

BULLETIN
No. 669 - October the 29th, 2006

On Monday, the 30th of October 2006, 16.45 hrs, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Administration and Interior (1A Piata Revolutiei, District 1, Bucharest), there will take place the signing ceremony for the “***Common Declaration on the co-operation between the Ministry of Administration and Interior of Romania and the Ministry of Interior of the Baden-Württemberg Land***”.

The document will be signed, on behalf of the Romanian party, by Alexandru Mircea - secretary of state of M.A.I., and on behalf of the German party, by Heribert Rech - Minister of Interior of the Baden-Württemberg from the Federal Republic of Germany.

This juridical instrument provides the legal framework for some concrete measures of co-operation between the two parties, especially in the areas of police and protection against catastrophes and fires.

During the official talks, the two officials will put forth a series of proposals related to the issues of improving the operational co-operation, setting some contacts and direct communication relations, as well as related to some joint actions of initial and continuous training.

BULLETIN
No. 665, October the 26th, 2006

Minister Vasile Blaga will require the removing of the visas for Israel

Today, the Minister of Administration and Interior, Vasile Blaga, started an official visit in Israel, upon the invitation of his counterpart, the Minister of Public Security, Avi Dicter.

The dialogue between the two ministers Vasile Blaga and Avi Dicter will mainly focus on the issue of countering organised crime, with a special focus on combating the trafficking in drugs and human beings.

The two ministers will sign a “***Common declaration***”, aimed at increasing the existing co-operation between Romania and Israel in the field of security and public order insurance.

At the same time, Minister Vasile Blaga will meet with the Israeli Home Affairs Minister, Roni Bar-On, as well as with other high representatives of the Israeli state administration.

In the context of the official talks held, Minister Vasile Blaga will also approach the issue of ***removing the visas for the Romanian citizens travelling in Israel***.

Based on an agreement concluded last year, the Romanian citizens who own simple passports are required to get visas for travelling in Israel, while the Israeli citizens with simple passports are exempted from the requirement of getting visas for Romania for short stays (when travelling up to 90 days), as well as for long stays in Romania, for trade-related purposes.

Minister Vasile Blaga will require his partners to support the amendment of this agreement in the Israeli Government, in view of harmonizing the Romanian citizens’ travel regime with obtaining the right to free-visa travelling in Israel.

This measure is required by the fact that, on the 1st of January 2007, Romania will get the status of a full member state of the European Union, the Ministry of Administration and Interior stated.

BULLETIN
No. 661, October the 24th, 2006

The Draft of the National Strategy on Romania’s joining the Schengen Territory has been approved today

The National Schengen Self-Evaluation Commission has reunited today at the Ministry of Administration and Interior in its first meeting, and approved the draft of the National Strategy regarding Romania's joining the Schengen Territory.

This document, which is going to be submitted to the Government's approval, sets the measures to be taken for Romania's joining the Schengen Territory, estimated to take place during 2010.

According to the draft strategy adopted, the achievement of the goal related to the removing of the border check at the internal frontiers and our country's joining to the Schengen territory imply the adoption and the implementation of the Schengen acquis, institutional building, the investment component, the acquisition of technical equipment, specialised equipment and systems, as well as the adequate training of the personnel involved in this undertaking.

The strategy draft put forth by MAI and approved by the members of the Commission gives details on the measures to be taken in each of these fields.

The Minister of Administration and Interior, Vasile Blaga, showed that the country needs 5 years of intensive preparations for achieving all the requirements, taking into consideration that these undertakings are complex. **"I believe that we set an optimistic deadline, but for attaining this goal we have to follow a strict roadmap"**, stated the Minister of Administration and Interior.

Minister Vasile Blaga insisted on the necessity of a perfect coordination between the institutions involved in the process of Romania's preparing for joining the Schengen territory, for an effective development of this process and for achieving maximum performance with minimal expenses.

The preparation made in view of Romania's joining the Schengen territory will mainly be financed by European funds, as our country is going to be the beneficiary of approximately 560 million euros – the "Schengen Facility".

During the same reunion, the National Commission approved the Integrated Strategy for training the personnel of the institutions and units involved in the process of Romania's joining to the Schengen territory. **"We will have to manage high-tech equipment and we need professionals"**, said Vasile Blaga, underlining the fact that the appropriate professional training of the personnel is essential for the success of this process.

The National Schengen Self-Evaluation Commission, chaired by the Minister of Administration and Interior, gathers representatives of the following institutions: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the European Accession, the Public Minister, the Ministry for Transportation, Construction and Tourism, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Secretariat General of the Government, the National Customs Authority, the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Special Telecommunications Service, the National Authority for Communications Regulation.

Context information

By the Agreement signed in 1985, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands decided to gradually remove the common border check and to introduce free movement for all the citizens of the signatory member states, other member states or some third countries.

The Schengen Convention was signed by the same five countries in 1990. This Convention provides the measures and guarantees necessary to the enforcement of the free movement. Gradually, also became signatory countries the following states: Italy (1990), Spain and Portugal (1991), Greece (1992), Austria (1995), Sweden, Finland and Denmark (1996), Island and Norway. The Switzerland joined the Schengen Territory in 2004.

The central and east European countries which joined the European Union in 2004 are not members of the Schengen territory yet. Their joining to the Schengen area, scheduled to take place in October 2006, was postponed and is estimated to take place not until 2009.

The stages of Romania's accession to the Schengen territory are as follows: transmitting a Preparing Declaration and putting forth a date for starting the evaluation process, filling in an enlarged questionnaire comprising detailed questions on the relevant aspects, which is going to be analyzed by the European Union Council, and after that, starting a series of evaluation visits; the final decision will be made based on the result of these visits.

1,160 INTERNATIONALLY WANTED PERSONS - TRACKED BY THE MEANS OF THE NATIONAL INTERPOL BUREAU (NIB)

During the 9 months of the year 2005, by the means of the National Interpol Bureau – the specialized structure of the International Police Co-operation Centre of M.A.I. – 1,600 internationally wanted persons (Romanian and foreign citizens) are currently being tracked, which means approximately **41 percent more** as compared to the similar period of 2005.

Two of the cases of great impact solved by this means are related to the German citizens named Magin Georg and Schmidt Matthias, accused by the German authorities for having committed banking frauds (286,000 euros) and grand larceny (2.1 million euros). The two people were taken in custody by the Romanian policemen and handed over to the responsible authorities in view of their extradition.

During the same period, the N.I.B. workers also accomplished the extradition to Romania of a number of **233 persons**, as the judiciary had issued on their names writs of execution of prison sentences for having committed different crimes in Romania. Compared to the first 9 months of 2005, in this regard a **30 percent increase** has been recorded, which confirms the NIB workers' professionalism.

The countries which the extradited persons were taken over from are the following ones: Italy (86), Spain (48), Germany (21), Hungary (22), Austria (11) etc.

In addition to the persons mentioned above, there are more **334** persons who, based on the informative materials transmitted by the Romanian authorities, were tracked and caught abroad, in view of being extradited to Romania.

There were also transferred, in view of carrying on serving their prison sentences in our country, **87 Romanian citizens**, who committed various crimes abroad, which means a **59 percent** increase compared to the first 9 months of 2005.

Over the same period of time, the N.I.B. workers carried out the extradition and transfer, respectively, from Romania to other states for **36 foreign citizens**.

The activity of the National Interpol Bureau – Romania has been highly appreciated by the Secretariat General of O.I.P.C. – Interpol and by other international authorities, Romania being regarded as a reliable partner in fighting the transnational organized crime.

**The intelligence received and solved at the level of the National Focal Point led to the dismantling of some transnational criminal networks.*

One of the National Focal Point's main concerns is improving the time of response and answer to the applications submitted by the Romanian and foreign law enforcement agencies. The operational message exchange and the immediate check of the data regarding the offenders/ suspects of having committed crimes abroad led to the dismantling of some organized criminal groups which acted in other European states.

From January to September 2006, over **3,000 assistance applications were solved** by the means of N.F.P., this representing a **20 percent increase** as compared to the similar period of 2005. Out of the 3,027 requests solved, most of them came from the Romanian liaison officers and internal attachés accredited abroad – 1,079 and from the foreign liaison officers and the internal attachés accredited to Romania – 560.

Due to this operational message exchange, important criminals involved in trafficking in human beings, robbery etc. abroad were retained.

For example, one of the cases recorded in Italy, solved due to the good co-operation between the Romanian and Italian law enforcement authorities, with the help of the National Focal Point, is the following one.

The operation was called "Papusha" and was aimed at dismantling a criminal group consisting in Italian, Albanian and Romanian citizens, involved in crimes related to sequester of persons, trafficking in human beings and procurement. This action implied the identification and surveillance of over 90 persons (traffickers and victims), based on a permanent data and intelligence exchange.

The investigations revealed that the group was headed by Cristina M., who used to contact young women from Iasi County and from Rome, guiding them to prostitute themselves. The beneficiary of the income resulted from the

young women's sexual exploitation was Cristina's husband, and the whole group (including another 5 Romanians) co-operated with the administrators of some hotels from Rome, who provided the "logistics". The young women had to give all the money they got to a member of the group, being forced to prostitute themselves until they reached 500 euros, permanently being threatened.

In Romania, the specific activities were finalized with the arresting of 8 network members, among whom the "head" of the group, Cristina M.

The two operations in Italy and Romania were possible due to a consistent, comprehensive and effective co-operation between the authorities, by the means of the National Focal Point and the Romanian home affairs attachés accredited to Rome.

**MAI plays an active part in the process of rendering the National Europol Unit operational.*

"The National Europol Unit is capable to access all the information necessary to accomplish the EUROPOL tasks".

This is the conclusion reached by the European Union's experts regarding the technical endowment of the National Europol Unit within the International Police Co-operation Centre (I.P.C.C.) of M.A.I., included in the final evaluation of the Institutional Twinning Project, developed at the level of this institution.

The setting up and the enlargement of the National Europol Unit (N.E.U.) represented one of the main goals aimed by the Ministry of Administration and Interior this year, in view of accomplishing the commitments in this field by January the 1st, 2007 – the date of Romania's accession to the European Union.

To this end, the Europol police co-operation was institutionalized at national level and the process of the national legislation harmonization with the European legislation was finalized; also, the specific actions within the Europol Enlargement Project II continued so that on January the 1st, Romania could be able to actively co-operate - by the means of the National Europol Unit of MAI - with the other EUROPOL members.

All these undertakings significantly raised the level of the co-operation between N.E.U. and Europol, the member states and the internal law enforcement units, improving the co-operation relations, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Thus, between January and September 2006, by the means of NEU, **1,698 operational messages** were exchanged, which represents an over 25 percent increase as compared to the same period of last year. At the same time, there were processed **815 assistance applications**, which represent a 30 percent increase as compared to 2005 (624 applications were submitted).

The analysis of the assistance applications submitted by Europol at the NEU, the member states and the internal law enforcement units are as follows:

- 116 applications related to falsifying the electronic pay devices (forged banking cards);
- 77 applications related to trafficking in drugs;
- 65 applications related to coin forgery (trafficking in forged euros)
- 43 applications related to illegal migration of persons;
- 24 applications related to swindle;
- 490 applications related to other types of crimes.

The check of the assistance applications by the Romanian/ foreign parties, and the prompt communication of the results obtained resulted in the dismantling of some important transnational criminal groups acting in Romania and in the EU member states.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The concept of "**institutional building**" at the level of the Ministry of Administration and Interior materialized in the setting up of the **International Police Co-operation Centre** – in 2005 – created as a unique platform of police co-operation, responsible for choosing the international channels in the field of intelligence exchange in the intelligence exchange field, in the context of the international police and judiciary co-operation.

In its organization structure, the Centre includes the National Focal Point (which contains the National Europol Unit) and the National Interpol Bureau, by the means of which the operational data and intelligence exchange is carried out.

As the international police co-operation channels unified in only one centre of monitoring the applications and operational intelligence which were received, processed and transmitted, considering the principle “one entry - one exit”, the response time was significantly reduced, so there were created the conditions necessary to carry out an effective intelligence, data and messages exchange in the field of preventing and countering trans-border crime.