



EUROPEAN UNION BORDER ASSISTANCE MISSION  
TO MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

# EVALUATION REPORT

JOINT BORDER CONTROL OPERATION

# “OLVIA”



EUBAM is an EU Mission fully funded  
by the European Union



International Organization for Migration  
is the implementing partner



**ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BCP</b>	Border Crossing Point
<b>BG</b>	Border Guard
<b>CBSAR</b>	Common Border Security Assessment Report
<b>CENcomm2</b>	World Customs Organization communication platform
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUBAM</b>	European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
<b>FRONTEX</b>	European Agency for the Management of Operation Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
<b>IPR</b>	Intellectual Property Rights
<b>JBCO</b>	Joint Border Control Operation
<b>LEA</b>	Law Enforcement Agency
<b>MD</b>	Moldovan/Republic of Moldova
<b>MDBMA</b>	Bureau for Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDBP</b>	Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDCCTP</b>	Centre for Combating Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDCS</b>	Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDIPCC</b>	International Police Cooperation Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDISS</b>	Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova
<b>MDMoIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
<b>NCB</b>	Interpol National Central Bureau of Ukraine
<b>NCP</b>	National Contact Point
<b>OCU</b>	Operational Coordination Unit
<b>SELEC</b>	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
<b>SSUA</b>	Security Service of Ukraine
<b>TF</b>	Task Force
<b>TFT</b>	Task Force Team
<b>THB</b>	Trafficking in Human Beings
<b>UA</b>	Ukrainian/Ukraine
<b>UAMoIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine
<b>UASBGS</b>	State Border Guard Service of Ukraine
<b>UASFS</b>	State Fiscal Service of Ukraine
<b>UASMS</b>	State Migration Service of Ukraine
<b>VIN</b>	Vehicle Identification Number
<b>WCO</b>	World Customs Organization
<b>WG</b>	Working Group



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The twelfth Joint Border Cooperation Operation (JBCO), codenamed “OLVIA”, covered the entire common Moldovan-Ukrainian border, as well as selected seaports and airports in both countries. Enforcement actions at border and inland locations were focused on seven targets. It was composed of four operational phases between 2 June and 19 September 2014, each phase covering different targets based on risk analysis and priority assessments by the partner services and participating agencies. EUBAM facilitated the participation of Europol, Frontex, Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) from European Union (EU) Member States (Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia), who supported the partner services in their efforts to intercept and disrupt criminal activities at the borders.

*OLVIA* proved an outstanding tool for information exchange between the national and international partners. The Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services were able to acquire information for risk assessment and investigation purposes. As a consequence, the partner services improved their capabilities to detect cross border offenses and cases of organized crime. This is demonstrated by the increase in exchanged information, as well as the operational results.

The partner services, supported by EUBAM and international participants, reported 128 incidents (seizures) estimated to the total value of 1.2 million euro. In all, 16.1 million pieces of cigarettes, 25 vehicles, 42,734 litres of alcohol, 709 tablets of psychotropic substances and 4 weapons were seized. As regards to violation of border regime, 35 persons were detained or sanctioned, out of which 11 were irregular migrants. Non-declared consumer goods were detected in 49 cases and the total estimated amount of seized goods reached 360,355 euro.

The objectives of the JBCO *OLVIA* were achieved thanks to the thorough planning and precise execution of the tasks set by the operational plan. By conducting an international operation like *OLVIA*, the partner services increased the effectiveness of border control, prevented and fought cross-border crime and raised their international profile in the law enforcement area.

EUBAM has been looking for a sustainable solution in performing effective interventions in the field of combating cross-border crimes. Lessons learned and experience gained from the previous JBCOs have contributed to significant improvements in performing such operations. They are now multi-targeted and use modern methods and risk analysis with international participation and recognition.

The JBCO *OLVIA* bore witness to the successful transfer of technical know-how to the Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services in carrying out this kind of operations. The partner services proved that knowledge, experience and skills developed while implementing twelve JBCOs will enable them to initiate, plan and perform the international operations on their own. However, despite the improvement and sustainability reached by the partners, the involvement of EUBAM in the future JBCOs, in the role of an observer or mediator, is still crucial.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The JBCO *OLVIA* was initiated by EUBAM, the Ukrainian and Moldovan border guard/police and customs services and other LEAs operating on the territory of both countries, as well as the LEAs from EU Member States and the international organizations.

The operation aimed at increasing the effectiveness of border control, preventing and combating trans-border crimes and improving the reputation of the Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services on the international law enforcement arena.

The targets for the operation were selected based on the 2013 Common Border Security Assessment Reports (CBSAR) and a forecast for 2014. The outcomes of the operational meetings of the EUBAM Working Groups (WG) on countering irregular migration and trafficking in human beings (WG I), trafficking in drugs, weapons, smuggling and customs fraud (WG II) and violations of intellectual property rights (WG III), as well as the Task Forces (TF) Arms, Drugs, Tobacco and Vehicle Crimes have reinforced the picture presented in CBSAR that the risks and threats identified for the operation were the top focus for the partner services during the last year. Consequently, the JBCO was used as a main tool for implementation of the targeted operations during the specific operational phases, which allowed the participants to focus on the key targets and risk areas.

In general, the JBCO offered plenty of opportunities for information exchange between the national and international partners increasing the capabilities of the Ukrainian and Moldovan LEAs to acquire information for risk assessment and investigation.



### 3. CONCEPT AND STRUCTURE

#### 3.1 Operational targets, phases, locations and main actors

The planning of OLVIA was initiated in the beginning of 2014 and an operational meeting was held on 17 April 2014 in order to discuss and agree on the plan of action. OLVIA covered the entire common Moldovan-Ukrainian border including the key locations, seaports and airports of both countries. It was concentrated on more targeted enforcement actions at the border or inland locations, focused on certain categories of offenses and on specific locations within the established periods. The locations were selected based on risk analysis and represented the hot spots marked by the partner services.

It also interacted within the operational proceedings at the borders of the neighbouring EU countries (i.e. Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania) with regard to the movement of goods and people from Ukraine and Moldova to EU Member States and vice versa. Apart from the Moldovan and Ukrainian LEAs, the international organizations and agencies, as well as the LEAs from EU Member States participated. A detailed list of participants is presented in Annex 1.

OLVIA was carried out in four operational phases between 2 June and 19 September 2014 and it comprised of seven different targets. Each target was tackled during one or two phases. All operational phases were supported by the Task Force Teams (TFTs) profiled for every phase and located at the selected areas based on risk analysis and the priorities/needs of the partner services. The targets, time frames, locations and main involved agencies of the JBCO are indicated in the table below.

Target	Description	Period	Locations	Main Actors
A	Irregular migration, THB and illegal border crossings (Working Group I)	21-25 July	Air/Sea/Rail/Road BCPs	UASBGS, UASMS, UAMoIA, MDBP, MDBMA, MDCCTP
B	Customs offenses and smuggling of high-duty and excise goods (Working Group II)	02-06 June 15-19 September	Sea/Road BCPs, Inland Customs Posts	UASFS, UASBGS, UAMoIA, MDCS, MDBP, MDISS, MDMoIA
C	Smuggling of drugs, precursors and other prohibited materials (Task Force Drugs)	02-06 June 15-19 September	Air/Sea/Rail/Road BCPs, Post-Offices	UASFS, UASBGS, UAMoIA, MDCS, MDBP, MDMoIA, MDISS
D	Smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco products (Task Force Tobacco)	02-06 June 15-19 September	Air/Sea/Rail/Road BCPs, Inland Customs Posts, Post-Offices	UASFS, UASBGS, UAMoIA, MDCS, MDBP, MDISS, MDMoIA
E	Smuggling of arms, explosives and nuclear material (Task Force Arms)	02-06 June 15-19 September	Road BCPs	UASFS, UASBGS, MDCS, MDBP, MDISS
F	Motor vehicles crime, illegal use of vehicles with false documents (Task Force Vehicle Crimes)	02-06 June 07-11 July	Sea/Road BCPs	UASFS, UASBGS, UAMoIA, MDCS, MDBP, MDISS, MDMoIA
G	Tackling of the Intellectual Property Rights infringements (Working Group III)	02-06 June 15-19 September	Air/Sea/Road BCPs, Inland Customs Posts, Post-Offices	UASFS, UAMoIA, MDCS, MDMoIA

### 3.2 Objectives

The JBCO *OLVIA* had the following objectives:

- Strengthening border and customs control measures at the border and at the key locations in order to prevent and combat cross-border crimes;
- Enhancing intra-service, inter-agency and international cooperation;
- Gathering, processing and analysing available information on new *modi operandi*, schemes and trends, as well as on organized criminal groups;
- Promoting the development and use of IT systems for exchange and enrichment of operational information;
- Facilitating and conducting the joint investigative actions, where appropriate, with the support of international organizations/agencies.

### 3.3 Expected results

The operation strived to achieve the following results:

- Enhanced quality of the actions aimed at prevention and enforcement of cross-border crimes;
- Identified illegal activities, new *modi operandi*, trends and organized criminal groups involved in the criminal activities at the common border;
- Enhanced professional experience, skills, knowledge and trust of all respective authorities in inter-agency and international cooperation;
- Improved communication at the intra-service and inter-agency levels, as well as with the international partners, measurable by the increase of the operational information exchanged during the operation;
- Improved cooperation and mutual assistance between the participants in the field of the fight against border related criminality, as evidenced by the joint investigations;
- Ensured sustainability through the contacts with the international organizations and agencies.

### 3.4 Operation Coordination Unit, Task Force Teams and National Contact Points

The operational coordination unit (OCU) was established at the EUBAM headquarters in Odessa. OCU was composed of EUBAM experts, the Ukrainian and Moldovan partners and the international participants in accordance with their relations to the targets assigned respectively to the operational phases I, III, IV. During the operational phase II, OCU consisted of the EUBAM experts only. OCU ensured coordination of the operational proceedings and interactions among the participants of *OLVIA*, real time data collection, analytical and technical support and prompt response to the operational needs.

The concept of the multi-targeted JBCO *OLVIA* included setting up the specially formed TFTs in Ukraine and Moldova, profiled to tackle the identified risks and targets. The TFTs had been also used in the previous operations and proved their value as an effective operational tool. The main strength of the TFT concept was the use of the expertise of the Ukrainian and Moldovan LEAs, supported by EUBAM and/or other international experts where appropriate, and their deployment at pre-defined hot spots to address the specific risks. For example, EUBAM and Frontex experts on migration provided support to the Moldovan Border Police Department (MDBP) at the Chisinau International Airport during implementation of the operational phase III. During the same phase, a EUBAM expert on migration assisted the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (UASBGS) at the Odessa International Airport. In order to assist the officers of Moldovan Customs Service (MDCS) in tackling different types of customs violations the EUBAM TFTs were deployed at the Chisinau International Airport for the period of the operational phases I and IV. The TFTs were either stationary or mobile components of the operational support to the field activity at the different phases. Their areas of operation were mainly the selected border crossing points (BCPs) and border zones, inland customs posts and surrounding areas.

Due to the unstable security situation in Ukraine the number of the TFTs at the selected BCPs with the participating Ukrainian LEAs decreased compared with the JBCO *OVIDIUS*. It also led to experts on vehicle crime from the Austrian Federal Police and the Liaison Officer of the Dutch Immigration Service not participating, as well as the Polish Customs Service officers not being able to be physically present in OCU.

The participating national and international agencies and the neighbouring EU countries appointed a National Contact Point (NCP) in each service and organization for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of information. The tasks of NCPs specifically consisted in collecting, assessing and distributing the information, consulting the national systems and other sources, responding to the information requests received from OCU, reporting about the seizures detected in the area of NCP responsibility and coordinating the national activities.

### 3.5 Communication

The exchange of information during implementation of all phases of *OLVIA* was carried out through the World Customs Organization (WCO) communication system CENcomm2, which has dual language support (English/Russian). Any relevant information was conveyed by means of warning messages and related feedbacks. Data on cases, incidents and seizures was also a part of the information flow. The Ukrainian and Moldovan national agencies, as well as neighbouring EU countries and international agencies communicated with each other by sending warning, seizure and feedback messages through OCU. This communication platform was the only one used by all participants for exchange of alert messages and the related feedback.

### 3.6 Operational synergy

Simultaneously with *OLVIA*, operational activities were conducted within the framework of two international projects at the Ukrainian-Moldovan border. Between 3 and 5 June 2014 EUBAM supported the SELEC operation “HIT”, which targeted stolen (or otherwise misappropriated) vehicles irregularly transported from Western Europe through the SELEC member states to the countries in the Near and Middle East. In the course of the operation EUBAM assisted the UASBGS and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (UAMoIA) in the exchange of information with the SELEC OCU.

The Frontex led project “Coordination Points 2014” was carried out at the road BCPs Criva (Moldova), Tudora (Moldova) and Kuchurhan (Ukraine)<sup>1</sup>. In order to ensure the adequate usage of the established Frontex coordination points, the operational phases II (target - motor vehicles crime, illegal use of vehicles with false documentation) and III (target - irregular migration, trafficking in human beings (THB) and illegal border crossings) were conducted during the same period as the Frontex project. EU experts were deployed to facilitate of the project at the mentioned BCPs, enabling them to support the border guards/police of the host country, exchange experience and expertise on the integrated border management and collect, assess and distribute information, thereby improving the detection of human trafficking and migrant smuggling facilitation by individuals and/or criminal network.

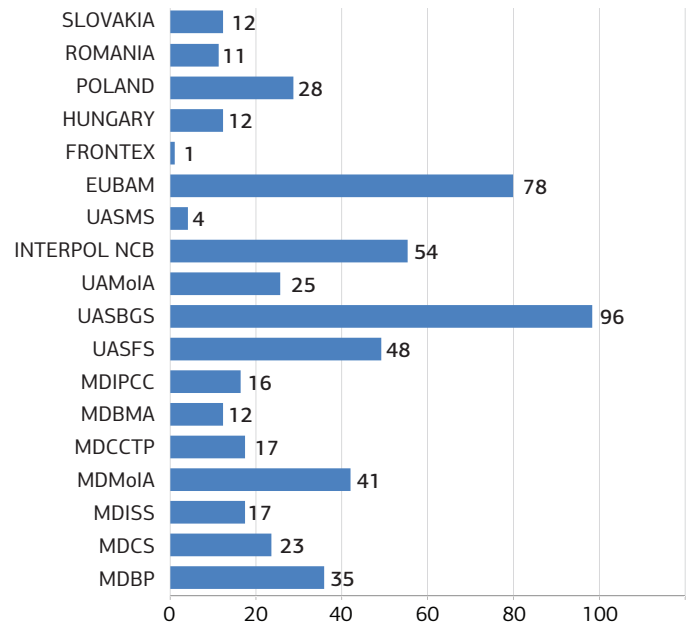
<sup>1</sup> Criva BCP 01-29 July 2014; Tudora and Kuchurhan 03-31 July 2014

## 4. OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONAL RESULTS

### 4.1 Exchange of information

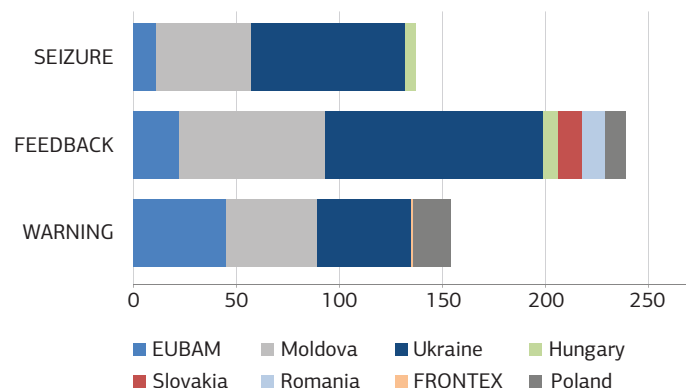
The number of messages exchanged via the CENcomm2 platform reached 530 compared with 454 messages sent during last year JBCO *OVIDIUS*. The Moldovan and Ukrainian LEAs sent almost three quarters of all exchanged messages.

Chart 1 Number of exchanged messages by participants



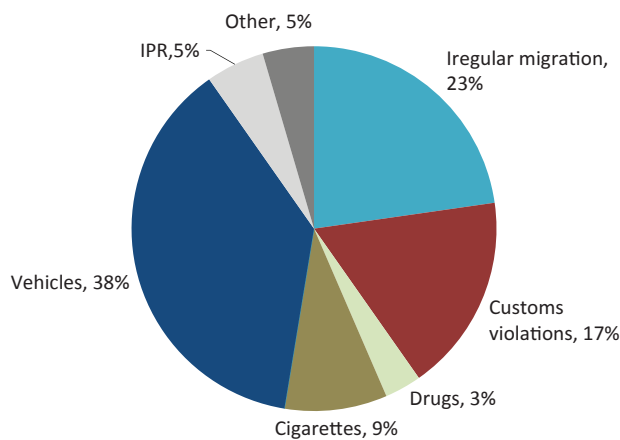
Out of all exchanged messages 154 warning, 239 feedback and 137 seizure messages were sent by the participants (Chart 2). As a result 128 incidents/seizures were reported. Some of the incidents were reported by more than one participant and thus the number of seizure messages exceeds the number of seizures. Further details on comparisons between the different operational phases of *OLVIA* and different kinds of messages sent by the participants, as well as comparisons between *OLVIA* and *OVIDIUS* are presented in Annex 2.

Chart 2 Exchanged messages by type of message and by country



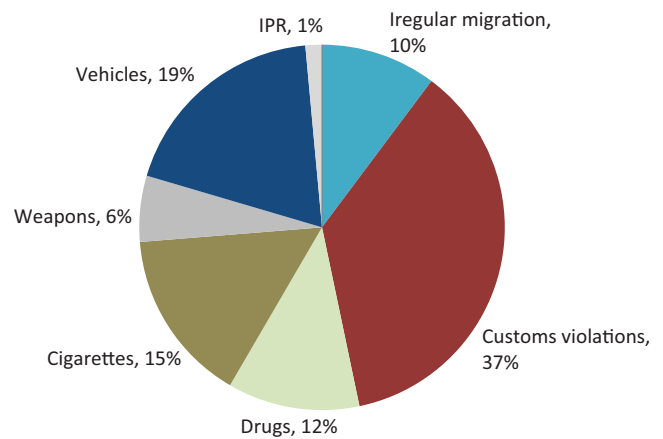
Warning messages reveal the activity of the participants in providing or requesting operative information regarding possible border offenses, which serves as a valuable performance indicator. In order to facilitate the analysis, the warning messages have been grouped into the seven different *OLVIA* targets. However, there are some warning messages, which do not really fall into a specific category, such as for example non-payment of road tax/vignette in Moldova, and such items have been placed in the category 'Other'. The highest percentage of warning messages concerned vehicles, irregular migration and customs violations (see Chart 3). The review of the target is important since it serves as an indication of the main types of the border crimes faced by the partner services. The warning messages were sent by the Ukrainian LEAs (30%), the Moldovan LEAs (29%), EUBAM (29%) and the Polish LEAs (12%).

Chart 3 Warning messages divided by target



For analytical purposes the seizure messages have been grouped according to seven different *OLVIA* targets. The majority of the seizure messages were related to customs violations, vehicles, cigarettes and irregular migration (see Chart 4). The number of the messages is unevenly distributed between the different operational phases due to the fact that each phase had a different number of targets. Hence the operational phase I, which included six out of the seven targets, had the highest number of seizure messages, whereas the phases II and III, which only focused on one target each, had the lowest number of seizure messages. Even if the operational phases II and III were dedicated only to two targets, seizures within other targets also took place during these phases. The most active participants in sending seizure messages were the Ukrainian LEAs (55%) and the Moldovan LEAs (34%).

Chart 4 Seizure messages divided by target



The total value of the seized goods amounted to 1,231,102 euro (including the estimated value of the vehicles). A larger part of the seizures (55%) took place beyond the BCPs (green border or inland) in this JBCO compared with the last year (20% in the JBCO *OVIDIUS*). The incidents which occurred beyond the BCPs were mostly related to customs violations, vehicles and cigarettes.

Out of the total number of the reported incidents, 78% occurred in the *OLVIA* target area at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and the rest at the Ukrainian or Moldovan borders with Romania and Hungary, or in other regions of Ukraine. The most commonly reported incidents from places outside *OLVIA*'s target area were related to vehicles, cigarettes and customs violations. The estimated value of the goods seized outside the *OLVIA* target area amounted to 170,221 euro. As for the reported incidents within the target area, they were typical for the Moldovan-Ukrainian border in terms of characteristics and *modi operandi* as reported in CBSAR. The value of seized goods within the *OLVIA* target area amounted to 1,060,881 euro (86% of total). In the following sub-chapters, where the *OLVIA* targets are more thoroughly analysed, only the total amount of the seized goods will be used for comparison, i.e. including the reported incidents from outside the *OLVIA* target area.

Table 1 Number and value of seizures within the OLVIA target area

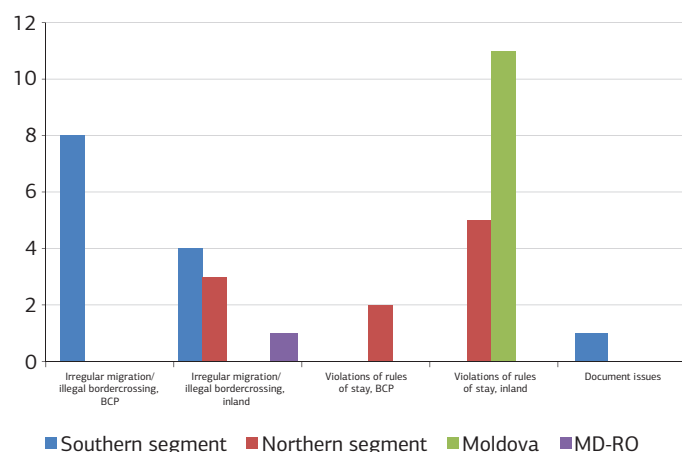
	Central	Northern	Southern	Moldova	OLVIA target area
Number of seizures	15	42	28	15	100
- seizures at BCPs	6	23	15		44
- seizures beyond BCPs	9	19	13	15	56
Value of seizures, euro	370,132	136,926	399,351	154,472	1,060,881

The highest number of reported incidents took place in the northern segment, but to the lowest estimated value (Table 1). The central segment had fewer reported incidents, but at high value, whereas the southern segment had the most even distribution of the reported incidents among the targets. The high value of seized goods in the central and southern segments is mainly due to seizures of high value goods such as vehicles and large quantities of cigarettes and alcohol. In Moldova, goods were mainly seized due to various customs violations. In general the BCPs with most reported incidents are those with a considerable traffic load both of passengers and goods, such as, for example, Rossoshany-Briceni, Mogilev-Podolskyi-Otaci and Kuchurhan.

#### 4.2 Irregular migration, trafficking in human beings and illegal border crossings

As a result of OLVIA 13 cases of border violations were reported, involving 35 violators. Six of the cases regarded irregular migration/illegal border crossing, other six were violations of the rules of stay in a country, and one case was related to forged documents.

Chart 5 Number of persons detected in border violations, by location



#### Irregular migration and illegal border crossing

During the first phase of OLVIA one case of irregular migration was reported, where 3 persons from Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia were detected approximately 400 meters from the BCP Vulcanesti in the southern segment trying to cross the border from Ukraine to Moldova illegally.

Another case of irregular migration was reported in the third phase. Eight irregular migrants (3 Syrians, 3 Moroccans and 2 Libyans) were detected during checks of trucks on the ferry “Sea Partner” arriving in the Illichevsk port from Haydarpasha, Turkey. The migrants were hidden in the space between the rear axle and the trailer floor of trucks carrying commercial goods destined for Russia and Ukraine. The migrants did not possess any travel or identification documents. The interviews with the perpetrators revealed that they had worked some time in Turkey, but had decided to try to move to Italy. They had paid 1,000 euro each to a Turkish security guard for facilitating getting on board the ferry in Haydarpasha and had then chosen rather randomly which trucks to hide in. It was established during the interviews that the drivers were not aware of them.

With ongoing conflicts and difficult political situations in many Middle Eastern countries, the risk of human smuggling from these countries to the EU is constantly growing. It can be assumed that the modus operandi described in the case above is common among smugglers of irregular migrants. The risk profiles show a high risk from travellers from Middle Eastern countries, using Turkey as a transit country, while looking for an opportunity to organize the next leg of the trip to the EU, mostly by paying a facilitator. The hiding places in trucks as mentioned above should be considered also for the trucks crossing the border at the road BCPs. Lucrative profits and low risk of identification for traffickers paint an overall picture of high risk probability for irregular migration using this particular modus operandi. Since May 2014 two similar cases have been reported in the Illichevsk sea port.

In the course of OLVIA three cases of illegal border crossings were detected, all cases reported beyond the BCPs and this is a marked decrease compared with

*OVIDIUS*. It emphasizes the decreasing trend observed during the past years in CBSAR 2013 and for the first eight months of 2014. The enhanced border surveillance capabilities on both sides of the border, the closer cooperation at all levels between the partner services, the joint border patrolling and the joint border operations, together with the public awareness campaigns are mentioned as the reasons to the decrease in illegal border crossings.

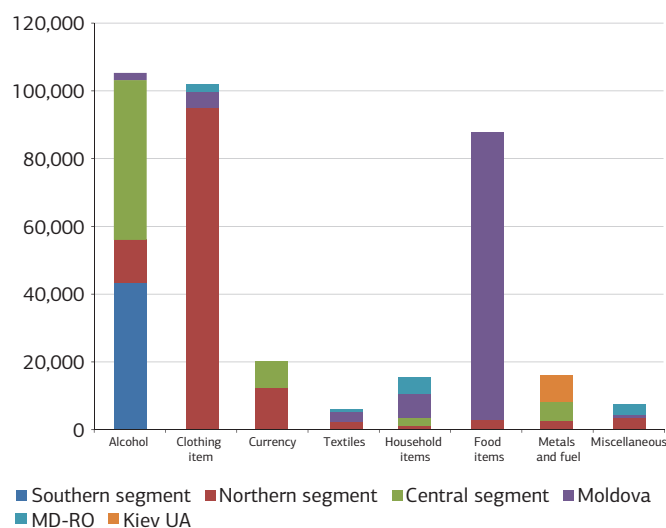
### Violations of rules of stay

Within this category 18 foreign citizens (Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Belarussian and Egyptian) were detected, who had overstayed the stipulated period of legal stay in Ukraine or Moldova according to the respective legislation. The majority of the cases (5) were discovered in the northern segment, but the majority of foreign citizens (11) were detected in Moldova. This is a significant decrease compared with both number of cases and violators reported during *OVIDIUS*.

### 4.3 Customs offenses and smuggling of high-duty and excise goods

As a result of *OLVIA* 49 cases of customs violations were detected and the estimated value of the seized goods amounted to 360,355 euro. The customs violations were spread over a wide range of different goods, but the most commonly seized goods and also to the highest estimated value were alcohol and clothing items. More than half of the seizures took place beyond the BCPs. In the southern and central segments, mainly alcohol was seized and in the northern segment - clothing items (see chart 6).

Chart 6 Value (euro) of detected cases of customs violation by location



### Alcohol

Out of 16 seizures of alcohol products and ethanol, six stand out in terms of quantity and value (94% of total quantity and 95% of value). During the first phase UASBGS stopped a consignment about 150 meters from the BCP Kuchurhan consisting of almost 23,000 litres of ethanol, which was subsequently seized due to the lack of proper documents. During the second phase, joint activities between the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine (UASFS), State Security Service of Ukraine (SSUA) and UASBGS on the shoreline of the Dniester River, near Mogilev-Podolskyi, led to the detection of 3,275 litres of alcohol in the cargo compartment of a private vehicle.

During the third phase a joint operation of MDBP and UASBGS resulted in a seizure of 8,000 litres of alcohol at the southern part of the Moldovan border with Ukraine. Three individuals were detained while they were attempting to pump alcohol from Moldova to Ukraine using a 30 meter long pipeline. UASBGS apprehended the perpetrators, two Moldovans and one Ukrainian, and seized a truck loaded with approximately 4,000 litres of alcohol. MDBP also seized a truck loaded with 4,000 litres of alcohol and a car belonging to one of the detained Moldovans, both vehicles had been left abandoned next to the pipeline.

In the fourth phase two larger seizures took place in the northern segment and one in the central segment. In the northern segment UASFS seized approximately 1,900 litres of alcohol in a house located in the Mogilev-Podolskyi district based on information received from UASBGS. Secondly, as a result of a police inspection of a private vehicle 3,500 litres of alcohol were found packaged in 16 plastic containers of 220 litres. In the central segment UASBGS stopped a truck near a private house in the Rozdilna district, 200 meters from the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and seized 1,250 litres of alcohol hidden in a concealed built-in compartment. While investigating the case, a plastic pipe approximately 10 meters long was found, running from the house to the Kuchurhan firth.

Both the number of seizures and the quantity of seized alcohol products and ethanol during *OLVIA* widely exceeded the results reported in *OVIDIUS* (9 cases amounting to 3,894 litres). According to CBSAR for the first eight months of 2014 the number of detected cases of smuggling of alcohol products and ethanol decreased compared with the same period in 2013, whereas the seized quantity increased drastically, more than 100%. The increase is mainly attributed to the large seizures of ethanol, mostly detected beyond the BCPs.

### Clothing items

A seizure of fur coats explains 91% of the seized value of the clothing items. UASFS discovered 831 items hidden in a specially designed niche inside a cargo-passenger minivan travelling from Moldova to Russia at the BCP Otaci - Mogilev-Podolskiy.

### Food items

Information obtained during the fourth phase allowed the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Moldova (MDMoIA) to complete a yearlong investigation of illegal meat imports. It was discovered that a Ukrainian company had been exporting beef meat to Moldova after changing the documents of origin for meat produced in Belarus and Russia. It was estimated that these actions had caused damage to the Moldovan budget equivalent to approximately 65,000 euro. Furthermore, the Moldovan police detained a vehicle on the road from Chisinau to Bender. The inspection revealed 2,300 kilos of undeclared frozen chicken legs for an estimated value of 20,000 euro.

### Currency

A total of USD 38,000 was found in the trunk of a private vehicle with two passengers at Kuchurhan road BCP. According to Article 471 of the Customs Code of Ukraine, a person is allowed to bring in the equivalent to 10,000 euro and the surplus of the allowed amount, in this particular case the equivalent to almost 8,000 euro, shall be seized. In the second case, undeclared currency equivalent to more than 12,000 euro was seized in a private vehicle at the BCP Mogilev-Podolskiy-Otaci.

### 4.4 Smuggling of drugs, precursors and other prohibited materials

OLVIA resulted in 16 incidents reported in connection with trafficking in drugs and illegal substances; ten cases from the northern segment, five cases from the southern segment and one case in the Lviv region, Ukraine. All incidents apart from one were detected at BCPs and the illegal substances were mostly found in the personal belongings of the travellers. A vast majority of the reported incidents concerned psychotropic substances, in total 709 tablets. More than half of the tablets were seized after customs control of parcels arriving via mail from Israel to Odessa.

During the first phase MDBP discovered a field of cannabis of approximately 1 hectare in the southern part of Moldova, about 800 meters from the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. Approximately 150,000 cannabis plants were detected, but it was assessed that they

had not been specially cultivated. The landowner stated that the land had not been cultivated by him for almost four years. It was estimated that the discovered plants could have generated 15 tons of marihuana to sell.

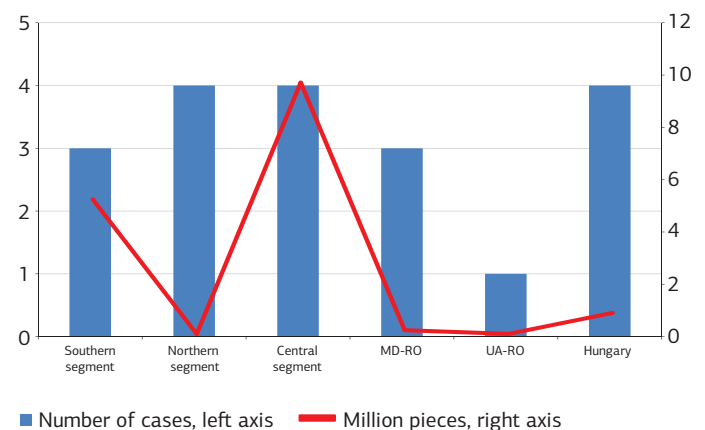
A large seizure of cannabis, 257 kilos, was reported by UASFS from a BCP between Ukraine and Poland, i.e. outside OLVIA target area. The drugs were detected in a concealed compartment upon a deeper inspection of a private vehicle. Due to the information provided by UASFS, cooperation between UASFS and the Polish Border Guard Service intensified. As a consequence of a comprehensive analysis of the information exchanged between the Ukrainian and Polish partners, as well as the valuable assistance of the Interpol National Central Bureau of Ukraine (NCB), it was possible to obtain sufficient data in order to establish the circumstances of the case.

The seizures reported during OLVIA are similar to the ones reported during OVIDIUS, where a majority of the cases also concerned psychotropic substances found in travellers' possession mainly at the northern segment.

### 4.5 Smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco products

The participants reported 19 seizures of cigarettes totalling 16.1 million pieces to an estimated value of 525,517 euro. Most cigarette seizures took place at inland locations, i.e. beyond the BCPs. 90% of the quantity was seized in the OLVIA target area. The total number of seized cigarettes was highly influenced by two larger seizures totalling 13.3 million pieces, one at the central segment and the other at the southern segment. In general, the southern and central segments were characterized with fewer seizures of large quantities, while the northern segment saw more seizures of small quantities. Eight of the seizures stem from Hungary, the Ukrainian-Hungarian border and the Moldovan-Romanian border, which can be considered outside the target area of OLVIA.

Chart 7 Number of seizures and million pieces of seized cigarettes by location



During the second phase, UASBGS together with UAMoIA, stopped a Ukrainian truck in the Odessa region and discovered cigarettes of Italian origin (8 million pieces) hidden behind a consignment of tires inside the semi-trailer. Furthermore, the UASBGS Kotovsk Detachment stopped a truck for inspection on the road from Transnistria to Ukraine (Fedosiyivka) about 400 meters from the central segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and detected 1.5 million pieces of cigarettes of foreign origin without excise stamps. In the fourth phase 3.8 million pieces of cigarettes were seized upon inspection of a truck on the territory of warehouses near the Odessa port. The cigarettes were imported from China, Sweden, Chile, and the United Kingdom, but did not have Ukrainian excise stamps.

According to the CBSAR for the first eight months of 2014 the number of detected attempts of illegal movement of tobacco products decreased compared to the same period in 2013. However, at the same time the quantity of smuggled tobacco products increased dramatically in 2014, over 400%. It should be noted that the quantity of seized cigarettes during the first eight months of 2014 significantly exceeds the total seized quantity during the full year of 2013.

Most seizures during *OLVIA* consisted of large quantities and almost 70% of them exceeded 10,000 pieces. This amount was considered a large quantity among the findings of the JBCO *OVIDIUS*, where only three cases larger than 10,000 pieces were reported. The CBSAR observations indicate that seized quantities have increased, which coincides with the *OLVIA* findings. In addition, the overall large seized quantities beyond the BCPs and predominantly at the central segment are well in line with CBSAR.

#### 4.6 Smuggling of arms, explosives and nuclear material

Four seizures of weapons and/or ammunition, all in Ukraine, were reported. A Moldovan citizen entering Ukraine stated, during verbal questioning, that he had a hunting knife, which was found in the back pocket of the front passenger seat. The Moldovan citizen had failed to comply with the Customs Code of Ukraine, when choosing the green corridor instead of the red, as required when travelling with a weapon. Another similar case resulted in the seizure of a stun gun and 55 cartridges of rubber bullets, where the offender admitted to possessing a weapon, but had chosen the green corridor. During the border check of a minibus at the Ukrainian border, an electro shocker was found hidden in the

personal belongings of a passenger travelling from Moldova to Russia, and it was seized. During the inspection of a car, one ammunition cartridge was found near the driver's seat.

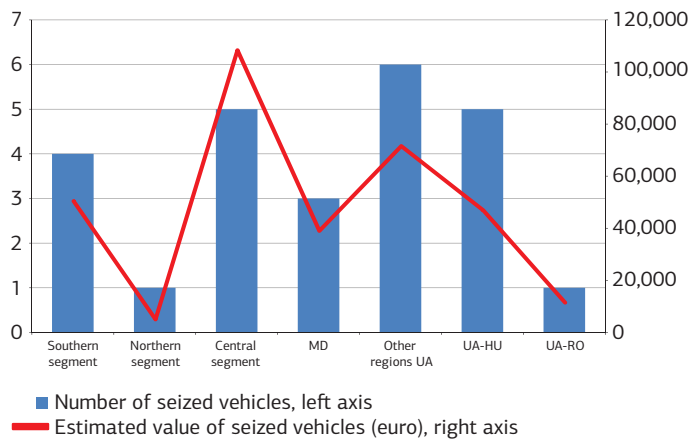
The majority of the seizures are still related to traumatic (pneumatic, electric-shock), gas and hunting weapons, mostly due to the lack of awareness among the general public of the rules governing movement of such items across the border or in the border area. In this respect the *OLVIA* findings fit well with the trends observed in CBSAR. The location of the *OLVIA* seizures, mainly at the BCPs within the southern segment, also corresponds with CBSAR.

#### 4.7 Motor vehicles crime, illegal introduction of vehicles by false documentation

Within the *OLVIA* operational phases, 27 vehicle-related offenses were reported. A majority of the cases were detected inland following intelligence information. The second phase of *OLVIA* was dedicated to combating motor vehicle crimes and illegal introduction of vehicles by false documentation. Within this phase, 118 vehicles were checked via CENcomm2 in the relevant databases with the support of international organizations and LEAs from neighbouring countries. The basic reasons for seizures are: inconsistency of VIN number and documents; forged power of attorney (PoA) and technical passport; stolen vehicles and exceeding the established legal terms of import/export and transit.

Altogether, 25 means of transport were seized, amounting to an estimated value of 332,653 euro. The use of forged/false documents (e.g. PoA) and/or VIN was established in 60% of the reported incidents and 32% were stolen vehicles. In the remaining two cases one vehicle had exceeded its term of temporary importation and the other vehicle was detained in relation to customs violations. The stolen vehicles were typically expensive models of BMW, Audi and Mercedes between 5 and 7 years old, while the vehicles with forged documents or VIN were low to medium price models between 10 and 20 years old. The vehicle seized due to customs violations (the central segment) was a trailer (long trailer/truck) and explains almost one third of the total estimated value.

Chart 8 Number of seized vehicles and estimated value (euro), by location



As displayed in the chart many seizures took place outside the *OLVIA* target area. Counting only the seizures related to the Moldovan-Ukrainian border 13 vehicles were seized, evenly divided between seizures at the BCPs and beyond the BCPs. This constitutes a decrease compared with 19 vehicles seized during *OVIDIUS* and a shift towards more seizures taking place beyond the BCPs. Furthermore, within *OLVIA* fewer vehicles were seized due to forged documents, PoA and VIN modifications, and more due to vehicles reported as stolen, compared with *OVIDIUS*. It follows the trends monitored in CBSARs 2014, stating that a significant decrease was noticed for the first half of 2014 and only 77 vehicles were seized compared with 184 seized vehicles during the same period in 2013 (-58%). The decreasing trend of illegal movement of vehicles with forged PoA continued in July and August 2014.

#### 4.8 Tackling of Intellectual Property Rights Infringements

During the first phase, two cases of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) infringements were detected. Officers of the Moldovan police inspected a private vehicle and found 218,400 counterfeited batteries. The batteries were transported from Odessa, Ukraine and destined for the Moldovan market. In addition, the Moldovan police found goods with the signs of violation of IPR and trade mark upon inspection of a warehouse belonging to the company Luxolvin stil. Furthermore, EUBAM submitted pre-arrival information received from the anti-smuggling team of the Brussels airport on the suspicious DHL courier shipments from China and Hong Kong to Chisinau via Kiev. Physical checks of the parcels were requested targeting possible IPR infringements.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE OPERATION

### 5.1 Strengthening border and customs control to prevent and combat cross-border crimes

In order to achieve this objective, *OLVIA* followed a strategy using risk analysis more than previously. The strategy included, for example, more targeted enforcement actions at the border or inland locations, focused on certain categories of offenses and on specific locations within the established time frames. Alongside with fast access to EU law enforcement databases, this proved to be effective in coordinating resources for preventing cross border crimes.

Similarly to last year's JBCO, EUBAM customs and border guard experts were deployed at the Odessa and Chisinau airports, as well as at the Odessa and Illichevsk sea ports, in order to support partner services in strengthening border and customs control. In the specific context of the Odessa and Chisinau airports, EUBAM experts had an opportunity to share experiences on risk indicators and modi operandi regarding irregular migration and THB. The EUBAM experts also helped UASBGS to establish a procedure for access to the European databases required for the verification of forged or falsified travel documents.

The current crisis in Ukraine raises serious security concerns. It has led to reinforced border and customs controls at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and increased security measures by UASBGS, especially at the Transnistrian segment. In the summer of 2014, UASBGS increased second-line checks of male citizens of Russia between the ages of 18-60 and introduced more thorough examination of vehicles at the Transnistrian segment, thereby strengthening its measures in preventing and combating cross-border crime.

The efforts and resource mobilization of the partner services during *OLVIA* undoubtedly resulted in improved border and customs controls.

### 5.2 Enhancing intra-service, inter-agency and international cooperation

To align the experience and knowledge of the partner services with those of the leading EU LEAs and other international organizations is essential for future successes in preventing and fighting cross-border crimes. The JBCO offered a good opportunity for the Ukrainian and Moldovan LEAs to develop their own routines for inter-agency and international cooperation. EUBAM has devoted considerable efforts to ensure international participation in the organized JBCOs, establishing a pool of regular key international

stakeholders such as SELEC, Frontex, Europol and Interpol.

SELEC, as well as the border and customs authorities from EU Member States (Romania, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic), supported the operation either within the composition of OCU or via NCPs. The Romanian border police provided information in 11 cases, the Slovak customs and border police in 12 and the Hungarian customs in 7. The support of the Polish customs and border guards to the JBCO should be particularly mentioned as they provided information on 28 occasions.

Concurrently with *OLVIA*'s first phase, EUBAM supported UASBGS and UAMoIA in the exchange of information within the SELEC Operation HIT. It focused on the illegal introduction of vehicles, which could have international implications connected to the EU and SELEC Member States. During the third phase of *OLVIA*, EUBAM and Frontex experts were deployed at the Chisinau airport. The Frontex Project Coordination Points 2014 ran simultaneously with two of *OLVIA*'s operational phases. The deployment of EU experts at the BCPs Criva, Tudora and Kuchurhan additionally expanded the possibility of the partners to align their practices with an EU border agency.

Enhanced intra-service and inter-agency cooperation were demonstrated in the work of OCU and TFTs, which combined the efforts of experts from different agencies in performing joint tasks on border or customs control. The participating OCU members were selected based on various sets of expertise adjusted to the needs of the particular phases of the operation. This tailored approach proved successful in reaching the objectives of the JBCO and should be recommended for future endeavours.

Well established international cooperation is a key factor and the openness of the participating countries, their willingness to share information, knowledge and experience demonstrated improvement in cooperation.

### **5.3 Gathering, processing and analysing the information on new modi operandi, schemes and trends, as well as organized criminal groups**

The *OLVIA* results are in line with the observed cross-border crime trends in the region. Furthermore, no dramatic changes in general pattern and modi operandi of illegal border activity were observed. However, a few cases are worth highlighting as examples of new modi operandi or developments of existing ones.

The risk of trafficking in human beings from the Middle Eastern countries to the EU using Turkey and Ukraine as transit countries is constantly growing, as a result of the ongoing conflicts in the area. The modi operandi discovered during *OLVIA*, where migrants hid in trucks travelling by ferry from Turkey to Ukraine, has been observed in two similar cases reported from the Illichevsk sea port during the last few months.

Large quantities of alcohol products and ethanol were seized within *OLVIA*, which is in line with the trends observed in CBSAR during the first eight months of 2014, but constitutes an increase compared with the previous years. Many seizures took place in warehouses, storage facilities or in larger vehicle consignments.

According to CBSAR, a common method for the illegal transport of cigarettes is smuggling of small quantities (3-5 boxes) to Ukraine beyond the BCPs. The cigarettes are then stockpiled in storage facilities in the border area, awaiting further distribution. It is possible that the observed shift in characteristics of the seizures during *OLVIA*, i.e. fewer seizures but larger quantities, just reinforces the trend described above.

The number of seized vehicles due to forged PoAs/VIN decreased within *OLVIA*, a trend which was also observed in CBSARs 2014. However, the risk of vehicle-related crimes due to forged PoAs/VIN still remains high, due to high customs duties on imported vehicles.

### **5.4 Promoting the development and use of IT systems for the exchange and enrichment of operational information**

The exchange of information during the implementation of all *OLVIA* phases was carried out through the WCO communication system CENcomm2. In general, the quality of the messages sent via CENcomm2 was considered good. The system proved to be a unique and effective tool for communication between the participants, who found CENcomm2 to be very useful and user friendly. This is the fifth JBCO where the partner services use the CENcomm2 system and they are well aware of its functionality, hence partner services should not have any problems in the future to continue using it.



### 5.5 Facilitating and conducting joint investigative actions with the support of international organizations/agencies

OLVIA provided opportunities for the exchange of investigative leads and actionable intelligence between participants, to be explored at a later stage within the framework of EUBAM WGs and TFs. The sheer volume of exchanged information shows further possibilities for developing joint operative investigations.

During OLVIA, several cases of information exchange between international and inter-agency actors were noted. Upon request from SSUA in the Zakarpatye region, MDBP provided information about a Moldovan citizen involved in organizing the irregular migration of 9 Afghans. Furthermore, as a result of information exchange between the Polish Border Guard and MDBP, two cases were initiated against an international organized crime group specializing in irregular migration of Syrian citizens via Ukraine and Moldova to the EU. Further developments of exchange of information, as well as more comprehensive checks will take place within the EUBAM WG I.

MDBP identified a criminal group involved in illicit trafficking of the psychotropic substance Subutex from France to Moldova. Using the information exchange procedures established for OLVIA, MDBP requested EUBAM's support in the investigation, as well as in establishing cooperation with the LEAs in France. Findings led to closer cooperation and exchange of information between Moldova and France, enabled through EUBAM's support.

The South Customs of UASFS requested the assistance of EUBAM in contacting the Customs Service of the Republic of Serbia, in order to receive information about a transit of diesel fuel via a Ukrainian sea port to Serbia. As a result of the inquiry, discrepancies were identified in the shipping documents, which led to the South Customs initiating an investigation. In this case, it was crucial for further investigative actions of the South Customs to obtain a quick response about potential customs fraud from another international agency, which was possible through EUBAM's facilitation.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past eight years EUBAM and its Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services have jointly conducted twelve JBCOs. The supporting role of EUBAM covering all different aspects of the operations has been instrumental for their successful implementation. The partner services have gradually developed knowledge and expertise in conducting the operations, and have taken on more and more responsibility.

This year JBCO OLVIA addressed border control concerns ranging from irregular migration to smuggling and to violation of intellectual property rights. OLVIA proved that a multi-targeted operation, which concentrates its efforts on tackling clearly specified threats at identified hot spots, based on solid risk analysis within thoroughly selected time frames, is effective and has a positive impact on border security.

The outcome of OLVIA confirmed general observations of the operational situation and *modi operandi* at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. Indirect access for the partner services to the EU law enforcement databases proved to be a significant factor for the overall success of the operation. Remarkable progress was visible with regard to threats identification and exchange of actionable intelligence, in itself proving a high level of border police/guard and customs cooperation. As a consequence, several investigative leads will be further evaluated at a later stage within the framework of the existing EUBAM WGs and TFs.

Beyond its operational successes, OLVIA offered an opportunity to improve control practices at border and inland locations and to increase cooperation between the Ukrainian and Moldovan LEAs, as well as between the partner services and the international participants. Participation and support of a wide range of international stakeholders demonstrates the recognition of the partner services' efforts to manage border related risks. The international stakeholders also expressed willingness to enhance cooperation and information exchange. Obviously, the interaction with the Ukrainian and Moldovan LEAs within the JBCOs provides the participating international stakeholders with a great opportunity to obtain operational information for their own use.

In all, OLVIA was characterized by a significant progress towards sustainability in inter-agency and international cooperation, among other things manifested by the increased number of interactions among the participants and intelligence information exchanged within the operation. OLVIA proved that

knowledge, experience and skills in implementing the JBCOs have been successfully transferred to the Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services, enabling them to initiate, plan and perform future international operations.

Following the results achieved in the recent years' JBCOs, it is time to move towards further empowerment of the Moldovan and Ukrainian partner services. In the future, these joint operations should increasingly be defined and managed by the partner services themselves. To start with, it is recommended that the Ukrainian and Moldovan partner services take over full responsibility for the operational plan of the next JBCO, as well as for hosting the operational coordination unit within their premises. EUBAM will take on the role of an observer, guiding the partner services on the road to self-sufficiency, a crucial task in itself. This will ensure continued proper functionality, smooth transition and sustainability, all essential prerequisites in order to maintain and further develop the achieved levels of the JBCOs.

***EUBAM Operational Support Section  
Odessa, 20 October 2014***



## Annex 1

### Moldova

- Customs Service
- Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Bureau for Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Centre for Combating Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- International Police Cooperation Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Intelligence and Security Service

### Ukraine

- State Fiscal Service
- State Border Guard Service
- Criminal Investigation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Department on Combatting Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
- State Migration Service
- National Central Bureau of Interpol

### EU Member States' law enforcement agencies and international organizations/agencies

- Polish Customs Service
- Border Guard Service of the Republic of Poland
- Financial Administration of the Slovak Republic
- Bureau of the Border and Alien Police of the Presidium of the Police Force of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
- Romanian Border Police
- National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary
- National Police of Hungary
- EUBAM
- EUROPOL
- FRONTEX
- Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC)

## Annex 2

Table 1 Number of the exchanged messages divided by type of message and phase

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Total
Seizure	67	17	17	36	137
Feedback	71	23	99	46	239
Warning	64	28	36	26	154
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>530</b>

Table 2 Warning and seizure messages by operational target

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		All phases	
	Warning	Seizure	Warning	Seizure	Warning	Seizure	Warning	Seizure	Warning	Seizure
Irregular migration	2	2	0	0	32	12	1	0	35	14
Customs violations	17	25	2	3	1	2	7	21	27	51
Drugs	2	8	1	0	1	0	1	8	5	16
Cigarettes	4	11	0	3	0	1	10	6	14	21
Weapons	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	8
Vehicles	27	14	25	9	2	2	4	1	58	26
IPR	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	1
Other	5						2		7	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>137</b>

Table 3 Exchanged messages comparison OLVIA and OVIDIUS

	OLVIA	OVIDIUS
Warning messages	154	145
Feedback messages	239	182
Seizure messages	137	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>454</b>
Seizures	128	116

Table 4 Seizures and value (euro) by target

	Seizures	Value (euro)
Irregular migration	13	-
Customs violations	49	360,355
Drugs	16	-
Cigarettes	19	525,517
Weapons	4	-
Vehicles	25	332,653
IPR	2	12,577
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>1,231,102</b>



Chart 1 Warning messages by participant

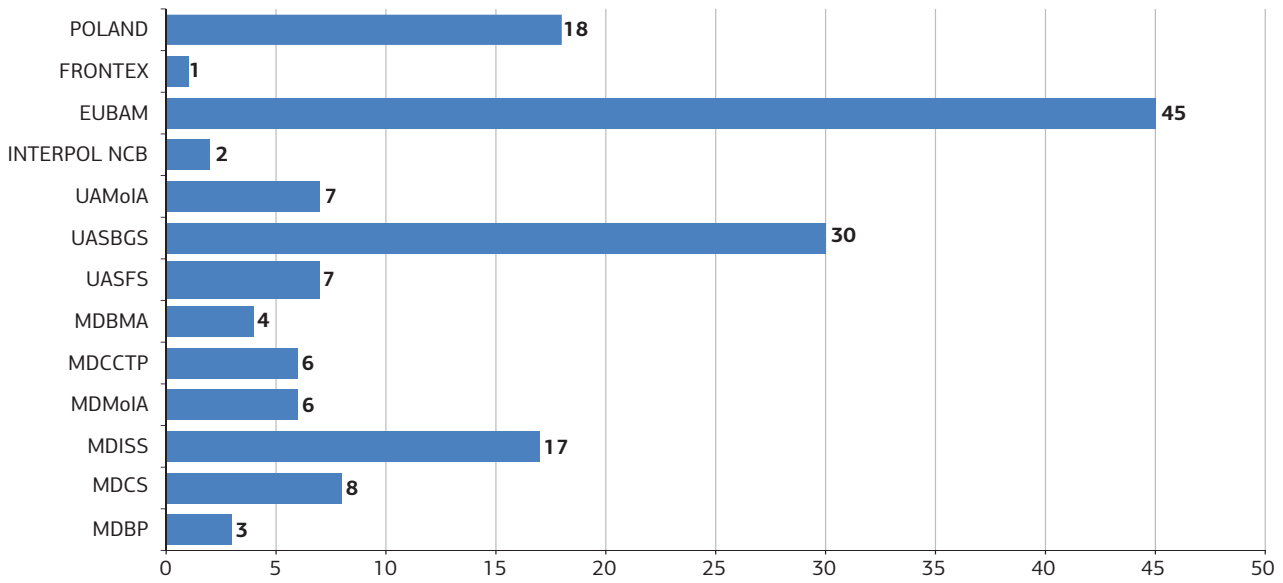


Chart 2 Feedback messages by participant

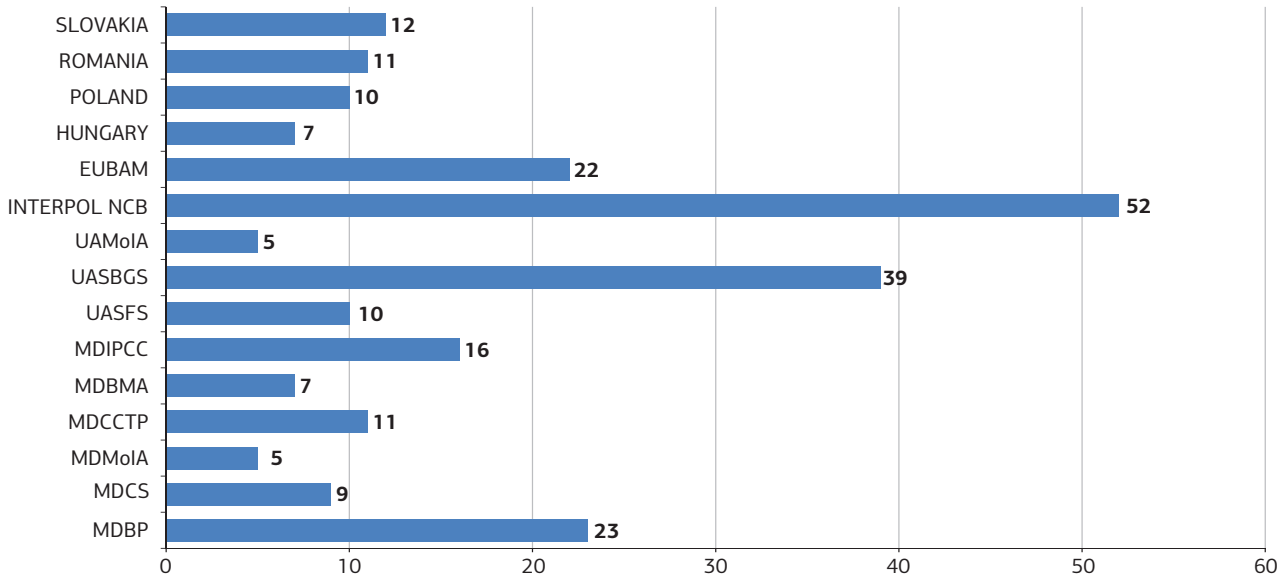


Chart 3 Seizure messages by participant

