

**COUNCIL OF
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SEMDOC

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LIMITE

ENFOCUSTOM 28

NOTE

from :	Finnish delegation
to :	Customs Cooperation Working Party
No. prev. doc.:	10513/3/96 ENFOCUSTOM 41 REV 3, 8318/96 ENFOCUSTOM 18; 7745/2/96 CORDROGUE 32 REV 2; 12247/95 CORDROGUE 69 SAN 115, pages 16 and 23
Subject :	Madrid Action Point No. 24 on the creation of national mobile search squads at external frontiers to combat illicit drugs smuggling – Results of the questionnaire on the use of national mobile search squads at external land frontiers

1. Introduction

On the basis of the questionnaire form in accordance with Madrid Action Point No 24 a survey was conducted on Member States' practice in using mobile surveillance patrols at external frontiers.

The questionnaire was sent in 1997 and the last replies were received in August 1998. The replies received relate to the year 1996. On the basis of the Member States' replies to sections 1 to 7 a summary was drafted on the mobile surveillance operations carried out by the different authorities at the borders with third countries and on the level of joint surveillance in that area.

The Customs Cooperation Working Party also considered it useful to examine activities carried out by national and regional mobile patrols in the interior of the country (including internal land borders and waterways) in order to obtain a more comprehensive overall picture in part 8 of the questionnaire, completion of which, however, was optional.

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2. General view

The Union's longest land border with a third country is that with Norway, stretching 2 359 km. There are many border crossing points and in Sweden they outnumber customs posts. In Sweden surveillance is organised on the basis of bilateral cooperation agreements and patrols in sections where there is little traffic. All border crossing points between Finland and Norway are manned. The land border between Finland and Russia at the Union's external borders stretches for 1 269 km. This border also represents an extremely sharp divide between living standards which in turn poses a surveillance risk in terms of smuggling and drugs control. The land border between the Union and third countries has a total length of 3 628 km in the Nordic countries, running mostly through uninhabited wasteland and mountainous areas.

On the other hand, the Union's external border with Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic, 2 691 km in all, runs for the greater part through farming areas and built-up areas in easily accessible terrain and along navigable waterways. Most traffic passing through the Union's land borders goes through German and Austrian border crossing points. This situation presents a substantial challenge for the competent authorities and poses considerable surveillance risks.

The Union's border with Switzerland and Liechtenstein, 1 885 km, runs for the greater part through mountainous areas and water. Surveillance is focused on busy border crossing points.

The Union's land border in Greece with third countries is 1 170 km long. Social changes within neighbouring States may cause an increased surveillance risk on this long border.

The Union also has a land border with Andorra and Gibraltar. The total length of the Union's land borders is about 9 500 km.

On the basis of answers received the Union's land borders with third countries have a total of 504 border crossing points/customs posts, 445 of which are for international traffic.

In each Member State the customs operates at land borders with third countries as a law-enforcement agency preventing the smuggling of drugs and other forms of smuggling. The Member States have carried out mobile inspections at their external land borders using their own resources and surveillance strategies.

It has been reported that internal mobile patrols are in operation in 6 Union Member States, one of which, Ireland, does not have an external land border with third countries. Apparently there are patrols operating inside more Member States.

There is far-reaching cooperation between the authorities of three Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden and Norway) in the form of joint customs posts and surveillance on behalf of the other contracting party.

In analysing the replies to the questionnaire it became apparent among other things how many incommensurable ways there are of providing even numerical answers. The less commensurable the available material, the more general the level of the conclusions drawn. This means that assessing the surveillance risks for the Union as a whole can easily depend on intuitive impressions. For instance, under the EU Customs 2000 programme all Member States' customs administrations should be able to function as one administration.

3. Proposals for further measures

1. According to the replies given the Member States were fairly unanimous in supporting the idea of visits to selected parts of the external borders in order to examine the situation. With reference to document 10513/3/96 ENFOCUSTOM 41 it is proposed that customs officials from other Member States take part as observers in mobile surveillance activities at external borders during a particular surveillance operation for purposes of training and to facilitate greater cooperation than before.

2. In the light of the replies received it is proposed that a list be drawn up of comparable well-run customs training stations in order to familiarise people with mobile patrols, as in the case of transit procedures.
3. Entry and departure surveillance has been rationalised in certain Member States. In developing cooperation between the competent authorities the customs/border posts obtained good results by entrusting various activities to one or two different responsible authorities, especially at small posts, e.g. passport checking and customs control. It is proposed that consideration be given in the Member States to the possibility of introducing this model on a broader scale.
4. In order to bring about more effective and more comprehensive drugs control and to further develop a common surveillance strategy it is proposed that a uniform and comparable model be designed for measuring and collecting surveillance data.
5. In the light of document 10513/3/96 ENFOCUSTOM 41 it is proposed that a corresponding survey be carried out on the level of mobile surveillance conducted at the Union's external sea borders and non-land borders.