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**From:** Europol

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

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**Subject:** Joint Action Days 2016

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Delegations will find attached the information about the Joint Action Days (JAD) planned in 2016 as agreed by COSI on 18 April 2016.



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## Joint Action Days 2016

### 1. Aim

The aim of this document is to provide COSI with information about the Joint Action Days (JADs) planned in 2016.

### 2. Concept of Joint Action Days

#### 2.1. Background of the Joint Action Days

- In November 2010, the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council of the EU adopted the framework for the implementation of the EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime.<sup>1</sup>
- In June 2013, the Council adopted the current 9 priorities concerning the fight against serious organised crime for 2014 – 2017.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Council Secretariat file no. 15358/10 COSI 69: (1) illegal immigration, (2) trafficking in human beings, (3) counterfeit goods, (4) excise and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud, (5) synthetic drugs trafficking, (6) cocaine and heroin trafficking, (7) cybercrime, (8) illicit trafficking of firearms, (9) property crime committed by Mobile Organised Crime Groups (MOCGs)

<sup>2</sup> Council Secretariat file no. 12095/13 COSI 91

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- In January 2014, all 12 Operational Action Plans (OAPs)<sup>3</sup>, in response to the 9 priorities set by the Council in June 2013, were adopted by the Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI) of the Council.
- In September 2014 a first Joint Action Day/ week was organised, Operation Archimedes. The operation took place during a period of 10 days. Actions against serious and organised crime covering several priorities were executed at more than 500 hotspots in the EU.
- One of the key points of the evaluation of Operation Archimedes was that Joint Action Days need to be more intelligence led, more focused and more regional.
- In 2015 the Drivers and Co-drivers of the EMPACT priorities agreed that Joint Action Days would be planned and organised under a common concept and name ('Blue Amber') focusing on specific regions, crime areas, modus operandi. As such, the timing of the actions could be adapted to the type of crime, and priorities clustered in an intelligence-led way. In 2015, a series of 14 joint actions were organised under the name Blue Amber.
- In October 2015 after an interim evaluation of the 'Blue Amber' Joint Action Days, COSI gave strategic guidance for the planning of the Joint Action Days 2016 and indicated a preference for a "Blue Amber" type of operation, not excluding the possibility for an "Archimedes" type of operation for a short period of time. Delegations underlined that these operations should be intelligence-led and focused on the EU crime priorities with a certain degree of flexibility to react to emerging events. Reference was also made to the importance of ensuring a multidisciplinary approach, involving inter alia customs and judicial authorities.<sup>4</sup>
- Europol organised an evaluation and planning meeting with EMPACT stakeholders on 27/28 January 2016 to discuss the best practices and the way forward.
- COSI had a discussion on the draft concept paper on 4 March 2016 where several delegations asked Europol for more detailed information about the large-scale operation planned in autumn 2016.

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<sup>3</sup> One OAP per crime priority set by the Council, with the priority cyber crime covered by 3 OAPs (child sexual exploitation, credit card fraud and cyber attacks) and the priority "excise and MTIC fraud" covered by 1 independent OAP per area

<sup>4</sup> Council Secretariat file no. 13775/15 COSI 134

2.2. The objective

The key objectives of the Joint Action Days are:

- Horizontal and intelligence-led operational actions covering more than one crime area;
- EU wide action day(s) focusing on key crime hot spots or key criminal infrastructures;
- Target the most threatening organised crime groups and top targets;
- Significant impact on serious and organised crime;
- Implementation of operational actions of the EMPACT OAPs;
- Improve the multi – disciplinary approach, including cooperation with third countries, agencies and the private sector;
- Improve the knowledge on the intelligence picture on SOC;
- Raise awareness about the threats of SOC and implement preventive actions;
- Improve coordination and cooperation at international and national level;
- Raising awareness on the EU policy cycle and EMPACT;
- Give international law enforcement cooperation a more visible public profile.

The Joint Action Days 2016 will be organised under the common name CICONIA ALBA.

### 2.3. The activities

The Joint Action Days are essentially Member State-driven, fully supported by Europol, in line with the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the coordination of Cross Border Operations (CBO) in Europol. Member States may apply for funding via the Delegation Agreement.

During the implementation of the Joint Action Days, special attention will be paid on key criminal hot spots (airports, border-crossing-points, harbours and cities) as identified by Europol, MS intelligence analysis reports and information available in Europol databases.

The area of activities will focus on the EU without excluding that some actions may take place outside the EU; other countries may be involved depending on the needs of the law enforcement agencies of the Member States.

Partners such as INTERPOL, Eurojust, Frontex, CCWP, regional initiatives and expert networks will be contacted to participate in or co-organise some of these actions. These contacts should also facilitate coordination of actions and avoid overlaps or duplication of efforts.

At the meeting of January 2016, agreement was reached to explore regional actions in the Western Balkans, the Baltic region and the Mediterranean region focusing on crimes such as migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, firearms trafficking, drugs trafficking, counterfeiting, excise fraud, property crime, credit card fraud...

Joint Action Days will also be organised in the framework of major events such as the UEFA Football Championships 2016 in France.

One intelligence-led large scale Joint Action Day is planned to be carried out in autumn 2016 (see ANNEX 1). It is up to the Member States to decide whether they wish to participate, depending on their analysis to which extent they are affected by the targeted crime areas. Besides being intelligence-led, the large scale Joint Action Day also contributes to further intelligence gathering.

#### 2.4. Action leaders and planning

It is planned that for each of the actions, an action leader and co-leader will be identified.

The EMPACT drivers and their representatives agreed at the meeting of 28 January 2016 to contact their EMPACT priority teams to discuss the proposals with a view to identify action leaders and more concrete proposals by the end of February 2016.

Europol will appoint a designated contact point for each of the actions to support the action leaders in the coordination and planning of the Joint Action Days.

### 3. Media strategy

During 2016, several CICONIA ALBA Joint Action Days are planned to be organised. The media strategy will be developed in a way that clearly explains the horizontal nature of actions, which differ from other action days, which generally focus on one specific crime or one specific modus operandi.

The media strategy should create awareness among the general public and the law enforcement community about the importance of international law enforcement cooperation and the role of Member States, EU agencies and COSI in promoting this cooperation. The policy framework within which Joint Action Days are carried out should be clear and reflect the context and purpose of the EU policy cycle and EMPACT.

Similar to 2015, Europol will plan a meeting with all MS media contact points to prepare the draft media strategy 2016. COSI will be informed about the outcome of this meeting and invited to discuss the draft media strategy.

**4. Way forward**

COSI will be informed about the state of play and results of the Joint Action Days 2016 on a regular basis.

A preliminary evaluation is planned to be provided by Europol in autumn 2016 so that COSI can provide strategic guidance for the Joint Action Days 2017. The final results of the Joint Action Days will be presented to COSI in December 2016.

**Explanatory note on the planned large-scale JAD in 2016****1. General principles**

Taking into account the lessons learnt from Operations Archimedes and Blue Amber, Europol together with the EMPACT Drivers and action leaders nominated by the Member States is planning to carry out a large-scale EMPACT Joint Action Day (LS-JAD) in autumn 2016. This LS-JAD would be part of Operation CICONIA ALBA that comprises also several smaller-scale JADs spread over 2016.

The objectives of the LS-JAD are identical to those outlined in the JAD concept paper 2016. All JADs should follow a focused and targeted approach and link together operational activities from the EMPACT OAPs in a meaningful way.

The LS-JAD 2016 is planned to target in particular the priority areas facilitated illegal immigration and firearms trafficking, covering key hotspots, major routes and hubs in the EU and partner third countries and following a more control oriented approach than the smaller-scale JADs. Depending on the operational needs identified during the planning, a limited number of additional crime areas might be linked to this JAD.

The LS-JAD, planned and carried out on the basis of intelligence from Europol identifying locations and targets for specific action, could contribute significantly to improve the overall intelligence picture on serious and organised crime. The additional information and intelligence gathered during those actions would be analysed by Europol and shared with MS law enforcement authorities and other operational partners to possibly trigger further operational actions including the initiation of new investigations.

Examples of more control oriented actions from BLUE AMBER in 2015: The Global Airline Action Days, where the focus was on payment card fraud and migrant smuggling and where large scale controls took place at key hotspots in and outside the EU, and many actions during the drugs action week have proven that the results from controls help identify new intelligence leads and links to other crime areas.



The LS-JAD should contribute to developing further a common EU law enforcement culture and help close the gap between frontline law enforcement activities and Europol. Moreover, the LS-JAD could help giving law enforcement cooperation a more visible public profile by highlighting that combating serious and organised international crime is a key objective for the European Union, the law enforcement authorities of the MS and their non-EU partners and that the EU Policy Cycle for serious and organised international crime is delivering concrete operational results.

## **2. Planning**

Europol offers its capabilities to coordinate the LS-JAD by sending out a request for participation and drafting a framework action plan as a basis for the detailed planning by the participating countries at the national level, by establishing a temporary operational coordination centre for 2-3 days and providing intelligence packages to MS assisting them in identifying the possible hotspots. Europol staff would be available to support this action from the operational centre together with the Liaison Officers posted at Europol and at key locations in the MS.

After endorsement of the general principles by COSI, the framework action plan will be prepared by Europol involving the relevant EMPACT (Co-)Drivers and action leaders nominated by the MS as well as representatives from Eurojust, Frontex, INTERPOL and the customs authorities (CCWP) to ensure coordination with operational activities prepared by them. Further participants including non-EU countries and regional initiatives may be included according to the evolution of the planning.

The state of play of the planning of JADs in general and the LS-JAD in particular would be presented for discussion at the NEC meeting from 24 to 26 May 2016.

Europol intends to organise operational meetings in June 2016 to further develop the operational planning and to discuss implementation with operational stakeholders.

COSI will be kept informed in the framework of the general reporting on the progress and results of JADs.