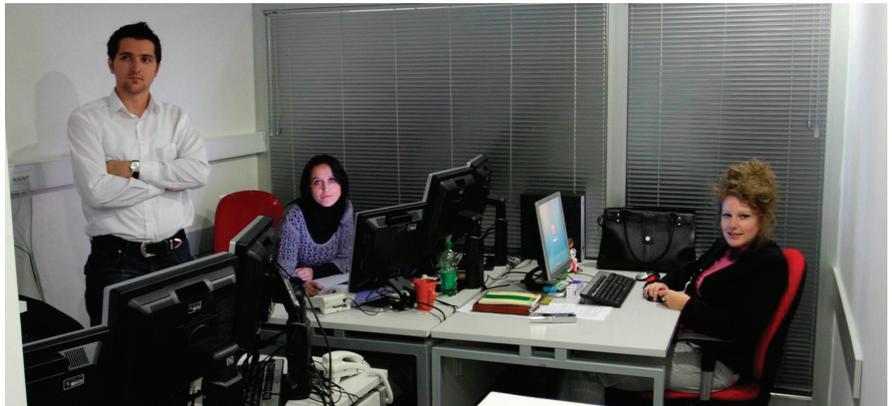


# Bosnia and Herzegovina: joint risk analysis on cross-border traffic

by Richard Ots

The application of risk management processes to the cross-border movement of goods and people in Bosnia and Herzegovina has gone through some remarkable changes over recent years. From a fragmented approach on the fringes of some border management agencies' operational processes, it is now well on its way to becoming an integral element in the country's comprehensive approach to border management.

Between 2006 and 2009, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) led an EC funded project to assist the country in the design and implementation of a national strategy and action plan on integrated border management. Risk analysis formed one of the components of the project, reflecting the authorities' awareness of the friction between on the one hand, the necessity to establish effective border control and on the other hand, the limited physical means at the relevant agencies' disposal.



*Some of the staff from the Joint Analysis Centre*

The Balkans region is, and always has been, an important transit point for goods and people to and from the EU. Additionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina is increasingly a source and destination country for cross-border traffic as well. The sheer volume of traffic makes it practically impossible to carry out 100% checks. However, the process of determining what to check and what to skip was in many respects still in its infancy.

From the outset of the project there was a clear consensus among the stakeholders (Indirect Taxation Authority, Border Police, State Veterinary Office, State Plant Health Protection Agency, and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs) that inter-agency cooperation would add significant value to the process of risk analysis. However, the form of this interagency cooperation was less well understood. The Ministry of Security and the heads of the border management agencies also gradually grew accustomed to the thought of going beyond a mere exchange of liaison officers. The convening of senior-level study visits to Rotterdam harbor, to the WCO,

and to Heathrow's Joint Border Operation Center assisted the development of both a shared understanding and the necessary conceptual buy-in for the idea of centralization and the partial amalgamation of the analytical functions of the border management agencies into a single Joint Analysis Centre (JAC). The agencies then established the JAC, through an inter-agency MOU, as a department within the Border Police, but staffed by all agencies on a secondment basis.

The objective of the JAC is to supply participating agencies with actionable operational level information as well as with strategic level information on general trends and developments in cross-border traffic. The work plan of the JAC is agreed periodically between the participating border management agencies. The agencies provide the JAC with an updated replica of their corporate data through each agency's Local Analysis Center (LAC) data warehouse. For example, information from a single agency's various internal databases is first funneled to its own LAC where it is processed for the

organization's own analytical purposes. It is then (partially or wholly) replicated for analysis of possible inter-agency relations or trends in data by the JAC. This required an extensive and ongoing process of standardization and normalization of data in order to be able to establish links between fields from the databases of the different organizations, or even from within one organization.

Confidentiality and privacy of data is protected by synchronized anonymization of fields holding personally identifiable information, in addition to physical, procedural and organizational measures. The analysts at the JAC are therefore at no point presented with names, addresses or telephone numbers of persons of interest, but merely with the fact that the codes representing the names match between different databases. If that link is deemed to be of operational significance, then authorized investigators may request the release of the corresponding personal information from the relevant agencies. This may result in an updated entry on a watchlist or even a proposal for an inter-

agency operation. An important part of the work of the analysts does not require this level of detail though. The creation and update of risk profiles for use at border crossing points does not entail actual name or detailed address information. Similarly, for the production of overviews of general trends and developments the coded information provides a sufficient level of detail.

The JAC is equipped with industry standard software for risk analysis in law enforcement environments, in addition to sophisticated software for data mining. Staff have completed advanced training on the use of the software as well as on risk analysis, strategic intelligence, applied statistics, the collection and use of open source information, and on reporting and presentation.

With the creation of the JAC and its continued development, Bosnia and Herzegovina is making significant steps to rationalize the allocation of its border management resources. The agencies continue to increase the quality and quantity of data flowing to its analytical structures by improving the capture of data at the border, digitizing existing archives and further standardizing and normalizing the structure of their databases. As Mr. Ermin Pesto, Head of the Sector for Border and General Security at the Ministry of Security said, "The JAC allows us to better target our efforts, increasing the success rate of checks while facilitating the legitimate flow of goods and people across our borders."

#### **More information**

**Richard Ots**

**International Organization  
for Migration**

**rots@iom.int**