

Speeding up border security

For many years, Albania was unable to police its maritime borders effectively, and the resulting trafficking and organised crime amounted to a security threat for Albania as well as for its neighbours. The EU has stepped in with advice and – crucially – fast patrol boats to intercept illegal activity.

NEW TOOLS FOR NEW SECURITY

The speed boats that used to roam the 400 kilometre-long Albanian coast were until recently a tool for illegal traffic and criminality, smuggling drugs, weapons and people. With a mixture of advice and hard cash, the EU has given the authorities new tools for enforcing the rule of law. Eight modern high-speed vessels were handed over to the border police and customs service in 2013, each costing around €400,000 – in total, around €3 million. In addition, this EU project is funding appropriate training for personnel engaged in managing the blue border, as maritime borders are called. It is also backed up by maintenance and logistics facilities, as well as by advice on integrated management of borders, to ensure closer cooperation between the police, the military, the coast guard and other agencies.

At the same time, 17 border police stations have been renovated, and 10 new border crossing points have been created. The project aims to ensure that border management meets EU standards at all crossing points, in particular at the ports of Durrës and Vlora. It has improved administrative and operational capacity, and clearer division of tasks among the agencies ensures better coordination and avoids overlaps and unnecessary duplication of effort.

CUTTING CRIME AND IMPROVING SECURITY

Reducing crimes committed across the blue border will in turn allow for relaxation and eventually lifting of the current ban on speedboats, introduced as a deterrent measure several years ago. That will in turn enhance the potential for coastal tourism. Improved coordination – including in search and rescue – will lead to improvements in safety and quality of life for Albanian citizens. And neighbouring countries will benefit from less crime originating from Albania's blue borders.

The new speedboats resolve some of the problems in controlling the blue border. Pellumb Nako, Deputy General Director for Border & Migration and Deputy General Director of the Albanian State Police, says that the capture of speedboats involved in illegal activity is rising



Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

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fast now. In the first quarter of 2014, nearly as many were seized as in the whole of 2012 or 2013. A similar pattern is emerging with seizure of narcotics – nearly 3,000 kg in the first quarter of 2014, which is approaching the same value as for the whole of the preceding two years.

Albania now has the chance to show it is a reliable partner in the international effort against trafficking and smuggling. Effective control of borders is an international concern.

In the EU, meeting this challenge is an integral part of enabling the free movement of people, goods and services. In Albania, achieving the highest standards along borders and at crossing points is a vital element in moving towards visa liberalisation and closer ties to the EU.

PROJECT DETAILS – Support to Blue Border Management



Partners:
Ministry of Interior,
General Directorate of State Police,
Department for Border and Migration

Total cost in €:
5.12 million

EU Contribution in €:
4 million (84.2%)

Start date:
October 2009

End date:
October 2012

Results:
Enhanced border security along the coastline; reduced criminality;
greater coordination of government agencies;
improved quality of life for citizens.

Techniques:
Procurement of equipment (speedboats);
upgrading of facilities; advice on coordination