



**EU: New information on undercover policing networks obtained by German parliamentary deputies** (also available in [html format](#))

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New information on the 2014 activities of European police cooperation groups and networks has been [published by the German government](#) (pdf), in response to questions from *Die Linke* parliamentary deputies. The answers include information on the work of Europe's secretive undercover policing coordination networks. However, the government claims – as it has done in the past – that many of the questions cannot be answered publicly, due to the need for confidentiality.

The questions concern a number of groups and networks, including:

- The European Cooperation Group on Undercover Activities (ECG);
- The International Working Group on Police Undercover Activities (IWG);
- The Cross-Border Surveillance Working Group (CSW);
- The International Specialist Law Enforcement (ISLE) project;
- Europol's 'Focal Point Dolphin'.

**European Cooperation Group on Undercover Activities (ECG)**

The ECG was established in 2001 and deals with: "The promotion of international cooperation by law enforcement agencies at the European level with respect to the deployment of undercover investigators to combat organised crime." [1]

However, the German government has also previously referred to "politically motivated" crime as one of the "main issues" looked at by the group, [2] and has admitted that the work of the exposed police spy Mark Kennedy was discussed following his widespread exposure by the mainstream media in January 2011.

The extent to which the ECG is involved in coordinating or directing police infiltration of protest movements across Europe is unknown, although a number of the British undercover police exposed in recent years are known to have travelled abroad frequently. German officers have also been sent abroad on a number of occasions. [3] Attempts by a number of women to obtain justice after being deceived into spending years in relationships with undercover police officers are ongoing. [4]

According to the German government, the ECG met in Bucharest from 20 to 23 May, and the group's third workshop on "Undercover on the Internet" was held in Marburg from 6 to 9 October.

The list of attendees is lengthy. At the main ECG meeting, there were representatives present from 22 EU Member States:

- Austria (Federal Criminal Police Office, Vienna)
- Belgium (Federal Police)
- Bulgaria (Government Agency for National Security)
- Croatia (Criminal Police Directorate)
- Czech Republic (Czech National Police)
- Denmark (Danish National Police)

- Estonia (Central Criminal Police)
- Finland (National Bureau of Investigation)
- France (Central Directorate of Criminal Investigation Department)
- Germany (Federal Criminal Police Office, Central Office of the German Customs Investigation Service)
- Hungary (Hungarian National Police and Hungarian Customs)
- Italy (Carabinieri)
- Latvia (Criminal Police Department)
- Lithuania (Criminal Police Bureau)
- Netherlands (National Police Agency)
- Poland (Polish National Police)
- Portugal (Policia Judiciária)
- Romania (Romanian National Police)
- Slovakia (Slovakian National Police)
- Slovenia (General Police Directorate)
- Spain (Spanish National Police)
- United Kingdom (National Crime Agency and Metropolitan Police)

And six non-EU states:

- Albania (Central Criminal Police)
- Macedonia (Office of Public Security)
- Norway (Oslo Police Department)
- Russia (Federal Drugs Control Service)
- Switzerland (Federal Criminal Police)
- Turkey (National Police)

At the October workshop the same organisations were present from Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Slovenia and the UK. Also present were representatives of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The content of the agendas has not been published by the German government. Its justification for the secrecy was lengthy:

*“The meetings dealt inter alia with tactical and operational measures in the context of undercover police investigations, for instance on the Internet. In addition to this, joint training measures in a particular area were discussed...”*

*The said undercover measures are only used in areas of criminal activity in which a particularly high level of conspiracy, danger to the public and willingness to employ violence must be assumed.*

*...making public specific contents of discussions of certain operational resources conducted with foreign police authorities, as discussed in the meeting in question, would gravely undermine the trust and confidence of the international cooperation partners in the integrity of German police work and render significantly more difficult continued cooperation in the area of undercover policing.”*

The same justification was referred to in response to a wide number of other questions put forward by Hunko and his colleagues, and similar statements have been previously been put forward by the government in response to parliamentary questions on policing issues.

## **International Working Group on Police Undercover Activities (IWG)**

The IWG was established in 1989 and its purpose has previously been described as “international exchange of experience on all matters related to the covert deployment of police officers.” 2014 saw the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the group, which took place from 21 to 24 October in Warsaw. Poland organised the meeting itself, but Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office prepared the invitations and agenda “in close consultation with the Member States.”

The same organisations from the list above were present to represent Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, and the UK. Also present were representatives from the Australian Federal Police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Swedish National Bureau of Investigation, and the United States’ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The IWG also has an International Business Secretariat (IBS), which has been the subject of previous parliamentary questions from Hunko and his colleagues.

In 2014, the IBS held a meeting from 10 to 13 June in Oslo, with Norway organising the meeting and the UK preparing the invitations and agenda.

Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office presented an agenda item on “biometrics” to the other delegations, who came from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

## **Cross-Border Surveillance Working Group (CSW)**

The CSW was first convened in 2005. It appears to have been busier during 2014 than some of the other networks asked about by *Die Linke* deputies – a meeting of the CSW itself was held in Rome from 7 to 9 May, the steering group met on the 16 and 17 October in The Hague, and The Hague also played host to the ‘Assembly of Regional Groups on Surveillance’ (ARGOS), which was attended by CSW representatives. Italy organised the meeting in Rome, while the ARGOS conference was organised by Europol.

The purpose of the meetings was “to enable the various mobile special mission units to exchange experiences and, building on this, the optimisation of cooperation during cross-border surveillance operations.”

In response to questions about the CSW, the German made statements on the content of the agendas. The May meeting saw discussions on:

- The organisation of Italy’s R.O.S. Carabinieri force “and a case study of an abduction case”
- “Current status and outlook for the European Tracking System (ETS) and European Law”
- The European Network of Law Enforcement Technology Services (ENLETS)
- “Presentation of the legal situation in Belgium and other Member States”
- “Use of different licence plates in the respective Member States”
- “Presentation of criminal activities and means of detection”
- “Police measures”
- “Air-based surveillance in the United Kingdom”
- “Challenges and opportunities arising from the use of technology in the fight against crime”

- “Legislative amendments and presentation of the organisation and deployment possibilities of the French police force”
- “Presentation of the different legal foundation and use of resources for the interception of private conversations in the participating countries”
- “Overview and presentation of an EU Framework Programme”

The agenda for the ARGOS conference in November included:

- A presentation on the CSW
- “Presentation of a case study on cooperation in the field of surveillance (SENSEE)”
- The European Tracking System and European Law
- ENLETS
- “Presentation of the Europol Liaison Officers ‘Working Group on Controlled Delivery’”
- “Presentation of the possible impacts of the European Investigation Order on cross-border surveillance” (the European Investigation Order was adopted in March 2014 and includes rules on cross-border covert investigations. [5])
- “Advantages of cross-departmental surveillance and administration”

Less detail was provided about the attendees, with the German government’s response stating:

*“The CSW meeting was attended by representatives of the mobile special mission units or comparable units from Belgium, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Denmark, Austria, Italy, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway and Germany (Federal Criminal Police Office). A representative of Europol also attended. The steering group meeting was attended by representatives from Germany (Federal Criminal Police Office), the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Europol. Representatives of 37 states attended the ARGOS conference.”*

### **International Specialist Law Enforcement**

As the IWG was meeting in Warsaw, organisations involved in the International Specialist Law Enforcement (ISLE) project were meeting in Rome, from 20 to 22 October. International Specialist Law Enforcement began life as an EU-funded project run by Belgium, Germany and the UK that sought to build “a network of [EU] Member State organisations that may develop coordination, cooperation and mutual understanding amongst law enforcement agencies using ‘specialist techniques.’” [6]

Although it appeared in mid-2013 that the project might have been discontinued, [7] the German government’s answers show otherwise.

The meeting was prepared, and the agenda drafted, by the German Federal Criminal Police Office and Europol. Including Germany, “members of mobile special mission units from 16 other EU Member States attended the ISLE meeting”.

According to the German government, “the agenda included the following points”:

- “Future development of international cooperation in ISLE”
- “Discussion on the possibilities provided by the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE)”
- Workshops on using the EPE

### **Expert Meeting Against Right Wing Extremism (EMRE)**

A meeting of the EU-funded EMRE project was held in Bonn, Germany, from 19 to 22 May, and was prepared by Germany’s BKA in cooperation with the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Representatives from 25 EU Member States and Switzerland attended the event, which “centred around exchanging information on right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist structures, right-wing events and Internet activities and their impact on the security situation in all European countries.”

On the agenda was:

“[A] lead-in presentation and presentations on the ‘Counter Terrorism Centre’ service unit in Hungary, a set of investigation files by the Czech Republic, the Joint Centre for Countering Right-Wing Extremism (Gemeinsames Abwehrzentrum Rechtsextremismus, GAR) by the Federal Criminal Police Office and the government exit programme for people seeking to leave the right-wing extremist scene in North Rhine-Westphalia.”

The interest of the German authorities in addressing right-wing extremism is notable, given the well-documented failure to deal with a series of racist murders carried out by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground between 2000 and 2007. [8]

### **Focal Point Dolphin and Europol’s data systems**

Europol’s Focal Point Dolphin is part of the agency’s ‘Analysis Work File’ on counter-terrorism, although it also contains information on political activism. [9]

Two meetings were held during 2014 in relation to Dolphin, both at Europol’s headquarters in The Hague: one of the “target group BAZAAR” on 15 April, dealing with the financing of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party); and one from 12 to 14 November at a “Counter Terrorism Event”.

The April meeting focused on “coordination and comparison of the information available in Europe on the financing of the PKK.” The agenda items for FP Dolphin at the Counter Terrorism Event were: “Overview, EIS [Europol Information System] in CT [counter-terrorism] work, ERWED/RWE Ukraine [RWE presumably stands for right-wing extremism], TG BAZAAR status and Ops MED status.”

No German authorities attended the Counter Terrorism Event, but the Federal Criminal Police Office was present at the April meeting alongside representatives from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Europol.

During 2014, the German government “made 24 data deliveries” to FP Dolphin, which it does using a “data loader” for the mass insertion of information in the system. As of 4 October 2012, Germany was responsible for 24,199 items in the EIS; on 18 October 2013, 36,047 items; and 30 September 2014, 49,449 items.

According to the government’s response, “Germany is the second most frequent user of EIS,” and “conducted a total of 20,331 searches in the EIS in Q4 [fourth quarter] 2014.”

The EIS contained entries on a total of 259,359 objects and people, although it is not clear what point in time this number relates to. The data in the system “is used mainly in the following areas of Europol’s mandate: drugs trafficking (28%), theft (19%), illegal immigration (11%), counterfeiting (8%) and fraud (6%).”

The full response from the German government also contains responses to questions on the 2014 activities of:

- The ‘TC LI Group’ of the European Telecommunications Standards Institute;
- the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC);

- “the platform for police from South East Europe ‘Police Equal Performance’ (PEP)”;
- “twinning projects” between German authorities and other states;
- the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC);
- agreements and cooperation between Europol and non-EU states and organisations;
- agreements and cooperation between Frontex and non-EU states and organisations;
- the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN);
- EU training for police due to serve abroad in “crisis management” missions;
- meetings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);
- the Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGT);
- the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF); and
- the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT).

Some significant information has come to light in recent years on undercover policing and the infiltration of protest movements. However, much remains unknown. The release of new information such as that obtained through the German Bundestag makes it possible to put together a picture of cross-border networks and their activities, but understanding in more detail their work - and holding state authorities to account for their actions - is far more difficult.

In the UK, the police appear to have tried to 'move on' from the scandal by renaming and re-organising undercover policing units, most recently establishing the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit. [10] Keeping track of the organisations, individuals and institutions involved - and what is known of their activities - can help to make clear the wider picture and what can be done about it.

### Sources

- *Statewatch* tracks developments in undercover policing; numerous articles can be found in our [database](#)
- The [Undercover Research Group](#) recently published webpages containing further information on numerous aspects of the police infiltration of political movements in Europe, and will at some point launch a Wikipedia-style website on the issue
- *The Guardian's* [Undercover](#) blog has regular updates on developments, mainly focusing on the UK
- The [Bristling Badger](#) blog frequently contains forensic examinations of issues related to the undercover policing scandal

### Document

Minor Interpellation submitted by Member of the Bundestag Andrej Hunko and others and the Left Party parliamentary group, '[Cooperation and projects by European police forces in 2014](#)' (pdf), January 2015

### Footnotes

[1] '[Another secretive European police working group revealed as governments remain tight-lipped on other police networks and the activities of Mark Kennedy](#)', *Statewatch News Online*, August 2012

[2] '[State guidelines for the exchange of undercover police officers revealed](#)', *Statewatch News Online*, May 2013

[3] Matthias Monroy, '[Using false documents against "Euro-anarchists": the exchange of Anglo-German undercover police highlights controversial police operations](#)', *Statewatch Journal*, vol 21 no 2, April-June 2011

- [4] [Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance; Police Spies Out of Lives](#)
- [5] Council of the European Union, '[Council adopts the "European Investigation Order" directive](#)', press release, 14 March 2014 (pdf); [European Investigation Order](#) (pdf)
- [6] '[Another secretive European police working group revealed as governments remain tight-lipped on other police networks and the activities of Mark Kennedy](#)', *Statewatch News Online*, August 2012
- [7] '[Uncertain future for EU-funded police project aimed at enhancing covert surveillance techniques](#)', *Statewatch News Online*, July 2013
- [8] '[NSU Crime Spree Report Finds 'Devastating' Errors](#)', *Spiegel Online*, 23 August 2013
- [9] Andrej Hunko, '[Abolish international databases on anarchy!](#)', press release, 5 June 2012
- [10] '[Political Secret Police Units](#)' *Bristling Badger*, 5 February 2014

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