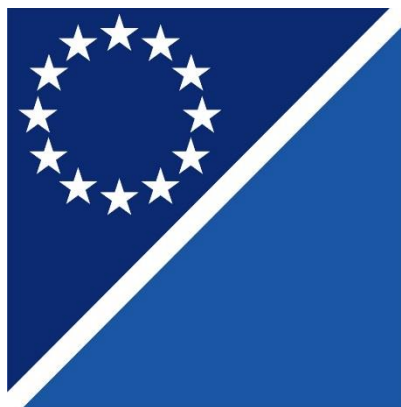


# REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

## 36<sup>th</sup> STEERING GROUP MEETING



*Summary and Decisions*

*November 2-3, 2021  
Zagreb, Republic of Croatia*

36<sup>th</sup> Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) Steering Group (SG) Meeting took place on November 2-3, 2021 in Zagreb, Republic of Croatia. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Justice and Administration of Republic of Croatia and organized by the RAI Secretariat.

## **Participants**

36<sup>th</sup> RAI SG Meeting was chaired by RAI Chairperson, Ms. Laura Stefan. It was attended by eight member countries' representatives:

**Albania** – Ms. Rovena Prega – Deputy Senior Representative, Head of the Anticorruption Programs Unit in the Anticorruption Directorate in the Ministry of Justice;

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** – Mr. Adnan Dlakic - Senior Representative, Expert Adviser, Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption, Ministry of Security;

**Bulgaria** – Ms. Milena Marinova, Delegated Representative, Senior Legal Advisor at EU and International Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Interior;

**Croatia** – Ms. Tamara Miserda, Senior Representative, Head of Sector for Prevention of Corruption, Directorate for European Affairs, International and Judicial Cooperation and Prevention of Corruption, Ministry of Justice and Administration, and Mr. Tomislav Matoc, Deputy Senior Representative, Senior Advisor, the Anti-Corruption Sector, Directorate for European Affairs, International and Judicial Cooperation and Prevention of corruption, Ministry of Justice and Administration;

**Moldova** – Mr. Valeriu Cupcea, Deputy Senior Representative, Head of the International Cooperation Directorate, National Anti-corruption Centre;

**Montenegro** – Ms. Marina Micunovic, Deputy Senior Representative, Head of Unit for International Cooperation, Agency for Prevention of Corruption;

**Romania** – Ms. Roxana Florentina Serbanoiu, Senior Representative, Legal counsellor, Crime Prevention Department, Ministry of Justice;

**Serbia** – Ms. Milica Pavlovic, Deputy Senior Representative, Ministry of Justice.

**RAI Secretariat** was represented by:

Ms. Desislava Gotskova – Head of Secretariat;

Ms. Aneta Arnaudovska, Senior Anti-corruption Advisor;

Ms. Dejana Grbic-Velagic, Chief Programme and Communications Officer;

Ms. Aida Zukic – Chief Finance and Operations Officer.

## **Summary of Discussions**

RAI Chairperson, Ms. Laura Stefan, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants joining the 36th RAI Steering Group meeting. The SG members were greeted by the State Secretary Mr. Juro Martinovic on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Administration of Republic of Croatia, the host of the 36th RAI Steering Group meeting held in Zagreb. He stressed the importance of the national and regional efforts in prevention and fight against corruption, and commended RAI for the regional efforts invested in these areas.

### **1. Adoption of Agenda**

The proposed Agenda was adopted unanimously.

### **2. Information from the Secretariat: Work Plan 2021-2022 - what has been done and plan for 2022**

Information from the Secretariat on Work Plan 2021-2022 was initiated by the Senior Anti-corruption Advisor who recapped the structure of the Work Plan and offered a presentation of the summary of the mid-term evaluation of the Work Plan.

Chief Programme and Communications Officer continued the presentation by giving an in-depth overview of all currently implemented projects and the corresponding activities. She provided an overview of the activities planned towards implementation of the second year of the 2021-2022 Work Plan and the related projects. Particular focus of the presentation was set on the awareness-raising and communication efforts encompassed by the ongoing projects. Among the presented awareness-raising initiatives, Steering Group Members agreed to invest additional efforts in promoting the currently ongoing [small grants scheme for anti-corruption initiatives](#).

Senior Representative of Croatia suggested that RAI engages more with youth, in particular in the field of raising awareness of anti-corruption in schools.

Deputy Senior Representative of Montenegro suggested that, for the better track record and planning purposes, RAI Secretariat prepares a table/overview of all ongoing projects and lists down activities with their status of implementation and timeframes.

Finally, it was concluded that all projects and activities implemented shall encompass all RAI member countries (and observers where possible) to the highest possible extent.

### **3. Presentation and discussion about the new planning cycle for 2023-2024**

The Steering Group received presentation from the Chief Programme and Communications Officer about the RAI planning cycle and the projected timeframe for the next planning period. Following the presentation and discussion, the SG expressed openness towards reconsidering the length of the 2-year RAI planning cycle, prescribed by the RAI Strategic Document. To that end, Secretariat will develop a recommendation based on the consideration of the member-countries' needs, efficiency of the current planning cycle, donors' practices, and other relevant factors regarding the possible changes of the RAI planning cycle. This recommendation and the background analysis are to be presented at the next RAI Steering Group Meeting, alongside the Work Plan Proposal for the next planning cycle.

#### **4. RAI budget for 2022**

Chief Finance and Operations Officer presented the cumulative budget for 2022. It was noted that nearly EUR 1 million cumulative budget for 2022 is inclusive of RAI Core budget proposal as well as all project funds to be implemented in 2022 in line with their corresponding implementation schedule.

Ms. Zukic commenced the presentation by stating that RAI Core Budget proposal (member countries' funds) for 2022 totals at 285.000, and is inclusive of nine member countries' contributions, plus envisaged underspending from the 2021 Core budget. She noted that the underspending is a result of availability of additional funds from donor-funded projects to implement most of the activities, as well as the online format of activities and lack of travel cause by the COVID-19 restrictions.

Ms. Zukic noted that the Cumulative Budget for 2022 indicated that there are funds secured for activities covering all Work Plan Objectives, as well as cross-cutting issues. Finally, it was noted that the variety of donors as well as the retention of donors indicates that RAI Secretariats' fundraising efforts have been successful, and that the organization is growing in terms of the finances as well.

In conclusion, Chief Finance and Operations Officer reiterated the duration of ongoing projects in the light of timeframe for secured funds, and mentioned the projects that are currently in the negotiation phase, hence those funds were not included in the cumulative budget for 2022 for now.

RAI Core Budget for 2022 was approved by the Steering Group by consensus.

#### **5. *Tour de table* - Brief information from Senior Representatives and Observers on the most important developments and projects in line with current RAI Work Plan**

While the SG meeting was organised as an in-person event, tour de table exchange was organised as a hybrid session, including the Senior Representative of North Macedonia, Mr. Ivan Todorovski and the RAI Observers (Georgia, Poland and Slovenia) who were not able to join the SG meeting in person. During the session, senior representatives and observers presented recent anti-corruption developments in their respective countries on the most important developments and projects in line with current RAI Work Plan, as well as the most recent developments pertaining to the UNCAC Review Mechanism and GRECO Evaluation Procedures.

#### **6. Any other Business**

Head of Secretariat informed the Steering Group on developments as regards to the Regional Anti-corruption and Illicit Finance Roadmap, the project RAI cooperates on with the UNODC. Steering Group expressed the support regarding the programmatic partnership with the UNODC towards the implementation of the Roadmap in the coming period.

Ms. Gotskova informed the Steering Group on the activities placed towards planning a joint special event at Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC COSP) 9, as well as the initiative for admission of RAI as a permanent observer to the UNCAC COSP. In relation to this, she asked the SG members to inform the Secretariat about the members of the national delegations at COSP 9, as well as their opinions regarding the initiative for placing in the request for the UNCAC COSP observer status. In response, Steering Group approved initiating the process for admission of RAI as a permanent observer to the UNCAC COSP.

On the matter of RAI Secretariat's registered office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Gotskova informed the SG that Bosnia and Herzegovina relevant state authorities have not provided any alternative to the current arrangement, following the joint coordination meeting on this matter held in September 2021.

## 7. Cooperation with partners – exchange of views session

Head of Secretariat provided an overview of the efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation with RAI's long-standing partners, as well as the those made towards expanding RAI's cooperation and forging new partnerships. Then, she announced participation and interventions from International Anti-corruption Academy (IACA), Integrative Internal Security Governance Secretariat (IISG), Network of Corruption Prevention Authorities (NCPA) and Commission for the Resolution of Conflict of Interest of the Republic of Croatia per the arranged agenda.

Mr. Jaroslaw Pietrusiewicz, Chief of Staff/Head of Strategic Partnerships and Projects at IACA reflected on consequences of corruption globally, as well as the limited success of efforts towards curbing corruption in the SEE region, in the context of IACA's willingness to contribute to these efforts in the region. He noted that IACA-RAI partnership has a substantive potential in terms of making a sustainable impact on prevention and fight against corruption in the region. Mr. Pietrusiewicz informed the Steering Group on IACA and RAI Secretariat's efforts in generating the capacity-building program for anti-corruption practitioners from the region. He expressed the expectation that participants in the joint program will act as multipliers in their professional and national contexts, and supporting the anti-corruption drive of the region through a network. He informed that IACA is looking for funding opportunities for IACA-RAI joint endeavours. Following his presentation, Ms. Gotskova expressed the hope that IACA and RAI would be able to initiate a joint programme and present it at the next Steering Group Meeting. Establishment of cooperation with IACA was highly appreciated and supported by the Senior Representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Agron Sojati, Head of Integrative Internal Security Governance Secretariat (IISG) Secretariat provided an introductory presentation about the origin, structure and the mission of the IISG. He also presented the European Commission's guidelines on IISG membership for international and other relevant organisations. Ms. Maja Pinjo Talevska, Senior expert/Deputy Head of IISG Secretariat provided further details about IISG and the benefits of the membership in the organisation for RAI and its members countries. She noted that membership in IISG does not include any financial implications, while she also shed the light upon the obligations and benefits of the IISG members. She explained that members are expected to provide input for the IISG mapping, data collection and analytical processes, while in turn they obtain access to IISG needs and gap mapping products, as well as internal databases entailing needs mapping, response mapping, mapping support, analyses and reports. Ms. Pinjo Talevska underlined complementarity of activities undertaken by both RAI and IISG. In response, Ms. Gotskova underlined the benefits of combining efforts, in particular under the WB Counter-Serious Crime initiative, especially in the light of RAI's extensive expertise on fighting corruption. She expressed a hope towards placement of the membership application in IISG on behalf of RAI.

The next partnership showcased during this session is the recent one with the Network of Corruption Prevention Authorities (NCPA). Mr. Dragan Sikimic, Director of Agency for Prevention of Corruption of Republic of Serbia (ACAS) and the President of NCPA in 2021, informed the RAI Steering Group that NCPA has almost doubled the membership, with members from around the globe during the last year. He noted the NCPA's focus on the joint efforts to improve collection and dissemination of best practice and experiences in prevention of corruption. Mr. Sikimic underlined the benefits of the NCPA-RAI partnership are substantiated on the complementarity in the goals and endeavours, which focus on strengthening the

integrity, which represents more than a mere absence of corruption. He added that RAI is a valuable partner for all members and the NCPA. He also noted the ACAS' direct cooperation with RAI, on various projects. Ms. Natasa Novakovic, President of Commission for the Resolution of Conflict of Interest of the Republic of Croatia and one of the co-Vice Presidents of NCPA supported Mr. Sikimic's presentation reaffirming strides made by the NCPA during the recent period.

Ms. Novakovic underlined the importance of RAI in the regional context of the peer-to-peer cooperation and exchange of practices, especially in situations where bodies with the anti-corruption competences face unprecedented situations and problems that have already emerged and addressed by initiations in other jurisdictions. She underlined that such exchanges provide anti-corruption bodies with the unique strength that could not be ensured without the effective regional cooperation. Head of RAI Secretariat underlined the view of RAI as a provider and sponsor of the peer support among its member countries, which is particularly important, as anti-corruption bodies face similar problems in all jurisdictions across the SEE. RAI chairperson noted that facilitating the effective exchange among the bodies can aid in effective identification of new areas of cooperation, new topics, and emerging objectives to be included in the coming Work Plan. It was concluded that RAI remains a relevant regional platform, 20 years following its establishment.

As a part of the concluding remarks, Ms. Gotskova presented the initiative towards formalising the cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), with whom the Secretariat is working towards producing the text of the MoU. The MoU is to be shared with the Steering Group for approval.

## 8. Workshop / brainstorming session

Steering Group members engaged in the brainstorming session on further development of RAI as an organisation and taking the next steps in the organisational evolution and growth. Discussion highlights will be transposed in the development of the new RAI Work Plan, as well as in the strategic plans and direction of the organisation in the upcoming period.

### ***Conclusions and Decisions***

1. Steering Group took note of the Mid-term Evaluation of RAI Work Plan 2021-2022;
2. Steering Group took note about the new planning cycle for 2023-2024;
3. Steering Group instructed Secretariat to perform an analysis of factors related to the optimum length of the RAI planning cycle and formulating a resulting recommendation to be presented at the next Steering Group meeting;
4. Steering Group approved RAI budget for 2022;
5. Steering Group welcomed the Secretariat's initiative for RAI becoming member of the IISG;
6. Steering Group welcomed the Secretariat's initiative for RAI becoming and observer to Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption;
7. Steering Group agreed that RAI keeps investing efforts in being part of the Regional Anti-corruption and Illicit Finance Roadmap;
8. Steering Group welcomed the idea of RAI expansion, including new members and partners.