

Technical Meeting on Nuclear Forensics: From National Foundations to Global Impact

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Overview of criminal legislation and nuclear forensics capabilities in Western Balkan countries

The Western Balkan (WB) countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. All of them except Bosnia and Herzegovina are European Union (EU) membership candidates. Western Balkan countries are a part of the European neighborhood that is also close geographically and in terms of trade and smuggling routes to the Black Sea region, which is widely recognized as an area worst affected by illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials. The Western Balkans, forming a land bridge and the shortest transit route between the south-east flank of the EU (Greece, Bulgaria and Romania) and its central European 'core' (Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria), is arguably the part of the European neighborhood that merits significant attention from the EU in terms of response to and prevention of nuclear smuggling.

All the governments in WB region are legally and politically bound to support development of nuclear security, including radiological crime scene management and nuclear forensics capabilities. All mentioned countries have endorsed, signed and ratified multiple pertinent international treaties and other legal mechanisms, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment, and International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT). All the WB countries have already started incorporating the legal requirements into their national legislation.

Currently Serbia and other WB countries have legal ban on the use of nuclear power. That ban is expected to be lifted soon and therefore, the nuclear and other radioactive material holdings in the region will increase. Despite the recognized need for nuclear security capabilities development in WB, the gaps in availability of equipment and lack of practical experience and expertise in the area of nuclear forensics and radiological crime scene management persist. For example, in most WB countries, national nuclear security response plans are being developed, but they are still to be adopted and made comprehensive. Language barriers and other factors have contributed to a lack of systematized information about the criminal legislation and capabilities related to nuclear security in general and nuclear forensics in particular. This paper addresses this issue by giving a clear overview of existing legal arrangements and practical capabilities for nuclear forensics and radiological crime scene management in Western Balkan countries. It will also analyze that overview and provide recommendations on potential next steps towards optimal nuclear security capabilities.

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