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WAPIS

# NEWSLETTER



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## EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues

The West African region has been caught up in a storm of international crime and terrorist activity, notably drug trafficking, terrorist activity in the Sahel, human trafficking from South to North, vehicle theft and arms trafficking.

In 2010, during a symposium organised jointly in Brussels by INTERPOL and the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, the West African Police Chiefs declared that, in order to tackle the security challenges facing the region, these countries needed an automated system for sharing police data at both a regional and international level. This declaration marked the inauguration of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) programme.

Thanks to the efforts and successes achieved by WAPIS since 2012, we are now in the third phase of the programme financed under the auspices of the 11th European Development Fund. This full WAPIS implementation phase will involve sharing police data between all countries in the ECOWAS plus Mauritania, and the launch of a regional platform.

At a meeting in Abidjan from 25 to 27 June 2018, we proceeded to officially launch this third phase in the presence in particular of the Secretary General of INTERPOL and the Vice-President of Côte d'Ivoire, demonstrating WAPIS' key place in the security architecture and the struggle against transnational crime and terrorism in West Africa. We are at the dawn of a new era of integrated data exchange and effective application of the law which will allow enhanced legal and police cooperation on criminal activity in the region, and with the rest of the world.

In conclusion, we all need to ensure that the Member States, the ECOWAS Commission, INTERPOL and the European Union have the responsibility for promoting a crime-free world and make WAPIS a shining example for other



regions in the world, while respecting the boundaries of private life, liberty and the search for happiness and prosperity by the people of West Africa. The ECOWAS Commission is therefore encouraging its Member States to sign up wholeheartedly to the WAPIS programme, since the Commission will offer its support to the police and security services in accomplishing their main responsibility of preserving the life and livelihoods of those populations in the region.

Thank you very much.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Experts from the ECOWAS countries and Mauritania choose the centralised data system which will form the architecture of the future regional platform

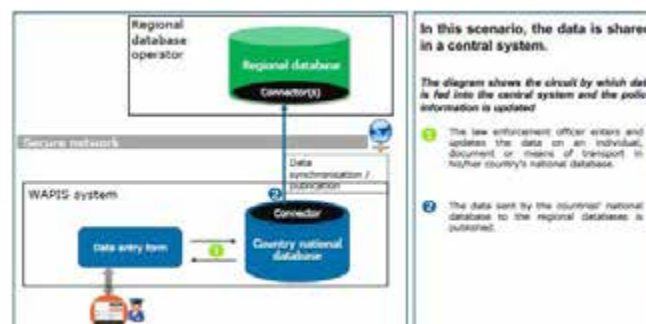
From 27 to 29 March 2018, INTERPOL, the ECOWAS countries and Mauritania held an Expert committee meeting in order to discuss and analyse the technical options available to them following a study commissioned into sharing police data at regional level.

The study conducted by a firm of external consultants identified three options which could be implemented in order to share data at regional level:

1. A centralised system for collecting and sharing data hosted by an entity to be determined/set up.
2. A decentralised system with direct sharing of data between States.
3. A decentralised system with direct sharing of anonymous data between States, which would need to be submitted for second confirmation, positive or negative.

Sixteen countries and more than forty-eight delegates from the ECOWAS countries and Mauritania attended this meeting in Abidjan and agreed to recommend the implementation of a centralised data sharing system (option 1) to the Ministers responsible for security from ECOWAS and Mauritania for the WAPIS regional platform. Nonetheless, due to the administrative, technical and financial constraints associated with option 1, the delegates agreed to implement a four-year transition phase during which option 2 (decentralised system with direct sharing of data) would be used.

As a reminder, in the centralised data sharing system, the WAPIS regional platform and its database will be hosted in a secure central structure. Data which States wish to share will be transferred to the regional platform and its centralised system. When police officers consult the national WAPIS system, they will also be informed whether or not the item they are looking for exists in the centralised database, so they can take immediate action. If this is the case, the country in possession of the data will be notified.



WAPIS centralised data sharing system

## SPOTLIGHT

### The WAPIS programme is officially entering its third phase, financed by the European Development Fund

The WAPIS programme has officially launched its third phase under the auspices of the 11th European Development Fund. On 26 June 2018, the programme organised a ceremony under the aegis of ECOWAS to mark this step. During this ceremony, a document was signed by the various stakeholders (INTERPOL, ECOWAS and the European Union) to reaffirm their commitment to achieving the goals set back in 2011, but above all to reassure West African populations that their security has been reinforced by the implementation of this mechanism for sharing police data.

On the fringes of this launch ceremony, meetings were held between the sixteen Ministers responsible for security and the Police and Security Chiefs of West African countries and Mauritania, in order to assess the security situation in the region and confirm their commitment to the WAPIS programme, especially its regional platform, as an appropriate solution for strengthening security in the region.

Held in the presence of the Vice-President of Côte d'Ivoire, the Secretary General of INTERPOL, the Ambassador of

the European Union in Côte d'Ivoire, officials responsible for security in West Africa and the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire, this ceremony helped boost the visibility of the WAPIS programme and confirm these leaders' commitment at the highest political level, which is crucial for its implementation in years to come.



Signature of the WAPIS 3EDF Phase official launching document



Family picture of the WAPIS 3EDF official Launching ceremony, Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire, June 2018

## FEEDBACK FROM NIGER



**Boubacar Rabiou Daddy**

Director of the Criminal Police and former WAPIS focal point for NIGER

**Niger was selected as one of four pilot countries in 2012 to implement the WAPIS programme. This country successfully passed the different steps involved in setting up the system at national level. Boubacar Rabiou Daddy, Director of the Criminal Investigation Department and former WAPIS contact point in Niger, agreed to share his experience.**

### ***How did implementation of the WAPIS programme work out in Niger? What were the steps involved?***

In Niger, when the first mission to establish contact and share data reached the authorities, WAPIS only received queries. After these visits (which were more political than operational in nature), we set to work, in close collaboration with the programme team.

This process was divided into several milestones, from choosing a focal point in September 2012, through to the 2nd phase, called implementation, in the four pilot countries. Actions of a widely differing nature were undertaken after creation of the WAPIS National Committee by order of Niger's Minister of the Interior on 4 July 2013, followed by the formation of a steering committee within the various units and training of its members.

On 16 September 2015, the criminal documentation department was inaugurated, premises were built to house equipment belonging to the programme and 400,000 records were received from the police and the Gendarmerie.

### ***Could you please briefly describe your public security documentation centre for us?***

The aim of the Criminal Documentation Department, which is the WAPIS system data collection and registration centre (DACORE), is to centralise police data from all law enforcement services (National Police, National Gendarmerie, Customs, etc), and justice services, by inputting and updating the data contained in criminal procedures, and also entering

decisions relating to people brought before the courts.

This data will be accessible via WAPIS units set up in the user services, distributed throughout the national territory. Definitions of the operating mechanisms, in particular the lookup procedures, and relationships with the user services are currently being drafted.

Niger has since decided to integrate WAPIS into its existing organisation, without overly disrupting its established procedures which, although dynamic, were handicapped by the existence of numerous paper records, which were held independently by each unit. It was therefore necessary, as part of an approach better suited to the country's organisational and financial situation, to encourage departments to integrate and adopt the system very quickly, minimising as much as possible the risks of rejection and mistrust that any new system is likely to arouse.

WAPIS has therefore managed, proportionally speaking, to become integrated in the police and gendarmerie records as they existed from an organisational point of view, with the benefit of being unifying, individual and automated.

DACORE has become a department of the Identification Division of the Forensic Science Directorate. At its heart it contains elements of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), namely the Gendarmerie, the Police and soon the National Guard and Customs. It is still at the stage of centralising data, with its current staff consisting of a group of eight civil servants.

***What effect has the WAPIS programme had on the daily lives of Niger's police forces and more generally on security in Niger?***

WAPIS has undeniably improved the level of trust, reliability, and security in managing "police" data, with a fairly noticeable impact on how fast units get through their day-to-day work. In particular, it has made it possible to:

1. Create and strengthen a spirit of internal cooperation, following migration and integration of the different units' archives (NP: 220,000 records - NG: 20,000 records) and implementation of a SINGLE AUTOMATED database.
2. Make "police" data secure which, given the nature of the medium it is on, has been exposed to damage or destruction as a result of negligence or deliberate acts.
3. Improve workplace efficiency.
4. Put in place a legal framework compliant with international standards as concerns personal data protection.

***What challenges have you faced in using the WAPIS software?***

Without question it is the challenge of getting used to something new. WAPIS has caused us to totally change our philosophy, in all aspects relating to identification of suspects, reliability of the information generated by the system, data security and finally and most importantly, respecting human rights in our approach to personal data protection.

***What advice would you give to new countries joining the WAPIS programme?***

From Niger's experience, apart from the level of commitment of the chain of participants in the programme, two points strike me as key to successful implementation of the system:

1. The choice of a national focal point, who is in charge of ensuring that the system works properly, has proved crucial, given the enormity of all the challenges and obstacles we had to face. The Director of the Criminal Investigation Department was appointed as focal point, and his grade and seniority helped establish a leadership which has been absolutely vital in convincing and getting all participants to accept the programme's concept and its implementation. Since 2017, the Director of Forensic Science has of course replaced the Director of Criminal Investigation Department. The initial plan has thus been maintained, and momentum kept up by the choice of a different player.
2. Relations to be maintained with the country officer, must be established from the perspective of trust and complementarity. The country officer and the focal point should form an inseparable pair whose actions should focus on achieving a target and a common interest, the success of the programme.

In conclusion, I would like to express my admiration to the team running the programme. To manage and integrate so many differences and contradictions, within the different countries and also globally at community level, is a challenge requiring humility, patience and lots of

determination. To date, countries have tried to face the challenges posed by terrorism and crime on their own, and we all know how difficult that has been!

WAPIS now gives us the opportunity to go further, to penetrate the world of unbridled globalisation into which crime has spread its tentacles; it is up to us all to take steps to meet this challenge.

## OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Strategic and technical visits to new member countries

During the second quarter of 2018, a delegation from INTERPOL and the European Union visited Guinea Conakry and Liberia in order to introduce WAPIS and get agreement from the authorities to roll it out in these countries. The authorities in these countries were all of one mind in demonstrating great interest in the programme, and reassured the delegation of their wholehearted desire to collaborate in the success of this process.

Technical visits also took place during this period in both these countries and also in Togo to assess the existing police data management architecture and the legal framework in place in these countries, which will be the working basis of the WAPIS system.

The WAPIS programme will continue to expand into new member countries in the coming months: Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Guinea Bissau.



WAPIS Strategic and technical visit in the ECOWAS countries and Mauritania between April and June 2018..

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> steering committee opens its doors to the WAPIS national focal points

The WAPIS programme held its second steering committee meeting in Abidjan on 27 June 2018 with, as a special exception, the WAPIS focal points from new member countries in attendance.

This meeting allowed participants to discuss how the WAPIS programme was progressing, but in particular allowed the programme directors to collect feedback from these focal points and users of the WAPIS system. These fruitful discussions strengthened the countries' desire to implement WAPIS and redefine the national strategies which take account of the context inherent in each of them.

To conclude, the European Union, the ECOWAS Commission and INTERPOL exhorted participants to continue the commitments made by the Ministers and Police chiefs in ECOWAS and Mauritania during the launch ceremony in the 3rd phase of the programme.



2<sup>nd</sup> steering and coordination committee meeting, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, June 2018

## OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES



Delivery of IT equipment for the WAPIS system strengthening with EUCAP SAHEL, Niamey, May 2018



Delivery of IT equipment for the WAPIS system strengthening, Cotonou, June 2018

### Installation of equipment to strengthen the system in Niger and Benin

Since 2012, Niger and Benin have been members of the WAPIS programme as pilot countries. After establishing the legal framework and their DACORE, the WAPIS system has become an important part of the security arrangements in these countries, thanks to management and sharing of police data.

On 22 May 2018 and 11 June 2018, the programme donated equipment in order to strengthen the national WAPIS system

in Niger and Benin respectively. Consisting of servers for the mirror site and workstations, the equipment will help these two countries increase their system coverage and extend the WAPIS network into Cotonou and the surrounding area.

This operation was undertaken in close collaboration with EUCAP-SAHEL, a partner in the WAPIS programme in Niger; a working agreement was signed between these two organisations in April 2018 to seal this partnership.

## EXPERTS' CORNER

### Personal data protection principles and the WAPIS programme

The WAPIS programme aims to create national databases containing police data and communication networks in order to share them, with a view to boosting the capacity of law enforcement services in West Africa to tackle transnational crime and terrorism.

Nonetheless, those processing this police data must comply with certain basic principles which guarantee respect for citizens' human right and individual freedoms.

In recognition of this, ECOWAS has adopted the additional Act A/SA.1/01/10 concerning personal data protection, which is binding on all the member States. It defines the principles of legality, collection, quality of data (accuracy, relevance, not overstepping its purpose, being up-to-date), and also transparency, confidentiality and security in data processing.

The legal team engaged by the WAPIS programme will continue to work with member countries to achieve these objectives, as the system's credibility depends on it.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### 17-21 September 2018 Banjul, GAMBIA

Strategic visit for the launch of the WAPIS programme

### 24-28 September 2018 Freetown, Sierra Leone

Strategic visit for the launch of the WAPIS programme

## WE WERE THERE!

### 24-26 April 2018 4<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the id4africa movement Abuja, Nigeria

INTERPOL participated in the 4th meeting of the ID4Africa movement, which aims to promote the adoption of a modern digital identification system by African countries. More than 1000 delegates from 50 African nations, 110 companies specialising in digital identification and 20 regional and international development agencies, attended this forum and an exhibition.

During this forum INTERPOL promoted the WAPIS programme and the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) and underlined the fact that all these systems will boost the capacity of law enforcement services to identify criminals and terrorists.

### 8-9 May 2018 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Europe Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

During this day, the projects financed by the European Union were presented to the general public. This event allowed the WAPIS programme to increase its visibility and meet other partners with a view to finding synergies in how they achieve their respective objectives.



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