



@ON OPERATIONAL NETWORK TO COUNTER MAFIA-STYLE SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS

ABSTRACT

1. INTRODUCTION

The DIA is making a special effort in **countering transnational organised crime**, not only at operational level, but also trying to raise awareness among the foreign counterparts, to spread a greater perception of the transnational organised crime phenomenon, including mafia type. In this framework, it was deemed necessary to improve, during the six months period of EU Council Italian Presidency, a tool supplementing at operational level the existing cooperation models.

On **December 4th, 2014**, on Italian initiative, the **@ON Operational Network** has been officially approved by the **EU Council - JHA**¹.

2. WHAT IS @ON

The **@ON Network**, in coordination with Europol, makes it possible to deploy on-site specialised investigators², from police forces already members the Network, to fight “serious” and mafia-style organised crime groups operating inside and outside the European Union, facilitating the best practice exchange as well as the necessary trust relationship.

The **criminal groups under investigation** are mainly Italian, ethnic Albanian, Eurasians, motorcycle gangs and the emerging organizations (Nigerian, Turkish, Chinese mafias etc.) posing a serious threat for EU security and economy.

The @ON Network with its European grant Project called **ONNET**, is based on a Network of Countries and a “Core Group” (**Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium and The Netherlands**) serving as a control room with the aim of selecting the investigations to be supported.

The information exchange is through the SIENA safe channel, and after the *Core Group* selection of the cases to support, the communications are shared with the involved police forces and Europol for the analysis.

In particular the Network aims are:

- to **strengthen** the cooperation and communication between law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to counter mafia-style serious and organised crime groups through:
 - (a) **making available on site specialised investigators** as consultants³;
 - (b) **improving information exchange**, through the SIENA channel, to develop a more accurate intelligence picture of organised crime;
- to **support** the existing initiatives to improve the **administrative approach** in the fight against mafia-style organised crime groups, with a view to detect and recover the assets illegally acquired by criminal organizations.

The @ON added value is its streamlined and informal nature that makes possible to quickly support the investigations - both preventive and criminal - with investigators of the partner countries specialised on the specific investigated phenomenon.

¹ “Justice Home Affairs” chaired by Italian Minister of Interior dated December 4th, 2014

² It is up to the requested Member State to assess, decide and select the right investigators

³ @ON investigators (as experts) do not act as *police officers* and will operate according to the legislation of the requesting Member State

3. WHAT IS ONNET

To support the @ON Network activity, the **DIA** in 2018 undersigned the *Grant Agreement* with EU Commission for a **direct Grant (ONNET n. 817618)** of about **€ 600.000** in favour of adhering Countries LEAs, for a 24 months period, starting from **November 1st, 2018**, and recently **extended until December 2021**, because of the health emergency.

The **ONNET Project** provides for:

- **Operational Missions (OMs)** of @ON investigators in direct support to Investigative Units of requesting Countries;
- **Special Tactics:** loan of technical equipment (TE) and payment for informants (CHIS);
- **Operational Task Forces (OTFs)** to support the most complex investigations;
- **2 Operational Conferences (OC)**⁴ with the Heads of Investigative Units of the partner Countries.

At present the Network is supporting the Member States Investigative Units of @ON Network in **40 investigations**, has funded **131 operational missions** in favour of **567 investigators**, leading to the **arrest of 222 persons**, including **3 fugitives**, and **seized about 2.5 million euros, drugs** (including **21 cannabis plantations**) and **weapons**.

Contacts are underway between DIA and European Commission for **ONNET Project phase 2** that will start on **January 1st, 2022 until the end of 2023**, seamlessly with the present project.

ONNET aims also to complement the current EU Policy Cycle, lacking of a specific EMPACT priority dedicated to countering organised crime as such, regardless of the offences committed by them.

4. NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION

Besides **France** (SIRASCO⁵ and PJGN⁶), **Germany** (BKA)⁷, **Spain** (UDYCO⁸ and Guardia Civil), **Belgium** (National Police) and **The Netherlands** (Federal Police), part with **Italy** of the *Core Group* of the of Network, are partners together with **Europol: Hungary** (National Police), **Austria** (BK)⁹, **Romania** (National Police), **Australia** (AFP)¹⁰ **Malta** (National Police), **Switzerland** (Federal Criminal Police), **Czech Republic** (NOCA)¹¹, **Slovenia** (National Police), **Poland** (CBSP)¹², **Croatia** (National Police)¹³, **Georgia** (National Police)¹⁴, **Norway** (NCIS)¹⁵, **Albania** (CPD)¹⁶, **Portugal** (UNCT)¹⁷, **USA** (FBI)¹⁸ and **Sweden** (National Police)¹⁹.

Italy is represented by **DIA** and by **Carabinieri Corps**, **Guardia di Finanza** and **National Police** as partners, for a **total number of 22 Countries and 27 LEAs**.

Rome (IT), 16 November 2020

⁴ The 1st (OC-1) was held at Europol HQ on 16-17 April 2019, the 2nd (OC-2) is scheduled in Palermo (IT) on spring 2021

⁵ Service d'Information de Renseignement et d'Analyse Stratégique sur la Criminalité Organisée

⁶ Pôle Judiciaire de la Gendarmerie Nationale

⁷ Bundeskriminalamt

⁸ Unidad de Droga y Crimen Organizado Cuerpo Nacional de Policia

⁹ Bundeskriminalamt

¹⁰ Australian Federal Police

¹¹ National Organised Crime Agency

¹² Central Bureau of Investigations of National Police

¹³ Croatian Police - Criminal Police Directorate

¹⁴ Georgian Police - Central Criminal Police Department

¹⁵ National Crime Investigation Service

¹⁶ Criminal Police Department

¹⁷ Unidade Nacional Contraterrorismo - Policia Judiciaria

¹⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation

¹⁹ Swedish Police Authority - National Operations Department - International Affairs Division