

R E P O R T

on the Progress Made by Bulgaria in Addressing the Specific Benchmarks in the Areas of Judicial Reform and the Fight against Corruption and Organised Crime

SUMMARY

BENCHMARK 1 - Adopt constitutional amendments removing any ambiguity regarding the independence and accountability of the judicial system
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From a formal point of view, this benchmark was implemented on 2 February 2007, when the National Assembly passed the fourth **amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria**. Since this benchmark is considered in its interconnection with the implementation of the next two benchmarks, measures in several directions have been provided for the establishment of an independent and accountable judicial system: through guaranteeing the independence of the budget, on one hand, and the fact that the independent Judicial Inspectorate with the SJC started functioning, on the other hand. A main objective is also the adoption of the principle of publicity in the work of the judiciary through regular publication of the results of the activity of judicial authorities and transparency of the activity of the SJC.

It should be pointed out that all the secondary legislation for the implementation of the new Judicial System Act, which is in force as from 10 August 2007, has been adopted at present. In the process of elaborating the new acts, the **experience and expertise of specialized legal NGO-s** in the field of forensic inquiry, and also on the issues concerning the role of expert witnesses and court assessors have been taken into account. In this way, on the constitutional, legislative and secondary legislative levels, the process of establishing the normative requirements for the functioning of an independent and modern judiciary has already been finalized.

In pursuance of the concept of the Judicial System Act and in order to implement the Action Plan, practical measures were undertaken in the reporting period which establish the necessary conditions for the achievement of the goals set.

Through the new Rules of Procedure of the Ministry of Justice, which were adopted by the Council of Ministers on 20 March 2008, the normative conditions for the functioning of a new independent Budget of the Judiciary Unit directly subordinated to the Minister of Justice. The necessary actions have been undertaken in order to provide the administrative capacity of the Unit.

A Budget and Finance Standing Commission with the SJC meets on a regular basis and presents on a monthly basis information on execution of the budget of the judiciary at the meetings of the SJC.

The independent Judicial Inspectorate with the SJC started functioning. On 9 January 2008 the Chief Inspector assumed her office and the remaining inspectors assumed office on 16 January 2008. In January 2008 the Inspectorate adopted a Regulation on the organization of the Activity of its administration. The operational framework for the implementation of the legal obligations of the Inspectorate has been established with the adoption of the Annual Programme for its activity in 2008 and a six-month working plan for the period January – June 2008. Methodologies for carrying out different kinds of inspections, samples of the procedures of the inspections, have been adopted. The Minister of Justice has taken the necessary steps to secure the required material and technical facilities for the Inspectorate with the SJC.

The SJC carries out its activity in the **conditions of publicity and transparency**. It, A public register has been created and is maintained, including in electronic form, where all of the decisions of the SJC and the reasonings thereto are entered. Under the Inspectorate submits an annual report on its activity to the Supreme Judicial Council and provides public information about its activity. Under the Judicial System Act the Inspectorate of the SJC provides an annual report on its activity to the SJC and provides annually public information on its activity, by publishing the report about its activity on the SJC's website.

Furthermore, the presidents of all courts should publish the annual reports of the respective court in the Internet. The SJC adopted new enlarged statistical forms for the the six-month and the annual reports of the authorities of the judiciary for future periods. At present, the information for 2007 is being analyzed. The results of the analysis of information will be used in the process of planning the activity of the Judiciary, as well.

The new, standing composition of the SJC should ensure consistency and sustainability of the measures undertaken. It is fully functioning since 3 October 2007. The Strategic Plan for administrative building and institutional strengthening of the Supreme Judicial Council for the period 2007-2010 has been adopted, as well as the Regulation on the organization and the activity of the Supreme Judicial Council and its administration, which is also published on the Internet website of the SJC. Immediately afterwards, all standing commissions of the SJC were constituted.

BENCHMARK 2 - Ensure a more transparent and efficient judicial process by adopting and implementing a new judicial system act and the new Civil Procedure Code. Report on the impact of these new laws and of the penal and administrative procedure codes, notably on the pre-trial phase

The **regular monitoring of the implementation of the new Codes**, which is a very important tool for identification and addressing in the future problems which have occurred in the process of practical application of these laws and creation of prerequisites for a uniform praxis in their law enforcement, continues. The reports of the working groups on the results of the monitoring are published regularly on the website of the Ministry of Justice. The Advisory Council on Penal Policy also discussed the proposed amendments of the Penal Procedure Code, aimed at improvement of the conditions for its implementation. In February 2008 a inter-institutional Working group to Develop Criteria for Monitoring the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) was established and it is envisaged that the same Working group should carry out also the monitoring, the inspections and analysis of the application of the new CPC. All the secondary legislation on the implementation of the new CPC which entered into force on 1 March 2008, has been adopted.

Actions have also been taken in order to implement monitoring on the application of the new legislation in conformity with Article 6 of the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The concept for setting up of information centers in the courts in order to improve the legal servicing of the citizens was approved and adopted in April 2007. The Concept is a part of the adopted by the SJC Plan for improvement of the work of the courts for 2007 which contains good practices in: court management; court administration, access to and work with the public; training and information technologies.

BENCHMARK 3 - Continue the reform of the judiciary in order to enhance professionalism, accountability and efficiency. Evaluate the impact of this reform and publish the results annually.

In pursuance of transparent and efficient disciplinary proceedings, legislative and organizational measures were adopted. With the adoption of the Regulation on the organization of the activity of the Supreme Judicial Council and of its administration on 1 November 2007, in terms of laws and by-laws the rules of conducting of disciplinary proceedings concerning the judiciary are now fully established and the powers of the bodies which enforce them are clearly specified. The Records of proceedings from the SJC's meetings, which are published on the website, include the **decisions on the disciplinary cases against magistrates issued by the SJC**. Hence the disciplinary

proceedings are conducted with complete transparency and provide for full guarantees of the possibility for public control.

A draft of a public register of disciplinary practice has been developed and approved, including in e-version, to be published on the website of the SJC and updated on a regular basis with all decisions concerning disciplinary sanctions applied to magistrates.

A Standing Commission on disciplinary proceedings and a Standing Commission on fight against corruption and professional ethics with the SJC are now fully functioning since the beginning of November 2007; they **have regular meetings and work actively in pursuance of their legal powers.**

The approach adopted does not only refer to the subsequent control and sanctioning of magistrates who violated their official duties. Serious efforts are also focused on the **adoption of the role of codes of ethics and professional ethics in general in the work of the judiciary.**

After a thorough analysis of the three codes of ethics which are in effect at present, for the judges, the prosecutors and the investigators in Bulgaria, and in the context of the conclusions of the Report of the European Commission from June 2007, the **Commission on fight against corruption and professional ethics with the SJC** admitted that the findings that these documents do not contain sufficiently efficient mechanisms for implementation of the responsibility of the magistrates who violated the ethical standards were correct.

With regard to this in January 2008 the Anti-corruption Commission approached the existing 17 supreme councils of the judiciary in the Member States concerning their experience in this area. All administrative heads of the authorities of the judiciary are invited to propose ideas and recommendations for finding an efficient solution, so that the Rules of Ethics for magistrates would be a modern, working instrument of the judiciary.

The two main pillars on which the professional system of the judiciary is built are the use of **information technologies and intensive training of magistrates**, where a package of measures with a long-term effect on the efficiency of the reform of the judiciary, has also been undertaken.

Besides the elaboration of the necessary legislation in this area, in August 2007 the Ministry of Justice undertook a detailed check of the current status of the information systems developed for the needs of the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary authorities. Projects with substantial financing and of particular importance for the functioning of the judicial system have been taken into consideration. In December 2007 the SJC

considered the reports on the status of the information systems submitted by the Ministry of Justice and the conclusions of the working group under the Supreme Judicial Council.

An Expert Round Table was organized in February 2008 on the issues of the information technologies in the judicial system. At the Round Table the implementation and the development of the Information strategy of the law enforcement authorities of the Republic of Bulgaria were discussed, as well as the status of the information systems developed for the needs of the judiciary. A Declaration on the problems of the information technologies in the judicial system was adopted and concrete decisions were taken for future actions to solve them.

Thus, conditions were created for systematic and optimal efforts to continue the provision of computers and information technologies in the judicial system.

Intensive training of magistrates is still in progress, with a focus on newly adopted legislation. It should be noted that the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has got a system for evaluation of the efficiency of the training of magistrates and court officers. A proposal is now being developed aiming at improvement and enhancement of the scope of the system. As a result, a very important mechanism has been created for feedback with the aim of strengthening the system of magistrate training and improving the quality of training.

The implementation of the Action Plan continues in an **active dialogue with NGOs**. The Public Council with the Minister of Justice holds its regular meetings where issues related to the policy in the area of justice as well as the progress in the implementation of the measures of the Action Plan are considered. At present, the Open Society Institute makes an independent analysis of the implementation of the two-year programme for the implementation of the Strategy for Reform of the Judiciary. Working groups (comprising representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the judicial system and NGOs) will be set up on the basis of the outcomes of the analysis which should propose strategic goals and specific steps in view of removing the problems and shortcomings found. These proposals will be incorporated in the new Strategy for continuation of the reform of the judiciary for the period 2008 – 2013 which is under preparation as well as in the Action Plan for its implementation.

The information possibilities of the official website of the Ministry of Justice were extended in view of enhancing the transparency in respect of the policy in the area of justice.

BENCHMARK 4: Conduct and report on professional, non-partisan investigations into allegations of high-level corruption. Report on internal inspections of public institutions and on the publication of assets of high-level officials.

The activity in the area of the fight against corruption within the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government has been optimised. The mechanism for coordination among the individual anti-corruption units in the executive branch of government has been optimised. The administrative capacity of the central government administration to optimise the performance of anti-corruption units has been strengthened.

Persons who conscientiously submit signals of corruption are effectively protected (regulated in the Administrative Procedure Code).

The administrative capacity of anti-corruption units in the central administration is strengthened.

The effectiveness of the scheduled and unscheduled checks conducted has been improved.

Coordination mechanisms for interaction and exchange of information between first-level and second-level spending units in connection with the implementation of current internal administrative control have been introduced and operate in the work of the central government administration. Thanks to this, the control of the inspectorates covers all central executive structures. The last year has seen a substantial *improvement in the quality of the checks*.

All central administrations introduced *analyses based on corruption risk assessment systems* by the end of 2007 and are preparing such analyses.

The number of unscheduled checks has increased at the expense of scheduled checks which is a result of the greater availability of opportunities to submit signals of corruption.

In 2007, a total of 1,098 scheduled checks and 2,024 unscheduled checks were conducted in the administrative structures.

In 2006, the scheduled checks numbered 879, and the unscheduled checks numbered 2,107.

Between 1 January and 29 February 2008, a total of 211 scheduled checks and 220 unscheduled checks were conducted in the administrative structures.

The mechanism for verification of the financial interests disclosure declarations of high level public officials is effectively applied.

The number of persons checked, together with the persons related to them: spouses and underage children, exceeded 10,000. In 195 cases, discrepancies were found between

the facts declared by the persons in the Public Register and the information received from outside registers.

In January 2008, the name list of the senior public officials and the discrepancies found was posted on the Internet site of the National Audit Office and has been sent to the National Revenue Agency for taking steps according to the procedure established by the Tax and Social Insurance Procedure Code.

In 2007, 258 disciplinary proceedings were initiated: 82 employees were discharged, 18 employees were suspended, sixty-eight cases were referred to the Prosecutor's office (2006 -53).

*In 2007, the competent structures of the **Ministry of Interior** worked on 495 signals of corrupt behaviour and conducted 308 checks. As a result of the checks on signals, 62 employees were discharged, 58 pre-trial proceedings were initiated.*

The quality of work of the control authorities has improved. The number of sanctions imposed has increased: thus, while 26 per cent of the proceedings initiated in 2006 led to a discharge, in 2007 this proportion increased by 6 percentage points to 32 per cent.

Effective control is exercised over the progress of case files in the pre-trial and trial phase.

- **In 2007**, 862 pre-trial proceedings in connection with corruption offences were concluded with 223 prosecutor's acts submitted to court.

- 27 prosecutor's acts among the acts submitted to court in 2007 were against **27 persons with immunity and other officials** (1 deputy minister, 4 mayors, 3 representatives of state agencies and other senior officials, 14 magistrates and 5 executive administration officials).

- In 2007 136 persons were **convicted** of corruption offences, from that 7 persons are high level officials. The convictions of **109** persons became effective.

- In the period **1 January and 29 February 2008**, 19 persons were convicted of corruption offences, including 3 of the category of magistrates, mayors and other senior officials.

The capacity of the judiciary to investigate corruption offences has been strengthened.

The Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office, the specialised department of the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office and the investigating pre-trial proceedings authorities discuss on a regular basis the penal practice of high-level corruption cases, including case studies.

By ordinance of the Prosecutor General, in May 2007 the corruption offences cases were taken on record by prosecutors of the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office and

the specialised departments at the prosecutor's offices, and the cases involving persons with immunity were taken on record by prosecutors of the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office.

BENCHMARK 5: Take further measures to prevent and fight corruption in particular at the borders and within local government

A principle of zero tolerance of all forms of corrupt practices by personnel in the compulsory border control services and local government is applied.

A computer system for collection of road tolls and permit fees, which automatically determines the road tolls and other fees due, functions at all border-crossing checkpoints.

The *e-government integration system*, which has been implemented, makes it technically possible to interface the source registers (Civil Registration and Administrative Services, BULSTAT and Commercial Register) into a common data and document-handling environment. The e-government integration system went into operation on 11 September 2007.

Corrupt practices and the corruption risk in delivering services at the border check points have been limited.

Ограничени са корупционните практики и корупционния риск при обслужване на гражданите на границите.

The automated system for payments through a "*single fiche*" at the road border-crossing checkpoints on the EU external borders is under implementation.

A proactive approach is applied to investigations on cases of inexplicable wealth. Specialized trainings are regularly carried out.

BENCHMARK 6. Implement a strategy to fight organised crime, focussing on serious crime, money laundering as well as on the systematic confiscation of assets of criminals. Report on new and ongoing investigations, indictments and convictions in these areas.

The mechanisms were optimised, and the administrative capacity for effective suppression of serious organised crime was further strengthened. The administrative capacity is further strengthen.

- A *Law to Amend and Supplement the Penal Code* was passed in 2007 (prom. SG No. 38 of 2007). Provisions were also made for additional protection to avert the risks related to unauthorised access to computer data and computer fraud. The circulation of pornographic material via the Internet was criminalised.

- **A Law to Amend and Supplement the Law on Public Offering of Securities** was adopted with a view to synchronising the regime of access to trade secrets.
- **The Tax and Social-Insurance Procedure Code was amended** (prom. SG No. 109 of 2007) with a view to simplify the regime for disclosure of tax and bank secrets.
- Amendments have been drafted of the **Law on Forfeiture of Criminal Assets**, which have been consulted at the expert level with the Criminal Assets Identification Commission, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance. The amendments provide for simplifying the procedure and optimising the time limits for the confiscation of assets, as well as for extending the scope Article 3 for conduct of proceedings under the Law and in respect of the two-instance procedure.
- In the frameworks of the **Long-term Programme for Vocational Training and Professional Qualification of Ministry of the Interior Personnel Appointed to the Position of Police Investigator** developed within the framework of a twinning project under the Phare Programme on “Modernisation of the Bulgarian Police and Enhancing its Efficiency – Improvement of the Specialised Structures for Police Investigation at the Ministry of the Interior”, implemented jointly with the Bavarian Police, **32 seminars** were organised and **training of 79 trainers, 407 police investigators, 31 prosecutors, operational officers, forensic experts of the Forensic Science and Criminology Institute and lecturers from the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior** was provided within the framework of the project.

Organised crime groups continue to be effectively dismantled. Proactive approach is applied as a basis to the fight against organised crime.

Statistics on the results of counteraction of organised crime demonstrate an **enhancement of the efficiency of the detection and investigation activities on organised crime groups.**

The criminal activity of 196 organised crime groups was detected partially or thoroughly in 2007 (in 2006 - 198 organised crime groups). In 2007 1 148 pre-trial proceedings were developed in connection with organised crime-related offences. A total of 920 new pre-trial proceedings were instituted in connection with organised crime-related offences (in 2006 was 844). The new pre-trial proceedings initiated in 2007 increased by 9 per cent compared to the previous year.

The criminal prosecution of organised crime group leaders and members has become more effective. The cases of street murders and organised crime, including logistics, financing and facilitating activities, are effectively investigated. The courts render deterring judgments.

Work on the comprehensive detection of the structures and initiation of pre-trial proceedings under Article 321 of the Penal Code (organised crime) has improved substantially.

In 2007, the Prosecutor's Offices initiated 101 pre-trial proceedings for crimes committed by organised crime groups. Eighty-seven pre-trial proceedings were solved. Seventy-two prosecutorial acts were submitted to court. The indictments were 54. A total of 316 accused persons, including 6 foreign nationals, were brought to court. Seventy-eight persons were convicted in 2007. The convictions entered into force for 77 persons.

In the period 1 January and 29 February 2008, the Prosecutor's Offices initiated 16 pre-trial proceedings. 6 prosecutorial acts were submitted to court. 32 persons were convicted.

A comprehensive approach is applied to the confiscation of criminal assets, so as to prevent criminals from benefiting from their criminal activities.

- The rules for identification of criminal assets have been standardised. A uniform approach and criteria have been introduced in the work of the Ministry of the Interior and the prosecuting authorities.

- There is an increase of six times of the claims for forfeiture of the assets acquired through criminal activity compared to 2006.

In 2007 the Commission for Establishing of Property Acquired from Criminal Activity (CEPACA) took 219 decisions for initiating proceedings to impose securing measures and to forfeiture of criminal assets.

33 civil cases were initiated for forfeiture of assets amounting over BGN 27 millions.

In January and February 2008, the CEPACA made 37 decisions on initiating proceedings on imposing securing measures and on forfeiture of criminal assets.

- The authorities of the Ministry of the Interior, the Prosecutor's Office, the National Revenue Agency, the Public Financial Inspection Agency, the State Receivables Collection Agency, the Customs Agency and the CEPACA have invigorated their interaction. Teams including officials with various specialisations have been formed for conducting joint checks and audits of the companies and distributive-trade establishments of organised crime group leaders and persons related to them with a view to establishing their financial position and property status.

The criminal markets, related to drug trafficking, production and distribution, trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, money laundering, counterfeiting of payment instruments and goods, have been limited.

- *Drug trafficking, production and distribution.*

In 2007 34 organised crime groups for drug trafficking and distribution were dismantled. 179 pre-trial proceedings against 204 persons were instituted after specialised police operations and successful police realizations carried out in 2007.

Fifty-one persons were convicted, one person was extradited, and one person was expelled from the country.

The results show achievement of qualitatively new balance between counteraction of organized crime connected to drug trafficking and drug distribution. Significantly more effective police activities for *dismantling networks for drug distribution*, functioning as basic motor of the drug market, are observed in 2007.

The criminal activity of key leaders, running the drug business in several regions in the territory of Bulgaria, and of organised crime group members, was successfully detected and documented in **2007**, and the leaders and participants in six significant organised crime groups of a great criminal potential were charged with the formation and participation in organised crime groups.

Fifty-nine charges of organised crime related to the production and distribution of narcotic drugs were brought against organised crime group leaders and participants. In 2007 the Ministry of the Interior and the Customs Agency seized a total of 4,287 kg, over 11,000 tablets drugs and precursors, of which 1,153 kg of heroin, 94.2 kg of cocaine, 2,521 kg of cannabis, and 431.3 kg of synthetic drugs. One illegal drug laboratory was detected. Twenty-six drug channels were broken up. In 2007 the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted 3,438 pre-trial proceedings in connection with drug-related criminal offences. The indictments were 1,184 against 2,142 accused persons, including 38 foreign nationals. A total of 1,463 persons were convicted of offences of this type. In the period 1 January and 29 February 2008, the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted 446 pre-trial proceedings in connection with drug-related offences.

- Trafficking in human beings

The 36 organised crime groups for trafficking in human beings were dismantled in 2007 which doubles the number of the dismantled OSG in the previous year (17 organised crime groups). **Nineteen facilitator networks** for trafficking in women for sexual exploitation were disrupted, compared to 18 in **2006**.

*In 2007 the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted **107 pre-trial proceedings** in connection with trafficking in human beings. The indictments were 45 against 110 accused persons. **A total of 85 persons were convicted.** In the period 1 January and 29 February 2008, the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted 21 pre-trial proceedings in connection with trafficking in human beings. The indictments were four against ten accused persons. Four persons were convicted.*

An evaluation of the statistics of the results of the fight against organised crime related to trafficking in human beings demonstrates an enhancement of the efficiency of the detection and investigation of these offences. Pre-trial proceedings are instituted not only in connection with the predicate offences but also in connection with laundering of the proceeds from prostitution and tax evasion.

Twelve police investigations were initiated in 2007 in connection with money laundering of the proceeds from trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. All investigations have an international element, and the execution of investigation requests on them is still in progress.

- Money laundering

The teams of the officials of the Ministry of the Interior, Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA) and Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office, set up to suppress money laundering by organised crime groups, invigorated their work.

През 2007 г. в прокуратурите са образувани 50 досъдебни производства за пране на пари (40 за 2006 г). В съда са внесени 8 обвинителни акта срещу 11 обвиняеми лица. Осъдените лица са 8.

In 2007 the services of the Ministry of the Interior worked on 396 case files with the FIA. Of these, 305 were instituted on FIA signals. Suspicious transactions totalled the equivalent of EUR 254.3 million.

Fifty pre-trial proceedings in connection with money laundering were instituted in 2007. The indictments were eight against eleven accused persons. Eight persons were convicted of offences of this type.

In the period 1 January and 29 February 2008, the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted seven pre-trial proceedings in connection with money laundering.

- Tax Offences

In 2007 the number of the initiated pre-trial proceedings for tax offences - 1,428 pre-trial proceedings, is 27 per cent bigger than the number for 2006. The indictments were 335 against 580 accused persons. A total of 343 persons were convicted in 2007.

Two hundred pre-trial proceedings in connection with tax offences were instituted in January and February 2008. A total of 73 persons were convicted.

- Counterfeiting of payment instruments and goods

The activities related to the collection of evidence against organized crime groups have

been improved which enables the initiation of more pre-trial proceedings and more effective performing of penal measures.

*The criminal activity of 18 organised crime groups **manufacturing and distributing counterfeit currency, credit cards and identity documents** was detected and dismantled in 2007, compared to 11 organised crime groups manufacturing, storing and distributing counterfeit currency and identity documents for 2006. The competent authorities worked on 42 pre-trial proceedings against 91 persons.*

In comparison to 2006 the volume of the operational and detection and procedural activities has increased with 17 per cent: a total of **860 pre-trial proceedings** were initiated, 136 accused persons were brought to court, 109 persons were convicted.

In the period 1 January and 29 February 2008, the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office instituted 56 pre-trial proceedings. The indictments were nine against 14 accused persons. A total of 14 persons were convicted.

- Document forgery and identity fraud

In the counteraction of document forgery and identity fraud, **seven organised crime groups with 35 participants** were detected **in 2007**, and charges were brought against 31 of them (in 2006 – **6 organised crime groups with 20 participants**).

A large part of the groups were detected at an **early stage of perpetration of the criminal activity**, as a result of which the circulation of a large quantity of certifying documents and their potential use in the EU Member States was prevented.

- High-tech crimes

Financial fraud through Internet banking was detected for the first time in 2007, along with the organisers of the criminal scheme, who are resident abroad. Prompt and proportionate measures were taken to prevent abuse in the use of Internet banking services.

In view of detecting financial fraud through Internet banking, checks on 60 signals of bank fraud totalling BGN 1.2 million were conducted in 2007. Transfers of over BGN 570,000 were halted and prevented. Twelve pre-trial proceedings were initiated.

Two pre-trial proceedings against five accused persons were instituted in connection with other cases of Internet fraud.

*In the counteraction of high-tech crime, **six organised crime groups with 31 participants** were dismantled in 2007. A total of 41 pre-trial proceedings against 52 persons were initiated.*

In 2006 3 organised crime groups with 13 participants were dismantled

The cooperation with Member States in the fight against cross-border organised crime is enhanced.

In 2007, Bulgarian competent authorities requested 112 persons internationally under EAWs; 93 persons were surrendered by Bulgaria to other EU Member States under EAWs; other EU Member States surrendered 34 persons to Bulgaria under EAWs; 103 extradition proceedings were instituted under EAW issued by other EU Member States.

The Bulgarian police are asserting themselves as a reliable partner of the European structures in the fight against cross-border organised crime. Police cooperation has been expanded and enhanced. Productive international police operations and parallel investigations have been carried out.

Active cooperation is pursued with the law-enforcement authorities of the US, the UK, France, Germany and Austria to prove the money laundering of proceeds from drug trafficking. Participation in one international operation for money laundering and two international operations for online distribution of pornography. A total of four pre-trial proceedings against eight persons have been instituted.

Two parallel police investigations have been conducted jointly with the FBI in connection with fraud using the Internet, and two international operations have been carried out.

In 2007 Bulgarian specialised services participated in 17 parallel police investigations and 18 international police operations for counteraction of drug trafficking. A total of 159.7 kg of heroin, 90.3 kg of cocaine, 262 kg of amphetamine, 12,960 l of acetic anhydride and 1,769 tablets of synthetic drugs were seized outside Bulgarian territory.

A total of eleven organised crime groups trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation have been neutralised as part of the effort to suppress human trafficking and the white slave trade and in execution of investigation requests and parallel police investigations with France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Norway and Austria.

Three parallel police investigations were carried out jointly with representatives of Europol, the Hungarian Police and the Greek special services to suppress the distribution of counterfeit currency and payment instruments.