

WAPIS

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NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This quarterly newsletter allows me the pleasure of addressing the entire community of stakeholders in the West African Police Information System (WAPIS).

WAPIS aims to strengthen internal security and contribute to stability in the subregion. It inherited data management processes from the European programme PARSIB, in which the gendarmerie and police, as well as customs, participated at the time.

Since its launch in 2012, the WAPIS Programme has been seen as an indispensable tool for the collection, analysis, and sharing of information between the different national law enforcement agencies. At the subregional and international levels, WAPIS will make an effective contribution to preventing and combating organized transnational crime, terrorism, and other threats to collective security.

Benin joined the Programme in 2012, during its pilot phase. In September 2019, the Benin Government signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the implementation of WAPIS with INTERPOL. Administered by the Public Security Documentation Centre (CDSP) and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice and Legislation, WAPIS is aligned with the vision of President Patrice Talon's government in terms of managing and processing police information in Benin. Given the current security situation, this Programme is of huge importance for Benin.

To that end, in January 2020, Benin established the WAPIS National Committee (WANACO), led by the Director General of the Republican Police, Mr Alain Soumaïla Yaya, a first-class Inspector General of Police. Other law enforcement agencies, notably customs, water and forestry, hunting, and the justice system are also represented in the WANACO.

With regard to standards and regulations, one of the important measures taken recently by Benin is the adoption of Decree 2024-877 of 11 April 2024 concerning the processing of police and court information, including in a prison environment. This act consolidates the implementation of WAPIS and ensures its long-term sustainability.



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In terms of major advances in implementing the WAPIS Programme and the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) project in Benin, the following should be noted::

- The signature in September 2023 of the agreement between NCB Benin and WAPIS-Benin to secure direct access for WAPIS-Benin to the INTERPOL Information System;
- The validation of the WAPIS Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in Benin in November 2023;
- The organization of the second set of WAPIS Programme information and awareness-raising days in March 2024;
- The adoption by the Council of Ministers, during its session of 11 April 2024, of Decree 2024-877 concerning procedures for processing police and court information, including in a prison environment;
- The official launch of the AFIS component in May 2024 – a circular memo from the Minister of Justice and a memo from the Director General of the Republican Police now obliges all those involved in the criminal justice system to report accused individuals and those taken into custody.

Benin is looking forward to the launch, in May 2025, of the regional information-exchange platform, which will enhance effective synergy of actions between stakeholders in the fight against common security threats. This cooperation mechanism is essential to maintain a stable security environment that favours the economic and social development of our region.

Every year, the Public Security Documentation Centre (CDSP), which constitutes Benin's Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE), rolls out its action plan through the extension of the system to law enforcement agencies and by training several digital terminal moderators and validators. It also raises awareness among those involved in the system (judges, criminal investigation department (CID) officers, customs inspectors and forest inspectors, etc.). The standard protocols have been validated by all those

involved and, since October, are in the process of being disseminated through Benin's departments. Currently, the Benin WAPIS is engaging with those involved in the criminal justice system and ensuring better visibility of the CDSP in terms of systematizing the reporting and registration of persons of interest in criminal proceedings. Interconnections are envisaged with a number of existing files. With this operationalization of its files, the CDSP is positioning itself as the primary mechanism for assisting with police and court investigations.

At this stage of implementation of the WAPIS Programme, I am delighted to acknowledge the support of our partners: the European Union (EU), ICPO-INTERPOL, and also the ECOWAS Commission. Their support has made a huge difference in the various project phases. I really must thank them for their ongoing commitment to this project.

We are convinced that the benefits of WAPIS will be felt increasingly over the coming months and years as we continue to build capacity and improve our working methods.

The Ministry of Justice and Legislation is firmly committed to working methodically to ensure effective training and retention of CDSP staff in order to achieve the objectives that have been set and align our system with international standards. The safety of our fellow citizens remains our top priority.

I am sure I share this concern with all stakeholders. On this matter, I would like to invite my counterparts in the ECOWAS countries and other groups working in security in the subregion to do all they can to ensure our States make the most of the opportunities this tool offers to encourage and strengthen peace and development in our region. Here's to cooperation within our subregion!

Thank you.

LEAD STORIES

3rd ECOWAS Expert Committee Meeting on the WAPIS regional platform and the legal framework required for the use of biometric data

The 3rd ECOWAS Expert Committee Meeting dedicated to the WAPIS regional platform and the legal framework required for the use of biometric data was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 21 and 22 May 2024.

The first objective of the meeting was to examine the draft ECOWAS Supplementary Act on the establishment and functioning of the WAPIS regional data-sharing platform. The second objective of the Expert Committee Meeting was to discuss the model legislation on the creation of an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) and the collection and use of biometric data in criminal procedures within the framework of the WAPIS/AFIS Project.

At the end of the discussions, several conclusions and recommendations were adopted. In particular, it was recommended that ECOWAS adopt the draft Supplementary Act creating and operationalizing the regional police data-sharing platform as soon as possible.

For its part, INTERPOL has committed to providing the necessary technical and legal assistance to make the regional platform operational, drafting and implementing the Standard Operating Procedures for its operation, and also adopting or updating the national legal framework governing the use of biometric data in criminal procedures and, for the Member States concerned, the legal framework governing use of the AFIS database.



3rd ECOWAS Expert Committee Meeting

Long-term sustainability of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) at the heart of the 10th Steering Committee meeting



10th WAPIS Steering and Coordination Committee Meeting

The 10th Steering Committee Meeting of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) was held in Abidjan on 24 May 2024, at which the long-term future of the WAPIS Programme, as it nears completion, was at the heart of the discussions. The presence of all the West African countries attests to the importance attached to the Programme and its regional scope.

The Committee welcomed the significant progress made by WAPIS, especially under difficult circumstances. Indeed, despite the security challenges facing some countries in conflict situations, the system has demonstrated its relevance and robustness as a tool in the fight against transnational crime. The Committee was also delighted with the progress made in Benin, where WAPIS has been effectively integrated despite a change in the institutional anchor.

Nonetheless, consolidation of the lessons learned and the implementation of measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of WAPIS in the 17 participating countries remain top priorities. Sustainable finance, a suitable legal framework, and qualified staff dedicated to running the system are essential elements to ensure its use in the long term. Deployment of the system to all borders, interoperability with national systems, and use of the system for joint INTERPOL activities and operations are also major themes.

ECOWAS, the European Union, and INTERPOL reaffirmed their determination to support member countries in this new phase. The common goal is still to make WAPIS an effective and sustainable tool that will improve cross-border collaboration and strengthen security in West Africa.

Optimizing the management of police information in West Africa: sharing Belgium's experiences



Study tour by the directors of the WAPIS Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs)

During a study tour organized in Belgium from 24 September to 3 October 2024, the 16 directors of the WAPIS Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs) from West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) learned important lessons about the Belgian police's procedures for processing police information. This study tour, which included visits to Verviers, Liège, and Brussels, provided an opportunity to learn lessons about how effectively information is shared in Belgium, especially between local and federal levels, which can be adapted to improve the management of police information in West Africa. The main lessons are the importance of structured systems for collecting and exchanging information and legal frameworks requiring that data be entered in police databases, plus the importance of leadership in setting up an effective police service that relies on information in order to act.

Buoyed by these shared experiences, the DACORE directors now plan to review and update their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for managing data, while appealing for more solid legal frameworks that require mandatory data entry. Moreover, the DACORE directors now consider themselves to have a leadership role to play to ensure that the various stakeholders adopt WAPIS in full, improve coordination at the national level, and appeal for the creation by ECOWAS of a unified regional platform for sharing police information. The commitments made during the meetings on 2 and 3 October 2024 with the ECOWAS Special Representative to the EU, Mr Jonas Hémou, INTERPOL's Special Representative to the EU, and the Directorate General for International Partnership, respectively, may be able to support these efforts in order to guarantee the long-term viability of the DACOREs at the national and regional levels.



Meeting with the ECOWAS Special Representative to the EU, Mr Jonas Hémou

BOOSTING ADOPTION OF WAPIS: LESSONS FROM THE STUDY VISIT BY THE DACORE DIRECTORS

As part of the efforts made to build regional capacity in security and data management, the DACORE directors recently participated in a study visit with the aim of reinforcing their leadership skills and their adoption of WAPIS. This visit acted as an interactive learning platform, sharing best practices and strategic discussions on how to make the best use of WAPIS when addressing urgent security challenges in West Africa.

At the end of the visit, a question-and-answer session was organized with some of the participants in order to garner their opinions, reflect on the main lessons learned, and discuss the way forward to maximize the system's potential. The answers to the questions are provided below.

1. After participating in this study visit to Belgium, what do you think is the most relevant and applicable best practice to improve the management of police information in your country?

What immediate measures do you envisage taking to implement this best practice and ensure that the WAPIS system is adopted in full by your country ?

 M. Ouedraogo :

The best practice I was able to observe concerns management of events, collection and use of police information which adds value to investigations and searches. The use of open sources (OSINT) is a practice which adds value to forward planning and searches, whereas the practice of victimization surveys and criminal analysis make it possible to draw up suitable public policies. I therefore intend to set up a task force within one month, with the aim of drawing up a timetable and assessing the necessary resources and legislation to take these practices into account.

 M. Doumbia :

This study visit to Belgium on managing police information was extremely successful. It has given a boost to our intention to set up the Côte d'Ivoire police information system (SIPCI) via the police data processing centre (CTIP) in Côte d'Ivoire, under the leadership of the Minister of Security and the Interior. The starting point for collecting information in Belgium is the area units (police stations and brigades in our country) up to the federal police (police prefectures, divisions, and corps). This demonstrates a consistent processing chain based on the facts reported by any service on patrol. In my view, it is therefore essential to design national software for drafting police reports or recording police information. We also need to transmit to our colleagues and unit commanders what we have learned here, in Belgium, during our awareness-raising activities.

 M. Bajinka :

I intend to put forward a proposal to set up a police call centre within the DACORE, in collaboration with the Gambian Police Operations Unit responsible for sending police officers to crime scenes in the Gambia. The aim of this proposal is to recommend the establishment of a centralized call centre for the police. This initiative will significantly improve communication between the public and the police, streamline emergency response efforts, and improve the efficiency of processing non-urgent requests. By creating this dedicated call centre, the police will boost their capacity to respond effectively to the needs of the public, improve their citizens' trust in them, and optimize the allocation of resources.

 M. Baah :

Technology is evolving, and so is crime. As a result, the fight against transnational organized crime, terrorism, and crime in general must strive to keep up with the times, otherwise we will be overwhelmed by the activities of criminals in our communities. The study visit made me realize the need to adopt technology and data as effective tools in the fight against crime on a global level, especially in West Africa and in the context of WAPIS. What I have observed here, in Belgium, and what is most striking, is how technology is used to gather, analyse, store, share, and diffuse information between all agencies concerned in order to fight crime together, and use this same information to adopt operational strategies for dealing with administrative events. The fact that there is a common database in Belgium and throughout Europe, from which all the national agencies concerned can verify the truth and validity of information concerning an individual, an event, or an object, makes the work of the security forces much easier than with fragmented, piecemeal information. The immediate availability of information and effective collaboration between the different agencies at the various levels of the security architecture make the fight against crime more efficient and more effective. The immediate

action or the plan to be implemented in order to learn lessons from this best practice is the need to appeal for a centralized national database for my country. Information is dispersed and nearly all the national agencies are linked to one database or another for their exclusive use; this is not in the national interest if we want to win the fight against crime and also plan and deploy sufficient resources efficiently in the event of a crisis. The information must be made accessible to the agencies concerned to enable efficient collaboration in the fight against crime and in problem-solving.

 M. Soumah :

I suggest the creation of a common file which could be used to solve nearly all criminal cases, from the simplest to the most complex. A file which would be a precious, everyday tool used by all law enforcement agencies and which would list all potential misdeeds related to our nationals at any given time. I therefore recommend that the Ministers of Security and Justice publish a binding directive guaranteeing expanded permanent access to the WAPIS criminal database in Guinea. To do this, awareness-raising sessions must be organized as a matter of urgency, not only for the highest-level decision-makers but also the heads of regional law enforcement agencies.

 M. Williams :

First of all, I must congratulate the Belgian Government and all the forces of law and order for the existence of such a unit and its collaboration. We cannot overemphasize the relationship and trust established for the common goal of fighting crime and protecting the Belgian people, as well as the whole European Union. In my opinion, all exchanges of information and practices between the federal police and local police in Belgium are relevant and applicable to Liberia, provided that my country's government invests in security and puts politics and considerations of a personal nature aside. It could also apply if the local authorities in my country were to adopt a spirit of unity and agree to collaborate independently of their political differences and their history. The immediate action I would take would be to get involved in this process and collaborate fully with the authorities and stakeholders at my level.

 M. Makama :

One good practice observed in Belgium which would improve the management of police information in my country would be to build the capacity of the local police to record incident reports in real time in the system at any time. The immediate action I would take would be to increase WAPIS training activities for investigators and police officers on the ground, in local divisions. I would also insist to my authority on the need for the CID and the administrative police to maintain close working relationships at the local and federal levels in order to encourage faster management of data collection and sharing.

 M. Serry :

The Belgian best practices which I believe to be relevant in improving the management of police information in my country and which I would strive to apply are as follows: establishing a unified information management system, standardizing the protocols for data collection, promoting inter-agency collaboration, offering comprehensive training programmes, improving cybersecurity, implementing strategies for community engagement, and using advanced analysis.

2. At the regional level, what specific role do you envisage for your leadership in strengthening the integration and interoperability of these police information systems?

 M. Ouedraogo :

I will visit and have discussions with the DACOREs, as was done with the Belgian police, and I will elevate the point of contact to the Cooperation Directorate to systematize exchanging information with the DACOREs.

 M. Doumbia :

Before tackling the regional plan, national systems need to be firmly established and operational in every country. Côte d'Ivoire has always responded to regional requirements when prompted by ECOWAS and, in this context, we are convinced that only trust, transparency, and open collaboration will allow us to break the ice and facilitate police and security cooperation within our region. The Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs) need to spearhead the new dynamic in regional police cooperation, as Europol does in Europe.

 M. Bajinka :

As a regional leader, my role in improving the integration and interoperability of police information systems will consist of encouraging cross-border collaboration, ensuring that systems are compatible and standardized, and implementing solid security measures for data protection. I will lead capacity-building initiatives such as training and knowledge-sharing programmes, while appealing for resources to support our technology infrastructure. It is essential to promote data sharing and coordination in real time so we can improve our incident response, all while continuously monitoring and assessing systems in order to guarantee their effectiveness and address the challenges facing us.

 M. Baah :

First of all, the long-term sustainability of WAPIS is crucial for the subregion. As a result, the region's political leaders urgently need to check that a regional legal framework and specific budgets are adopted to ensure the long-term sustainability of WAPIS. In order to guarantee integration and interoperability at the regional level, adoption of

a binding legal framework, a specific administrative structure, a sound budget, and unwavering political determination on the part of all countries must therefore constitute the way forward if we wish to achieve the objectives of the WAPIS Programme and the shared goal of making all our societies safe places to live.

 M. Soumah :

It is essential to make the national WAPIS systems fully operational and maintain the connection between us all and ECOWAS before we can implement the regional platform.

 M. Williams :

At the regional level, I will ensure that data entered in the system is shared at the national and regional levels in compliance with the guidelines and specific policies, and I will also ensure that data entered in the system are relevant and that the integrity of data and the system is guaranteed.

 M. Makama :

I will play a supportive and committed role to guarantee full participation in managing and sharing my country's data with other countries and thus ensure unwavering cooperation. I will concentrate on mobilizing material and human resources to ensure the system is effective at the regional level, where it will have the most impact. By strengthening operations at this level, I intend to contribute to the creation of a safer West Africa and, ultimately, a safer world.


 M. Serry :

At the regional level, I will recommend drawing up a strategic vision, getting all the stakeholders involved, promoting training, monitoring progress, appealing for technological innovation, and encouraging collaboration between all law enforcement agencies.

READ MORE: INTERVIEW WITH MR OURO-SALIM, DIRECTOR OF THE TOGO POLICE INFORMATION CENTRE (CIPT)

Leadership plays a central part in how the WAPIS Programme is run in Togo, and strategy, coordination, and collaboration are key to successful implementation. Mr Ouro-Salim, Director of the Togo police information centre (CIPT), who participated in the study tour in Belgium, is playing an essential role in the adoption of WAPIS by Togo by improving data sharing and police collaboration at both the national and regional levels. Emphasizing the need for a centralized national police database, Mr Ouro-Salim has committed to speeding up the updating of WAPIS to ensure it is reliable, secure, and modelled on the Belgian BNG, focusing on rigorous quality control to improve the accuracy of data as a top priority in the weeks following his return.



 **M. Ouro-Salim**
Director of the Togo police information centre (CIPT)

« Togo has done everything in its power to make the Centre run on a sustainable basis, particularly the allocation of staff funded from the general State budget, the allocation of an operating budget, the participation of the Ministry of the Digital Economy in implementation by hosting the servers for WAPIS and the AFIS project free of charge. »

1. Could you give us some insight into your role as the DACORE director in Togo?

The director of a DACORE is primarily responsible for the operational, administrative, and financial management of the Centre. The DACORE director must therefore ensure, before granting access rights to WAPIS, that the person making this request has all the required accreditations, especially the appropriate training, and this access right should exclusively be in the context of CID or administrative police activities. The director must ensure that colleagues comply with the

national legislation in force, particularly regarding data security and confidentiality, and the protection of personal data. The director must also oversee data quality control, ensuring that the information provided by the DACORE is accurate, valid, and up-to-date, and that system security is also guaranteed and preserved.

2. How long have you been participating in the WAPIS Programme and what has your experience been to date?

I was appointed by decree of the President of the Republic on 11 January 2022 as director of the CIPT (Togo police information centre), the name of the DACORE in our country. So, I have been playing a core role in implementing WAPIS in my country for almost two years. As the DACORE director, I have automatically integrated the select circle of direct Ministry of Security and Civil Defence employees by strategically positioning the CIPT in the national security architecture and the very important role of WAPIS in the crime prevention policy in Togo. In this role, I am gaining extensive professional experience because I am learning a huge amount alongside the WAPIS Programme managers and senior managers of the national security structures. The position of DACORE director inevitably ends up making you a planning specialist and endows you with proven practical leadership abilities.

3. What are the main aims of WAPIS in Togo?

The West African Police Information System (WAPIS) aims to address the security challenges faced by West African countries by enabling efficient collection of police information through a centralized national system and offering the ability to share information collected at the national, regional, and international levels. My country agrees with this global view of WAPIS as it helps increase the efficiency of law enforcement agencies involved in preventing and fighting transnational crime and terrorism in beneficiary countries through the enhanced management and sharing of police data.



In Togo, WAPIS makes it possible, for example, to collect, identify, centralize, record, and share data arising from checks and searches for people and goods in the course of the activities of the CID or administrative police in accordance with the legislation in force. The goal is to make it easier to share police information with law enforcement agencies (police, gendarmerie, the courts, customs, and water and forestry services) across a national and international platform in order to fight effectively against organized transnational crime and terrorism.

4. How has WAPIS been integrated in the other databases and law enforcement systems in Togo?

WAPIS has been integrated in other databases by means of an application programming interface (API), which is a set of rules and protocols that allow different software applications to communicate with one another.

By way of illustration, the AFIS project team is currently weighing how to make the most of WAPIS being rolled out to the whole national territory, in terms of equipment, etc. The same integration logic should lead to capitalizing on the existing network of the National Directorate-General of Documentation to extend WAPIS to all land, air, and sea borders without needing to deploy any WAPIS equipment.

5. What security measures are in place to protect the data collected and stored in WAPIS?

Protecting the data collected and stored in WAPIS is vital, as this data is extremely sensitive and crucial for security and citizens' trust. The main security measures in place to protect these data are diverse and wide ranging.

Data encryption

The data are encrypted when circulating between users, services, or networks using secure protocols.

Firewall and access controls

The servers are protected by firewalls which filter and block unauthorized traffic. Access to data is limited to users with specific authorizations according to their role in the organization. Every data access is recorded to ensure traceability and, when applicable, identify unauthorized access. In addition, the monitoring systems detect any suspicious activity or serious violation and send an alert in such cases.

Isolating and segmenting networks

The servers containing sensitive data are isolated from the other networks in order to minimize potential access points. Segmentation allows the network to be divided into separate zones to minimize lateral movements in the event of an intrusion.

Regular corrective updates

The servers are regularly updated with the latest security patches to fix any known vulnerabilities. Access means, such as equipment and user passwords, are updated every 180 days.

Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) and data registration

The data are regularly saved onto secure media to prevent any loss of data in the event of an incident. A continuity and recovery plan ensures that services and data are quickly restored in the event of a major incident.

Training employees

System users and administrators receive regular cybersecurity training in order to prevent human errors that could compromise data security.

By combining these measures, we are able to achieve a very high level of protection of this sensitive data.

6. Could you give some examples of how WAPIS has improved policing operations in Togo?

Since data started being digitized in the WAPIS database, all joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) routinely integrate WAPIS, either during the planning or implementation stage. This adds considerable value to these operations thanks to the WAPIS database.

« There are many success stories where WAPIS has contributed to crimes being solved. But of these, there is (...) a notorious robber who was plaguing the capital. He was arrested and charged in 2009, then in 2013, in 2016, and 2018, always for armed robbery, robbery, and criminal conspiracy. We can see that it is thanks to WAPIS that we have the whole history of his criminal career spanning more than 10 years. (...) He was put on trial and sentenced to a lengthy prison term. »

7. Since the WAPIS centre in Togo (the CIPT) you are running became operational, have you any success stories where the system contributed to crimes being solved or facilitated the arrest of criminals or the return of lost or stolen property?

There are many success stories where WAPIS has contributed to crimes being solved. I often like to mention one of these during training sessions. It involves a notorious robber who was plaguing the capital. He was arrested and charged in 2009, then in 2013, in 2016, and 2018, always for armed robbery, robbery, and criminal conspiracy. We can see that it is thanks to WAPIS that we have the whole history of his criminal career spanning more than 10 years. After leaving prison in 2023, he was once again heading up a criminal network behind a spree of shop break-ins in Lomé. All the CID officers who knew him had left the investigation units before he last left prison in 2023. He was, therefore, practically unknown among the new investigators. In 2023, after yet another shop break-in, an informer gave his alias to the investigators.

Happily for us, and unhappily for him, the first data entry operators when the DACORE was created had found the archives in the various units and digitized them in the WAPIS database, notably the police report dating back to 2018 which had led to his imprisonment. Using his alias, the investigators were able to obtain all the necessary information about him thanks to WAPIS. He was formally identified and arrested a few days later. He was put on trial and sentenced to a lengthy prison term.

8. What effect has WAPIS had on the prevention of cross-border crime and investigations in the ECOWAS region?

The WAPIS database will be connected in all ECOWAS countries as it has been in Togo, and also to the border management and migratory flow systems of countries in the region. This will no doubt contribute to making Togo's borders and those of our community more secure.

9. As the WAPIS Programme nears completion, what challenges do you foresee for the transition of its ownership from INTERPOL to Togo - to what degree have Togolese law enforcement agencies participated in the process and what role will they play to ensure a seamless transfer?

A few months after the end of the WAPIS Programme, the challenges identified in continuing our progress are significant and varied. They consist essentially of pursuing the DACORE's activities and tasks (training, countrywide deployment on remote sites, etc.), with the same degree of intensity, in addition to the acquisition and renewal of the equipment. Discussions aiming to minimize the effects of withdrawal by the implementation partners have led to numerous possible solutions, and the shock will certainly be well cushioned.

10. What measures have been put in place to ensure that WAPIS remains operational and ensure stakeholders' commitment once the project has closed?

The main stakeholders in the WAPIS Programme are the EU, INTERPOL, ECOWAS and the beneficiary countries, including Togo. I will concentrate in particular on the measures taken by my country to ensure the sustainability of the WAPIS achievements. It is important to note that in Togo, the CIPT (national DACORE), which came out of the WAPIS Programme, is a permanent administrative service integrated into the heart of the country's security architecture. To this end, Togo has done everything in its power to make the Centre run on a sustainable basis, particularly the allocation of staff funded from the general State budget rather than contract employees, the allocation of an operating budget with the prospect of increasing the budget year after year, as well as the participation of the Ministry of the Digital Economy in implementation by hosting the servers for WAPIS and the AFIS project free of charge. This attests to the steadfast commitment of the country's highest authorities responsible for security, as has been the case since the very first days when the Programme was implemented in Togo, to make sure that the achievements of WAPIS remain firmly anchored over the long term.

11. How do you expect WAPIS to evolve over the next five years, especially in the context of law enforcement in Togo?

In terms of vision, I can assure you that WAPIS has a rosy future in Togo. The fact that it is institutionally anchored in the existing security infrastructure, in addition to its major achievements, allow me to say with confidence that the importance and usefulness of the system will continue to evolve in Togo.

AFIS CORNER

The second half of 2024 saw the deployment of the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) in Benin, the Gambia, and Togo, with the possibility of integrating facial recognition in the future.

The second half of 2024 was mainly marked by the effective deployment of AFIS in the three pilot countries, namely Benin, the Gambia, and Togo. As a reminder, the Thales group was selected following an international call for tenders for the supply of this technology under the supervision of INTERPOL experts.

To mark this implementation, successive events were organized in the three pilot countries between April and May this year, with the distinguished presence of the highest authorities responsible for security or justice, the national police, the national gendarmerie, and IT technicians from the countries concerned. In Benin, for example, the launch ceremony was presided over by the Minister of Justice and Legislation.

The AFIS ("SAED" in French) is a criminal database consisting of fingerprints, palm prints (palms of hands), and finger markings collected from crime scenes. As part of the AFIS project, INTERPOL requested that facial photographs be incorporated into the system to prepare for possible future migration to facial recognition.

The AFIS technology is undoubtedly a real asset for CID services and of great benefit to the cause of justice in the countries that have it. The system's main benefit is speeding up the processing of cases linked to the identification of people, elucidating cold cases, and reducing the number of judicial errors.

In view of its deployment, which entered its active phase as of October 2024, activities such as the supply, installation, and configuration of equipment as well as operational training and support for the forensic teams have already been planned.

In parallel, with regard to the legal activities linked to the project, the model legislation drawn up by the legal team, one focusing on the creation of AFIS and the other on the collection, processing, and use of biometric data in criminal procedures, were the subject of discussion during the session of the ECOWAS Expert Committee Meeting held in parallel with the AFIS Project Steering Committee, which met in Abidjan at the end of May 2024. The conversations around this draft legislation were particularly rewarding and a real success.

These models, which will be used as a basis for countries participating in AFIS to adopt or update their legal frameworks in this area, give prominence to the rights of data subjects and the protection of personal data, in accordance with international law on human rights.

Under the supervision of the WAPIS Head of Programme, INTERPOL's AFIS project team will continue to support and assist countries in this matter, when requested by them and in compliance with their internal procedures.

In conclusion, it should be noted that several training courses on the protection of personal data will be added to those delivered to AFIS operators and, more generally, the forensic police of countries participating in the project.



4th AFIS Steering and Coordination Committee Meeting

SPOTLIGHT ON CHAD: THE CHAD POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIPT) IS FLOURISHING

In spite of a delayed start due to the country's political instability, the SIPT project has seen a resurgence in activity and has entered an acceleration phase since July 2023. This acceleration phase was confirmed by the signature, on 9 July 2024, of an amendment extending the project implementation period without any additional cost, in order to push back the project end date to 31 December 2025. Here are the highlights of the past few months.

A legal framework has almost been finalized to ensure the long-term sustainability of the SIPT

Since the resumption of activities in 2023, the WAPIS Programme's legal team has been performing activities on the ground and remotely in collaboration with the legal expert, the SIPT national point of contact, and various Chadian authorities in order to provide Chad with assistance in adopting a legal framework, strengthening compliance with the rules and key principles of personal data protection, and adaptation of the SIPT to the national legislation.

Numerous major pieces of legislation, ministerial decrees, and orders have been produced as a result of these activities. These mainly concern the following topics: creation of the SIPT and the Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) where it will be located, adoption of the rules for the organization and operation of the DACORE, appointment of the DACORE Director

and a deputy, and creation of the SIPT National Steering and Coordination Committee. This legal framework was completed by signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the implementation of the project and the Agreement on privileges and immunities during a high-level visit to Chad by INTERPOL's Executive Director for Partnerships and Planning, from 9 to 12 January 2024.

Finally, on 29 January 2024, the National Agency for Computer Security and eCertification (ANSICE) certified the processing of personal data within the context of the SIPT as being compliant with the Chadian law of 2015. The final stage, which is already well under way, consists of supporting the local authorities with the preparation and presentation of a specific budget line for running the SIPT.



Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on implementation of the project and the Agreement on privileges and immunities

1st SIPT Steering and Coordination Committee Meeting

Project governance in action

The first SIPT Steering and Coordination Committee Meeting was held via video conference on 23 April 2024, under the aegis of the European Union's ambassador to Chad and the Director of Operational Support and Analysis, Mr Cyril Gout. The Chad delegation was represented by the SIPT national point of contact, the DACORE Director, the DACORE Deputy Director, Deputy Director of the Forensic Science Police, and the legal expert.

This meeting enabled the key participants in the project to review its implementation, assess the progress made, identify new challenges, and indicate the way forward for the next six months. At the end of the discussions, the Committee adopted a number of recommendations and set the following goals for the project team: extending the project implementation period without any additional cost, starting renovation of the DACORE and Forensic Science buildings, launching the roll-out of the AFIS technology, delivering training for the forensic science police, rolling out extensions to the system and installing IT equipment.



Renovation of the DACORE and Forensic Science buildings

Starting renovation of the DACORE and Forensic Science buildings

Renovation of the DACORE and Forensic Science buildings is a cornerstone of the project's success because it meets the need to both modernize facilities and improve the DACORE's capacity and connectivity thanks to the installation of sophisticated IT infrastructure, specifically server rooms and security systems.

The project consists of several phases, from the initial topographical surveys and design to soil analysis and execution monitoring, whereas improvements to the IT system required new equipment and the design of virtual private network (VPN) architecture.

Work began in July 2024 and will last six months.

Roll-out of AFIS technology to provide the SIPT with the capacity for biometric identification



Visit to the Forensic Science building renovation site by the company responsible for rolling out the AFIS technology

From 10 to 14 July 2023, a technical evaluation mission took place in N'Djamena in order to draw up an exhaustive condition report of the existing police and gendarmerie forensic science capacity, especially as concerns taking fingerprints.

Following this mission, an action plan was drawn up in order to strengthen these structures and allow them to accommodate AFIS.

In June 2024, in keeping with this action plan and following a rigorous selection process, a company was chosen to supply and roll out AFIS and all its associated services in Chad. Work began in July 2024 and is due to last 11 months.

Capacity building at the heart of the action

The capacities of police and gendarmerie officers to use SIPT and in terms of personal data protection have been strengthened through training courses between 2019 and 2023. This training was delivered to more than 100 officers and has contributed to the creation of a pool of national trainers.

In addition, from 16 to 20 October 2023, a delegation from Chad participated in a mission to Lomé, Togo, to benefit from sharing experiences at the Togo police information centre (CIPT) and learn lessons that might be applicable to the SIPT.

In parallel, as part of the programme to build forensic science capacity in Chad, consultants were recruited to deliver refresher training and Train-the-Trainer courses. This training took place in August 2024 and has resulted in 41 technicians being trained in total, including a national forensic science team.



Training the Chadian Forensic Science Police

CONCLUSION



M. Gotwe

WAPIS Head of Programme

Dear readers,

I am delighted to address you again in this new WAPIS Programme newsletter.

Ten months have passed since our last issue came out, and the time has gone so quickly that the end of 2024 is already on the horizon.

These past few months have been intense, as can be seen by the numerous activities, both strategic and operational, that have been led by all the Programme teams, including the AFIS and SIPT project teams in Chad.

The 3EDF phase of the WAPIS Programme is nearing the end and is due to terminate in May 2025. Activities have primarily focused on strengthening the adoption of WAPIS by countries and the implementation of all the measures that will ensure the long-term

sustainability of this system after May 2025. With this in mind, we organized a study tour to Belgium, from 24 September to 3 October 2024, in which the 16 DACORE directors participated. They returned with a wealth of knowledge and expertise acquired by the Belgian police in the area of management of police information at all levels – local, regional, federal, and international. What we have heard since their return to West Africa shows that concrete initiatives, inspired by the Belgian experience, have already been launched in some countries in order to improve WAPIS. This is brilliant news.

This platform gives me the opportunity to thank the Vesdre police zone, including its commanding officer, Divisional Commissioner Alain BARBIER, who provided crucial assistance in organizing this study visit, as well as the Coordination and Support Department (DCA) of the judicial district of Liège and the Directorate of International Police Cooperation (CGI) of the federal police in Brussels.

I would also like to offer sincere thanks to Ms Nina Krotov and Ms Stéphanie Aglietti for organizing the visit to the European Union, a visit during which each director had the immense privilege of presenting the progress of WAPIS in their country.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this mission, both within INTERPOL and FCM, as well as our driver and interpreters.

The WAPIS Programme also covers AFIS and SIPT projects in Chad.

For the AFIS project, the deployment phase has started in the pilot countries, namely Benin, the Gambia, and Togo. This is an important milestone for the project, resulting from the project team's sustained efforts, for which I heartily congratulate them. The AFIS systems will be operational in these three pilot countries by the end of the year.

In terms of the SIPT project in Chad, the renovation works on the building housing the DACORE and the Forensic Science building are in progress and will be completed before the end of the year. Deployment of AFIS technology in Chad has also begun and will be finished in 2025. My congratulations and encouragement also go to the project team in Chad.

I could not finish these closing words without thanking each and every one of you for your ongoing support for the WAPIS Programme, which is helping us work to make West Africa a safer place and create a safer world.

I wish you all excellent end-of-year festivities.



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