



Progress Report

Working Table III Meeting
Belgrade, 29.5.2006

I – Introduction

The mandate of the Stability Pact's Initiative against organised Crime (SPOC) is to facilitate dialogue amongst international and regional representatives of the legal, academic, donor and law enforcement communities. The initiative assists project formulation regarding capacity building, awareness raising and legislative reforms. It is also involved in policy advocacy and helps the SEE region to formulate strategies against Organised Crime. SPOC activities are in line with the London Conference on Organised Crime in SEE (November 2002) and the EU-Western Balkans Forum JHA Ministerial meetings.

II – Working structures

The Board

The SPOC Board consists of representatives of the SEE States, main International Organizations, the EU, major donor countries and NGOs active in the research field against organised crime. SPOC is lobbying for a better attendance of governmental representatives from Bulgaria, Serbia and BiH. The next SPOC Board meeting is planned for autumn 2006.

The Chairman of Working Table III, Ambassador Janez Premoze, chairs the SPOC initiative on an interim basis after Mr. Hubert Pirker re-joined the European Parliament.

SP Brussels-team

The SPOC team in Brussels now is consisting of a senior Romanian Justice and Home Affairs expert, also acting as interim head of the SPOC Secretariat, and a junior Albanian lawyer from the Albanian Ministry of Justice. The team is in constant dialogue with its counterparts from the European Commission, the General Secretariat of the EU Council and the European Parliament.

The SPOC Secretariat Bucharest

The initiative is regionally coordinated through its Bucharest-based SPOC Secretariat. Apart from the interim head, its staff consists of one EU Lawyer (Germany) and two SEE lawyers (Serbia, Romania). A Romanian executive assistant and an intern seconded by the Albanian Ministry of Justice complete the team. The Secretariat, inter alia, provides legal expertise to the SECI Center and to SEE countries in order to strengthen the fight against organised.

III – Activities

1) Policy advocacy, educational and public awareness raising

During the reporting period the SPOC Brussels team and the SPOC Secretariat continued their programme activities as presented to and discussed by the Board. The SPOC Homepage (<http://www.stabilitypact.org/org-crime/default.asp>) has been regularly updated and served as main information source and dissemination of the activities of SPOC. The website of the SPOC Secretariat

SPOC Secretariat

(www.spoc-secretariat.org) has been established and contains a wide variety of background and legal documents on the EU and SEE countries.

2) Facilitating the dialogue with the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council

The dialogue with the regional partners developed by the former SPOC Chairman during his 2005 "Balkan Tour" was maintained and materialised in organising a workshop in Tirana (April 2006) on SEE parliamentary cooperation. This activity will continue and result in another workshop in Brussels in autumn this year also with involvement of EU parliamentarians. The purpose of this exercise is to support SEE parliamentarians in developing their role in fighting organised crime and to create a network of the Heads of the JHA Committees from the SEE Parliaments.

3) The SPOC Secretariat as a platform for regional networking and information exchange

The SPOC Secretariat has continuously updated the Palermo Convention implementation matrix, a project that is still ongoing throughout the year. The up-dated matrix has been presented on the seminar for SEE parliamentarians in Tirana and will be made available to the Working Table III meeting in Belgrade.

The SPOC Secretariat is working also in the areas of Data Protection, witness protection, financial crime and stolen vehicles crime and is closely cooperating with the US department of Justice Representative to the SECI Center.

The SPOC Secretariat will propose in consultation with the new Croatian SEECPC CiO a monitoring mechanism to the 2004 Bucharest Declaration of the ministers of interior and justice to simultaneously give an overview on progress and an incentive for further legislative implementation of the commitments undertaken.

4) Witness protection

During the reporting period the SPOC Secretariat continued to update the witness protection legislation CD-Rom with the assistance of international organizations and the US Resident Legal Advisors in the various countries of SEE and also incorporated the contents into the Secretariat website. All activities in this field will be closely aligned with the SECI Center's needs and should result in the joint organization of a witness protection seminar/workshop for the heads of the regional witness protection units and specialized organized crime prosecutors.

5) Prosecutorial cooperation in SEE -SEEPAG

During the reporting period, the SPOC Secretariat continued to support the continuing development of the South Eastern European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) into a regional forum of cooperation among SEE prosecutors to combat trans-border crime. Together with the Slovenian SEEPAG Chairmanship and the management of the SECI Centre, the SPOC Secretariat will design a project proposal aiming to strengthen the coalition of the law enforcement and prosecutors' representatives to fight organised crime in SEE.

6) SECI Centre

Important steps have been taken to implement the SPOC Secretariat - SECI Center rapprochement policy. Together with the management of the SECI Centre some priority areas have been agreed where the SPOC Secretariat will actively provide its legal expertise and support to the Center's task forces: e.g. on stolen vehicles, trafficking in human beings, witness protection. The Secretariat's functions may eventually be integrated into a strengthened legal department of a new SECI Centre structure as currently under consideration. Also, the interim head has actively participated in the consultations organised by the EU Project Leader within the EC funded project for the new SECI Center Convention.

The SPOC Secretariat has participated in a workshop on credit card fraud in Skopje and in a workshop on stolen vehicles crime in Bled, both being organised by the SECI Centre's respective Task Forces and the Stability Pact.

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