

BORDER GUARDING ON THE WAY TO QUALITY

Integrated Border Management

The EU CARDS concept of integrated border management (IBM) is laid down in the IBM Guidelines for the Western Balkans published in October 2004. It focuses on coordination and cooperation among all relevant authorities and agencies involved in border control and trade facilitation. It aims at establishing effective, efficient and integrated systems in order to ensure the overall goal of borders open to licit trade and movement of persons, while at the same time closed to illegal activities as well as threats to national security and health of people, plants and animals.

The main agencies involved in border management in the Western Balkans are consequently border guards, customs, and veterinary and phytosanitary inspection services. Associating the various other relevant state and non-state actors, these agencies should not only aim at improved coordination and cooperation within the structures of their own services, but also amongst each other and on an international level. This comprehensive approach towards border management allows for the effective and efficient execution of tasks linked to today's conception of quality in border management.

The IBM Guidelines not only define the EU concept as endorsed by all relevant units of the European Commission, but for the first time bring together current EU standards and best practices in this field, thus fostering a coherent high-quality approach towards IBM in the region. At the same time, the document aims to facilitate the development of national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the strategic objectives identified.

In formulating a national strategy, a coherent national approach necessary for quality control is supported and a base is set against which further progress can be judged. The strategy is founded on an in-depth analysis of the existing situation leading to the identification of challenges and corresponding objectives. The action plan complementing the strategy consequently identifies the concrete steps necessary to best reach the goals set in the strategy with the available means.

The objectives will reflect the overall goal of achieving high quality in border management based on best practices in all areas of cooperation identified in the IBM Guidelines, namely legal and regulatory framework, management and organisation, procedures, human resources and training, communication and information exchange, as well as infrastructure and equipment. The legal and institutional framework will provide the basis by clearly defining the responsibilities of the individual agencies and administrative units. Coherent procedures allow for a continuous high level of efficiency and quality of service. In order to support the work of the other agencies, awareness of their respective tasks and procedures has to be raised through training. The fast exchange of relevant data within and between agencies is similarly crucial to achieving both effectiveness and efficiency with the objective of border security and trade facilitation. This information

exchange can be optimised if the cooperation aspect is taken into account in the building or adaptation of border infrastructure and is supported by IT equipment.

In the implementation of the IBM concept in the Western Balkans the importance of an early involvement of all key stakeholders, as well as a common understanding of the concept based on consistent terminology has become evident. In this respect, continuity regarding the involvement of the national counterparts is vital and should be facilitated through the establishment of inter-ministerial coordination bodies on both the decision-making and the operational level, which also have a key role in ensuring the sustainability of the implementation process. Based on clear Terms of Reference, these bodies are responsible for the design, implementation and regular review of the national IBM strategy and action plan.

Several related EU projects¹⁹⁹ are currently ongoing in the countries of the Western Balkans, dedicated to a transfer of best practices and the support to strategy and action plan development or streamlining of existing documents along the lines of the IBM Guidelines, respectively. In the framework of these projects it could be observed that the necessary capacity building should also include management and monitoring/evaluation tools in order to ensure sustainability of both the structures and the implementation process after the end of the projects.

To sum up, integrated border management contributes to quality in the field of border guarding in a dual fashion – content-wise, as the concept of integrated border management is built upon EU best practice allowing for efficient and effective border management systems; and methodology-wise, as states introducing the concept formulate clear strategic objectives in the area of border management and thus allow for benchmarking and continuous monitoring and evaluation on the way to increased quality in the management of the national borders.

¹⁹⁹ The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is an international organization headquartered in Vienna with a focus on intergovernmental dialogue, migration-related research, capacity building and consultancy services in the wider European context. In the framework of the project EU Justice and Home Affairs Assessment Missions to the Western Balkans, ICMPD provided support to the EC for the development of the IBM Guidelines, and is currently involved in two projects implementing aspects of the IBM concept in Croatia (under Austrian lead) and the region (under French lead), specifically related to assistance in the development and the updating of strategies and action plans as well as the implementation thereof. Hungary is one of the 11 member states of ICMPD.