

# Australia and Europol join forces to combat transnational crime



**One year on from becoming the seventh non-European Union country to enter into an operational and strategic agreement with Europol, Federal Agent Ray Imbriano provides an insight in to his posting as Europol AFP liaison officer and the role of Europol.**

On 2 May 2007, I began work as the AFP Liaison Officer at Europol which is based in The Hague, Netherlands. I have begun to understand how Europol works and to recognise the potential benefits of liaising closely with a number of international law enforcement officials all located within the one complex.

The signing of the Europol agreement on 20 February 2007 by Commissioner Mick Keelty and Director of Europol Max-Peter Ratzel was the culmination of seven years of negotiations between the AFP and Europol.

The Agreement came into force on 27 September last year and information exchange has commenced as at February 2008.

During my posting, I have found that having the ability to liaise with officers from a range of countries on similar crime types has significant benefits for the liaison position, and ultimately, the AFP and the wider Australian law enforcement community. In particular, having direct physical access with liaison officers from 27 EU and 8 non-EU countries, as well as Interpol liaison officers, ensures a relatively quick turnaround on Australian enquiries.

In comparison to well-known law enforcement agencies around the world, Europol is relatively young having been established, with limited operations only, on 3 January 1994. However, it continues to evolve and since my arrival I have witnessed the potential of the organisation, and in particular the benefits of gaining membership to the Analysis Work Files (AWFs) – which is further explained later in this article. This is a very exciting time and I am confident that the future for Europol and its role will significantly contribute to the strategic and operational goals of the AFP and

partner law enforcement agencies.

Commissioner Keelty said that this agreement was a key part of Australia's strategic approach to strengthening its international capacity for fighting all forms of transnational crime, including terrorism.

"In the global crime environment we now police in, no-one can afford to operate as a single agency – or as a single country," Commissioner Keelty said. "Collaborative partnerships need to be entered into to combat the challenges of modern-day crime."

## Overview of Europol

What is Europol?

Europol is the European Union (EU) Law Enforcement Organisation that provides support services for the law enforcement community and promotes intelligence-led policing. It is a multicultural, multinational and multi-agency organisation. The aim of Europol is to assist the law enforcement authorities of member states in their fight against serious forms of organised crime.

Structure of Europol

The main areas of Europol are the Serious Crime Department and the Europol Liaison Bureau. As the AFP Europol liaison officer, my role involves interacting with Europol's different units and other liaison bureau members to obtain both strategic and operational intelligence that is relevant to the AFP and partner law enforcement agencies.



### Serious Crime Department

The Serious Crime Department consists of the following units: organised crime, drugs, crimes against persons, financial and property crime, terrorism and forgery of money.

Within each of these units are specific AWFs (projects) on specific crime types or crime groups. Europol employs about 357 personnel (including 100 analysts) as well as national and seconded experts covering a wide range of expertise.

### Europol Liaison Bureau

The Europol Liaison Bureau consists of 115 law enforcement Liaison Officers from federal, national and/or judiciary law enforcement agencies from EU member states and third-party member states (see listing below).

The Bureau includes: customs, border patrol, tax revenue, military police and other federal law enforcement agencies. The Liaison Bureau allows the Europol Liaison Officer to strengthen existing relationships with major partner countries such as the UK, Canada, Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. It also enhances new relationships with other smaller countries that may impact on the AFP and Australian law enforcement in the future such as Eastern Europe.

**The following 27 European Union countries are represented at Europol Liaison Bureau:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece,



Far left: Europol liaison officer Federal Agent Ray Imbriano; Above: SLO The Hague Russel Smith, Europol Director Max Peter Ratzel, Deputy Commissioner John Lawler and Europol LO Ray Imbriano.

Photos courtesy of IPO Desk - Europol

Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom.

**The following countries and organisations are also represented at Europol Liaison Bureau as third-party member states:**

Australia, Croatia, Canada, Colombia, Iceland, Interpol, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States of America (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Postal Inspection Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and US Secret Service).

Europol also has strategic-only agreements with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Russian Federation, Turkey, Eurojust – an agency of the

EU, European Commission, European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the United Nations Office of Drug Crimes, the World Customs Organization and other EU agencies. Strategic-only agreements do not allow for the exchange of personal information between Europol and these organisations and countries but do allow for the exchange of strategic intelligence.

**When can Europol be used?**

Europol can provide support to criminal investigations linked to any of the European Union member states and third-party member states (such as Australia, Canada, and USA) represented at Europol.

One of the main functions of Europol is to collate and analyse all the information provided by member states. Examples of this include: strategic intelligence documents, operational intelligence assessments and post-operational



assessments (including, but not limited to, phone numbers, names and illicit drug lab equipment). An attempt is then made to identify any links between countries that may be affected by the same criminal organisations.

Europol can then facilitate bringing these countries together bi-laterally so they can determine whether to undertake a joint investigation in relation to the criminal organisation. This process has been very successful in the past as there have been numerous examples where Europol has identified significant transnational criminal connections that were not identified by either party, using bilateral means.

The Europol position can not be used for the conduct of basic criminal enquiries such as subscriber and criminal history checks for operational investigations. These will continue to be processed via The Hague Post and/or Interpol as is relevant. However, the Europol liaison officer position can be used to cross-check phone numbers, names, company names and entities via all the relevant Europol Analysis Work Files and information systems.

Europol can also be used to exchange strategic intelligence that identifies emerging issues currently impacting on

Europe and the third member states. These reports are crucial as a catalyst for environmental scanning documents and in identifying emerging trends and issues that may affect Australia.

These strategic documents will be useful in shaping AFP policy and legislation in relation to crime types and resources. Such strategic documents include the annual EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment and the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report.

#### Analytical Work Files (AWFs)

The purpose of an AWF is to collect target-oriented data on specific criminal groups and trends for operation analysis and cross-checking. The 100 analysts at Europol examine and cross-check data from 17 AWFs with the purpose of identifying the criminal links between respective countries (listing at end of article).

#### The Information Exchange System

The AFP Europol Liaison Officer is Australia's gateway to exchanging strategic intelligence with Europol, EU member states and third-party member states. Europol uses a secure system for data exchange, which includes data evaluation codes and handling codes for restricting access and/or restricting

the dissemination of the intelligence provided.

This system is used to initiate requests for information to other Liaison Officers from various countries. The exchange system is also used by Liaison Officers to transmit intelligence to other countries represented at Europol and can also serve as a statistical tracking system providing statistical reports on its usage.

#### Specialised Services

Europol provides various support services to its members including specialised training and analytical, technical and operational data analysis. Some of the programs have included: the High Tech Crime Conference, Asset Recovery Conference, Euro Counterfeiting Conference, Informant Handling expert meeting, Witness Protection expert meeting, Online Child Sexual Exploitation courses and Trafficking in Human Beings expert meetings.

The Europol Liaison Officer also has access to Europol's Knowledge Management Centre (KMC). The KMC is an international search facility which collects information about expertise of an unusual nature. The Centre gathers and provides detailed information on persons

# EUROPOL

and/or organisations which have unique expertise.

Some of the items registered with the KMC include: three-dimensional visualisation and animation of crime scenes, face ageing and face reconstruction techniques, ear print comparison and sleeping disorders (the latter is used as an excuse for committing crime). The KMC can put law enforcement

agencies in contact with the right expert no matter how strange, unfamiliar or unusual the subject may be.

International Police Organisations Desk

In January 2008, AFP International established the International Police Organisations (IPO) desk. This has a new team and its key function is to manage and lead the AFP's relationship with

Europol, Interpol and ASEANAPOL as well as Commonwealth, State and Territory law enforcement agencies.

The IPO Desk can be contacted at: [IPO-Desk@afp.gov.au](mailto:IPO-Desk@afp.gov.au).

Far left: Europol Headquarters, The Hague; Middle left: Commissioner Keelty signs the cooperation agreement with Europol Director, Max-Peter Ratzel; Far right: Commissioner Keelty inspects the Europol Drug Laboratory.

## AWF name: Mandated Crime Area

**ISLAMIST TERRORISM:** Islamic Terrorism

**DOLPHIN:** most important non-Islamic terrorist organisations threatening the EU

**SYNERGY:** Synthetic Drugs such as MDMA and pre-cursors

**COLA:** Latin-American networks involved in cocaine trafficking

**MUSTARD:** Turkish networks involved in heroin trafficking

**TWINS:** Child pornography networks on the internet

**PHOENIX:** Trafficking of Human beings

**TERMINAL:** Payment card fraud

**COPY:** Intellectual property

**CHECKPOINT:** Facilitated illegal immigration

**MONITOR:** Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs

**EEOC:** Eastern European Organized Crime Networks

**SUSTRANS:** Suspicious financial transactions with concentration on money laundering

**COPPER:** Ethnic Albanian Organised Crime networks

**FURTUM:** Itinerant organised property crime

**SOYA:** Counterfeiting of the Euro

**SMOKE:** Illicit Tobacco Trade

**AWF MTIC:** MTIC, similar to GST fraud, which is likely to commence in the middle of 2008.