



Council of the
European Union

**Brussels, 8 September 2016
(OR. en)**

12027/16

LIMITE

**JAI 728
COSI 129**

NOTE

From: Europol
To: JHA Counsellors / COSI Support Group
Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security

No. prev. doc.: 13131/15, 8069/16 EU RESTRICTED, 8127/16, 10109/16

Subject: Preliminary evaluation of the Joint Action Days 2016 and strategic discussion on the planning of the Joint Action Days 2017

Delegations will find enclosed a Europol note providing a preliminary evaluation of the Joint Action Days 2016 and requesting strategic guidance from COSI on the planning of the Joint Action Days 2017.

Preliminary evaluation of the Joint Action Days 2016 and strategic discussion on the planning of the Joint Action Days 2017

1. Aim

This document is a preliminary evaluation of the Joint Action Days 2016. The interim evaluation has been prepared on the request of COSI and provide the first results for 2016.

2. Background

In October 2015 and March 2016 COSI provided strategic guidance for the planning of the 2016 JADs.

On 27 and 28 January 2016, the NECs, Drivers, Co-drivers and EMPACT Support Managers (ESMs) discussed the planning of different operational activities in the 2016 OAPs which would be developed under the umbrella of JADs.

Recognising the challenges that Member States' action leaders face in planning and coordinating JADs, Europol held a special meeting for JAD Action Leaders at Europol on 7 and 8 April 2016. This meeting was open to action leaders who were leading a JAD-type action in the 2016 OAPs and was attended by representatives from AT, EL, ES, FR, NL, PL, SE, UK, Europol, Eurojust and Frontex. At the request of the Netherlands Presidency, Europol has been working towards refining the JAD concept and planning. This has resulted in two important Council documents being adopted by COSI on 18 April 2016:

- 8069/16 Joint Action Days 2016 (EU RESTRICTED)
- 8127/16 Definition of Joint Action Days (JADs) – for 2017 planning

3. JADs 2016. Operation Ciciona Alba

Following the definition and the guidance provided by COSI and based on the Operational Action Plans 2016, the Member States with the support of Europol, have agreed on the following JADs in 2016:

- Anti-Labour Exploitation JAD
- Global Airport Action Days
- Large Scale Joint Action Days-LSJAD

Next to these Joint Action Days, many other actions are running within but also outside the framework of EMPACT. Some of these future planned actions may be further developed as JADS.

3.1 Anti-Labour Exploitation JAD

The Anti-Labour Exploitation JAD has been an EU-wide operation carried out by labour inspectorates and law enforcement authorities targeting organised crime groups trafficking vulnerable people for the purpose of labour exploitation. The action took place between **28 May and 5 June 2016**.

Two crime areas - trafficking in human beings (THB) and facilitated illegal migration - were targeted with actions carried out in dozens of key geographical hotspots (airports, border crossing points, etc.). Law enforcement authorities, immigration services and labour services from 21 countries joined forces for this operation. This was the first time that labour inspectors across the EU cooperated so closely with law enforcement authorities in a coordinated way to identify, safeguard and protect victims of labour exploitation.

During the span of the action week, 6 709 individuals were controlled, alongside 4 156 vehicles and 2 271 companies. As a result of these checks, 47 suspects were arrested for labour exploitation and 275 victims identified and safeguarded. Data gathered during the operation has led to the launch of 30 new investigations in order to identify further suspects and victims linked to human trafficking cases across the EU.

MS	New investigations
BE	4
CY	4
ES	10
FI	4
HR	1
NL	3
PT	1
RO	2
SE	1
Total	30

The operational activities targeted different sectors such as transportation, agriculture, construction, textile, food and catering industry as well as commercial activities. The competent authorities looked not only into key industries where victims are being exploited or are at great risk, but also into recruitment websites that may be used to advertise jobs that result in victims being exploited and into suspect businesses operating across the borders. Moreover, controls took place at border crossing points in countries of origin, transit and destination.

In addition to the operational results, this JAD had a real added value in promoting the cooperation between law enforcement agencies (THB experts) and labour inspectors, in terms of exchange of information and operational actions.

On 3-4 November 2016 THB experts and labour inspectors will evaluate this JAD and will elaborate best practices for the cooperation between law enforcement agencies (THB experts) and labour inspectors.

The exchange of labour inspectors between countries of origin and destination and the deployment of Member States' delegates to the operational coordination centre set up at Europol's headquarters during the action week have significantly contributed to the success of the actions linked to trafficking in human beings.

3.2 Airport Action Day

The two-day operation took place on 15 and 16 June 2016 and was organised globally through operational coordination centres at Europol in The Hague, INTERPOL Singapore and Ameripol in Bogota, with support from Canadian and US law enforcement authorities. Over 74 airlines and 43 countries, including 26 Member States, were involved in this year's action, which took place in over 130 airports across the world.

The Airport Action Day targeted airline fraudsters, the action has resulted in the detention and investigation of 140 individuals found in possession of tickets bought using stolen or fake credit card details. During the operation, 252 suspicious transactions were reported.

Individuals arrested during the operation were also found to be involved in other forms of crimes, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrime and terrorism.

Representatives from airlines, online travel agencies and payment card companies based at Europol's command post worked together with experts from Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) to identify suspicious transactions and send confirmation to law enforcement officers deployed at the airports.

Payment card schemes, card issuers, Perseuss and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) supported the operation by providing information to confirm any suspicious fraudulent airline ticket transactions.

Further support was received by Frontex, which deployed officers to the command post at Europol and at a number of airports across Europe, while INTERPOL assisted with the rapid identification of wanted persons and stolen documents. A Eurojust official assisted at the operational coordination centre in The Hague.

This action was also part of Europol's support to the 2016 UEFA European Championship delivered on the request of France. Special attention was paid to passengers travelling to the EURO 2016 football tournament with checks conducted both at airports in France and in countries of departure. A Europol mobile office was deployed to Paris throughout the action to facilitate the exchange of critical data, allowing law enforcement in the field to quickly identify potential perpetrators.

3.3 Large Scale Joint Action Days-LSJAD

Europol invited the Drivers and Action Leaders to propose Operational Activities in the OAPs suitable to be developed in an intelligence-led large scale JAD in autumn 2016, with a particular focus on facilitated illegal immigration and firearms trafficking.

For the Policy Cycle priorities THB, synthetic drugs, cocaine and heroin and Cyber-crime PCF, it was also proposed that different actions be implemented in this JAD.

Europol has prepared an overall action plan with the contributions of all Member States, the related Action Leaders, Drivers, Eurojust and Frontex.

The draft plan was discussed during a planning meeting held at Europol on 7 July, with the participation of the relevant Action Leaders.

The plan will be circulated between all Member States to confirm the participation and to identify and plan the actions at national level. The Action Leaders and participants in the actions are defining individual action plans for every involved activity.

4. Preliminary evaluation of the Joint Action Days 2016

Operation “Ciconia Alba” is still on-going. This preliminary evaluation has been prepared taking into consideration the objectives set.

4.1 Horizontal and intelligence-led operational actions covering more than one crime area focusing on key crime hot spots or key criminal infrastructures. Improve the knowledge on the intelligence picture on SOC.

Analytical support during the planning phase

The Joint Action Days 2016 have targetted key criminal hot spots (airports, border-crossing-points, harbours, reception/asylum centres, etc.) as identified by Member States' intelligence and information available in Europol databases. Europol provided the participants with a general tactical analysis of the key criminal hotspots for 2016 operational action days in the EU. The report was discussed during the drivers' meeting beginning 2016 and updated according to Member States' feedback.

Additionally, Europol's experts provided operational and tactical reports on the specific crime phenomena targeted during the action days.

Analytical support during and after the action days

During the action days, several operational analysis reports were provided and a number of new investigations initiated, based on the analysis performed.

The results of the action days and the additional information gathered have also contributed to improve the overall intelligence picture.

4.2 Target the most threatening organised crime groups and top targets. Significant impact on serious and organised crime

The Anti-Labour Exploitation JAD aimed at:

- Identifying high risk business areas where victims of trafficking are being exploited for labour.
- Identifying and safeguarding the victims of labour exploitation.
- Detecting and disrupting organised and sophisticated criminal networks who are facilitating trafficking for labour exploitation.

The competent authorities focused on:

- Cases that are being investigated at present which may fit within the timeframe for the proposal.
- Recruitment websites that may be being used to advertise overseas jobs that result in victims being exploited.
- Victim testimonies which may have provided details of companies which are facilitating exploitation.
- Transport routes (from source to destination countries).
- Suspect businesses which may be operating in overseas destination countries (registered or otherwise).
- Developing intelligence gathering to identify bogus companies and job advertisers that can be targeted for investigation.

4.3 Improve the multi — disciplinary approach, including cooperation with third countries, agencies and the private sector

Both JADs have demonstrated that a multi-disciplinary approach and the involvement of other EU agencies, third parties and regional initiatives have had a positive impact on the results.

The Anti-Labour Exploitation JAD was the first time that labour inspectors across the EU cooperated so closely with law enforcement authorities in a coordinated way to identify, safeguard and protect victims of labour exploitation.

The Airport Action Day was an excellent example of the public-private partnership cooperation.

4.4 Improve coordination and cooperation at international and national level

Leader/Co-Leaders and contact points at Europol have been identified for every operational Action involved in the JADs.

Europol and the Action leaders have organised different preparatory/planning meetings involving the Drivers, Action Leaders and participants.

Europol is preparing the Large Scale Joint Action Days plan based on Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the coordination of Cross Border Operations (CBO) at Europol. The individual Operational Actions have been and will be implemented based on specific action plans.

Different command posts and operational coordination centres have been established for these JADs.

Frontex Guest officers and Eurojust National desks (on-call) are also available to support the activities if relevant.

Europol and grant agreements funding have been available to support the development the JADs and to man the operational centres.

4.5 Raise awareness about the threats of SOC and implement preventive actions. Raise awareness on the EU Policy Cycle and EMPACT. Give international law enforcement cooperation a more visible public profile.

The Airport Action Day was part of Europol's support to the security framework surrounding the 2016 UEFA European Championship. The Large Scale Joint Action Day foresees some preventive actions and it is expected it generates more public visibility.

The media strategy has been defined to raise awareness among the general public and Europe's law enforcement community about the impact and necessity of international cooperation in fighting serious and organised crime. All available media channels, including specialised media, social media as well as technical briefings are being used for this aim. The media contact points contribute to the coordination of all communications related to Operation Ciconia Alba.

5. Strategic discussion on the planning of the Joint Action Days 2017

In preparation of the meetings for the drafting of the Operational Action Plans (OAPs) 2017 at Europol during September-October 2016, the Drivers have been informed of the guidance received from COSI during its meeting of 21 June 2016 and of the objective to consider the possible implementation of Joint Action Days in 2017.

The Netherlands Presidency and Europol proposed at the NEC meeting a planning procedure for JADs 2017 in 7 steps, with the aims at achieving a timely collaborative planning of JADs, following the definition validated in COSI on 18 April 2016 (item 9 of 8127/16). The planning procedure includes also the strategic guidance of COSI.

Beginning of November 2016, an evaluation questionnaire on JADs will be submitted to Drivers, Co- Drivers, NECs and Action Leaders. The results of the questionnaire together with the overall results of the JADs 2016 will be summarised in one global report.

In order to receive strategic guidance from COSI for the planning of the Joint Action Days 2017, Europol would like to invite delegations to comment on the following questions:

1. *What strategic objectives should be taken into account when planning the 2017 Joint Action Days?*
 2. *Based on the experience of previous JADs would delegations have proposals for the approach to be followed in 2017?*
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