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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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ENFOPOL 63

NOTE

From :	Presidency
To :	Delegations
Subject :	Manual of Good Practices concerning the International Police Cooperation Units at National Level

1. Following the mandate given by the Police Chiefs on 23 November 2006, work has started on drafting a manual of good practices for the organisation of international police cooperation units. A first draft was presented at the Police Chiefs strategic meeting of 28 November 2007. A number of changes have been made in response to comments sent by delegations.
2. The main goal of this draft manual was to underline advantages in setting up in each Member States a "one stop shop" unit for international police cooperation, with a multi-agency organisation. It is reminded that setting up such a unit is obviously a matter of national competence, which has to take account of each Member State's legal situation and law enforcement structures. Nonetheless, the advantages following from it for the other Member States (and the general efficiency of EU police cooperation exchange as a whole) are such that this recommendation should be made.

3. The other main topic addressed in this manual was the definition of criteria for choosing between various international channels (SIRENE, ENU, EIS, NCB, BDL network) or bilateral or internal law enforcement offices, such as the liaison officers network, according to the type of information exchanged or requested. This process is aimed at avoiding overlaps, multiple dissemination of information (or requests) or time consuming processes that harm efficiency of the exchange.

The third round of mutual evaluation on information exchange has clearly demonstrated the lack of guidance concerning the choice of communication channel and revealed a great tendency in most Member States to carry out international work on a case-by-case basis. This means that most information exchanges are based rather on personal contacts than on any real pre-defined strategy. No comments or further suggestions have been made for the proposed criteria set out in chapter 3.3.3. It is therefore proposed that the text is approved as such for now and that at a later stage, e.g. after some experience is gained with the implementation of the Swedish Framework Decision, the criteria for the choice of channels are re-visited to see if any substantial recommendations can be made.

4. Finally, chapter 4 has been deleted from this manual as the coordination and coherence with other instruments and handbooks should be done through the result of the work on a new Police Cooperation Handbook that is currently on-going in the Police Cooperation Working Party (see doc. 5386/08 ENFOPOL 11 CRIMORG 11 SIRIS 3 COMIX 32).
5. **Taking into account the changes described above and indicated in the annex (underlined), the Police Chiefs are invited to approve the manual in Annex and suggest to the Police Cooperation Working Party that it be taken into account in the on-going work on the new Police Cooperation Handbook.**

MANUAL OF GOOD PRACTICES CONCERNING THE INTERNATIONAL POLICE

COOPERATION UNITS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Chapter 1: Introduction

The current manual is meant for those units within the Member States' law enforcement authorities that are responsible for international police cooperation.

There are many different forms and channels of international police cooperation, each with its own purpose, needs, specific characteristics, ways of communication etc.

It requires a lot of Member States' resources to service all these channels in the best possible way.

The entry into force of the Council Framework Decision on simplification of information exchange, the "Prüm Decision" and any further implementation of the principle of availability will probably further increase the amount of requests for international information exchange.

Member States will have to cope with this trend, and thus, both as a requested or a requesting State, have to set up efficient and centralized structures, or improve existing national platforms. The "one stop shop" strategy has to be, as far as possible, recommended.

This manual aims to provide guidelines and examples for the above-mentioned units to maximise their resources, avoid overlaps and make cooperation with other Member States more efficient, expedient and transparent.

In the light of the experience gained through the third round of mutual evaluation process (in particular the final report on the evaluation visits of all 25 Member States, doc.13321/2/07 CRIMORG 141 REV 2 ENFOPOL 152 ENFOCUSTOM 93), the characteristics of an ideal international unit (or platform) are hereafter expressed.

The guidelines should be applied whenever possible and useful but always taking into account national legislation and regulations, structures and organisations.

Given the differences between Member States' legal situation (central/federal states), their law enforcement structures and powers (federal/regional/local levels, number of police forces, mandates of agencies, statutory responsibilities etc), not all guidelines, recommendations or examples will be useful or even applicable in every Member State.

The manual should be considered as an overview of good practices, of which Member States should select the ones appropriate for their situation in view of the common and agreed aim of enhancing international cooperation.

The manual contains, next to this introduction, the following chapters:

- national sheets on existing Member States' structures for international police cooperation
- good practices
 - o structure and composition of a unit for international cooperation
 - o national information exchange and availability of national databases and networks at the unit
 - o international information exchange: criteria for the use of channels¹ / use of EIS and other European and international databases
 - o staff training
- a list of reference documents that may be useful for the users of the manual

¹ geographical criteria, type of crime or information concerned, confidentiality required, proven speed of channel, commitments under / limitations of national law

Chapter 2: National sheets (to be completed)

This chapter sets out a very summary overview of the organisation of the international police cooperation structure in each Member State.

Belgium
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Denmark
Germany
Estonia
Greece
Spain
France
Ireland
Italy
Cyprus
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Hungary
Malta
The Netherlands
Austria
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovenia
Slovakia
Finland
Sweden
United Kingdom

BELGIUM

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	<i>Strategic matters:</i> CGI (Directorate of International Police Cooperation) <i>Operational Matters:</i> CGO (Directorate of Operational Police Information)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police
[regional offices]	CCPD (Police/ Customs Cooperation Centres in border regions)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police/ Customs

BULGARIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Ministry of Interior National Police Service (NPS) International Operative Police Cooperation Directorate (IOPCD)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[regional offices]	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[bilateral offices]						

CZECH REPUBLIC

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	International Police Cooperation Division of the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police and Custom officers
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police officers
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police officers
LO central office						
[regional offices]	West-Bohemian region	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[bilateral offices]	North-Bohemian region	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	

DENMARK

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	National Center of Investigation	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police Officers
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office						
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

GERMANY

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

ESTONIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

GREECE

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

SPAIN

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU		DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	-National police (Cuerpo Nacional de Policia) -Police with Military status (Guardia Civil) -Regional Police -Liaison officers from France and Italy
SIRENE		DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
NCB		DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
LO central office		DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

FRANCE

μ	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU / FRANCE	DCPJ- DRI SCCOPOL (under the supervision of Ministry of Interior)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	National Police (including Border Guards), Gendarmerie, Customs, representatives of Ministry of Justice
SIRENE/ FRANCE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB / FRANCE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above

FRANCE

LO central office/ France	DGPN / SCTIP (Service de Cooperation Technique Internationale de Police)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

IRELAND

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	International Liaison Section, Irish Police Service	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	An Garda Siochana (Irish Police Service)
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

ITALY

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

CYPRUS

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	EUIPCD (European Union and International Police Cooperation Directorate) Cyprus Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Cyprus Police
SIRENE	as above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

LATVIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	International cooperation Department at Central Criminal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

LITHUANIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Unit of International Liaison Office of Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
LO central office	Police Department under the MoI International Cooperation board	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

LUXEMBOURG

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU (Operational)	Police Grand-Ducale Service de Police Judiciaire	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police officers
	Police Grand-Ducale Direction Générale des Opérations Centre d'Intervention National (CIN)					Police officers
ENU (Administrative)	Police Grand-Ducale Direction Générale Service des Relations Internationales					

LUXEMBOURG

SIRENE	Police Grand-Ducale Direction Générale Direction de l'Information Bureau SIRENE	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police and Custom officiers
NCB	Police Grand-Ducale Direction de l'Information Bureau BCN Interpol	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police officers + Public Prosecutors
LO central office						
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

HUNGARY

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Hungarian National Police/ International Law Enforcement Cooperation Center (central Directorate with ENU, SIRENE, NCB, LO)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police, Customs and Finance Guard
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	-					
[bilateral offices]	-					

MALTA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Commissioner of Police, Head IRU Head of Europol/ ENU Personnel	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Malta Police Force Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

THE NETHERLANDS

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

AUSTRIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Sub Dept. II/BK/2.2 Austrian Desk at Europol in The Hague	DELETED	DELETED		DELETED	Federal Criminal Intelligence Agency
SIRENE	Ministry of Interior	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Federal Criminal Intelligence Agency
NCB	Ministry of Interior	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Federal Criminal Intelligence Agency

AUSTRIA

LO central office	Department for International Affairs - Unit for Attaché Affairs	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Federal Ministry of Interior
Regional and bi- lateral offices:	---	---	---	---	---	---
CCP Nickelsdorf- Hegyeshalom (Austria- Hungary)	Austrian Federal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
CCP Kittsee- Jarovce (Austria- Slovakia)	Austrian Federal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	

AUSTRIA

CCP Thörl-Maglern (Austria-Italy-Slovenia)	Austrian Federal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
CCP Drasenhofen-Mikulov (Austria-Czech)	Austrian Federal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	
CCP Schaanwald	Austrian Federal Police	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	

POLAND

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	General Headquarters of Police, Criminal Intelligence bureau	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Not specified
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
Multiparty structure for border area	CCPD in Swiecko (bi-lateral structure with Germany)	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED		

PORTUGAL

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

ROMANIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU						
SIRENE						
NCB						
LO central office						
[regional offices]						
[bilateral offices]						

SLOVENIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation – Europol Section	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation – Europol Section
SIRENE	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation – Sirene Section	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation – Sirene Section

SLOVENIA

NCB	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation - Interpol Section	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	General Police Directorate – Criminal Police Directorate – Division for International Police Cooperation - Interpol Section
LO central office	General Police Directorate -Service of the Director General of the Police – International Relations – Division	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	General Police Directorate -Service of the Director General of the Police – International Relations – Division
Trilateral Office: Centre for Police Cooperation Vrata Megvarje (Slovenia, Austria, Italy)	General Police Directorate, Uniformed Police, Border Police Division	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	

SLOVAKIA

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Europol	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Europol
SIRENE	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa SIRENE	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa SIRENE
NCB	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Interpol	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Interpol
LO central office	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce
[regional offices]	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Europol	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Prezídium Policajného zboru Úrad medzinárodnej policajnej spolupráce Národná ústredňa Europol

FINLAND

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	NBI/CID	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police Customs Border Guards
SIRENE	NBI/CID	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	NBI/CID	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	NBI/CID	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	NBI/CID	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[bilateral offices]						

SWEDEN

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	National Criminal Police, International Police Cooperation Division	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	Police, Customs and Cost Guards
SIRENE	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

UNITED KINGDOM

Unit	Management structure	Phone (24/7)	E-mail	Fax	Address	Participating LEA
ENU	Serious Organised Crime Agency- International	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	SOCA, Police and Customs agents
SIRENE	SOCA International	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
NCB	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
LO central office	As above	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	DELETED	As above
[regional offices]	Not applicable					
[bilateral offices]						

Chapter 3: Good practices

3.1 Structure and composition of a unit for international cooperation

3.1.1 Structure

- The unit is a "one stop shop" for international police cooperation: it has one phone number and one e-mail address for all international police cooperation requests sent at central level.
- It gathers under the same management structure the different national offices or contact points such as
 - the Europol National Unit (ENU)
 - the Interpol National Central Bureau (NCB)
 - the SIRENE Bureau
 - the contact point for national liaison officers posted abroad
 - the contact points designated pursuant to the "Swedish Framework Decision" and the "Prüm Decision"
 - if any: the contact point for the regional and bilateral offices
 - the law enforcement central office for national (internal) information exchange
- A front desk or "Central Contact Point (CCP)" at the unit determines which office/contact point will deal with the request.
- Ideally, the unit houses these offices and contact points in the same building.

- The unit for international cooperation is set up through its own national legislative or regulation identity, to empower them to meet their large-scale responsibilities and duties. This is particularly useful in the light of the multi-agencies composition of the unit (police / customs / justice). The platform is placed under the responsibility of a leading Ministry (usually the Ministry of Interior) and a leading Department (usually the national criminal police).
- The relationship between the unit and all competent law enforcement and other concerned authorities is established through national law and regulated in written agreements, in particular with those authorities represented in the unit but not belonging to the "leading Ministry".

- These agreements or regulations lay down the necessary legal aspects but also practical working procedures.
- The unit operates 24/7. (see 3.1.2)
- The unit comprises the most comprehensive national competence, covering the broadest geographical and material scope as possible, to be able to handle the full range of possible requests related to police cooperation.
- The unit has the competence to direct any request that would be wrongly addressed to the appropriate requested authority, without returning the request to the requesting country.
- The unit is set up in a secure working environment, including high level of security and safety of the premises.

3.1.2 Resources

- The unit is a **multi-agency** organisation, composed of staff coming from/belonging to different services and / or Ministries including criminal police, public order police, border guards, customs, [intelligence?] and judicial authorities.
- In Member States where judicial authorities supervise criminal investigations, the presence of these authorities in the unit is very useful for
 - a quicker response to requests related to criminal investigations, especially where the transmission of information by police channels requires a clearance by the judicial authorities
 - the "flagging" procedure related to a European Arrest Warrant (EAW)
 - the transmission of rogatory letters to the relevant investigating judge or prosecutor office
 - legal advice to police/customs staff of the unit or help to solve possible conflict between national law and the object of the request sent by another Member State (see 3.3.5)
 - the permission "on the spot" of urgent surveillances, or "hot pursuit" procedures within national territory, as defined by the provisions of Articles 40 and 41 of the Schengen Convention (or to forward such requests to another Member State).

- The unit is sufficiently and adequately staffed, including interpretation or translation capacities, to function on a 24/7 basis.
- In as far as possible, all staff are trained and equipped/mandated to deal with all kinds of tasks within the unit. Where this is not possible, it is ensured that all tasks can be dealt with through on-call duty officers 24/7.
- The ICT capacities are state of the art, including secure and back-up communication lines (phone, fax, e-mail), an efficient and effective workflow system, appropriate and timely (helpline) support and the possibility to electronically forward fingerprints in a commonly agreed format.

3.1.3 Publicity

- The unit is adequately known by the national police officers, and officers from other law enforcement agencies. Apart from its contact details (phone , fax numbers, e-mail addresses), every investigating police officer knows the basic services provided by the unit, and the main channels to be used depending on the type of the request concerned.
- For that purpose, a national "quality manual for international police cooperation" is drafted and published, both on Intranet and through booklets. It includes summary information on:
 - legal framework and international instruments (under national law, EU, United Nations, bilateral agreements on crime prevention and legal assistance)
 - standard of quality and required data for request for legal assistance
 - the various international channels
 - necessity, appropriateness and proportionality of the request
 - limits and restrictions to information exchange.

3.2 National information exchange and availability of national databases and networks

There is a close correlation between the way in which information and data bases are shared internally and the proper sharing of information at international level (Chapter 3.3).

Ability to answer correctly and quickly to other MS requests is dependent on the present Chapter).

The unit has direct access to the broadest range of relevant national databases and in any case to all those databases available to the authorities represented in the unit. This covers in particular law enforcement databases, vehicle registration, national visa database, immigration office database, DNA databases, fingerprint databases, information exchange with the national liaison officers, ...

- Ideally, all members of the unit have access to all of these databases, if necessary on a hit/no hit only basis; if this is not possible, all databases are accessible to the unit on a 24/7 basis, where necessary via on-call duty officers.
- The unit has arrangements for indirect (e.g. on a hit/no hit basis) but quick, effective and efficient access to relevant databases of other authorities or bodies, where appropriate subject to judicial approval. This applies to records of companies providing electricity, water, phone and other communication supplies.
- The unit uses standard forms for transmitting international requests to and receiving the corresponding replies from the national authorities, which are independent from the law enforcement authority involved (at local level or in the unit).
- The unit shall respect all applicable data protection rules.
 - condition for access to the data
 - designation of duly empowered officials according to the appropriate user profile
 - keeping of records (logging of checks and searches, date and time of access, type of data used for consultation, name of authorities having requested the check, records of the staff members -name or personal code- having consulted data, etc)
 - conservation period of personal data
 - deletion of data
 - purpose limitation/ownership rights
- The data protection rules are implemented and reflected in internal business procedures and working instructions, which are subject to regular review and supervision by the national data protection authority.
- Access to the databases and communication with national authorities is via secure means.
- Access to the different databases is organised in a user-friendly way, where possible via a single workstation.

3.3 International information exchange

3.3.1 Access to information

- The unit has direct access to European and international law enforcement databases (SIS, Europol, Interpol, CIS) and European databases to which law enforcement has been given access (VIS, possibly Eurodac in future).
- The unit is connected to the Europol, Interpol (I-24/7 communication system), BdL and TESTA networks.
- Access to the databases and communication with foreign authorities is via secure means.
- Access to the different databases is organised in a user-friendly way, where possible via a single workstation and combined with access to national databases and systems.

3.3.2 General rules for international communications

- A request is sent through one channel only.
- If a request is, in exceptional cases, sent through different channels at the same time, this is clearly indicated on the request.
- If the request is sent to parties for information only, this is clearly indicated.
- The channel is NOT be changed during an on-going operation or during any phase unless it is absolutely necessary.
- A change of channel is communicated to all parties, including the reason for the change.
- The handling codes used are compatible with the Europol 4x4 system.
- Whenever possible, the unit replies directly to the international request, where appropriate with copy to the concerned national authority.
- Where the unit cannot reply directly, because it is beyond its mandate and/or because it cannot directly obtain the information, it forwards the request to the appropriate competent national authority, even if the original request was wrongly addressed to another authority.
- When a request is refused, the grounds for refusal have to be provided through the initial channel.

- When receiving a reply from the national authorities to an international request, the unit proactively verifies whether this information can be useful to another Member State or Europol and if this is the case, requests and encourages the owner of the information to transmit the information further. Ideally, the unit has the legal authority to do this itself.
- The unit has the authority to actively check whether information received via its bilateral liaison officers can be of use to other authorities (within its Member State or outside, e.g. Europol).

3.3.3 Specific rules for the choice of channel

Possible channels:

- unit for international police cooperation
- bilateral liaison officers
- SIRENE Bureau
- liaison officers at Europol
- Europol
- Prüm contact points
- NCB
- Interpol General Secretariat
- jointly staffed units in border regions
- direct contacts between concerned authorities
- coordination units for Naples II

Proposed criteria for use of channels:

a) geographical approach:

- nationality/residence/origin of person or object concerned is known and request concerns establishing details (address, phone number, fingerprints, DNA, registration, ...)
- nationality/residence/origin of person or object concerned is not known

b) thematic approach:

- Europol (organised crime, at least 2 MS, connection to AWF, need for joint approach)
- confidentiality / sensitivity
- channel used for previous related request

c) technical approach:

- IT-criteria: need of secure channels (BDL for intelligence and terrorism-related information) or technical compatibility (SIRPIT for fingerprints)

d) urgency

- urgency / proven speed of channel (in particular immediate risk for person's physical integrity, immediate loss of evidence, request for urgent cross border operation or surveillances)
- priority
- routine

- The front desk or "CCP" is crucial in choosing the most appropriate and relevant channel by gathering all requests ("in" or "out") dealt with by the unit, before dispatching them to the relevant desk (Europol, Interpol, Schengen, bilateral liaison officer) on the basis of the above criteria.

This helps to prevent overlaps or that a request is sent more than once through different channels and may even lead to the discovery that two different national services or departments are investigating the same case or are targeting the same suspect.

3.4 Staff recruitment and training

3.4.1 General recommendations:

- Staff is experienced in dealing with international cases and main EU and international tools of police co-operation.
- Staff has knowledge of issues such as intelligence and criminal investigative techniques, as well as of the national legislation.

- Staff is able to communicate orally and to have good written skills in foreign languages.
Operators speak English. Basic knowledge of one or two other languages is an asset, especially of those languages most used in the international cooperation cases of their Member State (based on geographical, economic or historical reasons or on criminal phenomena).
- Staff have enough computer skills to fulfil its desk duties.
- Staff receives regular training, both about EU and international cooperation mechanisms (*i.a.* via CEPOL) and about national developments.

3.4.2 *Specific requirements for the Head of the unit*

- The head of the unit has a broad background in law enforcement.
- He/she has a suitable ranking to require additional information from national competent authorities and / or to speed up and ensure the follow up of requests within the time frames.
- He/she has good knowledge of national and international law (in particular of Schengen Convention, Europol Convention and Interpol standards), in order to advise staff members (and provide regular training on those matters).
- He/she is empowered to settle a difference between / provide an assessment on different channels that may be used, using the criteria set out in Chapter 3.3.
- He/she is able to assess and decide (in close cooperation with the authority that initially sent the request) about the most appropriate information channel to be used, according to criteria set out in Chapter 3.3, and to convince the concerned authorities of this, as well as of the need and requirement to forward relevant information beyond the initial destination.