



## @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 2014 EU Italian Presidency, a tool supplementing at operational level the existing cooperation models.

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

#### 2. WHAT IS @ON

The **@ON Network**, in coordination with Europol, makes it possible to deploy on-site specialised investigators<sup>2</sup>, 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 consultants<sup>3</sup>;
  - (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.

#### 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018**, and recently **extended until December 2021**, because of the health emergency.

<sup>1</sup> Justice Home Affairs

<sup>2</sup> It is up to the requested Member State to assess, decide and select the right investigators.

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

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)<sup>4</sup> 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 **43 investigations**, has funded **130 operational missions** in favour of **574 investigators**, leading to the **arrest of 225 persons**, including **4 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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** (SIRASCO<sup>5</sup> and PJGN<sup>6</sup>), **Germany** (BKA)<sup>7</sup>, **Spain** (UDYCO<sup>8</sup> and Guardia Civil), **Belgium** (Federal Police) and **The Netherlands** (National Police), part with **Italy** of the *Core Group* of the of Network, are partners together with **Europol**: **Hungary** (National Police), **Austria** (BK)<sup>9</sup>, **Romania** (National Police), **Australia** (AFP)<sup>10</sup> **Malta** (National Police), **Switzerland** (Federal Criminal Police), **Czech Republic** (NOCA)<sup>11</sup>, **Slovenia** (National Police), **Poland** (CBSP)<sup>12</sup>, **Croatia** (National Police)<sup>13</sup>, **Georgia** (National Police)<sup>14</sup>, **Norway** (NCIS)<sup>15</sup>, **Albania** (CPD)<sup>16</sup>, **Portugal** (UNCT)<sup>17</sup>, **USA** (FBI)<sup>18</sup> and **Sweden** (National Police)<sup>19</sup>.

**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), March 31, 2021

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

<sup>5</sup> Service d'Information de Renseignement et d'Analyse Stratégique sur la Criminalité Organisée.

<sup>6</sup> Pôle Judiciaire de la Gendarmerie Nationale.

<sup>7</sup> Bundeskriminalamt.

<sup>8</sup> Unidad de Droga y Crimen Organizado Cuerpo Nacional de Policia.

<sup>9</sup> Bundeskriminalamt.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Federal Police.

<sup>11</sup> National Organised Crime Agency.

<sup>12</sup> Central Bureau of Investigations of National Police.

<sup>13</sup> Croatian Police - Criminal Police Directorate.

<sup>14</sup> Georgian Police - Central Criminal Police Department.

<sup>15</sup> National Crime Investigation Service.

<sup>16</sup> Criminal Police Department.

<sup>17</sup> Unidade Nacional Contraterrorismo - Policia Judiciaria.

<sup>18</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation.

<sup>19</sup> Swedish Police Authority - National Operations Department - International Affairs Division.