procedures

*Very simple technology has helped the Albanian customs service to make very striking improvements in performance. With European Union funding, digital cameras have been installed in customs posts, allowing close monitoring of procedures by the central customs authority. The improvements can be seen in higher detection-rates for smuggling, better protection levels for staff, and reduced instances of corruption.*

## 24-HOUR MONITORING

The Digital Camera Surveillance System was installed during 2012, with 327 cameras installed at 20 different customs houses and customs points, and now 24-hour real-time monitoring takes place, backed up by recording.

The Albanian customs administration uses this new facility to prevent, detect and punish smuggling and illicit trade in goods. According to the statistics of Customs Administration, the number of infringements detected in 2012 has almost doubled, and the revenues collected from customs authorities have also increased. Seizures of suspect goods and vehicles are up too, as are investigations by law enforcement agencies.

Central monitoring of the data has made possible more sophisticated risk analysis and risk management. As a result, a check on what was declared as a container-load of doors from China revealed 7 million counterfeit cigarettes hidden inside.

At the same time, the cameras help to identify unnecessary barriers to traffic. Smarter working methods have drastically cut the number of time-consuming physical controls carried out, which means faster clearance for legal traders, and lower operating costs for the service.

## ONE SYSTEM BRINGING MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS TO CUSTOMS WORK

The goal is that customs posts will be better supported in their role of protecting public health from the risks that arise from traffic in hazardous substances or sub-standard food products. It should become possible to reduce damage to the environment, not just because consignments of harmful materials are spotted – such as dangerous waste or inadequately-contained chemicals – but also because of reduced exhaust emissions from waiting lorries as queues shorten.

The surveillance means tighter control and faster responses to incidents where customs staff are threatened or abused. Border security is strengthened through an alarm system. And at the same time the system has proved a successful tool to combat corruption, rapidly identifying infringements by customs staff of a new code of ethics.

The multipurpose cameras also monitor entry and exit of vehicles, recording registration plates, and noting drivers and passengers. And at the port of Durrës, cameras even record the number of containers.



## Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

## Albania

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM.

### A TOOL FOR FIGHTING SMUGGLING – AND MUCH MORE

The assistance is part of a wider programme of EU support to the alignment of customs procedures with EU standards, running from 2008 to 2012, which also boosted cooperation among agencies and supplied training in management methods.

According to the head of the monitoring sector in the central customs administration, “this system is a tool that fights smuggling and illicit trade, while making customs procedures easier and more efficient for legitimate traders”.

### PROJECT DETAILS –

Support to the alignment of Customs Procedures with EU Standards

#### Partners:

Directorate General of Customs  
Austrian Customs Administration  
Polish Customs Service

#### Total cost in €:

3.5 million (including 1 million for equipment supply contract)

#### EU Contribution in €:

100%

#### Start date:

Fourth quarter of 2009

#### End date:

November 2013

#### Results:

Improved detection of smuggling;  
better coordination among agencies;  
faster and more targeted processing at customs posts;  
greater safety for customs staff;  
reduction in corruption;  
raised customs revenues;  
increased investigation

#### Techniques:

Installation of digital cameras;  
organisation of continuous central monitoring

