



EUROPOL

ISF-2023-TF2-AG-ONNET-IBA, Project 101145918 - atON Network 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 the @ON Network 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 **OCGs under investigation** are mainly Italian, Eurasian, Albanian and outlaw motorcycle criminal gangs, but also new ones (i.e. *Mocro Maffie*, Nigerian etc.) posing an increasing threat to the EU security and economy.

3. HOW IT WORKS

The **@ON Network**, in coordination with **Europol** and **Eurojust**, makes it possible to **quickly deploy on the spot** LEA’s investigators³, partner of the @ON Network, 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.

Thus, the @ON Network supports the existing initiatives to improve the **administrative approach** in the fight against OCGs including mafia-style, with a view to detect and recover the assets illegally acquired by criminal organizations.

The EU Commission, with the ISF⁴ *Direct Grant*, is supporting the operational activities of the @ON Network with additional **2 million euros** through the “**atON Network**” Project (ISF-2023-TF2-AG-ONNET-IBA no. 101145918) for further 24 months, as of 1st February 2024.

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** uses the SIENA safe channel among the involved LEAs and Europol for the analysis support.

¹ The Justice and Home Affairs Council develops cooperation and common policies on various cross-border issues, with the aim of building an EU-wide area of freedom, security and justice.

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

³ They operate according to the legislation of the requesting Member State.

⁴ *Internal Security Fund. An ad-hoc first project (ISFP-2017-AG-IBA-ONNET-no.817618) started on November 2018, which lasted about 38 months, for an amount of 600.000 euros and a second one “ISF4@ON” Project (ISFP-2020-AG-IBA-ONNET-no.101052683) for an amount of 2 million euros, started on February 2022 till January 2024.*

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)*;
- 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 **50** LEAs, representing **43** countries have adhered to the **@ON Network**.

France⁵, Germany, Spain⁶, Belgium, The Netherlands and **Italy** are *Core Group members* of the Network in cooperation with **Europol**. Partners are: **Hungary, Austria, Romania, Australia, Malta, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Georgia, Norway, Albania⁷, Portugal, USA, Sweden, Canada, Latvia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Ukraine, Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina⁸, Ireland, Kosovo, Finland, Greece, Moldova, Iceland Brazil, San Marino, Slovakia, United Kingdom** and **Ecuador**.

Italy is represented by the **DIA** as Project Leader and by the *Carabinieri*, the *Guardia di Finanza* and the *Polizia di Stato* as partners⁹.

6. @ON NETWORK RESULTS

At present, the @ON Network's support to @ON Member States' Investigative Units can be summarized as follows: **202 investigations, 597 missions funded** in favour of over **2.350 investigators** - leading to the **arrest of 1065 persons**, including **15 fugitives** - and the **seizure** of about **271,1 million euros** (cash and assets), **drugs, weapons, vehicles, luxury watches and commercial activities**.

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), 26 September 2024

⁵ Police Nationale and Gendarmerie Nationale

⁶ Policía Nacional and Guardia Civil

⁷ CPD - Criminal Police Department and NBI- National Bureau of Investigation;

⁸ Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and BRCKO District Police

⁹ Coordination, at national level, is provided through the International Police Cooperation Service (SCIP) of the Central Directorate of Criminal Police