

PRESS RELEASE

US, EU and Council of Europe hand over equipment to the Police to fight money laundering

A strong partnership between Montenegro, US, EU and Council of Europe paves the way for a more effective fight against money laundering and terrorism financing

Podgorica, 8 October 2020 – In a handover ceremony, which took place in Podgorica today, the Department for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing of Montenegro of the Montenegrin Police Directorate received a donation of new equipment worth 290,000 EUR. The US Embassy in Montenegro provided 240,000 EUR worth of hardware equipment while the European Union and the Council of Europe invested 50,000 EUR into software development of a new system for collection, processing and analysis of financial intelligence data.

Judy Rising Reinke, the US Ambassador to Montenegro stated that “the U.S. government is proud to support Montenegro in fighting Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) by enhancing the capacity of the Police Directorate’s Department on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Prevention of Terrorism Financing. We worked this past year to help the AML Department implement a secure data network; especially important as the department also contains a unit serving as the GOM’s designated Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), required for the FIU to meet international standards for working with sensitive bank and financial data.”

Systematic collection of information is crucial for better processing of criminal offences of money laundering and terrorist financing. The newly developed Case Management System, donated by the EU and the Council of Europe, will become operational in January 2021 and will allow for electronic collection, processing and analysis of financial intelligence data.

Head of Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, **Ambassador Oana-Cristina Popa** stated: “In the European Commission annual report on Montenegro, published two days ago, we noted that Montenegro made some progress in the area of fight against organised crime, as an initial track record on money laundering was established and the capacity of the law enforcement agencies operating in this area continued to be strengthened . However, systemic deficiencies continued to hamper the whole chain of criminal justice in addressing money laundering. The case management software, which we are donating through our joint programme with the Council of Europe, will improve internal operations and increase inter-agency cooperation. Coupled with the donation of our US colleagues, it is a good step towards establishing a well-functioning institutional system for the prevention and detection of cases of money laundering and terrorism financing.” Ambassador Popa added that that she was looking forward to working with Montenegrin authorities to speed up reforms in the area of justice, freedom and security because citizens expect to see concrete results and benefits from the new administration.

Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Head of Council of Europe Programme Office of in Podgorica underlined that “the upgraded hardware equipment, which will allow for the Case Management System to be operational



in January 2021, addresses one of the highest priorities identified by the Financial Intelligence Unit. At the same time, it contributes to the implementation of the Council of Europe's MONEYVAL recommendation requiring development of a suitable IT tool in order to enhance the FIU's analytical output. Ultimately, a more effective and efficient handling of collected intelligence will contribute to increasing analytical reports on suspicious transactions, thereby improving investigations and criminal proceedings related to money laundering and terrorist financing."

Better co-ordination and automatic exchange of data is expected to lead to larger number of investigations and criminal proceedings for criminal offences of money laundering and terrorist financing in Montenegro. Reception, processing and forwarding of information will be done in accordance with the European and international standards in preventing the use of the financial sector for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing and in line with the standards on personal data protection.

Assistant Director of Police, Head of for the Department for Prevention of the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, **Dejan Đurović** has pointed out: „This donation represents the backbone of the future financial intelligence system of the Department for Prevention of the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. It will serve as the foundation for the efficient fight against organized crime and corruption and a tool for achieving of our goal that no one can retain assets obtained through the criminal activity.“

Since early 2020, US Embassy's program International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) has donated to the AML Department a high-volume scanner, secure e-mail licenses, firewall security, and most recently, computer hardware required to set up a closed data network within the FIU. The data network will be used to receive sensitive bank data received as currency transaction reports and suspicious transaction reports.

The new Case Management System is being developed within the EU/Council of Europe joint programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022", Action against Economic Crime in Montenegro funded by the EU and the Council of Europe and implemented by Economic Crime and Co-operation Division of Council of Europe.

**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*