



ISFP-2020-AG-IBA-ONNET-101052683-ISF4@ON
OPERATIONAL NETWORK @ON TO TACKLE TOP LEVEL OCGS AND MAFIA-STYLE STRUCTURES

ABSTRACT

1. INTRODUCTION

On **December 4th, 2014**, the **@ON Operational Network** was officially approved by the **EU Council - JHA¹**, following the proposal of the Italian Antimafia Directorate (DIA).

The “**EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025**”², 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. AIMS AND PURPOSES

The purpose of @ON is to strengthen transnational law enforcement agencies (LEAs) cooperation against top-level organized crime groups (OCGs) and mafia-style affecting the EU Member States, focusing on the OCGs as such, 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 to EU security and economy.

3. HOW IT WORKS

The @ON Network, in coordination with Europol, makes it possible for the EU Member States partner to request the **quick deployment on the spot** of @ON Network investigators, as consultants³. They are investigators specialized in the fight against this kind of criminal networks.

In this way, LEAs can share the most effective investigative techniques, facilitating the exchange of best practises and the necessary trust relationship.

@ON Network also supports the existing initiatives to improve the **administrative approach** in the fight against organised crime groups, 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 additional 2 million euros through the "ISF4@ON" Project (ISFP-2020-AG-IBA-ONNET-nr. 101052683) for 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.

¹ Justice Home Affairs

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

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

4. @ON NETWORK 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 renting *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. @ON NETWORK PARTNERS

Up to now **33** LEAs, representing **28** countries have adhered to **@ON Network**.

France (Police Nationale⁴ and Gendarmerie⁵), **Germany** (BKA)⁶, **Spain** (Policía Nacional⁷ and Guardia Civil), **Belgium** (Judicial Federal Police), **The Netherlands** (National Police) and **Italy** are *Core Group members* of the Network. Together with **Europol** other partners are: **Hungary** (National Police), **Austria** (BK)⁸, **Romania** (National Police), **Australia** (AFP)⁹ **Malta** (Criminal Investigation Department), **Switzerland** (Federal Criminal Police), **Czech Republic** (NOCA)¹⁰, **Slovenia** (Criminal Police Directorate), **Poland** (Police Central Bureau of Investigations), **Croatia** (Criminal Police Directorate), **Georgia** (Central Criminal Police Department), **Norway** (NCIS)¹¹, **Albania** (Criminal Police Department), **Portugal** (UNCT)¹², **USA** (FBI)¹³, **Sweden** (National Police)¹⁴, **Canada** (RCMP)¹⁵, **Latvia** (State Police), **Luxembourg** (Police Grand-Ducale), **Lithuania** (Criminal Police Bureau), **Estonia** (Police and Boarder Guard Board) and **Bulgaria** (GDCOC)¹⁶.

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

6. @ON NETWORK RESULTS

At present, the @ON Network's support to @ON Member States Investigative Units can be summarized as follows: **90 investigations**, **338 missions funded**, in favour of **1134 investigators** – leading to the **arrest of 506 persons**, including **6 fugitives** - and the **seizure** of about **146,4 million euros** (cash and assets), **drugs** and **weapons**.

The @ON Network also aims at developing a more structured approach through a closer link with EMPACT in the fight against organized crime groups.

Rome (IT), 13 October 2022

⁴ SIRASCO - Service d'Information de Renseignement et d'Analyse Stratégique sur la Criminalité Organisée

⁵ PJGN - Pôle Judiciaire de la Gendarmerie Nationale

⁶ Bundeskriminalamt

⁷ UDYCO - Unidad de Droga y Crimen Organizado Cuerpo Nacional de Policia

⁸ Bundeskriminalamt

⁹ Australian Federal Police

¹⁰ National Organised Crime Agency

¹¹ National Crime Investigation Service

¹² Unidade Nacional Contraterrorismo - Policia Judiciaria

¹³ Federal Bureau of Investigation

¹⁴ Swedish Police Authority - National Operations Department - International Affairs Division

¹⁵ Royal Canadian Mounted Police

¹⁶ General Directorate Combating Organized Crime