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## NOTE

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From:	Presidency
To:	Law Enforcement Working Party
No. prev. doc.:	6883/3/16 REV 3
Subject:	LEWP Networks/Expert Groups – updating the Strategic Objectives in the context of the new Policy Cycle and SOCTA

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### I. Introduction

In December 2015, the LEWP adopted the revised guidelines on the relations between the LEWP and its related expert groups and networks (12915/2/15 REV 2). In this document, the following is mentioned under heading A, subheading *Monitoring* (points 5 and 6):

- "5) Bearing in mind the priorities of the renewed ISS, **the LEWP should, in order to guide the networks in fulfilling their mission, set periodically the strategic objectives for the networks in accordance with the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime and taking into consideration where relevant the findings of the SOCTA.**
- 6) **The LEWP should discuss and approve at the latest by the end of December the annual work programmes of the networks while ensuring that they are in line with the aforementioned strategic priorities.** The LEWP should ensure coherence and that there are no overlaps in the strategic and operational objectives and the planned activities of the different networks."

In 2016, the Netherlands Presidency reached out to the networks and expert groups in order to gather their input on their strategic objectives, as well as on the compliance of these objectives with the Policy cycle and the SOCTA. Based on the information received, the Presidency issued a first preliminary overview of the networks' and expert groups' strategic objectives (6883/3/16 REV 3).

On 18 May 2017, the Council adopted its Conclusions on setting the EU's priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021<sup>1</sup>, taking into account, amongst other documents, the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA)<sup>2</sup> which Europol issued on 9 March 2017.

The existence of these new strategic documents requires an update of the above objectives, in order to reassess to which extent they comply with the newly identified threats and crime priorities, and thus help the networks to take them into account where appropriate. Moreover, possible enhancements to the cooperation of selected networks with third countries should be considered in order to better respond to common threats. The current Estonian Presidency launched a discussion to this end at the LEWP meeting on 12 September 2017 (11842/17):

## **II. Updating the networks' strategic objectives in the light of the new Policy Cycle / SOCTA**

While the Member States have broadly supported this idea, the following conclusions should be taken into account:

- The networks may be encouraged to integrate the new crime priorities into their strategic objectives as appropriate, but this has to be without prejudice to their independence in terms of mandate and specific expertise; (...) Networks and expert groups related to the LEWP should be invited to incorporate priorities identified as relevant by the LEWP into their work programmes (while being fully aware that certain network projects are aspects of Member States cooperation beyond EU competence).
- The degree of current activity of the networks varies greatly and not all of them may be able to pursue objectives linked to the new Policy Cycle; therefore, their integration into the strategic objectives should only be envisaged in cases where real synergies and added value can be identified.

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<sup>1</sup> 9450/17

<sup>2</sup> 6886/17, ADD 1 and 2 (EU RESTRICTED)

- The identification of synergies might be facilitated by the involvement of relevant EMPACT drivers and by the possibility to consider fully developed MASPs for each crime priority, the drafting of which should be finalised by the end of October 2017.

Based on the above and the discussion on 24 October 2017, the LEWP (...) agreed that

- **the following 12 networks and expert groups be invited to consider updating their strategic objectives in the light of the new Policy Cycle<sup>3</sup>, in consultation with relevant EMPACT drivers and taking into account the corresponding new MASPs:**

*@ON, AIRPOL, CARPOL, CULTNET, EFE, ENFAST, ENLETS, EnviCrimeNet, EMPEN, KYNOPOL, RCEG, TISPOL*

- **the remaining 4 networks (ATLAS, ENPPF, Experts for Major Sports Events and Liaison Officers) be invited to carry out a regular periodic update of their strategic objectives, as required by the revised Guidelines on the relations between the LEWP and its related expert groups and networks (12915/2/15 REV 2).**

The input received from the networks and expert groups will be used to update the overview of the networks' strategic objectives.

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<sup>3</sup> Based on possible synergies identified in 11842/17, as endorsed by the LEWP on 12 September 2017.

### **III. Enhancements to the cooperation of selected networks with third countries**

During the LEWP meeting on 12 September 2017, Member States expressed a very broad support to an increased involvement of relevant third countries in the activities of LEWP related networks and expert groups.

Nevertheless, unlike in the case of strategic objectives where they required a strong independence of the networks to be maintained, many Member States clearly indicated that such an increased involvement must be carefully negotiated at EU level on a case by case basis.

At the meeting on 12 September 2017, Europol clearly demonstrated in its presentation that a thorough assessment of relevant third countries against the crime priorities of the new Policy Cycle has already been carried out.

Moreover, as pointed out by one delegation, Europol's document of 6 June 2017 "Overview of the most relevant third states per priority (Policy Cycle 2018 – 2021)", drafted at the request by the Commission during the meeting of COSI SG on 12 May 2017, might greatly facilitate the identification of appropriate synergies.

**In the light of the above and the discussion on 24 October 2017, the LEWP (...) endorsed the following conclusions:**

- 1. The 12 networks and expert groups identified in part II of this document are strongly encouraged to systematically consider involving third countries in their activities, based on their specific mandates and capabilities. Cooperation with third countries should only be project-based and envisaged in specific cases where real synergies and added value can be identified.**
- 2. In cases where potential synergies are identified, they shall**
  - reach out to Europol in order to identify specific actions involving third countries that may contribute to an efficient fight against common threats at EU level, and**
  - report back to the LEWP for endorsement and definition of the way forward.**