

DURATION OF THE ACTION: 24 months
(1 January 2020 – 31 December 2021)

BUDGET: EUR 3,552,000

DONOR: the European Union

IMPLEMENTING PARTY: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Missions in Ukraine and in Moldova. The European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) will support the complementary actions of the project.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES: the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova, the State Customs Service of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the General Inspectorate of Border Police of the Republic of Moldova

Background: The Moldova–Ukraine State Border is 1,222 km long, consisting of 955 km of green border and 267 km of blue border. There are 67 crossing points, including international, inter-state and local ones.

Key challenges for the border authorities at the Moldova–Ukraine border include irregular crossings, organized and cross-border crime, such as illegal movement of goods, trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs. Smuggling, non-declaration and other customs offences affect state revenue and fair trade. Efficient surveillance of the blue border is impacted by lack of specialised equipment and trained staff.

Under the European Neighbourhood Policy, Moldova and Ukraine committed to progress towards efficient and comprehensive border management, including specific customs and border matters. Bilateral relations of the countries with the EU were upgraded through Visa Liberalisation Action Plans and EU Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as well as the agreements on joint border control and exchange of information signed between the border guard and customs authorities of Ukraine and Moldova.

These agreements require a stronger commitment in undertaking the necessary administrative reforms, building capacity, adopting implementing measures to comply with EU standards of human mobility and movement of goods, while achieving an appropriate balance between effective control and the facilitation of legitimate trade. Trade facilitation and streamlining of customs procedures need to be ensured at the busiest BCPs situated on the extended TEN-T network by integrating both video control system and ANPR with the risk management systems of the customs authorities. Operational capacities need to be enhanced for detecting, pursuing, and suppressing offences at the controlled common blue border.



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The **overall objective** of the action is to *facilitate trade and movement of people across the common border, while preventing and combating smuggling and other border-related offences, crime and corruption, and thus ultimately contribute to the security, stability and sustainable development of the region.*

The specific objectives of the action are to:

1. improve the conditions for free and safe movement of persons, goods, and vehicles across the common border;
2. foster crime prevention and preparedness to respond to border incidents, based on enhanced inter-agency and international cooperation and exchange of information;
3. improve knowledge and skills on operational use of equipment, in conjunction with use of risk analysis products, in a bilaterally coordinated and coherent manner.

PLANNED RESULTS

Upon completion of this action, the following outcomes will be achieved:

- 24/7 automated joint intellectual video control (VICOS) and pre-arrival data exchange based on Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) carried out at both sides of four busiest road border crossing points (BCPs), allowing cross-border and inter-agency real-time information sharing between Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities.
- Joint patrolling capacities improved and response time to border incidents (including urgent search and rescue needs) on common blue border reduced.
- Knowledge and skills (on specialized equipment) of relevant staff increased.

The **key stakeholders and beneficiaries** are IOM, the EU Delegation to Moldova, the EUBAM Mission and the border authorities of Moldova and Ukraine, which have already committed their support and co-financing to the action.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Performing the Rapid Needs Assessments (RNAs) through the external expertise for reconfirming the rationale and scope for supporting joint blue border surveillance, joint video monitoring and ANPR-based pre-arrival information exchange.
- Procuring, transferring, installing, and testing the equipment and software as confirmed in the RNAs, with due regard to interoperability and data protection aspects. Performing the related infrastructure works at the target BCPs if recommended by the RNA outcomes.
- Developing SOPs and/or Guidelines for staff of the border authorities on operation of the VICOS and blue border surveillance equipment.
- Providing capacity building for the relevant personnel at the target BCPs and blue border segments on usage and maintenance of the provided equipment for the VICOS and for blue border surveillance and usage of the developed SOPs and/or Guidelines.



Funded by
the European
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Implemented by
the International
Organization for
Migration



Customs Service
of the Republic
of Moldova



State
Customs Service
of Ukraine



State Border
Guard Service
of Ukraine



General
Inspectorate
of Border Police
of the Republic
of Moldova

SUMMARY OF PROJECT INTERVENTIONS



IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT VIDEO MONITORING AND ANPR-BASED PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

In order to enhance security along the common Moldova–Ukraine border, as well as the risk management capacities of the border agencies, the project is working to support the implementation of a joint video control CCTV (VICOS) and pre-arrival data exchange based on Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at four most important road BCPs, namely “Otaci – Mohyliv-Podilskyi”, “Criva – Mamaliga”, “Tudora – Starokazachie” and “Vulcanesti – Vinogradovca”.

This activity will strengthen operational capacities and information exchange between the border agencies of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as cross-border cooperation. It will allow proper functioning of the customs control zone and will reduce the possibility for violations to a minimum, including corruption and smuggling risks, due to permanent surveillance of the territory both on BCP and central level.

Trade facilitation and streamlining of customs procedures is going to be ensured by integrating both VICOS and ANPR with the risk management systems in use by the customs authorities, therefore vehicles that were identified by the system as presenting risks will be directed for further checks. The national rules of clearance and customs control will be simplified due to the automation of the procedures followed with minimization of the human factor.

The joint study visit of Moldovan and Ukrainian customs officials to Baku, Azerbaijan Republic on the video control, ANPR-based and information exchange systems was carried out in March 2020. IOM will also support two trainings for the customs authorities on the use of the VICOS.

The overall preparation and adoption of the relevant documents on the regulatory and operational preconditions and adoption of specific instructions for the operationalization and functioning of the VICOS at road BCPs will be performed by the beneficiary authorities and in close cooperation with EUBAM Mission.

SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE JOINT BLUE BORDER SURVEILLANCE

The project will procure specialized equipment for enhancing the operational capacities for detecting, pursuing, and suppressing offences at the controlled common blue border or adjacent areas of responsibility as well as for ensuring adequate response during rescue missions, presence in border areas difficult to access and maintaining public order and regimes of the state border and of the border area.

As of now, surveillance of about one third of the Moldova–Ukraine blue border is exclusively conducted from the land because of insufficient capabilities in terms of trained staff, special equipment and transportation means on the Nistru River. The northern part of the joint blue border is mostly not navigable in summer and does not allow access with regular equipment during winter. The listed factors generate favourable conditions for illegal border crossing, smuggling, trafficking, poaching, including those performed by organized groups. The physical presence of the border agencies is limited, and surveillance gaps could be closed with competitive innovative solutions, used by the EU Member States.

The south-east segment of the Moldova–Ukraine river border is navigable, and the use of river boats with a rigid bottom is most appropriate. At the same time the unfavourable weather conditions and complicated landscape sometimes does not even offer the possibility to bring the boat to the river. In this respect, procurement and mounting of floating docks for boats is a sustainable and added value solution.

To this end, the Moldovan Border Police and the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine aim for increasing the joint border surveillance and enhancing the operational capacity with proper equipment and watercrafts for the regional directorates and the border detachments in charge of the Moldovan–Ukrainian border.

The project will also organize trainings for officials of the border guard agencies of both countries on the use of the surveillance equipment and the supporting infrastructure.

Implemented by the
International Organization
for Migration

