WAPIS PROGRAMME

WEST AFRICAN POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

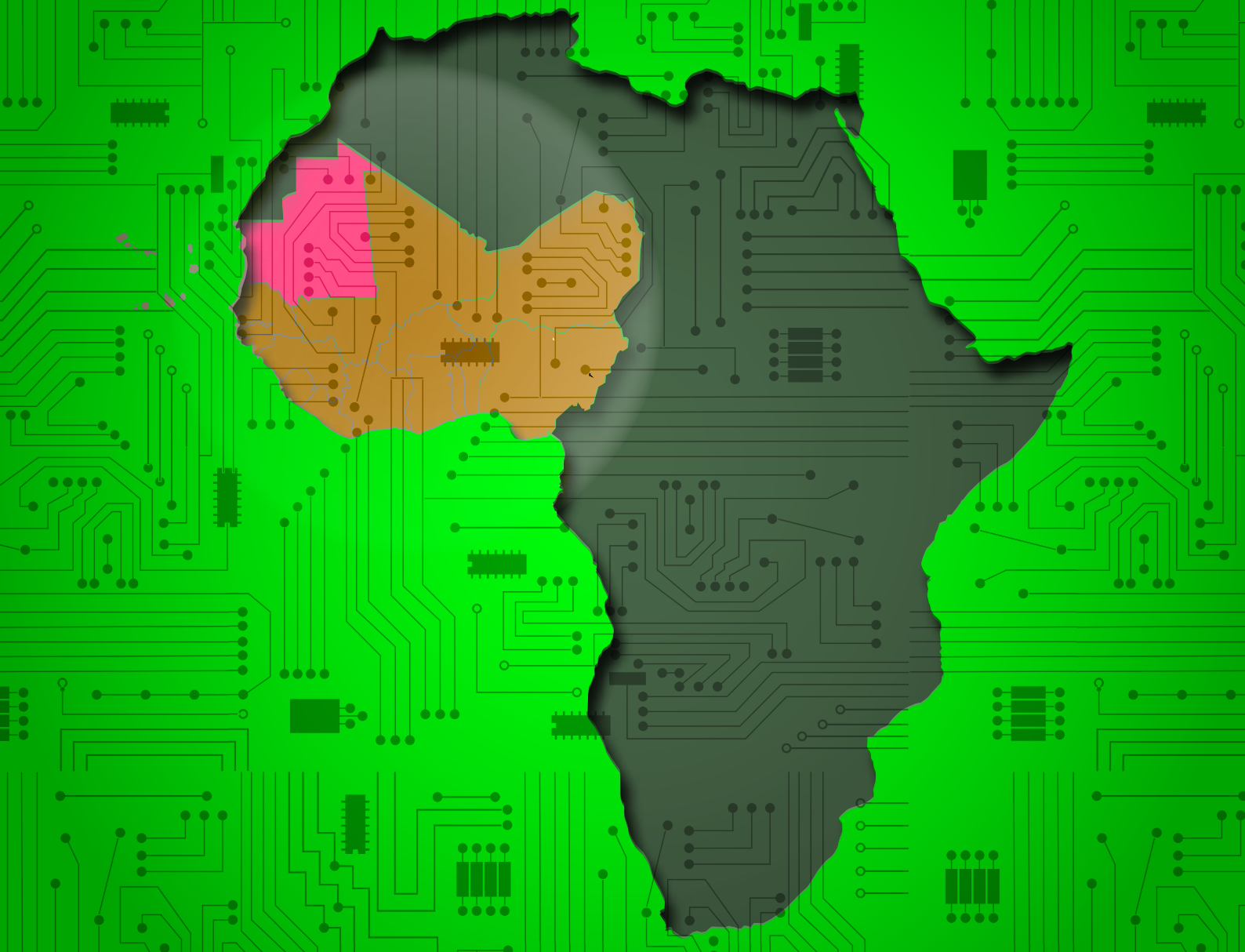

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Figure 1: Symposium, Brussels, 2010

INTRODUCTION

THE ORIGINS OF THE PROGRAMME

The idea to create a West African Police Information System (WAPIS) stemmed from ECOWAS Member States, which expressed their concern over the spate of transnational organized crime and terrorism affecting the region. Security gaps at national, regional and international levels have contributed to West Africa becoming a hub for crimes such as drug trafficking, human smuggling and global terrorism. Without effective police information exchange within the region, as well as between the region and the rest of the world, no enforcement strategy can effectively tackle these threats.

In 2005, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) published a protocol for the establishment of a Criminal Intelligence and Investigation Bureau (CIIB) in order to support ECOWAS Member States in their fight against transnational organized crime. In 2010, during a symposium in Brussels jointly organized by INTERPOL and the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, West African Chiefs of Police declared that, in order to meet the security challenges faced by the region, countries needed automated police information systems connected at both regional and global levels.

Following this common position, the European Union decided to grant funding to INTERPOL for the development and implementation of a police information system for ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania. The WAPIS Programme was born.

INTERPOL'S EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

INTERPOL's dedication to its member States has a proven record of sustainability and agility to emerging technologies and techniques. Since the creation of INTERPOL's I-24/7 in 2003, INTERPOL has extended access to all its member countries, thereby giving law enforcement in 192 member countries direct and instant access to numerous databases containing Notices, Child Sexual Exploitation Images, Stolen Motor Vehicles, DNA, Fingerprints, Stolen Works of Art and the Stolen and Lost Travel Document Database. INTERPOL thus enables the global law enforcement community to connect seemingly unrelated pieces of data, therefore facilitating investigations and enhancing international police co-operation.

INTERPOL's experience and expertise in providing its member countries with police data management systems and capacity building initiatives makes it best positioned to implement the WAPIS Programme.

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BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROGRAMME

The WAPIS Programme targets all West African countries including the 15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania.

Under the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, a WAPIS-like system is being implemented in Chad in order to ensure coherence and future cooperation among all G5 Sahel Member States.

15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the WAPIS Programme is to increase the capacity of West African law enforcement authorities to combat transnational crime and terrorism through enhanced information sharing.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the overall objective of the Programme, the following strategic objectives should be met:

- ECOWAS Member States have increased their capability to collect, centralize, manage, share and analyse its police data;
- ECOWAS Member States have increased their capability to exchange their police data within the sub-region and beyond;
- The West African law enforcement community is better connected to the global law enforcement community through enhanced global information sharing.

LEVELS OF OPERATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

The WAPIS System was conceived to intervene at three levels, i.e. national, regional and global.

NATIONAL LEVEL

At **national level**, it is to provide local law enforcement authorities with a national police data system allowing them to create, manage and share files on:

- Criminal cases and events;
- Persons suspected of having committed or participated in a crime or offence, as well as victims and witnesses of crimes;
- Legal proceedings associated to the crimes/suspects;
- Weapons and objects used to commit crimes;
- Stolen vehicles and vehicles associated with a crime;
- Stolen identity documents and documents of persons associated with a crime.

The WAPIS Programme encourages national authorities to involve all relevant law enforcement agencies in the Programme and to facilitate inter-agency cooperation through a WAPIS National committee (WANACO).

The national WAPIS system is located in a Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) within a designated law enforcement facility, ideally in the proximity of the INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB). The DACORE includes officers from authorized national law enforcement agencies responsible for:

- Registering police data;
- Performing data checks;
- Controlling the validity of police data.

Police data in paper format is difficult to access and share, yet it is very valuable. It is therefore crucial that police data be converted to a digital format so it can be inserted into the national WAPIS system. To assist in this process, deploy scanning stations has been deployed to selected national law enforcement agencies to scan existing paper files and enter critical data in the national WAPIS system for quick and easy searching.

The identification of criminals is considerably enhanced by fingerprint identification. This is particularly true in West Africa, where civil registry and quality of identity documents are very weak. To solve this issue, The WAPIS System integrates an **Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems** (AFIS) in parallel of the establishment of the WAPIS system to enhance law enforcement's capacity to identify criminals and terrorists and consequently ensure an immediate impact on the fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism across West Africa and beyond.

REGIONAL LEVEL

At **regional level**, the national systems will be networked into a regional police information sharing platform under the auspices of ECOWAS. The latter would allow the instant exchange of police data, including on persons, vehicles and ID documents, among countries of the region. Officers staffing a country's DACORE or in the field would therefore be able to:

- Quickly know if an individual is wanted by another country;
- Quickly determine if an ID document, a vehicle or a firearm is reported as stolen or associated to a crime by police in another country.

As such, police cooperation would be enhanced as well as law enforcement agencies' capacities to tackle transnational crime and terrorism.

○ GLOBAL LEVEL

Finally, at **global level**, each national WAPIS System is to be connected to the country's INTERPOL NCB in order to share authorized national data globally through INTERPOL's I-24/7 system. Conversely, linkage with the INTERPOL NCB and to I-24/7 would allow officers working on the WAPIS System, with the same query made on their country's WAPIS System, to perform checks against INTERPOL's databases. For example, an officer performing a name check on a national suspected of drug trafficking may learn that this individual, despite not being already wanted by national authorities or by any other country of the region, is wanted by a South American or European country for similar drug-related criminal activities.

The greater inclusion of West African law enforcement agencies within the international police community is crucial to effectively combat transnational organised crime and terrorism.

Figure 2: WAPIS System 3 level structure

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

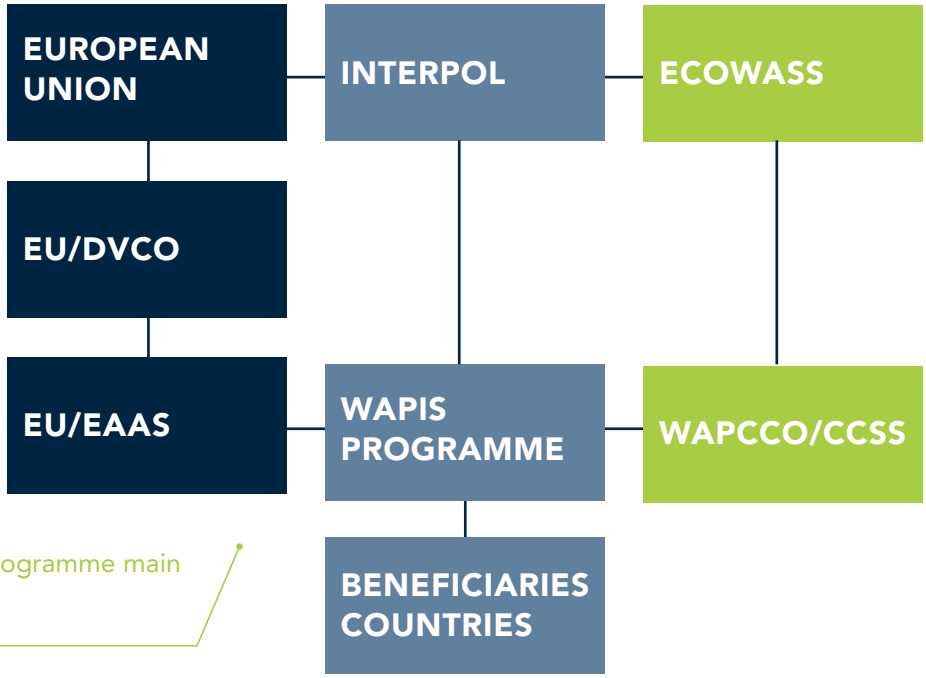

Figure 3: The WAPIS Programme main stakeholders

NAME	STRATEGIC ROLE
EU/EEAS	The European External Action Service sets the strategic priorities in agreement with the European Commission and is present in every country through European Union Delegations.
EU/DEVCO	The European Commission is funding the Programme via the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
INTERPOL	INTERPOL's role is double: 1. The Organisation is commissioned by the EU to implement the Programme and therefore is responsible for designing the action plan and managing its implementation. 2. Due to the fact that the Organisation operates the I-24/7 global secure police information system, to which the WAPIS System will be interconnected, INTERPOL is responsible for developing the core technical standards of the WAPIS system.
ECOWAS Commission	As the regional body representing the 15 countries of West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a crucial political actor. As such, it will play a central role in:

ECOWAS Commission *(continued)*	1. Facilitating negotiations among Member States leading to the selection of the type of mechanism to be used for the exchange of data at regional level and to the adoption of the required legal framework. 2. Providing legal advice and support in its role of custodian of the Supplementary Act on Personal data Protection Within ECOWAS, which is the appropriate legal framework for the processing of personal data within the ECOWAS region. 3. Providing political support for the Programme among its Member States. 4. Participating in the monitoring the Programme's progress in its Member States.
WAPCCO /CCSS	The West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) drives intra-community police cooperation, including information exchange and coordinated enforcement strategies. The WAPCCO will assist the ministerial council in the preparation of related political decisions and in the drafting of the relevant ECOWAS regulations. The WAPCCO will contribute to monitoring the Programme's implementation. The Committee of Chief of Security Services (CCSS) includes all agencies involved in ensuring national security across the region. It facilitates intra-community cooperation and information exchange towards the collective fight against crime. The CCSS will assist the ministerial council in the preparation of political decisions and in the drafting of relevant ECOWAS regulations. The CCSS will contribute to monitoring the Programme's implementation. Both committees are part of the ECOWAS Commission's institutional process
BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES/ TARGET GROUPS	Beneficiary countries are involved in the implementation of the Programme also via the appointment of SPOCs and the establishment of WAPIS National Committees (WANACOs). The WANACO is the national body responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of WAPIS at national level. Each country will need to set up and manage its own WANACO, composed of officials from national law enforcement agencies involved in WAPIS. Whenever appropriate, the governance and internal structure of the committee should be made official and a budget line should be allocated to ensure effective functioning. WANACOs should convene on a regular basis. Law enforcement agencies (Police, Gendarmerie, Customs, Immigration Services, etc.) across the region will be the main target groups. Police authorities from INTERPOL's other member countries will be indirect beneficiaries of the Programme, including the 28 European Union Member States.

LEGAL ASPECTS

The WAPIS Programme raises several questions and addresses sensitive issues, including linked to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The commitment of the European Union, INTERPOL and ECOWAS to fundamental human rights is at the heart of the WAPIS Programme. The collection and processing of police data will comply with international human rights standards and rules on the protection of personal data.

○ PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

The WAPIS data protection system will be based on both regional and international norms such as the Supplementary Act on Personal data Protection within ECOWAS and INTERPOL's Rules on the Processing of Data. It will also comply with internationally recognized principles (including the UN guidelines for the exploitation of personal data files/1990; EU directives 95/46/EC, 2002/58/EC, and 2009/136/EC).

Whereas several West African countries have already established a Data Protection Authority, such as Ghana and Benin, the regional dynamic spurred on by the ECOWAS Commission is fostering the setup of Data Protection Authorities in all ECOWAS Member States, as required by the Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection. Against this backdrop, in the course of summer 2015, Mali set up its first Authority of Personal Data Protection Authority.

FUNDING

The Programme has been fully funded by the European Union since its outset in 2012, first under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) then under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. In July 2015, the EU and ECOWAS agreed to further support the full rollout of the WAPIS System in all ECOWAS countries and Mauritania under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF, EU-West Africa Regional Indicative Programme). The EDF support funding has been available since November 2017 for a period of 55 months and will cover activities in all ECOWAS countries and Mauritania. Activities with the G5 Sahel and Chad would will continue under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa until February 2018.

PROJECT MILESTONES

PHASE 1

SEPTEMBER 2012

PHASE 1 OF THE WAPIS PROGRAMME IS LAUNCHED.

SEPTEMBER 2013

PHASE 2 IS LAUNCHED

The system is implemented in four pilot countries. (Benin, Ghana, Niger, Mali) under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

PHASE 2

SEPTEMBER 2015

Official Inauguration of the Data collection centre in Mali, Niger and Benin.

FEBRUARY 2016

The WAPIS Programme comes under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The Programme initiate work with Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Mauritania.

SEPTEMBER 2016

WAPIS is launched in Ghana. The Data Centre is inaugurated in in Accra, Ghana.

PHASE 3

NOVEMBER 2017

PHASE 3 IS LAUNCHED.

WAPIS comes under the 11th European Development Fund for a phase which will last 55 months.

Full roll out is envisaged to all ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania.

The WAPIS Team is relocated to Abidjan.

INTERPOL

WAPIS Programme

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