

PRACTICES AND FORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN CUSTOMS AND BORDER GUARDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The economic crisis and the increased threats from terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration have brought to light the issue of efficient and effective management of the external borders of the European Union. For Bulgaria it has become even more important with regard to its upcoming accession to the Schengen area.

The concept of an “integrated management system for external borders” dates back to 2001 when the European Council approved a number of political documents underlying the need for intensified interagency cooperation along the external borders of the EU¹. Following the Commission Communication of 7 May 2002 on integrated border management and the Feasibility study of 30 May 2002 on a European Border Police, the Seville European Council approved an Action Plan on Management of the External Borders of the EU (2002). In 2005 building on the Tampere Program, the Hague Program was adopted,

¹ The current analysis resulted from a study commissioned by the European Commission to Identify Best practices on the Cooperation between Border Guards and Customs Administrations Working at the External Borders of the European Union. The study was based on an electronic survey sent to customs and border guards employees in 26 Member States. 230 interviews and site visits to 25 BCPs in 12 countries were conducted. The full version of the report in English is available at: www.csd.bg/eustudy

KEY FINDINGS

- In Member States there are various **forms of cooperation between customs and border guards**: Strategic planning, communication and exchange of information, coordination of workflow at border crossing points (BSPs), joint risk analysis, joint criminal investigations, joint special operations and control outside BCPs („blue” and „green” borders), use of joint mobile groups, joint professional training.
- Cooperation aims to enhance **effectiveness** of securing the external borders of the EU and the Customs Union, as well as **efficiency** that makes best use of the limited financial resources of the two institutions.
- **Cooperation challenges** that customs and border guards face comprise legal and operational obstacles, different institutional cultures, and political pressure over the management bodies of the two institutions.
- **Bulgaria** falls into a group of Member States where the level of cooperation between **customs and border guards is most limited** and often characterized by mistrust and competition.
- The Government of Bulgaria, the Customs Agency and the Border Police should adopt best cooperation practices in order to increase the security of the external borders of the European Union.

defining “second generation” measures designed to strengthen management of the external borders in general.

Some of the achievements of the implementation of these two programs led to the establishment of the European Agency for Management of Operational Cooperation along External Borders (FRONTEX) and the adoption of the Code on the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Border Code, 2006). Furthermore, the Community Customs Code (2005) introduced a number of systems focusing on more stringent security rules with regard to the movement of goods across international borders.

Despite the development of **common standards** for management of the external borders of the EU, the forms and range of cooperation were left to the **competence of each Member State**. As a result some countries have managed to establish good institutional cooperation even merged the two institutions (for example the UK), whereas in other countries the relations between the two institutions are characterized by either strict division of missions and functions or even in certain cases by distrust, competition and lack of communication.

A number of national, geographical, institutional and cultural factors have defined the variety of management patterns and interagency operational practices with regard to border management within the EU. In spite of this it is necessary to make an overview of best practices in order to use gained experience in improving security and management of the external borders of the EU. In some Member States there are obstacles that hinder the cooperation between border guards and customs administrations and they require further explanation to be understood correctly.

Key findings

Eleven areas of cooperation in Member States were examined:

- Strategic planning;
- Communication and information exchange ;

- Coordination of workflow of Border Crossing Points (BCP);
- Risk analysis;
- Criminal investigation;
- Joint operation;
- Control outside BCPs;
- Mobile units;
- Contingency/emergency²;
- Infrastructure and equipment sharing and
- Training and human resource management.

The degree of cooperation varies greatly among these 11 areas. It depends both on the institutional set-up in the MS, and the specific competencies of the institutions.

There are just few institutions in the EU that can provide data or evidence that efficiency or effectiveness were enhanced after the adoption of certain cooperation practices between customs and border guards. It should be kept in mind that the ‘transferability’ to Bulgaria of some of the best practices identified is limited only to states with a similar institutional set-up, or where institutions have similar competencies. Also, some of the best practices presented are specific to a particular type of border or border crossing point (land, air, or maritime).

To best understand why certain forms of cooperation exist and whether best practices might be transferable to particular Member States, it is necessary to understand the diversity that exists across the EU. Three characteristics best describe this diversity and explain the forms and intensity of cooperation:

- **The institutional set-up:** While in some Member States there are specialised BG and Customs organisations, in others, it is the police or coast guards that have border guard competencies, or the financial guard and

² In this policy brief this area of cooperation has not been addressed .

gendarmerie that carry out customs law-enforcement duties.

- **The powers/competencies** of BG and Customs: in some MSs the Customs or BGs do not have investigational powers; in others they might not have any maritime patrol competencies, or any competencies outside border-crossing points (BCPs).
- **The legislative basis** on which cooperation is based should also be taken into account: while there is comprehensive legislation in some MSs, in others local, or need-based agreements, or informal cooperation govern cooperation.

Below, each of the 11 areas of cooperation and their related best practices is discussed.

Strategic planning

The cooperation in setting overall strategic direction is very limited in Member States. Some MS rather reported on cooperating in setting ‘strategic (i.e. long-term) plans’ in specific areas of cooperation: mobile groups, risk analysis, or collection of intelligence. In many MS there are **coordination / management inter-agency structures** (such as working groups or inter-departmental committees). Twenty-one MSs reported having such bodies. In some MSs high-level representatives are part of these structures; apart from the ministries of the interior and finance, other ministries who deal with BCPs may be included. These inter-institutional bodies usually meet two or more times per year but they usually focus on operational and shorter-term issues, rather than setting strategic directions for cooperation.

The best practice presented is from Lithuania. The heads of Border Guards, Customs and Police approve an annual plan of activity for the Joint Centre for Analysis of Criminal Information. Although, the development of the agencies’ strategies are not coordinated, the strategic analysis that shapes each agency’s priorities is done jointly: each agency suggests priority areas to the Centre’s annual workplan.

Communication and information exchange

The communication practices and the exchange of information between Customs and BG is one of the most fundamental aspects of successful cooperation. The exchange of information examined is related to almost all areas of cooperation: flow of passengers and cargo; investigations; risk analysis; patrolling; and special operations. At least four different categories along the wide spectrum of cooperation of information exchange can be discerned: ‘on request’; ‘ad hoc’; ‘periodic’; and ‘continuous exchange through joint databases’.

The prevailing approach is ‘ad hoc’, used in 16 MSs. Exchanges take place only when there are ‘incidents’ (CY), ‘special identified cases’ (AT) or cases of investigations (EE), or if specific intelligence information (e.g. regarding irregular immigration) is seen to be of use to the other agency (SK). A small number of MSs make use of joint databases – five for data about vehicles, and six for data about persons.

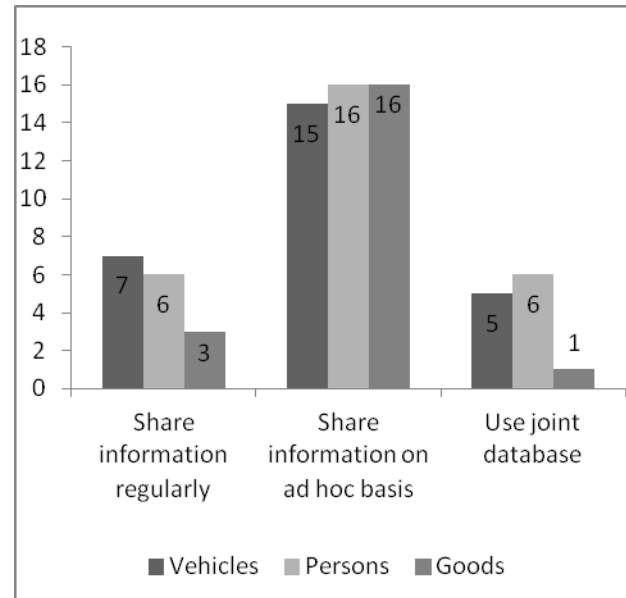


Figure 1. Exchange of information between Customs and Border Guards in EU Member States

In most countries, however, Customs and BG have exclusive access to national databases that are not shared with the other agency. The existence of various cooperation mechanisms (such as joint analysis, intelligence, or investigations centres) is often the means by which information is shared.

The best practice presented is of the German police information system INPOL: it stores information on persons, property and criminal investigations. All important reports on crimes and criminals of regional or national significance are stored in INPOL. This system constitutes the IT backbone of the investigative network of the German police forces. The Federal Police and the Customs officers who carry out police and border guard-like functions have direct access.

Coordination of workflow at BCPs

Control of the transnational flow of goods and persons, along with protection and surveillance duties, constitute the core elements of the management of the external borders. A number of factors determine the specific cooperation needs at BCPs. The management structure might differ significantly according to the type of BCP (land, airport, sea port), its size, or its institutional set-up (it may also include more than two law enforcement agencies at the BCP (IT, ES).

In the daily operations, the most common cooperation activities are the coordination of available space, the coordination of checks of persons and vehicles that need special attention (detailed checks), and the coordination of specialised personnel (e.g. sniffer dog handlers). The coordination of shifts is the least common activity, reported in 12 out of 25 MSs. This may present a problem during joint operations, when personnel from one agency need to be changed in the middle of the operation due to shift schedules.

Cooperation between Customs and BG is somewhat different at sea ports, where officers of the two (or more) agencies are usually located in separate

buildings and have limited direct contact with each other in their daily work.

The best practice presented in this section is from Finland. At land BCPs in Finland, heavy commercial traffic is processed at one line. A single Customs officer processes the declaration of import of goods and the driver's travel documents. To support these checks, the officer has access to both the Customs and Border Guard Risk Management Databases. Customs officers have been trained by Border Guard to inspect ID documents and visas, among other procedures. Border guards have received basic Customs training, which includes search of vehicles and recognition of prohibited and restricted goods, e.g. drugs, alcohol and counterfeit items.

Risk analysis

The risk analysis³ that Customs and BGs develop are generally different in scope. BGs focus their analysis primarily on immigration, trafficking of human beings, and the use of false documents. Customs' risk analysis, on the other hand, is focused on protecting EU and national financial interests, excisable goods, and on security and safety risks such as drugs, counterfeit goods and dual-use goods. In all MSs, there is some level of either formal or informal cooperation. There are two common forms of cooperation in risk analysis: one institution shares the results with the other, or they conduct a joint risk analysis. Practically, in all MSs, the risk analysis is shared in some way – either informally at the lower levels, or formally (centrally or locally disseminated) at the BCP level. Joint risk analysis is usually limited in scope, and takes place only either

³ Risk analysis is the process of identifying a certain risk, data and information collection related to the risk in question („risk assessment”), their analysis, as well as the development of different solutions and measures („risk management”).

at specific locations (high-risk BCPs), or on specific topics (e.g. drugs or cigarettes). Joint risk analysis is done nationally or regionally only in Finland, Sweden and the UK.

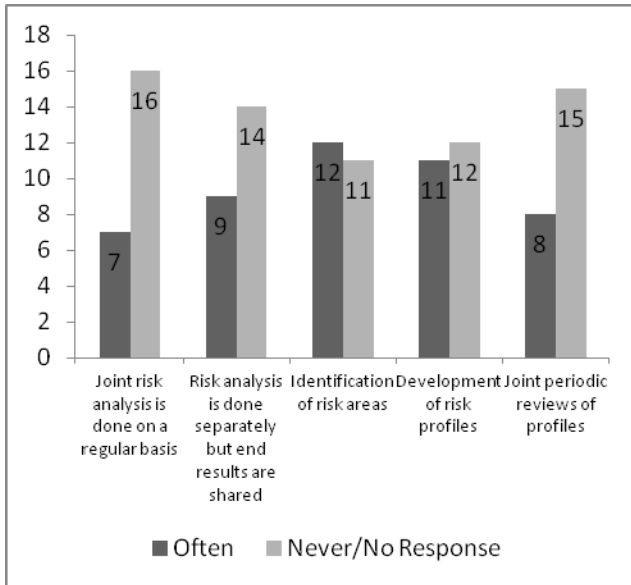


Figure 2. Forms of cooperation in risk analysis in EU Member States

The best practice identified is from Finland, where the National Bureau of Investigations in Helsinki (one of the main units of the Finnish Police) manages the Police-Customs-Border Guards National Crime Intelligence and Crime Analysis Centre. The centre carries out daily monitoring of crime situations; and produces ad hoc memos on targets, threats and trends. The operation and control system of the PCB relies on officers from both Customs and BG working alongside their Police colleagues.

Criminal investigations

The criminal investigations that Customs and BG carry out often relate to different categories of crime. Typically, Customs investigate crimes that violate the customs regime (i.e. drugs or customs fraud). Border Guard investigates migration crime or trafficking in human beings. Across the EU, though, there is significant variation in the competencies and powers of Customs and BGs, the resources they have, and the

institutional arrangements (e.g. the existence of Financial Police, or the merging of BG with the Police).

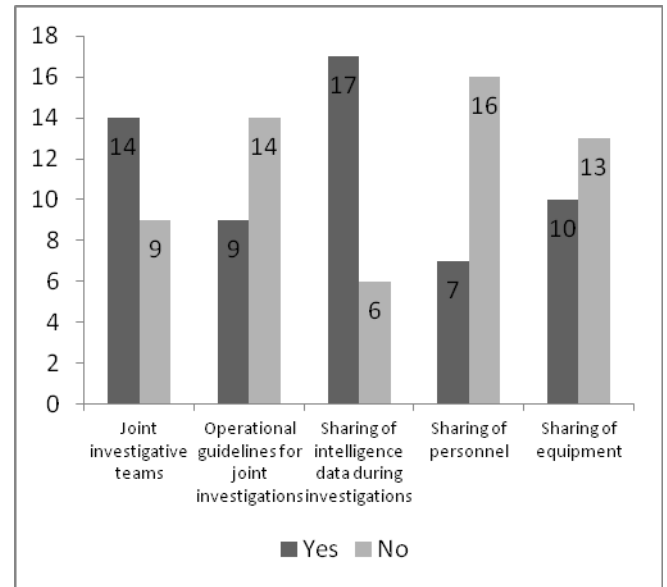


Figure 3. Cooperation in criminal investigations in EU Member States.

Survey data indicates that EU Member States do not maintain permanent joint investigation structures, such as Joint Investigation Centres or permanent joint teams. Instead, ad hoc Joint Investigative Teams are reported by 14 MSs. These teams are set up on a case-by-case basis when a need is identified. Another example of effective cooperation is the coordination centres for investigative information. They comprise not only Customs and BG, but also include Police, Coast Guard, or other investigative services. The roles that these units typically play are in the coordination of investigations (thus avoiding duplication), sharing of intelligence information, supporting investigations, and conducting crime analyses. Examples of such structures are: the centres for the fight against drug trafficking (IT, EL, FR); centres to combat organised crime (HU, ES); and coordination intelligence centres (FI, SE, LT).

The best practice for investigations comes from Sweden. There is cooperation between law

enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Sweden at all levels: strategic, operational and tactical. At the strategic

level, the National Cooperation Council (which includes the Police, Customs, Tax Agency, among others) is responsible for overall cooperation. At the operational level, the National Criminal Intelligence Centre and Regional Intelligence Centres (where all LEAs are represented) provide joint intelligence. At the tactical level: Customs and Border Guard offices submit proposals for joint investigations to the National Operational Council, which then approves the ones suitable for a joint action.

Joint operations

Joint operations (JOs) between BGs and Customs are important as they provide opportunities for effective and efficient cooperation. Institutions across the EU might define differently the term 'joint operation', but it generally refers to a range of activities that are **not** carried out on a routine basis but are planned and take place over a longer period of time, with a greater degree of complexity/coordination, or over a wider geographic area.

Customs and BG carry out joint operations most often over issues that involve their common competencies, such as drugs smuggling and excise goods (cigarettes, alcohol, or fuel). Fewer MSs have joint operations related to irregular immigration. There are various benefits of joint operation, both in terms of effectiveness and in terms of efficiency. The greater effectiveness is usually achieved by the fact that all institutions participating can contribute intelligence or resources that can make the impact much greater. Some of the efficiencies noted were the pooling of personnel and equipment, or saving time on formalities related to the exchange of information or to the transferring of the case between one agency and another.

Two best practices in this area should be highlighted: in Germany a comprehensive system for evaluating

joint operations has been implemented. It analyses the operational results, the allocation of personnel, and information exchange. The second best practice comes from Poland, where joint operations are planned in detail, including specific task allocation, control procedures, joint use of equipment, and the respective financial contributions of the participating agencies.

Mobile groups

There are various purposes for which 'mobile units' could be used, and there is no strict definition of the term. Member States were asked about the coordination of mobile units or the existence of joint mobile units, related to control of external borders outside BCPs or in special operations. The use of mobile units often depends on the geographic specifics of the Member State. Countries without external land borders (e.g. SE, CZ, AT, PT) make little or no use of mobile border patrols or joint mobile units.

When agencies focus on their own duties within joint mobile units, each agency usually manages its own members of the unit (FI, DE, HU) separately. With larger mobile units, coordination may be shared between Customs and BG, or agencies may take turns in leading the mobile units (DE). In some countries, mobile units are led either by the agency that initiates a given operation (BG, LT, PL, RO, SK), or by the agency under whose competence the operation falls most closely. Typically, each agency uses its own specialised equipment.

The best practice in this section comes from Bulgaria, where joint Customs-Border Guard mobile units have been established to control the 'green' land borders with Turkey, Macedonia and Serbia. These mobile units primarily focus on the control of goods violating the customs regime. In this case, the institutions have a shared interest, because while

Border Guards are responsible for green border controls (including the smuggling of goods that fall under control of the Customs), the involvement of Customs increases the expertise and saves time when processing the case.

Control outside BSPs

Some form of cooperation, already discussed, such as ‘joint operations’ and ‘mobile groups’ may take place often outside BCPs. In addition, however, other forms of cooperation related to control outside BCPs were identified. Joint patrols, surveillance and inspections along external maritime (*blue*) and land (*green*) borders⁴ were singled out as the most frequent occasions for cooperation outside BCPs. Some Member States, where customs or border guards do not have competencies on protection of green or blue border, or where there are no external blue or green borders, there is no scope for cooperation.

The two best practices from Germany focus on maritime control. The first one relates to the coordination of the surveillance measures in the maritime area via the Joint Operational Centre Sea in Cuxhaven. The second one relates to the controls of smaller ports (ports, marinas and piers) which are without permanent inspection facilities. There, a joint risk analysis is carried out within the context of the so-called Port / Harbour Index.

Infrastructure and equipment sharing

The survey data and site visits indicate that sharing of equipment occurs relatively seldom, and primarily on the basis of an ad hoc request by the other agency. Sharing of common facilities, such as buildings, largely depends on the type of BCP (sea, air or land) and the actual location (e.g. major or minor border crossing

⁴ *Green border* is the external land borders outside BCP areas. *Blue border* is any external water border (maritime, river, or lake).

point). In smaller countries, at small BCPs, or in countries with limited financial resources, the pressures to share equipment and facilities are greater. In larger countries, sharing is perceived as an obstacle, as it might deprive agencies of their flexibility.

The best practice presented is from Poland, where the establishment of one-stop processing and the construction of joint processing facilities at land BCPs has yielded a 30% reduction in processing time. Another best practice is from Finland, where the sharing of common premises and equipment at Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa BCPs has been introduced. Each authority has a designated role in the servicing and maintenance of these facilities.

Training and human resource management

Cooperation in training is important because it could have an impact on all other areas of cooperation. Training of Customs and BG officers ranges from formal courses provided in BG academies and Customs schools to regular seminars and workshops, and occasional exchanges of know-how between the two agencies. Customs and Border Guards throughout the EU provide to each other or carry out jointly a number of different courses. These cover almost all the areas of competency of both agencies. A number of countries reported that they routinely cross-train their personnel to improve cooperation, or efficiency (e.g. by using only one agency at smaller or temporary BCPs).

The best practices presented are the Nuija project in Finland, which included an extensive training programme for all officers stationed at the BCP, in order to provide them with a range of skills to further speed up the border management process. The other example is from Germany, where the Federal Police and Customs agencies both use the

Education and Training Centre for Maritime Policing. Officers from both institutions go through the same training before joining the naval units.

Cooperation at the EU level

The current state of cooperation between BG and Customs authorities at EU level could be described as **fragmented and reactive**, despite many efforts and initiatives in the past decade. One of the reasons for the absence of cooperation, that policy-makers have most often referred to, is that border policing and customs matters have not been governed by a common regulatory framework, and customs regulation was separated into two pillars of the pre-Lisbon EU policy-making system. Customs criminal enforcement (including operations) was discussed under the ‘third pillar’, while customs procedures, customs controls, and customs risk management were dealt with under the ‘first pillar’.

Another reason for the lower degree of cooperation at EU level concerns the role of Frontex. The agency does not have a partner EU-level agency that represents the law enforcement aspects of MSs’ Customs agencies. So far, most attempts at such high-level cooperation have been made through the Customs Cooperation Working Party (CCWP). The ‘coordination mechanism’ that has been put in place between CCWP and Frontex, however, is in practice limited to exchanging information on joint operations (JOs) that Frontex or the CCWP have carried out independently (I-EU).

Challenges to cooperation

There are three broad sets of obstacles: operational issues (technical, legal, or administrative / financial); institutional culture; and political influence.

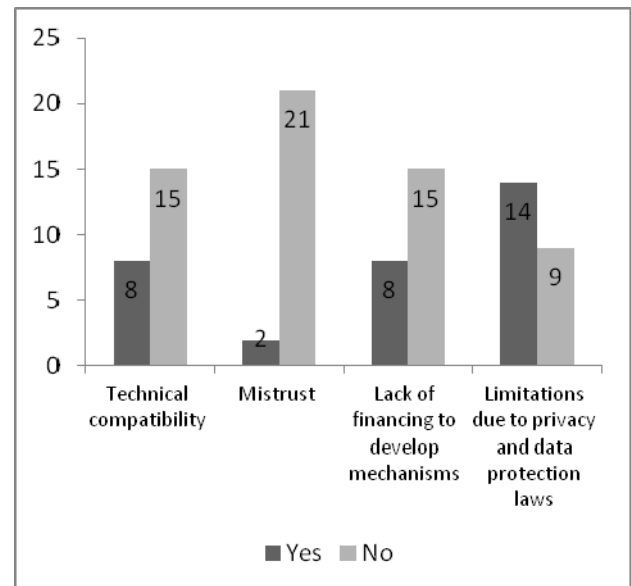


Figure 4. Cooperation obstacles to the exchange of information in EU Member States

Operational challenges

The most readily admitted challenges to the sharing and exchange of information were the legal obstacles relating to privacy, data protection and confidentiality of trade information. This obstacle highlights the underlying problem created by the historical separation of border management between two or more agencies that are forced to constantly exchange information to keep pace with the current state of crime. Technical incompatibility and lack of financing were the two other significant obstacles to sharing and exchanging information. The issue of various degrees of mistrust among the institutions is a problem in the countries with higher levels of corruption (BG, RO, PL, IT). In the area of financial planning and cost sharing, there seems to be practically no cooperation, as a result of the rigid financial relationships between institutions belonging to different ministries.

Institutional cultures

The institutional cultures could often prevent informal, or even undermine formal forms of

cooperation. Customs agencies in the EU Member States usually have a very different institutional history from BG and other LEAs with BG functions, such as the Civil Guard Corps (ES), the Guardia di Finanza (GDF) (IT), the Gendarmerie Maritime (FR), or the Coast Guard (EL). Most often, Customs is part of the Finance Ministry and its institutional culture is very close to that of the civil administration. Customs officers usually graduate from local universities and have completed some additional professional Customs training. The BG, and other LEA institutions with similar functions, belong in most countries to the Ministry of the Interior and their organisational culture is close to that of the Police. In certain MSs, the BG is historically linked to the Defence Ministry. In the majority of countries, although the military hierarchical structure is no longer applicable, the Police has retained some form of military culture.

These two cultures – civil and law enforcement/military – can present challenges to the communication and cooperation of Customs and BG. In Italy, for instance, the setting up of joint units of the GDF and Customs failed because the two agencies could not agree who would lead the units; the GDF (which is a military organisation) was reluctant to be commanded by a civilian. Customs, for its part, sometimes found it difficult to communicate with the GDF because of its ‘military nature’, and the apparently rigid nature of its decision-making process. In cases where urgent decisions need to be taken, the GDF agent is usually not capable of doing so without involving his superiors, which may take a long time (CS-IT). Interviewees from the French Gendarmerie, the Spanish Civil Guard, and the Bulgarian and Polish Border Guards alluded to a similar cultural incompatibility.

The cultural differences are reflected in some functional and organisational inequalities that produce tensions between Customs and BG officers. In some countries (EL, ES, IT and PL), BG are not entitled to strike, while Customs officers have this

right. As a result, when Customs officers go on strike, their duties might have to be performed by BG.

The most significant differences between the two border agencies are in the models of recruitment, education and career paths.

The strict definition of competencies, that excludes any overlap of tasks and functions, is considered a cornerstone of the efficient operation of border agencies (FR, DE). This approach, however, has its negative side. It discourages officers from learning more about the other agency, and from acquiring skills that would allow them to assist and cooperate better with the other agency.

Despite the existing legislation and inter-institutional MOUs that are in place in many MSs, cooperation is most often based on informal contacts, often shaped by subjective factors. In one case, information and support may be provided, and in the next this may not happen. There are no systems for control and evaluation of the degree of cooperation. There are no specified consequences for officers who do not cooperate or who avoid cooperation. Cooperation, therefore, is left on a shaky ground, without instruments to either encourage or enforce it.

Political considerations

Political influence is limited on border agencies in many of the Member States or does not exist at all as in the case of five MSs (FI, FR, LT, SL and NL). In countries such as Germany and the UK, politicisation is understood not as political influence on appointments but rather as the discussion among political parties of the role of border agencies. Bulgaria, Poland, and Greece are the MSs where political influence over border agencies is most clearly felt. Political appointments are a common practice in these countries.

The political influence over border agencies presents two challenges to cooperation. Vertical political loyalty (Customs towards the Ministry of Finance and Border Guards towards the Ministry of the Interior) entails suspicion of, and avoidance of cooperation with, the agencies of a competing ministry. The second challenge is that frequent changes in the agencies destroy the informal contacts and trust developed between their top managements (CS-BG).

Recommendations

The recommendations made to Member States and the European Commission are listed below.

Recommendation to the European Commission

- Generate political will: The Commission should use policy instruments (communications, public debates, impact assessment) to generate political will at EU level to further the Customs and BG cooperation agenda.
- Use political mediation to overcome institutional interests: Political leadership could stimulate closer cooperation even if entrenched institutional resistance is present.
- Conduct external ex-ante evaluation of possible cooperation at the EU level: An alternative to an external evaluation would be a more intensive consultation process to increase cooperation between the Commission (DG TAXUD), the Council (CCWP) and Frontex in specific areas (e.g. risk analysis, intelligence information, operational cooperation, investigations).
- Inclusion of Customs-BG cooperation issues in Commission annual reports: The inclusion of such analysis in the regular reporting process could include a number of indicators, such as reporting on overall cooperation initiatives, on the number of operations, etc.
- Implement pilot projects: Such pilot projects could provide a good opportunity to test cooperation mechanisms in a 'controlled environment', and to examine the value-added impact of Customs–BG cooperation that involve Frontex, CCWP/ COM/national Customs.
- Expanding Frontex' capacity for customs cooperation: At present Frontex is staffed solely by representatives of MSs' Border Guards, who have limited knowledge of customs issues. Attempts to increase Frontex' capacity to cooperate with MSs' customs administrations, or to involve them in operations, could profit from the presence at Frontex of officers with a Customs background, as 'liaison officers'. Some Member States (e.g. ES, FI) have 'liaison' officers from Customs working alongside border guards, and vice versa.
- Replicating the Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCC) along EU external borders: At present such centres exist at borders between 'old MSs'. There are many locations where such centres could improve cooperation along the external borders. The eastern EU external land border provides various opportunities where such centres could play a role (for instance, Greek–Bulgarian cooperation along borders with Turkey or Macedonia, Romanian–Hungarian–Slovak cooperation along the Ukrainian border, or Baltic countries' cooperation along Russian and Belorussian borders).
- Joint training: The Commission has developed, with MSs in the Customs Training Management Steering Group, and internationally with the World Customs Organisation, joint training programmes and modules for Customs which can be used also by any other law enforcement authority.

- Support research and development for multifunctional equipment that facilitates cooperation: Detection technology, for instance, presently aims either at verifying the cargo content for Customs purposes or detecting irregular immigrants or CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) materials for BG purposes. Identity verification equipment, such as ‘automated credibility assessment’⁵ technologies, allows for such equipment to serve the needs of Customs agencies as well. The EC could also financially support joint procurement of such multifunctional equipment by MS Customs and Border Guards.

Recommendations to Member States

- **Use political mediation to overcome institutional interests:** This process of politically mediated cooperation could initially include formulating a strategic vision for increased cooperation, and the arguments of budget savings and increased security should be promoting such cooperation. A starting point would be establishing (or tasking the existing) high-level inter-agency councils to formulate a strategic direction and implementation programme for cooperation. The experience of some Member States (SE, FI) could help in initiating such a process.
- Conduct **impact evaluations** on cooperation between BG and Customs: There is a need for independent and comprehensive impact evaluation of existing cooperation mechanisms (of the lack of them). It might be common sense that effectiveness is increased, for instance, once information barriers between Customs and

Border Guards are lifted. Nevertheless, there are so many factors that influence effectiveness that only a systematic evaluation could provide convincing evidence to support a particular cooperation practice.

Recommendations to Customs and Border Guards

- **Transfer of best practices:** The transfer of the best practices should be considered, while taking into account the national contexts. The practice of cooperation mechanisms being mechanically transferred, without being properly adapted to local realities should be abandoned. The main reason behind the failure is that the practices were only partially transferred, and small but important details were overlooked. Another common reason for failure is that they were transferred only at the highest management level, without ensuring the support of the middle or lower-level management.
- Implementation of **pilot projects** on cooperation: Pilot projects on specific cooperation mechanisms could be a cheap and quicker way to implement/test particular cooperation mechanisms. They could range from conducting a pilot joint investigation to doing a pilot risk analysis for a particular BCP, to carrying out a joint operation.

⁵ This is in effect a sophisticated automated lie detector using facial recognition software, which asks the truck driver, for instance, questions and then monitors the answers. Therefore, questions relevant to Customs could also be asked.