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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Working Party on Information Exchange and Data Protection (DAPIX)
Subject:	Outcome of the 6 th Annual Conference on Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs) on 7 and 8 September 2015, Europol, The Hague, The Netherlands

Under the aegis of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and organized and co-financed by the German Federal Police led ISEC Project “Strengthening of PCCC Cooperation in the European Union”, the 6th Annual Conference on Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs) was held at Europol in the Hague on 7 and 8 September 2015.

Both days of the Conference were attended by the national PCCC coordinators and representatives of national authorities. Speakers from the Commission, Europol and Frontex actively contributed to the conference. Since 2014, it was the second annual PCCC conference that took place at the Europol headquarters.

The aim of the conference was to exchange best practices, to discuss the progress made on the roadmap (see 5709/1/12 REV 1 DAPIX 7 ENFOPOL 18 CRIMORG 8 ENFOCUSTOM 4) for the development of PCCCs in the EU and to develop ideas for further activities to strengthen the PCCC channel, which stems a huge volume of cross-border information exchange.

1. The following items were on the agenda for this year's conference

- i) The assessment of the added value and benefits of the implementation and the use of SIENA in PCCCs;
- ii) The promotion of the platform for PCCCs within the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) and the role of the PCCC Newsletter;
- iii) First general trends identified after the Schengen evaluation of PCCCs and the European Agenda on Security about PCCCs;
- iv) Possible synergies between Frontex and PCCCs;
- v) The impact of phasing out the ISEC-project for PCCCs (“Strengthening of PCCC Cooperation in the European Union”) and the aim of the follow up project under the ISF Union Action “Strengthening of PCCC Activities in the European Union”);
- vi) The outcome of the first Customs Workshop for PCCCs;
- vii) Analysis done by PCCCs;
- viii) The phenomenon of false identity and the respective support possible by PCCCs
- ix) Car theft and the supporting role of PCCCs;
- x) The latest migration developments and its impact on the activities of PCCCs;
- xi) E-learning for PCCCs via CEPOL by the “Blended English Course for PCCCs;
- xii) The German software VoDoS as a tailor made Case Management System for PCCCs.

2. The following items were examined in depth

- The state of play of SIENA use in PCCCs:

Currently, four PCCCs (out of meanwhile more than 50 in Europe) use SIENA for their daily operations: Heerlen, Basel, Thörl-Maglern and Dolga Vas, and a number of other PCCCs had the intention to start using SIENA in the coming months.

Europol emphasised that since those four PCCCs use SIENA, the number of SIENA requests generated by Member States had significantly increased and estimates show that they would make up for more than 10 per cent of all SIENA messages between Member States to be expected in 2015.

EPICC Heerlen would exchange by far the most messages of the 4 PCCCs, followed by Basel. The lower usage by the other PCCCs could have various explanations, for example the fact that they started using SIENA more recently and still not all participating authorities were involved.

More than 50% of the messages would refer to crime areas within the Europol mandate, the most common crimes related to the Europol mandate being drugs trafficking (16%), fraud & swindling (13%), and motor vehicle crime (8%).

Finally, Europol informed about its foreseen multi-level confidentiality approach for SIENA – allowing Member States and Third Parties to provide SIENA access via networks with various confidentiality levels.

In addition, Europol presented its intention to start in 2016 to offer to Member States several web based interfaces (which then could be of interest for links between SIENA and PCCC Case Management Systems).

- PCCCs and the Internal Security Strategy:

The European Commission stated – as emphasized in the European Agenda on Security as a main building block of the Renewed EU Internal Security Strategy – to keep its commitment to PCCCs and to support their further development.

The European Agenda on Security would be built on three pillars, namely 1) information exchange, 2) operational cooperation, 3) training, funding, research and innovation, and PCCC's could make contributions to all these areas.

Regarding the Schengen evaluations so far carried out under the new system, the Commission explained that the Schengen on-site visits had proved an appropriate tool to assess the performance of PCCC's. The evaluations revealed that a large chunk of international police information is channelled through PCCC's. The evaluations had also shown the heterogeneity of PCCC's, such as their level of integration with customs, their links to their SPOC and to Europol or their handling of chain requests.

PCCC's having implemented SIENA for intra-PCCC communication purposes had referred to their good experience with this tool. The evaluations would be continued according to the adopted multiannual programme till 2019 aiming at an assessment of what needs to be done to enhance the role of PCCC's.

- PCCC's support for law enforcement authorities

The nine panels of the Conference stressed the very active role of PCCC's in supporting the law enforcement authorities of Member States, especially by enabling a very fast information exchange in the border regions.

New phenomena of crime and the role PCCC's could play to help law enforcement authorities to cope with that were shown and discussed.

Furthermore, the possibilities of synergies between Frontex – and here especially its Focal Points Land operations – were reflected on.

It was stressed that the numerous activities of the German Federal Police led ISEC project for PCCC's sustainably helped to lift PCCC cooperation in the EU on a scale not seen before.

It was recommended that given the high volume of information exchange via PCCC's, the upcoming ISF Union Action project for PCCC's should concentrate on the need to standardize and frame cross-border police information exchange, taking into account the opportunities given by SIENA.

3. Conclusions of the Conference

- i) Since the information exchange via PCCCs, especially taking into account the possibilities given by SIENA, plays an important role in the fight against and prevention of crime, needs and considerations of PCCCs should be considered thoroughly by DAPIX.
- ii) Standardised information exchange via PCCCs should be intensively examined, especially taking into account the respective possibilities given by the upcoming ISF Union Actions project for PCCCs.
- iii) A closer cooperation of PCCCs with their respective national Single Point of Contact (SPOC) as well as with Europol should be envisaged.
- iv) Action Point 7 of the IMS should be updated in the light of the outcome of this conference and in line with the needs shown up during the various presentations and discussions.
- v) Annex 6 for the PCCC Guidelines, as already presented in 16249/13 DAPIX 142 should officially be adopted and annexed to the Guidelines.
- vi) Joint Trainings for PCCCs, as already implemented under the out-phasing ISEC project for PCCCs, should be followed up by the upcoming ISF Union Actions project for PCCCs.
