



CELBET2 - full speed ahead!

Deliverables of team work, implementation of project's activities, strengthening cooperation and new solutions of external EU border protection like **BCP Network**– were the main issues discussed during the CELBET kick-off meeting.

The kick off meeting of the CELBET 2 Steering Committee was held on 24-25 April 2018 in Warsaw. All Member States involved in project were present together with the representatives of the European Commission – TAXUD and OLAF (COM). Representatives of Frontex and Europol also took part in the meeting. As decided during the CELBET kick-off meeting held in Vilnius in September 2016, the meetings of the Steering Committee are chaired by the National Revenue Administration of Poland. The meeting was opened by Mr Marian Banaś, Secretary of State, Head of the National Revenue Administration. He underlined the importance of the project for Poland which is proud to host Steering Committee and working teams meetings. He referred to significant progress and added value of the first phase of CELBET. He underlined in particular the role of Estonia in leading CELBET 1, and thanked Finland for taking over the steering wheel of CELBET 2, as well as the European Commission for overall, valuable support.

Mr Philip Kermode, Director from DG TAXUD in his opening speech reminded that CELBET was a risk when launched, but in the opinion of the Commission it paid-off. He highlighted collaboration and cooperation between customs services on the ground. CELBET is not discussing, but implementing solutions. Mr. Kermode summing up the meeting stressed that huge work done so far and huge effort to continue and expressed satisfaction from involvement of OLAF, FRONTEX and EUROPOL. He also noted that **BCP Network** as a new CELBET product is a valuable exercise which should last long and working relations should be developed and continued. Networking is an important feature of connecting and sharing experience.

We are the team of 11
customs & tax administration



TULLI



National Customs Agency
Bulgaria



Head of CELBET and each team leader presented deliverables from the first phase of CELBET and introduced activities and ideas they will be working on in CELBET2. Head of CELBET Mr Jyrki Linna gave an overview of the aim, tasks and expected results of the **BCP Network** and presented the geographical set-up of border strips and border posts on which CELBET work will be based on.

BCP Management and Evaluation team leader Ms Annika

Mägipõld presented outcomes of CELBET 1 random controls, which helped the Member States to estimate the value of legal and smuggled cigarettes carried by passengers. New ways and challenges for measurement and evaluating the efficiency of a BCP were introduced.

Did You know that random controls revealed that the value of cigarettes brought into EU from neighbouring third countries is three times higher than the amount of smuggled cigarettes detected by customs ?

Risk Management team leader Ms Elina Cirule presented new approaches for building risk profiles, gave an overview of Joint Intensified Activities, highlighting the results of JIA3 and introduced new ideas on risk management field.

Did You know that CELBET risk profiles led to seize 3,5 tons of counterfeit goods in Polish truck at Kapitan Andreevo BCP in Bulgaria?

Operational Controls team leader Ms Luminita Carasca explained the team will base its activities on the lessons learned during CELBET1 and presented the plans for JIAs, that include also site visits and involvement of the mobile groups working near green border.

Did You know that top five most seized goods at the green border are: cigarettes, alcohol, fuel, drugs and cash? Most seizures are made at the borders of Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

Equipment Team leader Mr András Bartha introduced new approaches of CELBET2. The team will focus more on practical work, will explore possibility of sharing control equipment between Member States and between customs and border guards, will explore potential for: creating CELBET Automated Number Plate Recognition System (ANPRS) and launching CELBET X-ray seizure and modus operandi information exchange.

Did You know that 1 500 illegal cases were detected by x-ray equipment at EU external land borders last year?

Training Team leader Mr Norbert Jakus presented the activities of the team that include creation of a network of training representatives, exploring the use of regional centres of expertise, cooperation with other agencies, update of the training catalogue and building bridge between CELBET and CLEP (Common Learning Event Programme).

Our analysis revealed that among training needs concerning customs control one big need is professional foreign language training



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
TAX AND CUSTOMS BOARD



National Tax and
Customs Administration



Valsts ieņēmumu
dienests



Inter-agency and 3rd country cooperation team leader Mr Bartosz Gruszecki stressed the need for more regional approach and consultation with BCP practitioners, the importance of cooperation with border guards and continuation of Ukrainian and Belarus border strip activities. CELBET will explore possibilities to promote and assist implementation of recommended solutions for synchronised checks, joint operation centres and jointly operated border posts with neighbouring countries.

The results from the pilot within cooperation between customs and Border Guards showed that synchronised checks decrease the border crossing time significantly.

PR Expert Ms Anna Hatała-Wanat presented a plan for communication activities. She focused on the priority of building strong and effective PR Network, Seizure Bank and Photo Bank dedicated to customs matters. These elements will be fundamental and will launch the PR and communication environment of CELBET2. She also noted that all of project participants are responsible for positive CELBET publicity and PR.



From left: Mr Philip Kermode, Director from DG TAXUD, Mr Jyrki Linna Head of CELBET, Mr Marian Banas, DG of National Revenue Administration of Poland

WHAT'S NEXT?

Launch of monitoring checks on border with: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, Fyrom, Turkey, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Moldova.



Finnish Customs in North Lapland

Control of Slovakian Customs



Marian Banaś, Head of the National Revenue Administration in Poland: Ensuring effective customs safety of EU external border is most of all the task of countries having external crossing border points. This appears as European Union common matter and countries with external borders should get support within this issues. This is one of the CELBET tasks.

Anna Hatała-Wanat: Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET) started its activities in September 2016. Poland together with Estonia initiated the project and is one of the leading Member States. Steering Committee in April 2018 launched second phase of CELBET, which is the proof of the project continuation's need. How the National Revenue Administration will support CELBET expert teams' activities?

Mr Marian Banaś: First of all, I would like to underline, that National Revenue Administration invariably gives a special attention to the main idea of the project, which is ensuring balanced and effective safety and customs control on the external EU border, but also to the specific and expected results. Among those outcomes, I would list for example providing optimum control standards, good practices exchange and elaboration of forms of support Member States in achieving those standards. The operational and technical standards of control equipment, elaborated by CELBET experts, are good example within this matter. In the future this will be helpful in proper locating funds.

Going back to Your question about how NRA supports CELBET, our activities will be continued. We have delegated the best experts, that we could select. Their participation in the project enables taking Polish point of view into account in the outcomes and also will contribute theirs high quality level. NRA and its management will support experts' efforts and engagement in many different ways, bearing in mind releasing them from everyday duties for NRA when it will be needed. Poland still leads the CELBET Steering Committee, which meets twice a year and when strategic decisions of trends and realization of Action Plan are made.

A.H-W: On previous Steering Committee meeting, in November 2017 in Cracow, You have underlined unusual progress of CELBET in achieving goals and highlighted the expert teamwork which is significant for Poland. What are expectations of NRA in second phase of CELBET?

Mr Marian Banaś: As I mentioned, we do care about high quality elaborated practical solutions and their significant added value. But we also take into account their implementation in real conditions. Our Polish point of view is also very important. I would like to stress that Poland, beside to Lithuania, has the largest representation in CELBET. Our experts have big experience and knowledge, that's why they will be huge support for the project. Poland is directly involved in four of six teams: BCP Management and Evaluation Team, Inter-agency and Third Countries Cooperation Team, Operational Controls Team, Risk Management Team. We have also delegated very experienced officer to the new formed CELBET BCP Network – very important initiative especially for ensuring practical attitude and better information exchange during the realization of CELBET Action Plan.

A.H-W: What in Your opinion is the biggest challenge on Polish eastern border with third countries? How can CELBET experts help in coping with those challenges?

Mr Marian Banaś: There are many challenges that NRA has to cope with. From one side, cross-border crime threats, having impact on collecting customs and tax dues. What I mean is smuggling excise goods or avoiding paying VAT. Nowadays ensuring the safety became more important – detection of illegal weapons or dual-use items happens more often. Ensuring the safety of EU external border is most of all task of Member States.

But this is common issue of whole European Union and Member States with external border should receive support in this matter. This is one of the CELBET task: what kind of support give to member states in effective and harmonized customs control on external borders. It is about supporting control equipment purchases and also working out real, optimum and balanced border control management methods.

A.H-W: Do You think that there is need of making this kind of expert team as a more expanded structure with wider scope of eastern land border activities in the future?

Mr Marian Banaś: At this time we are focused on the best, practical realization of tasks specified in CELBET 2 Action Plan. But we do not have illusions, that the end of the project will bring completed and final answer, contributing us optimum border management solutions. We need to take care of this matter constantly, among other things, due to changing challenges, new forms of international trade or new safety threats. We don't want this matter to vanish from our and our EU partners' fields of attention.



MEET OUR EXPERT TEAMS

BCP Management and Evaluation Team



Inga Pileckaja LT, Atanas Manchev BG, Annika Magipold EE, Aneta Lomanska-Grzegorzak PL, Mika Poutiainen FI

Inter-agency and Third Countries Cooperation Team



Nikolai Voronin EE, Aikaterini Sini, GR, Ana Burkovskiene LT
Inta Kovalevska LV, Bartosz Gruszecki PL

Operational Controls Team



Olga Grzibovska LV, Jure Ursic HR, Luminita Carasca RO
Cezary Nowacki PL, Jelena Karpovic LT

Equipment Team



Mario Colar CR, Anca Somacescu RO, Karolis Bradauskas LT
Andras Bartha HR, Lauris Krivans LV

Training Team



Zsolt Dezsi HR, Aleksandra Kubilinskiene LT, Kalina Chobanova BG, Sari Arola FI, Norbert Jakus SK

Risk Management Team



Pawel Janicki PL, Vjatseslav Pantazi EE, Elina Cirule LV, Marian Toth SK, Keijo Keisu FI

INTERVIEW

One of the CELBET management meeting was held in Bucharest on March 26-27. It was great opportunity to meet Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei, DG of Romanian Customs and to do this interview.



Anna Hatała-Wanat: Romania joined EU in 2007, how the customs service changed from that time?

Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei : Romania signed the Accession Treaty to the European Union in 2005, but the Customs Authority was involved in the whole pre-accession negotiations process, finalised in 2004. Thus, the Romanian Customs was submitted to a thorough modernisation process and implicitly in the implementation of the EU standards concerning the application of the Union Customs legislation. New structures were created, the electronic systems necessary for managing the import, export and transit were developed/modernised and the best European practices were implemented in important areas, such as: risks management, customs controls, use of the non-intrusive means of control, organisation of mobile units and K-9 teams, and so on. Ever since 2008, additional tasks were assigned in the area of excise, while the EMCS system was successfully implemented nationally.

Since 2013, the Customs Authority went through an ample reorganisation process: presently, it operates as a directorate general in the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, with no legal personality. At regional level there are 8 Regional Customs Directorates and 89 Customs offices, methodologically coordinated by the General Customs Directorate, while the logistical and other support activities are provided by 8 Regional Public Finances Directorates. Our experience since 2013 includes positive aspects, mainly concerning the fiscal role of customs to collect the duties due to the state budget and the cooperation with the fiscal structures, but also less favourable aspects, such as the staff mobility, the prioritization of investments in the infrastructure, or the fact that approximately 60% of the customs activity concerns surveillance and control in areas like observance of IPR and CITES legislation, illicit traffic with arms and ammunition, prevention and combating drugs traffic, protection of the financial interests, safety and security of the EU.

A.H-W: What are the plans for the near future within the Romanian customs administration?

Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei: The plans include:

- the reorganisation of the Customs in a structure with legal personality within the National Agency for Fiscal Administration;
- strengthening the activity of 12 Customs offices of major importance for the Customs authority;
- the territorial customs surveillance structures should be directly subordinated to the central department, the Directorate of Customs Surveillance and Control;
- replacement of the non-intrusive control equipment with gamma rays by X rays equipment;
- provide the mobile teams, as well as the BCPs, with mobile scanners;
- training the customs officers by specialized trainers;
- hiring and training young customs professionals.

A.H-W: What are the biggest challenges on the Romanian borders?

Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei: We consider the illicit traffic with excise goods to be the biggest challenge at the Romanian borders. The reason behind this fact is the price difference between such goods in the Republic of Moldova, for instance, and Romania and the EU. In order to combat this traffic we need better control equipment and more intensive training of the staff, for them to have better access to EU applications concerning alerts.

A.H-W: Do you see practical results of CELBET team work?

Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei: CELBET team work provided us with support and arguments for proving our priorities to other Romanian authorities, especially on the topics of modern leadership and management of the Customs, acquiring modern equipment, and hiring staff.

Practical results include seizures which fit CELBET risk profiles and using Equipment Team deliverables in considering options for upgrade of equipment at the land border.

Romanian Customs plans to disseminate the knowledge acquired at the training organized by CELBET in Slovakia. We also look into the cooperation models provided by the Cooperation Team deliverable, considering them very useful and decide further about their gradual implementation based on local specifics and opportunities.

A.H-W: You have mentioned that you strongly rely on CELBET team, what can CELBET group do for Romanian BCP and customs administration?

Mr Marius Claudiu Atomei: A very useful activity is the mapping of the BCPs, so that the local and national management should have a general image of the activity and a gap analysis for reaching the EU standards required from the Member States.

Another suggestion would be an electronic application for the management of the BCPs, showing traffic levels and identifying the issues, containing data about traffic, seizures, alerts, with specific information for central and local levels and other helpful elements.

The best outcome is the involvement of our experts in MS sharing experience and working together for better tackling smuggling at the land border, providing safety for the EU citizens and more cohesion between MS.



Practice **together** makes perfect

On 21-25 May, Customs Training Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania was hosting the joint training course for customs officers and border guards 'Enhanced cooperation between Customs and Border Guard at external land border crossing points'.

The training was organised by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency **FRONTEX** together with **CEL BET**. The importance for both services to cooperate and the benefits of such cooperation were discussed. 22 officials from the EU and third countries were attending the training which was ran by an international team of 10 experienced trainers from customs and border guard administrations.

The course consisted of the online training part, which was followed by the online test and trainees who passed the test were invited to take part in the face-to-face session in Vilnius. The content of the course covered all different aspects of work in the BCP:

- Cooperation in information exchange
- Cooperation in performing border checks
- Cooperation in countering border related violations
- Cooperation in the field of infrastructure and equipment
- Cooperation in BCP management.

Common training with FRONTEX is organised for the second time, first one took place in January 2018 in Warsaw.



CEL BET 2 : Navigating in winds of change



All six CEL BET teams have had their first meetings during May. Several new experts (2-4 in each team) have been welcomed. The implementation plan has been the basis for each team to share tasks among experts and to start working. Also the feedback from CEL BET kick off meeting, held in 24-25 April in Warsaw, has been explored to get a better understanding on the needs of our customers- that is members states, TAXUD and other agencies.

The message from kick off was encouraging. CEL BET 1 was called a success. The work done in the area of technology and equipment was highly appreciated by TAXUD. The importance of cooperation and coordination between CEL BET members was emphasized in many comments. The visibility has been our shortcoming, but improvement could be recognized already during the meeting. From the long list of our tasks, wider use of ANPRS was highlighted by several delegates. Also cooperation with 3rd countries was emphasized. The newly nominated BCP network representatives also participated in the meeting. This network will be in the center when we plan our activities at BCPs and search for feedback. We will need this feedback on regular basis to improve our work.

My thoughts are already at the end of this year, when CEL BET Steering Committee and Customs Policy Group will have their meetings. At that time I will have real stories to tell about things we have done during this year with member states, things that matter, not just to us but also other EU member states.

When navigating towards our objectives, we will use our implementation plan as a roadmap. We exploit the winds coming from member states. Strong or light, head or tail, they all take us forward. Only dead calm would stop us. Let us keep the winds blowing.