

Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans

Within the preparation for integration in the EU, the fight against serious organized crime in the Western Balkans has made progress in the recent years, but needs considerable improvement. In the past, the lack of coordination and sometimes even the insufficient cooperation between the public prosecution, the police and other law enforcement bodies has often been counterproductive to an efficient investigation and prosecution of cases of serious organized crime.

The project “Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans”, funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) aims to address this cooperation gap. With its new approach of uniting support to public prosecution and police and law enforcement under one roof, the projects aims to improve the security in the Western Balkans and the EU by combatting organized crime. It emphasizes the need for awareness raising and cooperation among regional and national institutions to counter serious crimes, including the recovery of illegal financial gains and the fight against illegal migrant smuggling. The project spans the region of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is implemented by a collaboration of three partners: GIZ, the Italian Ministry of Interior and the Center for International Legal Cooperation (CILC) in The Hague.

In order to be successful and have sustainable impact, the project faces complex challenges. First, the project targets a region of six countries with protracted historic conflicts, war trauma and identity tensions. Second, the very nature of fighting serious organized crime needs a strong collaboration of all actors marked by deep trust and confidentiality. Third, the project needs strong collaboration patterns both on the national level, namely within the country team and between the teams and the local partners, and on the regional level. Cross-border investigations and cases are a crucial success factor in sustainably fighting serious organized crime.

With the facilitation of strategic planning workshops, both on the regional team level and on the national level in each country with the partners, CLI supported the successful launch of the project with a collaborative and impact-oriented focus. The first workshop united all six country teams – prosecution advisors, legal and police experts respectively - together with the project’s regional management. CLI planned and facilitated the intensive 4-day workshop on the basis of its © Dialogic Change Model, with aspects from its meta-level guiding methodology for sustainable collaboration, the © Collective Leadership Compass. As a result, national and regional collaboration and communication agreements were reached, as well as a regional team spirit for a collaborative and bottom-up approach to launch the project with local partners. The roles and tasks within the country teams, as well as on the regional level, were clarified, and the kick-off workshops of the project in each of the partner countries were planned.

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(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>)



Kick-off workshop in Sarajevo.

In a second step, CLI facilitated the individual kick-off workshops in each of the six partner countries, with the project country teams and representatives from the partners at the Ministry of Interior, police and law enforcement, Ministry of Justice and public prosecution offices. As a result, resonance and engagement for the collective and bottom-up approach of the project was built. Concrete activities for the project in each country were developed, as well as joint activities and collaboration actions across the region.



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