



## CARDS 2001

**Country**  
Croatia

**Implementation period**  
2003-2005

**Funding**  
€1.2 million

### Results

Draft a strategy paper for the creation of a Customs Academy, training activities, workshops, familiarisation exercises with the EU and EU customs

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### Partners

Austrian Ministry of Finance

## A duty to upgrade Croatia's customs

### Modernising customs services

Recent years have seen huge changes in Croatia's contact with the outside world, highlighted by its accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2002 and its application to join the European Union in 2004. And since EU enlargement in May 2004 Croatia now has direct land frontiers with the EU. These developments have led to a significant increase in the cross-border movement of goods and people. The result is significantly higher pressure on Croatia's customs service and administration.

At the moment, truck drivers and ships can expect long queues and processing delays at Croatia's many entry and exit points. With such a long border – both on land and the coastline around its islands – all aspects of Croatia's border management need to be modernised to cope with the added workload on the customs service.

The Integrated Border Management Programme, an EU project funded from the CARDS programme, aims to address all these issues. It is one of the first EU supported projects in the customs area and as such, there is much expected from this capacity-building project.

The project was launched in March 2003 and is expected to run until the end of April 2005. The Austrian and Croatian partners set themselves a vigorous agenda to help restructure and integrate the existing system which, while conforming to WTO procedures, needs to be upgraded to meet rigorous European Union standards.

### Concrete objectives

The €1.2 million project has three main components. The first concentrated on the development of training facilities for customs officers. This included work on curricula development and on the training of trainers. In addition, the team drafted a strategy paper regarding the creation of a Customs Academy. It is planned that the Academy will eventually be responsible for basic training for customs officials. The EU plans to fund the purchase of a suitable building for the new Academy with an investment grant of €800,000 within the framework of a separate project.

Another component of the project was to analyse gaps in current Croatian customs practices, in relation to World Customs Organisation and EU standards, with a view to drafting new regulatory measures and assisting in their implementation. In particular, there was a need to draft legislation to allow customs officers to do their job effectively by giving them the right to check goods and people both at the border and at other points within the country.

The third component was to pave the way for the introduction of the Common Community Transit System, used for the movement of non-Community goods in the EU. The project was also expected to help develop ethical rules for customs officers and help the Customs Administration adopt an effective risk management strategy.

### **Real situation**

Changes to the customs law introduced in March 2003 have meant the recruitment of many new staff members taken on by the Customs Administration. The new staff has to be trained and kept up-to-date with the rapidly changing legal situation in the country.

The training has been well-received by customs officers working on the ground and a network is starting to be created. This encourages officers to see themselves, and their customs house, as part of the bigger picture.

Mobile auditing teams have also been introduced, checking the standards in operation at each customs house around the country.

### **Promising results**

An average of between 400 and 700 trucks a day pass through the Jankomir customs point. In 2001, it took around 320 minutes to do a check on just one truck. Today, with improved organisation and more staff (up to 600 now), this time has more than halved and the number of trucks processed each month has increased from 3,600 to 6,000. Now the challenge lies in communicating these improvements to the drivers affected so that they understand fully the improvements being implemented.