International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Evaluation Report

Final Internal Evaluation of the project "Strengthening Surveillance and Bilateral Coordination Capacity along the Common Border between Belarus and Ukraine (SURCAP Phase II)"

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Contents

List of Acronyms

ABC	Automated Border Control
API	Advance Passenger Information
BCP	Border Crossing Point
CCP	Common Contact Point
EU	European Union
Frontex	European Union Border and Coast Guard Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IBM	Integrated border management
IOM	International Organization for Migration
SBC	State Border Committee (Republic of Belarus)
SBGS	State Border Guard Service (Ukraine)
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission

Executive Summary

In 2014-2017, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Migration Agency, implemented the "Strengthening Surveillance and Bilateral Coordination Capacity along the Common Border between Belarus and Ukraine" project (thereafter SURCAP II). The project was implemented in close partnership with the State Border Committee (SBC) of the Republic of Belarus and the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine.

IOM places utmost importance on the quality of its project interventions. As such, evaluation is an integral part of IOM's institutionalized project implementation cycle. Therefore, using an established evaluation framework, IOM conducted an internal evaluation of SURCAP II focusing on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and cross-cutting issues, as reflected in the project design and implementation.

The evaluation consisted of two phases. First, desk research was conducted to review all relevant project documents. Second, a field mission took place in Ukraine and Belarus on July 3-7, 2017 with the aim to visit the project sites and interview beneficiary government representatives. The present report summarizes the findings and observations.

Overall, the project was highly relevant, implemented in an effective and efficient manner, had an immediate, visible impact and interventions were, to a large degree, sustainable. In the future, cross-cutting issues, such as fundamental rights and gender, should be addressed in a more effective manner, as should be visibility.

The evaluator would like to thank the national counterparts in Belarus and Ukraine for their time and open discussions which have led to the identification and formulation of good practices and recommendations. Special thanks to the SBGS and SBS senior staff, Mr. Sergey Morozov and Mr. Taras Seredyuk, who have accompanied the evaluation mission in Ukraine and Belarus, respectively and to IOM colleagues, Ms. Yelizaveta Melnik and Mr. Andrei Zaitsev for having supported the evaluation all throughout.

Lívia Styp-Rekowska

Senior Regional Immigration and Border Management Specialist

IOM Regional Office for Southeastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Vienna

LStyprekowska@iom.int

1. Introduction

Ukraine and Belarus share a common border of approximately 1084 km, which necessitates close bilateral cooperation on border management and border security issues between the two countries. Programs implemented by IOM, including SURCAP II, contribute to and further develop this bilateral cooperation, focusing on strengthening border management strategic and legal frameworks in the two countries, institutional structure, standard operational procedures, human resources, information management and border management infrastructure and equipment. IOM advocates for the adoption of recognized standards and practices (European and international), while embracing the integrated border management (IBM) approach to managing borders.

Building on achievements of the previous phase (SURCAP I), the project "Strengthening Surveillance and Bilateral Coordination Capacity along the Common Border between Belarus and Ukraine" (thereafter SURCAP II) was implemented between March 22, 2014 and March 22, 2017 (including a non-cost extension). The **project objective** was to **contribute to the enhancement of security levels on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border**. The project also strived to improve international cooperation between the border services of the two beneficiary countries, as well as among all services present at the border (such as border guards and customs); assist beneficiary countries in applying the provisions of bilateral agreements on local border traffic; and help beneficiary countries increase legal trade and, as a consequence, legal revenue.[1]

The foreseen **outcome** of the project was for the **Belarusian and Ukrainian border services working at the central and western areas of the countries' joint frontier demonstrate greater efficiency and effectiveness in border control**.[2] The expected **outputs** were to be international and inter-service cooperation enhanced by applying IBM principles (1)[3]; security levels at the common borders strengthened through drafted technical specifications, procurement of surveillance equipment and user-training on surveillance equipment (2)[4]; and finally, residents of the border area, as well as *bona fide* travelers, duly informed about the exact location of the state borderline and legitimate places of crossing, the rules of staying within the 50km border zone, as well as border crossing regulations applied by the respective authorities of Belarus and Ukraine (3).[5]

The project was co-funded by the IOM Development Fund (IDF) and a separate project, aligned with SURCAP II objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities, was developed to complement the activities foreseen in SURCAP II. The **objective** of the IDF-funded project, "Strengthening the Security of the Belarus-Ukraine Border", was to **contribute to strengthening the security of the Belarus-Ukraine border**. The **outcome** of the IDF-funded project was **increased capacity, including in cross-border cooperation and coordination, information exchange and border surveillance, of the State Border Committee (SBC) of the Republic of Belarus and the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine.** The planned **outputs** were for border agencies of both countries to have the skills and venue to coordinate decisions pertaining to the management of the common border (1); border agencies of both countries to have the skills, knowledge and venue to effectively exchange information through a newly established Common Contact Point (CCP) (2); and border guards of Belarus and Ukraine to have

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[1] Project Proposal: "Strengthening Surveillance and Bilateral Coordination Capacity along the Common Border between Belarus and Ukraine" (SURCAP Phase II), p. 1
[2] Ibid, p. 5
[3] Ibid, p. 6
[4] Ibid, p. 7
[5] Ibid, p. 8

the means to effectively protect the common border through the donation of modern border surveillance equipment (3).[6]

Although consisting of two separate projects, the final evaluation examined the program as a whole due to the inter-dependency and complementarity of the project activities.

The evaluation was commissioned by IOM Belarus which served as the project's management site. The evaluation was closely coordinated with IOM Ukraine and relevant governmental stakeholders, namely the SBC of the Republic of Belarus and the SBGS of Ukraine. It was conducted by the Senior Regional Immigration and Border Management Specialist based in the IOM Regional Office in Vienna. In Ukraine, the evaluator was accompanied by IOM Ukraine project officer directly involved in the implementation of the project in Ukraine. In Belarus, the evaluator was accompanied by IOM project officer responsible for the overall management and coordination of the project, as well as a representative of the SBC of the Republic of Belarus. The evaluation aimed to complement the Results-Oriented Mission (ROM), led by Mr. Louis Blondiau, which took place on May 16-24, 2016 and was commissioned by EU Delegation to Belarus.

The present evaluation report consists of eight sections, including Introduction (Section 1); Context, Purpose, Scope and Criteria of Evaluation (Section 2); Evaluation Framework and Methodology (Section 3); Findings (Section 4); Conclusions (Section 5); Good Practices (Section 6), Recommendations (Section 7); and Annexes (Section 8).

2. Context, Purpose, Scope and Criteria of Evaluation

IOM supports efforts of its Member States to ensure safe and orderly migration. A key component of well-managed migration is a well-developed border management framework, with policy and regulatory framework aligned with international norms, standards and practices; sound institutional and administrative structure; well-trained personnel; immigration procedures in place; effective and efficient migration data collection, management and analysis; and finally, adequate equipment and infrastructure.

In the context of Belarus and Ukraine, SURCAP II was designed as a response to increase in irregular migration through the Belarus-Ukraine border. Although not the external border of the EU, the Belarus-Ukraine border nevertheless has a direct effect on the security of the external EU border itself. This is due to the fact that the Belarus-Ukraine border is a popular transit route for irregular migrants *en route* from Asia (and, to a limited extent, Africa) to the EU.

The common, largely non-demarcated border passes through dense forests, rivers as well as the contaminated Chernobyl area. During the Soviet era, the Belarus-Ukraine border was considered an internal 'border' within the Soviet Union. As such, it required neither dedicated resources nor specific infrastructure. However, this change when the two countries gained independence, with the Ukraine-Belarus border now being an international frontier between two separate states. Maintaining adequate border security requires significant resources from both countries, as well as external stakeholders. According to interlocutors interviewed in the scope of this evaluation, SURCAP II (as did its predecessor SURCAP I) has substantially contributed to this effort.

The purpose of the evaluation exercise was to evaluate the project from the perspective of **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and cross-cutting issues** (see Annex 8.1. Evaluation

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[6] Project Proposal: "Strengthening the Security of the Belarus-Ukraine Border – Co-funding contribution to the EC project SURCAP II', p. 6-7

Terms of Reference). The objective was to assess whether the approaches and practical implementation modalities used to carry out SURCAP II project enabled IOM to effectively implement the project activities and attain its objectives. It also served to analyze if the project had the intended impact and if the results were sustainable upon the project's cessation. Finally, the evaluation aimed to identify good practices, lessons learnt and any remaining gaps, in order to incorporate or address these in potential future interventions, while taking into account the limitations of project stakeholders and the environment they operate in.[7]

The evaluation will be used primarily by IOM Belarus and IOM Ukraine but also the Regional Office in Vienna and IOM Headquarters to support organizational learning for projects implemented in the Eastern European region and beyond. The evaluation report, or parts thereof, will be shared with the donor, as well as the project counterparts.

The scope of the evaluation includes the entire project implementation period from 22 March 2014 to 22 March 2017. At the time of the evaluation mission, all project activities were completed and the CCP, based in Zhytomyr (Ukraine) and Pinsk (Belarus) respectively, was in the post-project pilot testing phase, thus providing a good opportunity to see some of the project deliverables in operation.

Due to time limitations, it was not possible to visit every project location to interview project beneficiaries and inspect donated equipment; however, the agenda of the evaluation missions was designed in a way as to provide a balanced view of the project from the central, regional and local perspective, thus combining visits to SBC and SBGS headquarters, as well as the CCP located at the premises of Border Detachment of the SBC in Pinsk (Belarus) and the Northern Regional Directorate in Zhytomyr (Ukraine), border crossing points (BCPs) and a number of border detachments including those located at the border frontline.

IOM Mission in Belarus has chosen five criteria to evaluate SURCAP II, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability[8], as listed below with sample questions for each category.

- **Relevance:** the extent to which the project's objective and intended results remained valid and pertinent either as originally planned as or subsequently modified.
    - o Were project activities and outputs consistent with the intended outcomes and objective?
    - o Was the project aligned with and supportive of national strategies?
- **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the project achieved its intended results
    - o Have the project outputs and outcomes been achieved in accordance with the stated plans?
    - o What was the quality of the results, services and/or products provided?
- **Efficiency**: how well human, physical and financial resources were used to undertake activities, and how well these resources were converted into outputs
    - o Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative means of implementation?
    - o Were the costs proportionate to the results?
- **Impact:** the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the project, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally
    - o Which positive/negative and intended/unintended effects were produced by the project?
    - o Did the impact come from the projects activities, from external factors or from both?
- **Sustainability:** the durability of the project's results or the continuation of the project's benefits once external support ceases

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[7] Annex 1: Terms of Reference, p. 1
[8] All definitions below are taken from IOM Project Handbook (2017), pp. 434-437

- o Will the benefits generated by the project continue once external support ceases?
- o Are project partners adequately capacitated (technically, financially and managerially) to continue to deliver the project's benefits/services?

For a complete list of the evaluation questions, please refer to the evaluation matrix (Annex 8.2.).

3. Evaluation Framework and Methodology

The evaluation followed a methodology established by the internal IOM evaluation framework[9], which is based on the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.

It was conducted in **two stages**. First, during **desk research**, available documents were reviewed, such as relevant national policies, strategies, regulatory documents, project proposals progress reports, training and networking visit reports, assessment reports, minutes of the Steering Committee and others (for a complete list of the documentation reviewed, please refer to Annex 8.4.). Review of the relevant documents allowed to properly frame the evaluation in the current policy, regulatory and operational framework. During this stage, the **evaluation matrix** (Annex 8.2.) and **interview guides** (Annex 8.3.) were designed to guide the meetings with project stakeholders.

Following the desk research, a field **evaluation mission** took place on July 3-7, 2017 and included meetings with governmental stakeholders at central, regional and local levels in Belarus and Ukraine; visits to project cites (such as the CCP); inspection of procured equipment; and meetings with IOM project staff in both countries (Annex 8.5. Agenda of the Evaluation Mission). A follow up meeting was also conducted with the International Centre for Migration Policy and Development (ICMPD) in Vienna, given their role as an implementing partner for the networking visits and training component of SURCAP II.

Overall, the evaluation is based mostly on **qualitative data** gathered from relevant documents and semi-structured interviews conducted during the field mission. Despite the time **limitations**, the evaluation team was able to interview key counterparts at the central level, senior management and operational staff from regional centers and personnel based at the BCPs in both Belarus and Ukraine. The team also visited and observed the operation of the CCP, including test calls from Ukraine to Belarus and vice versa. Operational reports submitted through the CCP (periodic ones and those related to particular incidents) were also briefly reviewed, including the turnaround time of the information exchange. Finally, the team inspected some of the donated equipment (in Belarus only), most notably the patrolling boats. The only component not evaluated was equipment donated to Ukrainian counterparts due to limited time available for the field mission.

4. Findings

4.1. Relevance

In **Ukraine**, counterparts have unequivocally confirmed that the project has directly contributed to improving security on the Belarus-Ukraine border. This is so due to several reasons. First of all, through SURCAP II (and SURCAP I before then), the cooperation, coordination and communication between Ukraine and Belarus have intensified and tangibly improved; compared to a few years back, when only a limited number of meetings took place, the regular meeting schedule, joint trainings and joint networking visits under SURCAP II have facilitated the creation of close professional and personal

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[9] See IOM Project Handbook (2017), Module 6 – Evaluation.

relations at all levels. Second, the creation of the CCP has led to swift sharing of operational information, including large amounts of data, such as photos and videos, which in turn facilitated rapid reaction to border-related incidents. Third, donated equipment has significantly improved the capacities of border units to conduct border surveillance.

The project has also contributed to the implementation of the *National Integrated Border Management Concept* (particularly the international cooperation aspect thereof) and the *National Strategy for the Development of the State Border Guard Service* stipulating introduction of IBM standards and practices to improve surveillance of Ukrainian borders. Additionally, it has paved the way for the assignment of a Ukrainian border management liaison officer, to be stationed in Minsk as of 2018. Moreover, the project enabled both parties to see the potential of bilateral cooperation, such as conducting joint patrolling and joint controls in the future. Finally, it has deepened relations with neighboring countries and contributed to the debate on the future of IBM, mainly through the high-level event which took place in Lviv on 15 March 2017, of which both Belarus and Ukraine were highly appreciative and which they would like to see replicated in the future.

The Ukrainian stakeholders also had suggestions for follow up actions. For example, while the CCP has facilitated a more efficient exchange of information, they would like to see further improvements to the reporting template and tailor it further to sharing of operational (rather than statistical) information. Additionally, due to the difference between the status of Northern Regional Directorate in Zhytomyr (Ukraine), a regional directorate covering the entire Belarus-Ukraine border, and Pinsk (Belarus), covering only the section of the Belarus-Ukraine border falling under the Pinsk Directorate, the CCP still does not cover the entire common border on an equal basis from the two sides of the border; changes in the administrative and reporting structure on the Belarusian side would be needed to enable Pinsk cover the entire Belarus-Ukraine border from the Belarusian side, or additional CCPs would need to be established, for example in Gomel (Belarus), to supplement the current structure.

In **Belarus**, the government authorities also confirmed that the project directly contributed to improving security of the common border. For example, within weeks of installation of the surveillance equipment procured under the SURCAP II project, there was a visible decrease in irregular migration, as smugglers understood that "this was no longer a viable route." Second, the project significantly improved relations with the Ukrainian counterparts; before SURCAP projects, only *ad hoc* meetings were taking place, whereas now there was a strategic approach to the bilateral cooperation and a 1-2 year plan for bilateral actions. Third, they highlighted the contributions of the CCP to border management system at-large. In their view, it contributed to the implementation of IBM principles; demonstrated the workings of the integrated border management principles in practice and showed it to other border agencies, such as customs; and it was an excellent vehicle for international cooperation, previously done at high level only through diplomatic efforts. Finally, while there is no IBM strategy in place yet (apart from the *Concept of Border Security 2008-2017*), the cooperation with Ukraine, particularly the CCP, demonstrated how IBM can function in practice and hold important lessons learnt for strategic documents currently under development.

Overall, the project has achieved the intended objective, namely increased security at the Belarus-Ukraine border. Individual project components have directly or indirectly contributed to the implementation of relevant national policies, namely the IBM Concept in Ukraine and the Concept of Border Security in Belarus. The project has directly responded to the needs of the beneficiaries, who were very closely involved in and consulted about the activities, including procurement of particular equipment (e.g. type and design of the patrolling boats, taking into account the experience and lessons learnt from SURCAP I); jointly deciding on the theme of networking visits; and inviting particular experts whom they had previously met during such visit to deliver a particular training. Should there be bilateral projects in place in the future, Belarus noted that they would welcome further capacity

building on smart borders, as well as Advance Passenger Information (API) systems, given the fact that API will have become a standard of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in early 2018. Other stakeholders interviewed in the course of the evaluation noted that the training component was too small compared to other pillars and trainings and study visits should be better linked, for example, by organizing trainings and study visits on the same theme in order to combine and enhance classroom and practical learning (it was done for some topics but not nearly all).

4.2. Effectiveness

In **Ukraine**, the government deemed that the project was designed in an effective manner. First, the project was designed in such a way as to practically illustrate EU practices and then enable them being implemented in Belarus and Ukraine. A case in point is the CCP; prior to the initiation of negotiations on the CCP, relevant officials from both countries participated in a networking visit to an EU Member State and a training dedicated to this subject. The combination of the visit and the training, done before the CCP was designed and eventually launched into operation, turned out to be an effective tool for rolling out such complex and sensitive structure as the CCP. The effects of the study visits were felt in other ways too; for example, a visit on CCP inspired Ukraine to change their legal framework to enable concerned agencies to share more information with others.

The project covered urgent, immediate equipment needs, although some were still pending; in the context of bilateral cooperation, the government suggested procurement of a minibus that could serve as a 'mobile office' for bilateral meetings which now take place directly on the border between the border crossing points (BCPs). Future bilateral projects could also facilitate joint work on dog handling curriculum; deployment of automated border control (ABC) gates; risk analysis; implementation of integrated border management (particularly the cooperation aspect thereof) and approximation to European standards in border management, particularly those set by Frontex.

Governmental counterparts also appreciated that the project facilitated the institutionalization of a process, whereby activities were discussed, decided (what, when, how) and implemented in a joint manner. In case of trainings and study visits, with the exception of one case (study visit to the Netherlands for SBGS and to Finland for the SBC), both countries participated in every single activity. Such regular, joint participation in events has further consolidated the relationship between the two governments and made the activities more effective, as well as sustainable.

Additionally, the Ukrainian government strived to ensure that trainings were useful and successful by adjusting the training curricula to the national context; nominating people who have already been trained in SURCAP I and who needed to refresh and cement their knowledge to be able to use it effectively; appointing personnel who were capable of training others; ensuring that training participants write a report with recommendations and these are taken into account when designing strategic documents; and organizing rollout sessions at the regional and local level (mostly informal ones through debriefing, mentoring and guidance).

With regards to information exchange, the CCP made information sharing more effective, however, the Ukrainian counterparts recognized that both governments still needed to work on timing to further shorten the turnaround of the information, particularly if related to events taking place at the border, such as apprehensions, seizure of weapons and drugs and other such incidents.

Finally, should bilateral projects be implemented in the future, other stakeholders could be included, such as the State Migration Service, Customs, Frontex and international organizations (UNODC and UNHCR were mentioned). In terms of the CCP specifically, Ukraine would suggest involving customs, as it is already trying to do in the CCP with Poland and Moldova.

In **Belarus,** governmental counterparts deemed that, thanks to close consultation and coordination, activities were implemented in an effective manner. For example, prior to the launch of the CCP, the design of the facility was discussed to the smallest details (size of the meeting desk, type of video conferencing facility and others) and the CCP was launched into operation in carefully consulted, phased approach. Similarly, numerous meetings were held before the type and parameters of the patrolling boats were finalized; risk analysis on irregular migration routes was conducted to decide on the most appropriate type and placement of the surveillance equipment. Governmental counterparts appreciated this attention to detail and commitment to making sure that procured items fully responded to local needs, realities and absorption capacities.

Study visits were also deemed useful in that they showed practical solutions for different terrains; allowed to discuss the price/quality ratio with the foreign authorities who were using them; and facilitated networking among practitioners from different countries. Following such a visit, someone from the Belarusian delegation participating in a study visit was always tasked with compiling the final report with recommendations which were later taken into account when a particular issue was being discussed by the agency (such as the ABC gates). Unfortunately, no such accounts were requested from the Ukrainian delegation, and as such, conclusions from the networking visits appear one-sided and incomplete, as they reflect the perspective of one party only.

The Belarusian authorities also noted some challenges. For example, adding customs to the CCP would be useful, however, it was currently not possible in Belarus due to the administrative structure in place (customs authorities are not present in Pinsk, only in Gomel and Brest). Belarus also regretted that due to legal restrictions on the part of the EU, some equipment, such as particular thermovision cameras, could not be purchased for Belarus (only for Ukraine), although these would have been useful for particular contexts, such as river patrolling.

Apart from this, from both governments' perspective, the project was implemented in an effective manner, leading to an effective use of resources. That said, a few areas were identified where project implementation could further be strengthened.

First, coordination and communication between IOM Belarus, IOM Ukraine and ICMPD could be revisited. These include ensuring that if certain activities are taking place in one of the targeted countries, the relevant office is fully involved in planning, scheduling and, whenever possible, design of that event. Moreover, while direct communication with a governmental beneficiary has some advantages, as a rule, communication with the national authorities should always pass through the IOM country office (or at least should be closely coordinated with it and IOM should be copied on all correspondence). Such approach would also strengthen links with other national and regional IBM programs.

Second, visibility and communication could be further improved. In the course of the project, different visibility items produced in the course of the projects (bags, notebooks etc) displayed different logos, placed in an *ad hoc,* inconsistent manner depending on the type of the product. In future projects, it would be beneficial to standardize at the outset of the project, which logos will be included and in which order, and use this template for all visibility products throughout the project implementation. Such standards could also be applied to project documents (such as training reports, study visit reports and Steering Committee minutes), so that they all display the same letterhead. Consistency should be a guiding principle for all other aspects too, for example the designation of the CCP (called differently in different project documents). The most unfortunate aspect is the complete absence of the IOM Development Fund logo, which co-funded SURCAP II and should have been included on all visibility products, procured items and project documents.

Finally, there is Output 1.3 in the SURCAP II project: "Residents of the border area, as well as bona fide travelers, are duly informed about the exact location of the state borderline and legitimate places of crossing (i.e. border checkpoints – BCPs), the rules of staying within the 50 km border zone, as well as border crossing regulations applied by the respective authorities of Belarus and Ukraine." According to the project document, an information campaign was to be conducted to this end in towns and villages in close vicinity to the border. Leaflets, flyers, publications, web and TV advertisements, targeting the travelers as well as residents of the border area, were also supposed to be published and disseminated. However, this activity was never implemented, apparently due to the fact that it was not included in the project budget in the first place.

Border guards do this type of awareness raising with local authorities and at schools at their own initiative and independently from the project. IOM should consider supporting these efforts in the future, not only as an awareness raising activity but also a way to cement the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the communities. IOM should also ensure that in case budgeting of certain activities is omitted at the stage of project signature, this is rectified and/or clarified in the course of project implementation and addressed in narrative reports accordingly.

4.3. Efficiency

The **Ukrainian counterparts** believed that the project was implemented in an efficient manner, particularly considering the fact that the project implementation team, comprised of both governments and IOM, was able to generate savings and redirect the resources to additional activities.

Alternatively, e-learning courses could have been developed and deployed instead of or in addition to the residential ones. Ukraine already has extensive experience with e-learning and would welcome further developments in this regards; however, it would be necessary to develop courses for different levels of participating officers and take into account the time limitations of officers on duty. Participation in residential trainings implemented under SURCAP II was duly tracked in the staff member's human resources file and taken into account when that person was being moved to a different position or location. The biggest contribution of the CCP was an efficient exchange of information; while emails and phone calls, all dully registered, had the same weight as the official communication in writing (which usually followed), the CCP facilitated swift sharing of information, allowing border agencies to analyze and act on it in an efficient manner.

The **Belarusian counterparts** stated that the project's benefits would be further apparent in the coming months and years. The government trusted and approved the project design, which is also why they decided to contribute with their own funding (as did the Ukrainian government). The fact that the project was "living" throughout the project implementation, able to adjust to arising changes, also contributed to it being implemented in an effective and efficient manner.

With regards to alternative means of implementation, the Belarusian counterparts believed that residential activities, such as trainings, were "irreplaceable" because they not only facilitated learning but also led to the formation of personal and professional relations. E-learning could also be an efficient use of resources but the courses would need to be developed in the local language. Another way to use available resources was through the deployment of long term experts on particular topics of interest to the government (already happening to a limited extent through Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX)).

Overall, the project appears to have been implemented in an efficient manner and was a good value for money. Alternatives, such as e-learning, were discussed with the authorities and generally well received. In future projects, a combination of residential courses and e-learning would perhaps allow including even more border management personnel, particularly those posted in the regions, while

also potentially creating sustainable training tools and training infrastructure (it is worth to note that training curricula from SURCAP II were all translated to Russian, however, none of them seem to have been institutionalized, a common challenge for this kind of technical assistance).

Moreover, in order to streamline capacity building activities, the project team and ICMPD strived to coordinate training activities with other ongoing initiatives, most notably the Frontex-led *Capacity Building in Integrated Border Management* project for Eastern Partnership countries, as well as border management programs implemented by IOM at the national and regional level. This meant that all pending training needs which could not be met by SURCAP II were relayed to other stakeholders for their consideration and potential inclusion in their program.

Finally, practical trainings, particularly if combined with a study visit, seemed most welcome. In the future, whenever possible, trainings should take place at the national training academy (as opposed to a hotel conference room), in order to further increase the feeling of ownership but also to facilitate direct in-kind contribution to project implementation. In future trainings, IOM should also seek much greater involvement in the design and implementation of trainings, if organized and delivered by an implementing partner (in this case, ICMPD). In SURCAP II, IOM limited its role to agreeing on the training subject and the text of the press release with ICMPD; IOM reviewed neither the agenda, nor the curriculum. Due to this omission, training agendas, as reviewed by the evaluator, appeared overwhelmingly law enforcement-minded, rather than representing a more balanced view that would take into account the all-important fundamental rights aspects of border management work. IOM should also ensure that due training standards are applied, such as pre- and post-training tests and analysis of the training evaluations by the participants (conducted by ICMPD but not included in the training reports). All in all, this represents a missed opportunity and should be avoided in projects of this kind in the future.

4.4. Impact

In **Ukraine,** governmental counterparts highlighted the improvement of relations between Belarus and Ukraine and the progressive strengthening of relations at the national, regional and local level as the most important impact of the project. In addition to learning about each other administrative structures and procedures, the two governments have developed personal contacts at different levels, facilitating efficient information sharing between the two countries.

From Ukraine's perspective, perhaps the most important project component was the CCP. It is already inspiring future ideas and initiatives (such potentially having a CCP at a top Kiev-Minsk level with other relevant national agencies or set up a CCP at the BCP level sharing premises at some point in the future). The CCP allows the Ukrainian government to have a complete overview of the situation on the Belarusian border by centralizing the information sharing between Zhytomyr and Pinsk (despite differences in Belarusian and Ukrainian regional and local border management structure, an agreement was found on the location of the CCP and its operational modality). Situations which previously took days via traditional channels, such as verifying the identity of a third country national, can now be resolved in a matter of hours. Videoconferencing installed at the CCP has facilitated regular contacts between the two parties, independent of the schedule of official meetings and trainings.

Moreover, the combination of study visits and trainings, facilitated by EU experts, led to learning more about practical border management solutions deployed in the EU. The donated equipment improved mobility, allowing border units to rapidly respond to situations at hand. Due to differences in the legal framework and different chain of command in the two countries, it was not possible to do joint patrols. However, the two governments agreed to "coordinated monitoring", essentially joint visits to border areas whereby each party kept to their side of the border and then met later to discuss conclusions and recommendations. This was highlighted as a step in the right direction.

Naturally, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine affected the project implementation in one way or another, including fluctuation of the national currency, which in turn led to delays in tendering and procurement. In order to reflect these circumstances and challenges, the project workplan was continuously adjusted, in consultation with all stakeholders concerned.

In **Belarus**, border authorities believed that the project had a profound, positive impact on the working relations between the two countries. The CCP in particular has complemented the important diplomatic efforts of the Republic of Belarus and facilitated fast, practical solution of situations arising at the border. SURCAP II has led to the establishment of regular meetings, not just at the commanders' level but also among analysts and experts. Technical solutions tested and implemented through SURCAP II at the Belarus-Ukraine border initiated discussions for technical solutions for Belarus-Poland and Belarus-Latvia border, including on joint use of equipment.

In general, SURCAP II has significantly improved the way Belarus and Ukraine interact on border management matters. Regular meetings, joint capacity building events and border surveillance equipment have not only improved border management capacities of the two countries but also increased confidence, trust, communication and collaboration between the two parties. As the project progressed, other by-products became clearly visible. For example, trainings and study visits gradually led to the creation of an informal experts' network, thanks to which governmental agencies often took the initiative to invite particular experts to particular events. If there were savings, governmental agencies agreed to combine a study visit with training (or vice versa) to increase the impact and enhance the learning. The flexibility, openness and commitment demonstrated by all stakeholders concerned meant that the project went far beyond the original project design and intention.

4.5. Sustainability

Sustainability is an important aspect of development projects, particularly when technical assistance is involved. Capacity building interventions need to be appropriate for local needs and realities in order to be sustainable in the future.

In **Ukraine,** the stakeholders were positive about the sustainability of the project. Despite the fact that no meetings have taken place since the completion of the project, a number of joint meetings were being planned for the upcoming period to continue discussions commenced under SURCAP II. Furthermore, governmental counterparts also clearly stated that they regarded the donated equipment as "theirs" and as such, it has been included in the governmental budget to ensure proper maintenance. SURCAP II has made contributions in other areas, too. Through SURCAP II, professional relations have been forged, not just with the Belarusian counterparts but also with many EU Member States colleagues, and these relations are expected to continue through national and/or bilateral border management initiatives. Practical examples, shown through networking visits of Ukrainian and Belarusian delegations to EU Member States, have been key to demonstrate European solutions to border management challenges faced by both EU and Ukraine.

In **Belarus,** governmental counterparts were also positive about the long lasting effects of SURCAP II, and the project was regarded as having inspired good practices that would continue in the future. For example, based on European CCP procedures, as observed during one of the networking visits, Belarus established regular meetings between CCP and BCP staff to regularly exchange information and increase awareness about CCP's role. Due to shortage in human resources (and thus, unlike in Ukraine, absence of dedicated CCP staff), a pool of 18 officers, chosen from the existing personnel and specifically trained, was established and given the authority to operate at the CCP, a practice that works just as well. This pool will remain in existence beyond the project completion and will continue to staff the CCP. Finally, mid- to high-level ranking officers were nominated for study visits; being in a decision-making position guarantees at least some degree of influence on operational, as well as

strategic issues and, provided that the officers remain at the same or similar positions, warrants the retention and passing of that knowledge within the border agency.

Overall, the project seems to have been designed and implemented in a way as to ensure that procedures, structures and practices set up in the course of the implementation are upheld once the project is finished. Both governments are resolutely committed to take over and maintain donated equipment, reap the benefits of the trainings and study visits, and continue to develop the CCP. One aspect that could be improved in future projects concerns rollout of trainings in the field. IOM should consider allocating separate resources to ensure that trainings done at HQ are formally rolled to officers stationed in the field.

4.6. Cross-cutting Issues

Cross-cutting issues, such as human rights and gender, are crucial to ensure that international principles and standards, such as human rights law, and needs of particular groups in the society, are taken into account when designing and implementing interventions. This is particularly important if they concern law enforcement.

In **Ukraine,** governmental representatives acknowledged that meeting some of the standards, particularly those related to gender, is challenging. In the SBGS, women tend to have lower ranks and mainly fill administrative positions, hence nominating them for technical trainings or study visits is not always possible or desirable. However, the counterparts agreed that more could be done to mainstream human rights and gender in capacity building activities. Anti-corruption and professional ethics were among other topics suggested by the SBGS.

In **Belarus**, governmental counterparts believed that it was not absolutely necessary to include human rights aspects in the trainings; other agencies, such as UNDP and Frontex, delivered border management trainings with human rights and gender already included. Therefore, they believed that adding them to SURCAP II trainings would be an unnecessary duplication.

The Belarusian counterparts are absolutely correct to warn against duplication and all project stakeholders should make an utmost effort to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way possible. However, IOM as an intergovernmental organization still has the responsibility to ensure that a balanced view, with due regard to sensitive human rights issues, such as personal data protection, access to asylum at green and blue border, protection-sensitive treatment of particular social groups and others. Therefore, in future projects, IOM should make an effort to ensure that these aspects are fully incorporated and reflected in the trainings delivered under one of its projects.

6. Good practices

The project has led, intentionally or unintentionally, to formulation of numerous good practices and approaches. Some of these include the following:

1) **Phased approach:** SURCAP II was designed in such a way as to logically continue and link with SURCAP I. Such approach was beneficial, as it allowed to not only immediately build on activities, experiences and lessons learnt, still fresh on all stakeholders' mind, but also gradually engage in ever more ambitious, complex initiatives.

2) **Thorough consultative process:** even the smallest issues related to project implementation were thoroughly discussed and consulted with beneficiary governments at different levels, including national experts. This not only ensured that the proposed activity was fully in line with local needs and priorities but also increased the feeling of engagement and ownership.

3) **Local absorption capacity:** when tendering and purchasing equipment, such as patrolling vehicles and boats, much attention was given to the possibility of the equipment to be repaired by local providers where the equipment will be deployed or even by border guards themselves. This has guaranteed efficient and effective equipment maintenance, particularly in distant locations in the field.

4) **Local needs:** numerous ideas came from the field rather than from the agencies' headquarters. High importance of regional and local units' opinion and feedback was reflected particularly in the type of equipment purchased for the border areas.

5) **Networking visit reports:** upon return from networking visits, Belarusian delegation always compiled their own report with recommendations which was filed with other project documents. Such approach further encourages participation and ownership but also reflection, analysis and information retention among project beneficiaries.

6) **High level events on border management:** international high level event on integrated border management organized under SURCAP II in Lviv in March 2017 was an occasion to showcase SURCAP II activities but also an excellent opportunity to gather heads of border management agencies from Eastern Partnership and EU countries, discuss latest trends and developments, and cement existing and forge new relations at the highest level. Some of the interviewees referred to the event as a "brilliant by-product" of the project.

7) **Linking study visits, trainings and/or practical interventions:** governmental counterparts praised the combination of trainings and study visits when dedicated to the same subject, as it effectively combined classroom learning with showcasing practical implementation in the field. Similarly, they appreciated when, prior to embarking on certain, such as the CCP, first a study visit was conducted to demonstrate European experience and lessons learnt. Trainings were conceptualized more as workshops, in order to give participants ample time to ask questions and discuss.

8) **Creating a pool of staff:** When unable to hire staff dedicated for the CCP, Belarus created a pool from existing officers, specifically trained and authorized to operate the Center. This creative approach contributes to sustainability of project interventions.

9) **CCP reporting template:** both beneficiary governments were open and flexible to regularly review and revise the reporting template, so that it corresponds to evolving information sharing needs. Reporting templates can be a sensitive matter, therefore, such approach is welcome and attests to good working relations between the two countries.

10) **Community of practitioners:** through regular bilateral coordination meetings, study visits, trainings and the high level event, a community of practitioners has slowly developed. Beneficiary governments then often took the initiative of inviting specific experts, whom they met in previous project events, thus further enhancing professional relations, networking and experience sharing between EU, Ukrainian and Belarusian experts.

11) **Community relations:** equipment handover ceremony in Pinsk doubled as a visibility and community event, giving local residents in Pinsk the opportunity to closely observe border management equipment in use. This concept is encouraged, as it increases project visibility, while at the same time improving community-law enforcement relations.

7. Recommendations

Overall, the project was highly relevant and timely. It was implemented in a very effective and efficient manner, deploying approaches that guarantee a fair degree of impact and sustainability, although

scoring slightly less favorably when it came to cross-cutting issues. The following recommendations could be formulated:

1) Build on the successful SURCAP I and SURCAP projects and continue to support the established partnership between the EU, beneficiary governments and IOM. Partnerships with other EU countries, such as Poland, could be explored to increase the viability of a follow-up phase.

2) Support the implementation of integrated border management strategies in Ukraine and Belarus, aligning it closely with the development of the *Integrated Border Management Strategy* in the EU. Contribute to efforts of the Virtual Contact Analytical Center in Ukraine and advocate for the establishment of a National Coordination Center in Belarus.

3) Support and step up border demarcation efforts in order to facilitate other border-related initiatives, such as joint patrolling.

4) Organize a follow up high level event (similar to the conference organized in Lviv in March 2017), in order to continue engagement among all stakeholders concerned.

5) Explore possibilities to streamline the CCP capacity to exchange information about the entire Belarus-Ukraine border. Alternatively, establish additional CCPs on the Belarusian side, connected with Zhytomyr, in order to ensure that the entire Belarus-Ukraine border is covered via one or several CCPs.

6) Revisit the CCP 12-24 months after launch of the operation to jointly review the practices and identify gaps, if any.

7) Compile good practices and lessons learnt from the CCP experience. Particularly the CCP between Ukraine and Belarus, given that it is a "non-contact" CCP, located in two different cities and connected via video link, is useful for countries not ready yet to be co-located at one place.

8) Explore the design and functioning of a pilot Jointly Operated Border Crossing Point between Belarus and Ukraine. It could focus on BCPs already covered by numerous IOM border management interventions, such as Novaya Huta – Novi Yarilovychi.

9) Include pending equipment needs, such as the mobile office, in state budgets or other border management projects.

10) By way of mainstreaming professional ethics, unless already in place, develop and institutionalize a Code of Conduct for Border Guards addressing anti-corruption, anti-discrimination, respect for fundamental rights, absence of sexual exploitation and other elements of professional ethics. Frontex Code of Conduct could serve as an example of European practice.

11) Explore e-learning, in close cooperation and coordination with national training academies in Belarus and Ukraine. This way, trainings would benefit more personnel, particularly those based in the regions.

12) Consider deployment of longer-term technical experts to advise on subjects of particular interest to the beneficiary governments.

13) Consider organizing the trainings at premises of the national training institutions. Encourage cooperation among the training institutions, also in the field of student and instructor exchange and joint work on training methodology.

14) Strengthen IOM's involvement in and oversight of trainings when designed and delivered by an implementing partner. This includes review of the draft curriculum to ensure that a balanced, human rights- and gender-sensitive approach is adopted; and the design, use, analysis and reporting on training tools, such as pre- and post-training questionnaires and training evaluations, to ensure that these are adequately deployed.

15) Reinforce follow up, on the part of the governments and IOM, on recommendations and suggestions raised in networking visit and training reports.

16) Ensure that Ukrainian participants of study visits also share their feedback on the study visits and formulate recommendations for follow up, as relevant to Ukraine.

17) Strengthen the roll-out and institutionalization of training curricula in the regions and national training academies, respectively.

18) Ensure proper coordination among and involvement of all implementing organizations and offices concerned, to facilitate linkages with other national and/or regional border management initiatives.

19) From the project outset, systematize visibility for project deliverables as well as documents and ensure that all project partners are adequately recognized.

20) Ensure that the visibility stickers placed on the donated equipment, remain on the equipment after the project implementation is over or, if worn out or accidently torn off, are adequately replaced to ensure continuous project visibility.

21) Support border authorities' efforts to build relations with local communities by organizing public awareness raising events, such as demonstration of border management equipment.

8. Annexes