



**CELBET**  
CUSTOMS EXPERT TEAM



**NO.6**

# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020

**CELBET 2 :  
MISSION  
COMPLETED**

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Dear Readers,



I am very pleased to present you the special edition of CELBET Newsletter. This publication, consisted mainly of interviews, is summarizing the second phase of CELBET: the two years of work of customs administration's experts from 11 countries. Ideas, practical solutions, joint activities on both sides of the border, lots of data, analyzes, summaries, assistance missions and overview of the EU external border strip are the result of the efforts of almost 300 people involved in the project.

Apart from tangible results and detailed reports, there is something more that CELBET team gained during these 24 months - relations between customs officers coming from various areas, not only in geographical meaning but above all, from various fields of challenges. Thanks to BCP Networks, CELBET experts connected with the officers from the first line of control and what is the most important nowadays – experts reached the data and information. Additionally, the contacts established between the officers during meetings are an excellent source of information exchange, proof of teamwork and practical benefits to all. Sharing - as a CELBET key message, is also expressed by trainings organized by Training team. Highly motivated trainers, specialized in their field are sharing best practices and knowledge that comes from years of experience and competence.

The two years of the second phase of CELBET are different than the previous one because of the project visibility and visual identity. A logo, website, Twitter account and dedicated graphic materials have been created to strengthen the CELBET message and to disseminate it outside the meeting room. For me, there was and still is an extraordinary adventure and evidence of what happens when the reliable team and preparation meet opportunity - the success story happens and surely will continue.

**PR expert**  
**Anna Hatała-Wanat**

## INTERVIEW

### **- With these great people it is a joy to do things that matter - highlighted Mr. Jyrki Linna, Head of CELBET**

**„CEL BET 2 : Navigating in winds of change” – that was the title of Your text in Newsletter No 2. which was launch of the second phase of CEL BET. I guess it shows that this phase was different than first one.**

For me it was different because of the new task as Head of CEL BET. Instead of big differences, CEL BET 2 was built on the succesful elements of CEL BET 1. And this is also the way we move on: building and facilitating networks to support Customs at the external land borders of EU, gathering and sharing relevant data on risks and capabilities of the BCPs, testing new tools for assessment of BCPs, organizing joint activities, establishing platforms for exchange of data, delivering tailored training, piloting new ways of working together. But we also need to be agile and recognize changing needs and expectations of CEL BET counties and EU.

#### **The most challenging during CEL BET 2 was...**

It has been a challenge to find a way to involve all the right people in an effective manner in order to reach tangible impact. This includes keeping the different networks active in serving both national and common goals. We also need to involve management –regional and central–when national decisions are needed. Language is an issue that needs regularly our attention. As we are ambitious, we will never be – and should not be - short of challenges.



#### **If You think about the biggest success over the last 2 years of CEL BET what it would be?**

We have six teams in CEL BET 2 and all of them have been able to give something practical for the benefit of Customs working at the border. The biggest success for me lies in the people. Team leaders and experts working for countless hours and full-heartedly for their countries and for CEL BET. Officers I have met at the BCPs, being proud of their important work; members of CEL BET networks, creating a team spirit second to none. With these great people it is a joy to do things that matter. And with our PR, we have reached a new level in the visibility. CEL BET would not exist without Customs 2020 programme funded by TAXUD. The cooperation with TAXUD has been active and fruitful, and the support from TAXUD has been visible and valuable.

At the end of CEL BET 2 we are now finally ready to share most of our outcomes with all EU Customs. In order to get the best out of our work and create new networks, wider communication is needed.



## INTERVIEW



**Thanks to CELBET area of activity which is EU external border strip almost 9 300 km long, You have got an excellent overview on what challenges customs is facing and what development has been made.**

There is one challenge we cannot overcome directly or in short-term. That is lack of human resources at some BCPs. I do not believe in slogan „doing more with less“. But we can do differently. We can intensify our joint efforts for a determined period. We can learn from each other. Most of the things we are working with can be done with more or less resources. The list of developments that have been done is long. Some of the recent ones are new ways to cooperate with other agencies at the border and new initiatives to develop cooperation with neighboring third countries. The diagnostic study tool has now been introduced after testing. Training is ongoing. I look forward to more operational missions during CELBET 3, the first steps have been now taken.

*The Head of CELBET is leading the CELBET management meetings, represents CELBET on the meetings and panels organized by the agencies/bodies/organizations working within the customs and safety matters. Head of CELBET is also responsible for organising meetings with the BCP Network in collaboration with CELBET team leaders.*

### What new will be in CELBET 3?

In all teams there is something new. The most important new thing is the feasibility study on the future of CELBET. It has become clear that CELBET is not just a project for solving short-term issues. Coordination of national Customs activities and building up satisfactory level of safety and security at the land BCPs is a process and cannot be finalised within a project-based activity with a short-term budget and lifespan. The analysis will contain a problem/needs statement, legislative environment, a feasibility study of possible future solutions, financing options, including funding of personnel costs and a pilot exercise on a most practical solution, if needed.

**„Leadership is about making people better as a result of our presence and then figuring out how to have that last without us...“ What is a leadership for You?**

Leadership for me is working together, respecting competencies, listening to everyone who knows more, communicating effectively in CELBET and with stakeholders, and finally making decision. Having said that, it should be noted that the work in CELBET is mainly done in the teams, led by team leaders, and huge responsibility in programme management lies on grant coordinator.



## INTERVIEW

**- I enjoy my job as CELBET grant coordinator very much -  
underlined Mrs. Pille Jogisoo, Grant Coordinator.**

**As a grant coordinator You are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the project. Can we say that CELBET 2 was a success story?**

Yes, of course CELBET 2 was a success story! I'm very satisfied to see that all ideas we had already in CELBET 1 more than three years ago how to enhance harmonisation of control practice and day-to-day management of BCPs at EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border have proven to be right ones. For example, just to name a few: establishing the BCP Network that has given valuable input from the ground to all CELBET teams, developing BCP Diagnostic study tool enabling evaluation of the capacity of BCPs, carrying out common trainings that contribute to more harmonised skills of customs officers working at the border, carrying out Joint Intensified Activities, analysing participating Member States risk engines capabilities and advising the interested ones in implementing synchronised checks at selected BCPs, starting with exchange of officers.

And the people working for CELBET! They have made CELBET a success – the team leaders, all experts both from the teams and networks, National Contact Points, our PR expert Anna, Head of CELBET Mr Jyrki Linna. I would also like to emphasise the big role of DG TAXUD in making CELBET 2 a success and well known among the Member States not being part of the project.

**Supplying DG TAXUD with all documents, preparing reports, managing the grant agreement, assistance to the team leaders in organizing teams' and network meetings... which part of Your activity was**

**was the most demanding and challenging during CELBET2?**

I don't take any CELBET activity as demanding or challenging. I enjoy my job as CELBET grant coordinator very much.



Maybe financial reporting in Excel files was challenging in the very beginning of the project not only for me but for all CELBET Member States. However, by today we have already got used to it. A new challenge might raise when the financial reporting has to be done in ART.

**You have been in CELBET from the very beginning, taking part in every step that the project has made. What are the most significant milestones of CELBET 2?**

I'm very lucky being part of establishing CELBET. I believe that the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between Member States in a matter of common interest has been our success factor also in CELBET 2. The most important milestones of CELBET 2 have been the Steering Committee meetings that took place twice a year. These meetings, dedicated for summing up our achievements, presenting topics for discussion and proposals for short and long term future of CELBET, were well prepared by CELBET Management – the Head of CELBET, Grant Coordinator, team leaders and PR expert. During these meetings a lot of valuable feedback on CELBET activities and recommendations for the future was given from the highest managerial level of participating Member States Customs Administrations and DG TAXUD.

*The grant coordinator is monitoring the implementation of the project, supplying DG TAXUD with all documents and information required under the grant agreement. GC also prepares interim and final grant reports, reminds partners of the timeline and contractual obligations of the grant agreement, provides assistance to the team leaders in organizing teams' and networks meetings by submitting the meeting invitations to MS, DG TAXUD and contacting Customs 2020 coordinators if necessary.*



## INTERVIEW

**- Role of customs in facilitating cross-border movement of goods, in particular humanitarian aid, is more than ever crucial - said Mr Jan Zralek, Steering Committee chairman.**



**You as a representative of Polish Revenue Administration hold the position of the Steering Committee Chair of CEL BET. You are also National Contact Point of CEL BET in Poland. Actually know everything about CEL BET, as one of those who took active role in creating the expert team. What expectations did You have and are You satisfied with the results?**

Indeed, we in Poland have been actively involved in and truly committed to the project. Today 15 years passed since most of CEL BET countries joined the European Union. In 2014, ten years after accession to the EU, we decided that time is ripe to look closer at the issue of EU external border protection and management in view of traditional and new challenges. We thought that it is important to evaluate experiences, both good and bad. We also thought that it would be appropriate to do it together with partner countries facing similar challenges. First discussion on this issue took place in Kraków in May 2014. At the invitation of the Polish Customs Service, on the occasion of 10th anniversary of joining the European Union, heads and high level representatives of Customs administrations from, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, who since 2004 have been responsible for

significant part of the EU external land border, met in Kraków to share and recapitulate experiences learned in this area. Five other Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland and Greece with different membership experience, but involved, directly or indirectly in the management of the EU external land border, as well as the European Commission also took part and substantially contributed to the outcome of the meeting.

**What were the objectives and results of the meeting?**

The main objective of the meeting in 2014 was to reflect on how to evaluate and define the perspective for the EU harmonized and equivalent management and protection of the EU external land border. The main conclusions of Kraków meeting were that:

- control at the external, eastern border is a common challenge for the EU and should be an important element in the discussion on overall governance of customs union;
- a need for the enhanced harmonization and equivalent management of the EU external land border. Harmonization process should include in particular: development of EU competency framework or customs border control, standardized availability and the use of X-ray scanning, better coordination with other agencies, share of equipment with other agencies where feasible, evaluation of one-stop-shop solutions and enhancement of fast ways, e-booking systems, implementation of joint border control practice with third countries, where feasible, following gap analysis, exploring perspectives and possibilities for joint procurement of control equipment for Member States.



## INTERVIEW

Most of these findings were then included in further discussion in Narva, Riga and Vilnius, which eventually led to creation of unique expert team- CELBET. Today, and this is not only our opinion, CELBET is one of the most practical projects in the customs area. It has a potential and it does effectively contribute to equivalent border customs control and coordinated border management. Needles to add that Poland is particularly interested in this issue, since we are responsible for the most busy eastern border stripes. Very special thanks are due to Estonian and Finnish colleagues for their efficient management and support for team work of the Group. I believe that Team work has become a kind of CELBET trade mark.

**Nowadays when all customs services are struggling with border traffic to stop pandemic of COVID -19 we see the role of customs, smart border management and information effectively disseminated. Maybe it's the time when CELBET may show its trustworthy part?**

COVID-19 disease, in particular its scale, is a very serious, global threat and challenge to the people and economies. It ignores borders, paralyzes way of life and the economies. In this context discussion on future model of trade is already taking place. For now though, the COVID 19 pandemic has set new, not yet fully predictable and defined challenges for customs and tax services. Role of customs in facilitating cross-border movement of goods, in particular humanitarian aid, is more than ever crucial. It is and will be necessary to monitor legal and organizational solutions undertaken at national level (especially in neighbouring countries) as well as at EU level in the customs area (e.g. changes, derogations in the provisions on customs relief, tariff changes, etc.). There is also an increased risk of taking advantage of the situation by criminals (which is already happening).

As this is a global challenge it requires coordinated, international response and action to be taken also by customs. The European Union and the WCO are closely monitoring situation and have prepared a number of initiatives and guidelines. Cooperation of Customs with other border services will be of particular importance. In this context participation in information sharing as well as implementing already elaborated CELBET instruments such as for example CELBET guidelines on joint Customs and Border Guard actions in crisis situation may prove to be particularly timely and useful.

**You are organizing and managing the Steering Committee meetings on which Heads of the customs administrations participate and review progress of the project. Is customs expert team needed? What is a SC members' opinion ?**

Answer to your question whether customs expert team is needed is simple: yes, it is needed. I hope that it appears clear also in view of earlier questions. As you know, during the steering committee we discuss and evaluate not only achievements and activities proposed for continuation. Above all heads of customs decide on issues of strategic importance. One of such themes which was recently discussed was the perspectives and possible modalities for the future of CELBET. General view of all was that border control and management is a permanent task, not to be tackled within limited in time project formula. Steering Committee members have in principle agreed on the need for continuation of CELBET. There were also convincing arguments for continuation under more permanent organizational set-up. Concrete proposals on possible future organizational modalities will be prepared during third phase of CELBET. I believe that this also answers your question.

## summing up CELBET 2

**A broader picture of threats, gaps related to resources, control equipment, sharing good practices, working methods, and management of risks on 174 border crossing points at the EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border.**

### BCP MANAGEMENT & EVALUATION TEAM

- BCP Networks
- Monitoring checks
- Diagnostic Study
- Diagnostic Tool
- tool for measurement of the border clearance and control time



### RISK MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Risk engine
- RIFS
- List of Risks
- collected seizures data and risks at border points
- interesting seizures collected



### TRAINING TEAM

- Training Platform
- „train the trainers” system
- Training Network
- Centres of Expertise
- cooperation with CLEP
- over 300 officers trained



### EQUIPMENT TEAM

- updating Inventory of BCP equipment
- technical specifications' advisory assistance
- Procurement Expert Network
- common use of equipment
- X-ray image and data exchange platform
- analysis on broader use of ANPRS



### COOPERATION TEAM

- Guidelines for CA and BG shift management
- Synchronized checks
- advisory mission
- concept of Joint Management of the emergency situation at the BCP
- idea of Shared BCP
- Balance Development of selected BCPs
- cooperation with Frontex, OLAF, EUROPOL



### OPERATIONAL CONTROLS

- Joint CELBET Activities
- Vulnerability Study and map at the EU land border related the cigarettes smuggling pressure
- Guidelines for missions/ exchange of customs officers



detailed teams' reports are available on PICS



## INTERVIEW

**- Monitoring checks results give us information on the level of smuggling. Cigarettes were the most seized goods at the Eastern and South-Eastern land border - explained Mrs Annika Magipold, BCP Management & Evaluation Team leader.**



**BCP Network was created during CELBET 2 and two rounds of the BCP Network meetings were organised. What exactly is BCP Network and how valuable have You found them?**

BCP Network connects the customs officials on the border crossing points. The BCP Network consist of 11 members from CELBET countries. They have been valuable partners in sharing the best practices, spreading CELBET recommendations and giving practical feedback to CELBET products. We organised BCP Network meetings regionally for Nordic, Central and Southern countries involving more customs officials from different BCPs. During the meetings, we had discussions on monitoring checks, measurement of the border clearance and control time, synchronised checks, results of JIAs, etc. During CELBET 3 the BCP Network members will be involved in BCP Diagnostic studies.

**Have You noticed the differences in challenges between BCP Networks ?**

Regarding the challenges, we all as customs officers are speaking the same language and understand each other, when we are talking about fighting against smuggling, new modus operandi, use of equipment, available resources. CELBET is aiming to provide solutions for these challenges. I hope, that the administrations will find a way to translate CELBET products into native language and spread information.

**In CELBET 2 You continued monitoring checks. Four stages of the monitoring checks were planned and performed on the third country border strips of: Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Serbia, North-Macedonia, Turkey, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Moldova. What are the monitoring checks and whether the data You have collected bring You expected results ?**

Monitoring check is a complete examination of a traveller and his/her personal belongings and the vehicle at the border by random selection based on statistical method called Systematic sampling. Monitoring checks results give us information on the level of smuggling and the conclusions can be expanded on all passengers' vehicle traffic at the BCPs. The results can be used as a tool for deciding, if additional measures are needed at the BCP.



## INTERVIEW

How to explain the systematic sampling in more simple way? For example, the random testing could be used for identifying the spread of coronavirus in community. Many countries are testing only those who show clear signs of infection. At the same time it is known, that many people do not have any symptoms and therefore the virus can be much wider spread in the community. Therefore random testing can give more data on how and why the virus is spreading in society and take appropriate measures based on the data.

**Another tool that You and Your team created is BCP Diagnostic Study tool. It has been made for evaluating the capacity of BCPs. Can You tell us more about this unique product?**

BCP Diagnostic study is a mission, when the Diagnostic team will evaluate performance and capacity of the BCP. The study should give an answer on the strengths and weaknesses of the BCP, what can be changed in short and long term, what are the possibilities, and how can the changes be done. The Diagnostic Study Tool supports the diagnostic study team to perform the evaluation. The tool is a unique Excel table with key-factors which cover all areas of the BCP: infrastructure, equipment, customs controls, risk management, training, cooperation and management.

**If You could tell, basing on the data Your team has collected, what is the biggest problem customs administration has to deal with ? What are the main needs of officers from the first line of control?**

The BCPs have different problems and it also depends, who and how evaluates the problem. Therefore, I hope that BCP diagnostic studies with using the unique tool will give us more information on problems and helps to provide solutions. During the site visits our team has learned that motivated and trained customs officials are most valuable for an effective work in a BCP. We have learned that a good cooperation between border agencies would reduce the border clearance and control time. An IT system can help to avoid duplication of activities, improves transparency, increases efficiency of customs controls and therefore supports to manage the BCP. In addition, border e-reservation systems could help to reduce the border queues significantly. Based on the monitoring checks, cigarettes were the most seized goods at the Eastern and South-Eastern land border. Due to COVID-19 outbreak the economic situation in the countries is getting worse and more people will be unemployed. Big differences between the cigarette prices might motivate for smuggling. This might increase the level of smuggling at the BCPs.

**What are the plans for C3?**

The Evaluation team will implement the BCP diagnostic studies together with the BCP Network. The team will also continue to implement monitoring checks and provide regularly overview to the CELBET Steering Committee on the situation at the Eastern and South-Eastern border strip. New Leader, Mika Poutiainen is from Finland. I continue in CELBET 3 in new team, Feasibility study team.

*The Border Crossing Point Management and Evaluation Team is aiming to establish common approach for measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of BCPs. The purpose is to support managers in their decision-making process with reliable data in CELBET MSs. The team uses the monitoring checks methodology for assessment of the level of smuggling on the BCPs. ME Team with other CELBET teams explores the best practices and describes a model of BCP which has a high level of performance in 6 areas (risk management, operational controls, equipment and procurement, co-operation and training).*

## BCP Network meetings



Greece 2018



Lithuania 2018



Croatia 2019



Poland 2019



Slovakia 2018



Finland 2019

## INTERVIEW

**- It is all about sharing the information - said Mr Marian Toth, Risk Management team leader.**



**Bruce Pittman said that: „Keeping the risk management plan up to date can transform it from a door stop into a vital project management tool. Remember: what you don't know can kill your project.” The main task of Your team was to collect the seizure data and risks at BCPs from the CELBET Member States. How have You been collecting it and did it give You a broader picture about the illegal movement of goods crossing EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border?**

The idea of gathering seizures data right is to have an up-to-date overview on actual situation at borders (trends, modus operandi, top seized goods). The RM Team collects data on seizures from the CELBET Member States quarterly. Most of the seizures are not shared among the Member States – they don't meet the criteria for issuing a RIF. Therefore, the Team considers this collection as a valuable added value and believes that sharing of risk-related information among the Member States helps to mitigate risks and provides information that would not be available otherwise. The Team clears, compiles and analyses the received data. The compiled raw data from all CELBET Member States are stored in an excel file and together with an analysis of the seizures are disseminated to the CELBET NRACs using CRMS-RIF. It gives Member States more information to mitigate risks at their borders.

This approach improved data sharing between CELBET NRACs and is considered as one of valuable deliverables from CELBET. The RM Team also supported JCAs with risk profiles which were issued after analysis of seizures data. We discuss the activity with CELBET NRAC Network like in November 2019 when the meeting took place in Riga, at the premises of the State Revenue Service of Latvia. All 11 CELBET MS were present at the meeting and active in sharing their national practices and ideas for future activities.

**Through all the months RM team issued several RIFS. What is it and what is the aim of it?**

It is all about sharing the information. The RM Team in cooperation with CELBET Member States gathers relatively much information – seizures data or adversely known persons or even details on risk management work in different customs administrations. All this data is being thoroughly analysed and is a starting point for analytical documents that we produce in the team. Of course, we do not leave the results to ourselves but share it with CELBET Member States. As the data is often of a sensitive kind, we disseminate our products by means of RIFs and secure emails – a safe and effective instrument for sharing risk related data.

**You have been also focused on analysing capabilities of national risk engines. What are the risk engines and can't they be helpful for CA?**

Risk engines are nationally developed IT systems to support and facilitate the control functions of National Customs administrations. They help customs officers and risk analysts to identify risky objects and to plan control measures like physical control of vehicles, documentary controls of passengers and declarations.



## INTERVIEW

All these measures are with intent to protect safety and security of the EU as well as the financial interests of EU and national budgets. We have been analysing different systems of the CELBET Member States. Systems like ANPRS (Automated number plate recognition system), Passenger registration system, and commercial transport risk engines of the Member States. The analysis of the risk engines provides valuable information for Member States, offers a possibility to learn from best practices applied by other Member States and make changes into their own IT systems after identifying areas needed to be upgraded.

**The RM Team has also created a questionnaire „List of Risks“. Your team cooperate closely with NRACs and BCP Network members in order to consult the data. What does the list contain, what is the purpose?**

The Team asked the BCP Network to cooperate and complete the questionnaire named as “List of Risks” and to provide information about the risks identified at the BCPs. It is an excel template which was used to identify what kinds of risks and threats might be present at the borders. Some of those risks might appear during everyday work at the BCPs and their presence is proved by reported seizures, others could be regarded as potential threats which might be proved by carrying joint control activities in the future. The List gives a possibility to evaluate and compare risks at neighbouring BCPs, Member States and border strips in road and rail traffic.

Due to the complexness and extent of the collected information, the RM Team decided to prepare an analysis of the received information to have an overview about the gathered information. The update of the List will be carried out during CELBET 3.

**The RM team started a collection of interesting seizures. Can You tell us something more about it?**

The RM Team started a collection of case studies (description and pictures) about interesting seizures in 2019. The presentation of the received data took place at the regional BCP Network meetings and at the Customs 2020 Land Frontier Contact Group plenary meetings. These materials are especially useful for broadening practical knowledge and for trainings needs. The cases were used during CELBET trainings as well and can be found at the webpage of the CELBET Training Team.

**What are the plans for C3?**

In CELBET 3 we look forward to making more in-depth analysis of national capabilities and strategies of risk assessment, control planning tactics, risk mitigation measures and other aspects of risk analysis.

As well as we plan to continue to gather and analyse significant seizure data. We also intend to have a more actual and updated situation in tasks done during CELBET 3 like List of risks and Risk engine capabilities report.

*The Risk Management Team gathers and examines the existing threat analysis and situational reports published annually by different organizations but also operates on the existing threat assessments that are essential for Eastern and South-Eastern land border customs. The team makes also proposals for JIA for EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border. RM team supports the National Risk Analysis Centres of CELBET countries by defining specific CELBET risk profiles, adjusting them periodically and sharing them on regular basis.*



## During 24 months of CEL BET 2

over **300** officers have been trained



over **140** meetings organized



over **23** visits at the border crossing points



[www.celbet.eu](http://www.celbet.eu)

## Over **1500** seizures were analyzed by Risk Management team...

### TOP SMUGGLED GOODS:

cigarettes,

medicines,

firearms and weapons

amber

### The amount of seizures ca:

**850**

**350**

**80**

**60**



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### INTERVIEW

**- In the context of scarce human resources in rail traffic at the EU border and the continuous development of the “New Silk Road”, the missions are very important - explained Ms Luminita Carasca, Operational Controls Team leader.**



**OC Team created a special product which has been continued in CELBET2 - Joint Intensified Activities, JIA that were carried out in all CELBET MS in passenger and cargo traffic as well as on the roads close to green border by customs mobile units. What is JIA and what is the purpose?**

Based on OC planning, JIA were controls carried out approx. 2 - 3 weeks by the customs officers in the road and rail border crossing points and mobile units on the second line control out of the BCP. The purpose was to improve discovering of illegal cigarettes, main risk at the EU land border and other illegal goods as well such as: drugs, firearms, counterfeits, cash more than 10,000 euro, etc.

**Taking all the data and JIA experience into account, your team has created a “Vulnerability Study” in regard of cigarette smuggling. What are the conclusions?**

The strategic management of the customs administrations may use this innovative tool in the decision-making process to prioritize with regard to the following:

- recruitment of customs officers,
- purchase of customs control equipment,
- development of infrastructure in the BCP,
- design by case contingency plans and
- planning customs controls.

**Can we say that Vulnerability Study is the result of all the data You collected and activities You organized?**

We thank Land Frontier Contact Group who provided us the raw data we used for compiling the Vulnerability Study. Yes, the concept of Vulnerability Study is the result of the team brainstorming in regard of targeting the customs controls. And the compiling of the data to produce the “Vulnerability Study” and the map are the merit of our team expert who allocated a lot of time for it. We thank him very much for this.



## INTERVIEW

**Sharing is caring as they say. Missions seem to be one of the best ways of sharing the experience and building the teamwork and network between the customs officers from the EU external border. First pilot mission was tested in rail traffic. What are the impressions and results?**

Following this experience, the team already drafted "Guidelines for missions/ exchange of customs officers" and they will be tested during CELBET 3 missions. Ideally, the document may develop into EU legislation. The participants found very useful the Polish rail specialist practically selected the wagons for physical examination in Finland and afterwards in Poland. In the same time, it was valued the exchange of experience in regard of the "management tools" in the rail BCP in Finland.

In the context of scarce human resources in rail traffic at the EU border and the continuous development of the "New Silk Road", the missions are very important to practically share good practices in the Member States. Then customs administrations can choose to adapt and implement these good practices. After consultations, Customs Controls team will analyze and decide about the missions in CELBET 3.

**What are the plans of the team in CELBET3?**

The team will continue to organize customs controls activities in the commercial and passenger traffic, road and rail BCP on the EU land border. Mobile units will be involved on the second line control out of the BCP as well.

The "Vulnerability Study" for road traffic will be developed more and tested. Together with the Rail Network and Member States, we will explore to extend it for the rail traffic. The team will also contribute to the Training team for creating training modules for rail traffic and proposal of Centre of Expertise for rail traffic.

*The Operational Controls Team aims at tackling smuggling at the EU land border and thus to be more efficient in preventing budget loss to the Member States. The Team organizes coordinated customs control activities in the BCP and also on the roads close to the green border for commercial and passenger traffic in all CELBET Member States. The team cooperates closely with RM Team and ME Team. OC Team developed together with FRONTEX a Training material for Customs and Border Guards at non- commercial traffic BCP.*



## INTERVIEW

**- With the Centres of Expertise we want to guarantee long-term impact of the CELBET training both at EU and national level - highlighted Mr Norbert Jakus, Training Team leader.**



**"Train the trainers" is one of the effective training approach. TR team applied the results from CELBET 1 to CELBET 2 training activities. Why?**

"Training the trainer" is a proven way of distributing knowledge, taking into account the regional aspect, as the CELBET region is undoubtedly large geographically. This is a real fact. With CELBET, this approach is multiplied by the language capabilities of the regions. Cooperation with experts / trainers from CELBET countries shows that so far, for each area, each country can represent this role at the required level. We verify the possibilities of target groups where we could direct our education directly to the colleagues from the performance, the generation of younger colleagues - newly recruited could be linguistically proficient. At the same time, in train the trainer courses, it is expected that the content will automatically be transferred to a larger number of participants thanks to ongoing national trainings. This trend was strengthened mainly during CELBET2, while CELBET 1 made a significant contribution to the training needs mapping and drafting the training catalog.

**TR team has established the TR Network. What are the main topics that Network is working on?**

Establishing such a network of representatives has proved to be both practical and desirable. It is important to have friends in each CELBET country. It is a fair group of colleagues that responds to the needs of their country, communicates opportunities, recommends trainers but also participants. Thanks to this network we try to be connected with the CELBET countries and regularly update information. Country nominations vary slightly but it still works. We are trying to connect with national training departments so that we can represent each other properly and not compete.

**Some of the trainings are supported under Commission's CLEP programme. What and how many trainings have been organized within the CLEP?**

Commission support, namely the CLEP program, has helped us greatly to start our intentions. We can respond more quickly to the needs of CELBET countries. Yes, this might look like an ideal connection and use of existing possibilities. If I were to highlight the benefits of CLEP, it is certainly worth mentioning the joint training with Frontex "Enhanced cooperation between customs officers and border guards" in Bulgaria last year. Thanks to CLEP for the first time we had the opportunity to organize this activity under the heading of CELBET. So far this area has been under the umbrella of FRONTEX.



## INTERVIEW

But certainly we need to highlight our joint training with the Polish administration - Bus search, or with the Hungarian administration of Customs control process. In both cases, thanks to CLEP, the contents of these trainings as well as the teams of trainers have stabilized and created good prerequisites for the creation of centers of expertise on these topics in the future. Another benefit of CLEP is that other EU countries outside the CELBET region can also be involved in these trainings. It is one of our priorities for the future. At the moment we are looking for financial support for the trainers' preparatory meetings, this is outside the CLEP financial rules.

**In order to disseminate the training materials more widely and to reach to more customs officers TR team created a The CELBET training platform. How does it work? Is it popular among officers?**

The training platform should be considered as a CELBET training tool and a CELBET training catalog in one. At the moment, it is primarily a support for our classic trainings, coaches. All training materials for our training are stored in one place. Both for pre-training and for classical teaching as well as for the post-training phase.

It is also an area where already trained trainers following "train the trainer" approach can use all available materials for national implementation.

I believe that gradually we will be able to open some of the trainings as pure e-learning and reach hit a lot of colleagues at the same time. We also plan to distribute practical video instruction on various technical equipment, for example. We have to be careful with popularity as any flame can quickly go out.

What we want to have is quality and motivating products and keep interest after launching e-learning courses, and not to underestimate any phase of the implementation. If someone gets a negative experience it is difficult to return him to the playground in the future. So yes, the interest in our platform is increasing, unfortunately our capacity is limited, but we are still in line with our work plan.

**Some of the CELBET MS customs administrations are specialised in particular area of control. Was it the background of the idea of Centres of Expertise? and how the Centres are functioning?**

The idea is not new, but its realization was made possible as a CELBET initiative, supported by the European Commission. To explain it in a simple way, CoE for training purposes has three main pillars: expertise, financial resources and procedures. The first one, the existing, proven training expertise of a certain MS in the customs control area, includes trainers, content, experience. The second one, money, it is needed for developing, sharing and distribution of this expertise among other MS. The third one, the procedures are the mechanism to make CoE work with an added value compared to the traditional delivery of single trainings. In fact, it is quite a complicated process and our big challenge is to gradually establish the effective functioning of these CoE, involving all stakeholders and continuously improving the processes. It means regular trainings according to the needs, stable finances, expanding the network of trainers and the coverage of target groups, developing or improving content in line with the trends, etc. With the CoE we want to guarantee long-term impact of the CELBET training both at EU and national level.



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The first step was made with the establishment of the first 4 CoE in 2019 – Car search, X-ray image analyzing, Sniffer dogs training and E-learning. An example of their functioning are the already provided trainings under their umbrella with different target groups: CELBET MS, EU MS and also at national level for a specific CELBET MS. We have already agreed on the training activities under CoE for 2020. The second step is to develop clear guidelines on the CoE and to provide support to all partners involved. As it's a complex task it was proposed as a topic for a project group under the European commission and CELBET. One of the main issues to be covered is the content development of new CELBET trainings.

### **How many trainers and how many trainings have been organized by Your team in C2?**

In the beginning of C2 we made a research about the training needs and about the available trainers for the most requested training topics in the CELBET MS. Based on the results we put our efforts to deliver as many of them as possible. Under C2 we managed to deliver 11 trainings on 7 different topics. Moreover, under the Centres of expertise, we delivered 3 trainings at national level – in Greece and Estonia. We were able to do it thanks to the contribution of lots of trainers and experts. Currently we have a list of more than 100 potential and active trainers who are ready to support CELBET trainings. So far, around 30 trainers have participated in the delivery of CELBET trainings at international and national level.

### **What are the future steps in C3?**

C3 has big goals as well as potential to significantly increase its impact at EU and national level. In the training we will focus on three main layers: improvement, enlargement and standardization. Improvement means that we will develop all of the successful activities: the CoE, the Training platform, the networks, the procedures, etc. Enlarging the scope of the training activities could be considered in several areas: reaching bigger target groups, which is the main goal of the national implementation of the CELBET trainings; establishment of new Centres of expertise on priority training topics which will raise stability and efficiency; expanding the trainers' network in order to cover more topics and

trainees, etc. At the same time we will take care of the quality of the training system through enhancing the training standards. One of the very new initiatives which is already planned is the of Anti-corruption training targeted at BCP officers. It will be organized in cooperation with Frontex.

We are assessing the situation continuously and depending on the actual needs we can also implement more new concepts, for example basic training to target newly recruited customs officers.

Due to the increasing number of training activities, webinars will be used as a support tool, for example in the preparatory phase but also to deliver short training topics

*The Training Team develops common training system for EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border officers which ensures the harmonized level of the knowledge and skills needed for effective performance. Experts of TR team organize the exchange of good practices and also analysis urgent training needs, defines training delivery approaches, training strategy, and develops common training catalogue (list of common training topics, a pool of experts who meet the trainer's requirements set and a list of countries where training could be delivered. Thanks to TR team joint trainings with Frontex are established.*

# Trainings in Centres of Expertise



## INTERVIEW

**- We are happy that Equipment Team could organize the first CEL BET Mission between Slovakia and Hungary - underlined Mr Andras Bartha, Equipment Team leader.**

**Everything is possible with the right equipment. EQ team has prepared a comparison exercise for updating the inventory of available and practically deployed equipment on border crossing points. What is the purpose of the comparison? Are the results expected?**

The inventory provides an overview of deployment of customs control equipment at land border BCPs such as X-ray devices, ANPRS, radiation detection equipment, scales, etc. and other detection tools like small inspection devices and detection dogs. The document aims to visualize inventory data and extract information that can be used for better decision making. In order to accomplish Customs role and legal obligations in the EU, BCPs must be equipped with the infrastructure and the technical equipment, which is an absolute prerequisite for effective and efficient controls at the external borders of the EU. During the analysis EQ team has processed more than 13 000 data from 169 BCPs and made various graphs to present the main characteristics of BCPs and to visualize the real situation on each area of deployed detection technology at the EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border.

As it was expected between years 2015 and 2018 the situation hasn't been significantly changed. The overview concludes that there is a need for additional EU funds (or other financial sources) to procure and maintain control equipment in order to perform effective customs control for ensuring the safety and security of the European Union and its citizens.



**Your team brings also an advisory function in supporting MSs to prepare technical specifications for customs detection equipment. What are the pillars of the function? How does it look like?**

This task consists of advising MSs in preparing technical specification of procurements on various items of customs detection technology and comment prepared user requirements by providing remarks and advice for technical solutions. MSs can exchange good practices and draft recommendations for procurements and maintenance of customs control and detection equipment through the EQ team.

**Many CEL BET activities are based on networks. You have created Procurement Expert Network. What is it?**

As communication with the representatives of MSs is a matter of primary importance, a Procurement Expert network was established. Via this network MS can collaborate with the experts from the EQ team on matters related with preparing technical specifications for procurements of customs control and detection equipment. Experts of the network can also give feedback on feasibility of EQ deliverables taking into account the particularities of the national procurement legislation.



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### **Going back to CELBET motto that sharing is caring You have to tell us about EQ team's product: common use of equipment between Member States**

We are happy that EQ team could organize the first CELBET Mission between Slovakia and Hungary. A pilot exercise was organized in co-operation with other CELBET teams to analyse the possibilities for sharing or common use of equipment deployed in land border crossing point. The objective of that exercise was to test the common use of equipment between Customs Administrations of Slovakia and Hungary as well as working together in real control situations and exchange of experience and good practices. Each team consisted of 7 members: one delegation leader responsible for the whole group, two x-ray specialists, two dog handlers with sniffer dogs to detect tobacco products, and 2 car search specialists/rummage officers worked together on the first day at the Slovakian-Ukrainian border and on the second day at the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. After the programme the exercise was evaluated and it was pointed out that all participants liked the idea of sharing experience on use of different technical equipment and practical knowledge on working methods and supported continuation of similar exercises. On the basis of the success of the idea of CELBET Missions during CELBET 3 EQ team will propose and assist missions organised by the Cooperation team for movement of officers and customs detection technology, from one country to another in order to share practical experiences by working together.

### **EQ team closely cooperate with TR team. As a result of this fruitful cooperation an X-ray image and data exchange platform has been created. What was the reason of making this kind of tool?**

The platform has been created to ensure exchange of X-ray images between CELBET MS with the purpose of enhancing training of x-ray operators and to develop their skills and ability to analyse X-ray images. This solution and the common thinking with experts of DG TAXUD and other X-ray contact groups also helps the development of CRMS 2 technology corner and this way CELBET can contribute to achieve whole EU level goals and assist cooperation between x-ray image interpreters.

### **Your team have been working on analysis and recommendations on broader use of Automated Number Plate Recognition System (ANPRS). What are the results?**

The analysis on broader use of ANPRS justified that ANPRS is a very helpful tool to enhance more efficient customs control of traffic of vehicles at the external EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border as well as inside the EU territory. ANPRS has a tremendous potential for future development, especially if national ANPRS databases of CELBET MS are linked between Member States and data between such systems is exchanged.

### **What are the plans for C3?**

EQ team during C3 will work towards ensuring that the BCPs operating at the EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border would be equipped with sufficient, reliable, state-of-the-art and efficiently used customs control equipment taking into account the risks at the EU external land border. Our aim is to coordinate the information flow of best practices in the equipment area and provide advice for coordinated procurement and use of customs control and detection equipment. Personally, I have to be prepared for a new challenge as I will take over the head of CELBET position in the halftime. This means that for the first one and half year I parallel with the EQ team leader post need to be involved some more managerial tasks too.

*The Equipment Team finds solutions for ensuring that the BCPs operating at the EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border is equipped with tailored set of technical appliances, taking into account the risks, threats and traffic flow at the border. This team produced an inventory of the control and detection equipment and keep this regularly updated within the mandate of the expert team. Experts from EQ team draft recommendations for coordinated or joint procurements and maintenance of customs control and detection equipment.*

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**- There are a lot of advantages of jointly operated BCP's: enhanced border performance, customer friendly environment, lower infrastructure operating costs and alignment of the performance standards - explained Mr Bartosz Gruszecki, Inter-agency and 3rd Country Co-operation Team leader.**

**I guess the key to success is triple C: cooperate, cooperate and cooperate. During the second phase of CELBET You and Your team prepared a report containing proposals for required actions for cooperation between Customs Administrations and Border Guard shifts management at the BCPs. What includes this report and how it can bring advantages to both services?**

Inter-agency and 3rd Country Co-operation Team elaborated the Customs and Border Guards shifts management procedure in form of easy to use and follow check-list of shift leaders actions. The main aim of the check-list is to provide to the hands of shift leaders acting at the land BCPs a practical tool increasing efficiency of shift management and improving cooperation between Customs and Border Guards. However, during the consultation process and frequent visits and interviews with shift leaders at various BCPs we realised that we could conclude several more general statements regarding BCP Shift Management at contemporary land border crossing points. The most important of them are:

- 1) Shift Leader is a key management position at the border crossing point that affects the overall performance of the BCP
- 2) The scope of the BCP Shift Leader's activities is usually too wide, forcing him too often to prioritize some activities at the expense of the other
- 3) The BCP Shift Leader performs a significant number of activities other than management which significantly hampers his concentration on shift management



- 4) Cooperation between Customs and Border Guards shift leaders is still based mainly on routines and depends on personal relations
- 5) As a rule, the managerial actions of the BCP Shift Leader are not supported by an appropriate electronic tool.

**Synchronised Checks concept is the product that has been examined in CELBET 1 but successfully continued in second phase of the project. What are the synchronized checks?**

In simple words, the essence of synchronized checks is closer cooperation between the border guards and customs officers. In the classical BCP system, the car is checked first by the border guard and then by the customs officers. One-stop system provides the solution when the car stops only once and all checks are performed simultaneously. In a more advanced module of synchronized checks, customs officers and border guards exchange functions and all checks are carried out not only in one place but also by one officer. The most advanced module makes border crossing on average 20% faster and use of service's human resources more flexible.



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### **Coop team delivered advisory mission to Croatia. Can You tell us more about it?**

The focus of this mission was to assess the situation in the field of cooperation between customs and border guards in Croatia and work out proposals of the solutions to be implemented at the external borders of Croatia. First, we introduced the EU policy in this area and together with the participants assessed the current situation in the country. Both local level and high-level representatives participated in the mission (more than 20 participants). As a result of two-day work, the list of recommendations for improving the situation in the area of inter-agency cooperation was worked out. 9 areas of cooperation were mentioned in the list and practical solutions were offered. The document was forwarded by CELBET to the DG of Croatian customs. Now in the hands of Croatian colleagues there is a tool how to make their work even more efficient and implement the recommendations of the European Union.

### **Another issue that became so meaningful nowadays during pandemic and challenging situation on borders, that Coop team prepared are recommendations on draft agreement on the joint management of the emergency situations and peak time at the BCP. Have You tested it? What are the outcomes?**

According to EU Guidelines on further development of the cooperation between Border Guards (BG) and Customs (CA) (updated in 2018) at the national level, written cooperation document should contain contingency planning at national, regional, local level to increase the response capacity for border control. Additionally, according to the recommendations worked out by CELBET 1, CELBET Member States were encouraged to conclude the agreements with BG and with CA and BG of the neighboring countries on throughput capacities of BCP's.

Following the recommendations, CELBET 2 Co-operation Team explored existing agreements and based on research study worked out written procedure on the joint management of the emergencies and peak time at the BCP – model quadrilateral agreement on joint Customs and Border Guards management to ensure uninterrupted vehicles traffic at the land border-crossing points in the cases of congestions and emergencies. The main objectives of the agreement are to speed up border crossing process and to increase BCP capacity by using available resources and even more as it is possible.

### **Where was it tested?**

Following CELBET 2 recommendations Greece tested the standard national procedure (between national CA and BG) during the period 20-27 January 2020 at the BCP Evzonoi. Greece did not face any problem during the testing of procedure. Taking into account, that high traffic at the BCP Evzonoi – BCP Bogorodica will be during the summer period and period of the holidays of North Macedonia, experts recommend testing the next pilot in cooperation with North Macedonia by applying advanced procedure among four partners (Customs and Border Guard/Police from Greece side and from North Macedonia). The idea of joint BG and CA management procedure of the emergencies and peak times between EU and neighbouring 3rd country was presented and promoted by CELBET 2 Co-operation Team to Lithuania and Belarus as well during the site visit at the BCP Silene (LV) – BCP Urbani (BY) (Latvian-Belarus border) on 26 February 2019. During the site visit, Co-operation Team invited Lithuania and Belarus to join the project, and presented in details and in practice the procedure implemented by Latvia and Belarus.



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As the result, it is essential to recognize that on 4 November 2019, the Heads of the Customs and Border Guard Services of Lithuania and Belarus signed the protocol. Contingency measures foreseen in the Procedure are designed and based on the CELBET2 recommendations and the best practices of other EU Member States, following the Guideline. Additionally on 2 April 2020 Hungary announced, that on the basis of CELBET 2 suggestion - Deliverable 6.2.D. "Written procedure on the joint management of the emergency situations and peak time at the BCP", Hungary started the preparation of quadrilateral agreement with Ukraine and Serbia on the joint management of the emergency situations and peak time at the BCPs.

**You participated in Eastern Partnership Panel on "Migration, Mobility and Integrated Border Management" in Odessa in September 2018 and during that meeting You promoted Concept of shared BCPs. What is the shared BCP and what phase the concept is?**

There are two terms relevant to the idea of performing border control activities jointly by two neighbouring countries: Shared BCPs and Joint border control. Both of them describe the idea from a little different point of view being complementary to each other. Joint border controls refer to the concept of two neighbouring Customs and Border Guard administrations entering into an agreement to operate Customs control jointly, i.e. to coordinate export and import controls, opening hours and competences. Ideally, joint controls are conducted in juxtaposed Customs offices where physical and technical infrastructures are shared. Shared BCPs is a term introduced by Schengen Borders Code and it is defined as a border crossing point situated either on the territory of a Member State or on the territory of a third country, at which Member State border

guards and third-country border guards carry out exit and entry checks one after another in accordance with their national law and pursuant to a bilateral agreement. There are a lot of advantages of jointly operated BCP's. The main important are: enhanced border performance, creation of the customer friendly environment, lower infrastructure and operating costs and alignment of the performance standards.

The practice of jointly operated BCP has been implemented by 3 CELBET member states at the following BCP's:

Croatia - border with Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Jasenovac – Gradina

Hrvatska Kostajnica – Bosanska Kostajnica

Ličko Petrovo Selo–Izačić

Maljevac – Velika Kladuša

Klek – NeumI

Gabela I – Gabela

Metković – Doljani

Hungary: Bácsalmás-Bajmok (border with Serbia)

Poland ( border with Ukraine)

Zosin– Ustilug

Dołhobyczów– Uhrynów

Budomierz –Hrushiv

Krościenko –Smolnica

**Lithuanian and Belorussian, Polish and Belorussian and Latvian and Belorussian borders connect one idea: balanced development of the selected BCPs. What were the foundations? How it was developed?**

Foundations of Balanced BCP procedure are related to the need of neighboring countries to assess in clear and unified way the deficiencies influencing throughput capacity of the BCP , taking into consideration infrastructural and organisational capacities of both neighbouring sides.



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Coop team has elaborated a benchmarking procedure, establishing the steps necessary to conduct analysis of the neighbouring BCP's capacities in result providing possibility to identify significant performance differences, demands and needs for possible actions/adjustments and measures on national levels.

**Frontex, OLAF, EUROPOL – are the bodies Your team cooperates very closely. One of the common activity was application of T2 transit procedures & T2L documents. What role had Coop team ? and what are the results?**

The main idea behind the operation was to engage new actors into the CELBET operations and enhancement of awareness between the participants regarding the vulnerability of the T2 procedure in terms of abuse. Results of operation completely approved the team intentions. Especially, enhancement of cooperation among the participating BCPs – shift exchange of information. Improved cooperation with OLAF and implementation into CELBET operations VOCU as an effective platform for information exchange turned out to provide additional value of the activity. Promotion of the cooperation with 3rd countries (in this case North Macedonia) during the CELBET activities was the next distinctive feature of the JIA. CoopTeam arranged the operation, cooperation both: with other agencies and 3rd countries. CoopTeam experts were personally engaged in the information exchange and coordination of the cooperation between BCPS during the action.

### What are the future steps in CELBET3?

Co-operation Team is going to extend its role beyond two previous components of inter-agency and 3rd country cooperation with an additional component: facilitation of cooperation between CELBET members. For developing this task, the team is going to explore relevant Frontex Focal Point network experience. The missions will be designed as a target-oriented by precise description of the objectives and post-evaluation methods. BCP Network will be engaged in the process. Additionally, the component for facilitation of cooperation between CELBET members involves harmonisation of the specific approaches to the neighbouring countries continuing the Border Strip Approach as established in CELBET 2. The team is going to continue its close cooperation with DG TAXUD in the area of assessing implementation of the Guidelines on CA/BGs cooperation in CELBET MS.

*The Inter-agency and 3rd Country Co-operation Team is to ensure both effective cooperation and coordination between customs administrations and border guard/border police and with neighbouring third countries services operating at the BCPs of the EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border. The team develops and pilots the Customs Administrations and Border Guard shift management procedure and also explores and implements joint management procedures for the emergency situations at the BCPs. The team supports enhancement of border strips cooperation by unifying approaches of the CELBET Member States to the same neighbouring 3rd country.*



More information about CELBET activities on

[www.celbet.eu](http://www.celbet.eu)

&

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