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- SLOVENIA : report on Sea Borders

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EXTRACT FROM REPORT

from : the Evaluation Committee Sea Borders
to : the Schengen Evaluation Working Party
Subject : Schengen evaluation of the new Member States
- SLOVENIA : report on Sea Borders

Management summary

The Committee visited two ports in Slovenia, the port of Koper and the port of Piran. The port of Koper has only one weekly ferry connection with Croatia during the summer season and periodical RoRo connections with ports in Albania (Durrës) and Serbia and Montenegro. The Koper Maritime Police station is the only authority competent to carry out border control for the sea border.

The threat of illegal immigration via the Slovenian maritime border has been low over recent years and this situation seems to be stable. The Committee underlines, however, the need to continue closely monitoring this situation since the migratory pressure can easily change, especially if new ferry connections would be established. The future abolition of internal border controls could also negatively influence this situation. Furthermore, the fact that the land borders are confronted with a migratory pressure, underlines the need to closely monitor the situation at the ports and the blue borders and calls for efficient border surveillance and border checks.

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The port of Koper has no terminal to handle and control passengers. This situation is explained by the absence of regular ferry connections and the low number of cruise ships. New border check facilities will, however, be constructed for the handling of RoRo ships. The works, which are expected to be ready by the end of 2006, foresee the construction of two booths for border checks as well as a building for the border police.

The current infrastructure does not comply with the Schengen standards and it would be necessary that the SCH-EVAL Working Party is regularly informed on the progress with regard to the construction of the check point and the final result. Only at that moment a complete evaluation can be made in terms of infrastructure and equipment. The equipment currently available is also expected to be upgraded under the Schengen facility. Furthermore, the Committee would also recommend to moor cruise ships at this terminal, which seems not to be planned at the moment.

The blue border surveillance is based on one coastal radar sensor complemented by patrolling by boats, cars with thermal vision cameras as well as regular information exchanges (between the different authorities and with local people). This surveillance system is considered as sufficient taking into account that it will be further enlarged by combining the Police radar with the radar of the Maritime Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (MARS) which will be built in the Koper cargo port as well as by the purchase of another boat. The stationary radar currently only covers the area with Croatia and a part of the borders with Italy. This deficiency will be solved by linking the two radars and the Police will also get access to the AIS system. The Safe Sea Net, an information system for the exchange of data on vessels positioned in the internal waters, in the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone, will be built by the MARS and is expected to be ready by December 2007. This system will also provide data to the Police and in this way, complement the surveillance of the blue borders.

The number of personnel in the ports of Koper and Piran is considered as limited, taking into account the volume and type of traffic. The current number of officers (53 in total) is expected to increase to 71 by mid 2007. This increase could solve the high workload the officers are currently experiencing during the Summer season. The Committee supports the increase in the number of personnel and suggests the Slovenian authorities report to SCH-EVAL when this increase is carried out.

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The training of personnel is a crucial element in preparing a State to comply with the Schengen standards. Slovenia has already started this training and will continue doing so under two Twinning light projects. In general, the Committee noted that various officers were already well acquainted with the Schengen acquis.

The border control procedures comply with the Schengen standards although the absence of a terminal does not facilitate the way border checks are carried out.

4. REPORT ON THE PORT OF KOPER

4.2. Infrastructure and equipment

Comments and recommendations of the Evaluation Committee:

At the moment of the visit, the infrastructure for border checks at the port of Koper does not live up to the Schengen standards. There are no booths for border checks, no signposting, no separation of flows nor any lanes for checks. The Committee was told that there is no need for this kind of infrastructure because of the frequency and the type of the traffic. According to existing plans on developing the port facilities and estimates of increasing passenger traffic, the existing infrastructure is at the moment not sufficient. The Committee notes that there are plans to develop this infrastructure in the new RoRo terminal in the port of Koper whereby two booths will be constructed. The Committee invites the Slovenian authorities to keep the Schengen Evaluation Working Party updated on the progress in these works and the final result.

The Committee considers the equipment as sufficient taking into account the current traffic and low migratory pressure. It, however, recommends that more first line equipment such as UV lamps and document examination suitcases as well as a microscope for the second line check should be purchased for the port of Koper.

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General Comments and recommendations of the Evaluation Committee:

In general, the experts are satisfied with the application of the procedures. However, the procedure for the following points should be modified:

With regard to EU citizens figuring on passenger list, they should not be submitted to systematic administrative checks against the national (and future SIS) data bases.

The Committee also noted that crew and passenger lists are not directly sent to the Police, but to the MARS. However, the Schengen Borders Code sets out that these lists should be sent directly to the Police. This practice should, in this respect, be reconsidered.

Comment from Slovenia

Border checks on cruise ships will be carried out in compliance with the Schengen Borders Code. So the ships which are considered to pose risk and on which border checks need to be carried out will land at the RO/RO terminal where by the end of the year 2006 a new border crossing point will be built. However, ships which are considered to pose no risk will land at the first pier of the port of Koper.

6. BORDER SURVEILLANCE

Comments and recommendations of the Evaluation Committee:

The Committee considers that the blue border surveillance is carried out in accordance with the Schengen standards, taking into consideration the short length of the coast (46,6 km) and the low threat assessment.

It underlines, however, that the narrowness of the bay of Piran puts special demands on the border surveillance and the capacity of interception. The Committee therefore recommends that one boat should constantly be kept in the port of Piran or at sea for rapid reaction. It also recommends that the intervention time for crews not on duty should never exceed half an hour.

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The Committee points out that the border surveillance in the Adriatic Sea could be improved by setting up a coordination centre for all countries involved.

The fact that the maritime border between Slovenia and Croatia has not been agreed influences the way blue border surveillance is carried out. Even though Croatia is most likely to join the EU within a few years the Committee would like to encourage Slovenia to make any efforts available in order to reach a border agreement with Croatia.

7. STAFF AND TRAINING

Comments and recommendations of the Evaluation Committee:

The number of personnel is considered as limited, especially in the Summer season. The number (53) is expected to increase to 71 by mid 2007 which will solve the heavy workload the Police currently faces in the Summer Season.

The training for police officers is considered to be of a satisfactory level. The provisions of Schengen manuals, catalogues etc. are taken into account in the preparation of the Schengen training Strategy. The Committee points out that in the light of the Twinning light projects further training is foreseen. The language skills of the police officers are also considered as satisfactory.

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9. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

The Committee is of the opinion that the ports of Koper and Piran fulfil the Schengen standards with regard to the number of personnel, the training, the border control procedures, risk analysis and equipment. The infrastructure does, however, not live up to the Schengen standards in the port of Koper. The Committee notes that a new terminal will be built and recommends that the Schengen Evaluation Working Party will be kept informed on the progress of the works and the final result. It is expected that this new infrastructure will be ready by the end of 2006 or the beginning of 2007. Only at that moment, a correct evaluation can be made of the infrastructure. Controls are currently carried out on board the vessels or on shore which has clearly some disadvantages e.g. in case of bad weather conditions, or when the officer wants to consult the national database.

The blue border surveillance is performed by radar surveillance of which the coverage will be extended by linking it to a new additional radar so that it will cover the entire Slovenian coast. The Committee notes that this surveillance is correctly carried out but is faced with one difficulty i.e. the fact that the maritime border between Slovenia and Croatia is not agreed yet.

The Committee is aware of the current low migratory pressure but underlines the need to closely monitor this situation. The narrowness of the Bay of Piran put special demands on border surveillance and the interception capacity.

Finally, it recommends the following;

- to inform SCH-EVAL on the increase of personnel which is expected to be completed in 2007, as well as on the progress realised in the construction of the new facilities for border control in the RoRo terminal,
- to purchase more equipment for first line control,
- to keep one Police boat in the port of Piran,
- to limit the intervention time for the blue border surveillance to a maximum of half an hour,
- to send crew and passenger lists directly to the Police.