

International targeted checks at the Brenner Base Tunnel construction site

Representatives of the European Network on the Administrative Approach tackling serious and organised crime (ENAA) visited the largest tunnel construction site in Austria.

Vienna (OTS)

From the 10th to the 11th of April 2024, representatives of eleven EU Member States participated in an ENAA Field Visit at the Brenner Base Tunnel construction site in Innsbruck (Austria) and Bolzano (Italy). The Austrian and Italian authorities joined forces to organise this field visit and chose the Brenner Base Tunnel because of its importance as a joint once-in-a-century construction project at EU level.

The Austrian Minister of Finance, Magnus Brunner, stated, “I would like to extend my gratitude to all the national and international authorities and partners for this valuable exchange of experiences and our ongoing joint checks. Our approach regarding the Brenner Base Tunnel serves to monitor the construction site throughout the years through compliance measures and to conduct targeted checks according to our internal risk analyses. The Financial Police will continue to screen subcontractors in the construction industry, particularly those working on large construction projects.”

The field visit started with presentations by representatives of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria (BK), the Federal Ministry of Finance (Austria), the Labour Inspectorate of the Province of Tyrol (Austria), Guardia di Finanza (Italy), Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (Italy) and Prefettura di Bolzano (Italy). The presentations provided an opportunity to exchange successful methods of combatting serious and organised crime across different authorities. In Austria, the ENAA National Contact Point is located at Criminal Intelligence Service Austria.

The Austrian Director General for Public Security, Franz Ruf, remarked, “Criminal organisations generate approximately EUR 140 billion per year in Europe alone. Around 76% of criminal networks in Europe operate in two to seven countries and 86% make use of legal business infrastructure for their purposes. In this context, national borders increasingly lose their significance. Therefore, Austria’s collaboration with international authorities as well as the exchange of experiences play a crucial role. Together we take a stand against organised crime.”

Checks at the Brenner Base Tunnel construction project

Following the presentations, the Financial Police teams from Innsbruck (Austria) and Kitzbühel/Lienz (Austria), the Tyrol Aliens Police (Austria) and the Austrian Labour Inspectorate – in total 19 agents and officers – joined forces to conduct targeted checks at the Brenner Base Tunnel.

In order to prevent organised crime from infiltrating the legal economic infrastructure, it is especially important to check subcontractors at large construction sites.

During the check of the companies involved in this construction project, the Tyrol Provincial Police Directorate (Austria) checked the identity and documents of 24 persons while the teams of the Financial Police conducted checks of three companies and 26 employees in accordance with the Anti-Wage and Social Dumping Act (LSD-BG) and the Employment of Foreigners Act (AuslBG).

The labour inspectors identified seven deficiencies, some of which have already been addressed, and offered counselling regarding relevant topics, such as the coordination of construction works

at large construction sites and the EU's reduction of occupational exposure limit values. The exposure to dust and gases poses a major challenge for employers in the field of underground mining.

The Director of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, Andreas Holzer, explained, "The quality of the relationship between various authorities at a national as well as international level is crucial to successfully fight and prevent organised and cross-border criminality. The jointly-organised ENAA Field Visit at the Brenner Base Tunnel is a good example of efficient cooperation."