



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

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### ABSTRACT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

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

The “**EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025**”<sup>2</sup>, inter alia, stated:

*“Against this landscape, it is crucial to scale up the dismantling of organised crime structures, targeting those groups that are a higher risk to Europe’s security and the individuals in the higher echelons of criminal organisations.”;*

*“At European level, the operational cooperation against mafia-style organised crime groups carried out through the @ON Network facilitates the on-site deployment of specialised investigators across Member States to assist in investigations into cross-border organised crime groups.”;*

#### 2. @ON NETWORK AIMS AND PURPOSES

The purpose of @ON is to strengthen transnational LEA cooperation against top-level OCGs and mafia-style affecting the EU MSs, focusing on the OCGs themselves, regardless of the offence committed.

The **criminal groups under investigation** are mainly Italian, Eurasian, Albanian OCGs and outlaw motorcycle criminal gangs, but also the new ones (i.e. Chinese, Nigerian, Turkish OCGs etc.), posing an increasing threat for EU security and economy.

#### 3. HOW IT WORKS

The @ON Network, in coordination with Europol, makes it possible for the EU Member States to request the **quick deployment, on the spot**, of @ON Network investigators, as consultants<sup>3</sup> specialized in the fight against these kind of criminal networks.

The most effective investigative techniques are shared among LEAs, facilitating the best practice exchange as well as the necessary trust relationship.

This way, @ON also support the existing initiatives to improve the **administrative approach** in the fight against organised crime structure, with a view to detect and recover the assets illegally acquired by criminal organizations.

The EU Commission, with the ISF Direct Grant, will support the activities of the @ON Network with an additional 2 million euros through the "ISF4 @ ON" Project (ISFP-2020-AG-IBA-ONNET-nr. 101052683) for a further 24 months (2022-2023).

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

The **information exchange** is through the SIENA safe channel among the involved LEAs and Europol for the analysis support.

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<sup>1</sup> Justice Home Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> The EU Commission document COM(2021)170 final, dated 14/04/2021.

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

#### 4. @ON SUPPORT

##### a. Deployment of investigators:

- deployment on the spot of specialised @ON investigators to support the investigative Units of requesting Countries, through *Operational Missions (OM)* or *Operational Experts* with long-term deployment on the spot (**OE**);
- operational meetings/Action days with the involved LEAs;

**b. Special Investigation Tools** by providing the loan of *Technical Equipment (TE)*, reimbursement of operational expenses related to lawful *covert human intelligence activities (CHIS)*, *Undercover Operations (UCO)* and expenses for *Language Assistance (LA)*.

#### 5. NETWORK PARTNERS

Up to now **30** LEAs, representing **25** countries have adhered to **@ ON NETWORK**.

Besides **France** (SIRASCO<sup>4</sup> and PJGN<sup>5</sup>), **Germany** (BKA)<sup>6</sup>, **Spain** (UDYCO<sup>7</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>8</sup>, **Romania** (National Police), **Australia** (AFP)<sup>9</sup> **Malta** (National Police), **Switzerland** (Federal Criminal Police), **Czech Republic** (NOCA)<sup>10</sup>, **Slovenia** (National Police), **Poland** (CBSP)<sup>11</sup>, **Croatia** (National Police)<sup>12</sup>, **Georgia** (National Police)<sup>13</sup>, **Norway** (NCIS)<sup>14</sup>, **Albania** (CPD)<sup>15</sup>, **Portugal** (UNCT)<sup>16</sup>, **USA** (FBI)<sup>17</sup>, **Sweden** (National Police)<sup>18</sup>, **Canada** (RCMP)<sup>19</sup>, **Latvia** (State Police) and **Luxembourg** (Police Grad-Ducale).

**Italy** is represented by **DIA** and by **Carabinieri Corps**, **Guardia di Finanza** and **National Police** as partners.

#### 6. @ ON NETWORK - RESULTS

At present the Network is supporting the Member States Investigative Units of @ON Network in **55 investigations**, funded **171 operational missions** in favour of **736 investigators**, leading to the **arrest of 287 persons**, including **5 fugitives**, and **seized about 11,3 million euros, drugs (including 23 cannabis plantations) and weapons**.

@ON Network aimed also to explore a more structured integration of a targeted approach against criminal networks into EMPACT.

Rome (IT), February 1, 2022

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<sup>4</sup> Service d'Information de Renseignement et d'Analyse Stratégique sur la Criminalité Organisée

<sup>5</sup> Pôle Judiciaire de la Gendarmerie Nationale

<sup>6</sup> Bundeskriminalamt

<sup>7</sup> Unidad de Droga y Crimen Organizado Cuerpo Nacional de Policia

<sup>8</sup> Bundeskriminalamt

<sup>9</sup> Australian Federal Police

<sup>10</sup> National Organised Crime Agency

<sup>11</sup> Central Bureau of Investigations of National Police

<sup>12</sup> Croatian Police - Criminal Police Directorate

<sup>13</sup> Georgian Police - Central Criminal Police Department

<sup>14</sup> National Crime Investigation Service

<sup>15</sup> Criminal Police Department

<sup>16</sup> Unidade Nacional Contraterrorismo - Policia Judiciaria

<sup>17</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation

<sup>18</sup> Swedish Police Authority - National Operations Department - International Affairs Division

<sup>19</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police