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# INTERPOL-Europol forum outlines steps against people smuggling

**LYON, France,**

The INTERPOL and Europol Operational Forum on Countering Migrant Smuggling Networks, held at INTERPOL on 15 and 16 October, has outlined various measures against the organised criminal networks behind people smuggling. Both organisations will reinforce their cooperation to ensure optimal investigative support to police across source, transit and destination countries within their respective memberships.

Europol announced the establishment of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC), building on its Joint Operational Team Mare initiative. In cooperation with INTERPOL, it will aim to strengthen support for European Union Member States through enhanced information exchange and the provision of operational support.

The production of a joint Europol-INTERPOL report on migrant smuggling networks was also agreed. The report will provide an overview of the criminal networks behind migrant smuggling, their key spots and modi operandi. It will serve as a guideline for coordinated and efficient law enforcement activities.

The steps put forward by the meeting also include the establishment of an INTERPOL Specialist Operational Network against Migrant Smuggling, comprising experts from source, transit and destination countries. Working closely with Europol, this specialist operational network will aim to increase the real-time exchange of police information worldwide so as to more effectively investigate migrant smugglers and dismantle the criminal organisations to which they may belong.

Wil van Gemert, Deputy Director of Operations at Europol commented: "The conclusions and recommendations reached at this forum send the clear message that Europol and INTERPOL are determined to identify and disrupt the organised crime networks behind these unprecedented levels of migrant smuggling. Together, we are stepping up efforts to ensure optimal investigative support to the international law enforcement community across source, transit and destination countries."

As part of INTERPOL's 'Infra' (International Fugitives Round-up and Arrest) initiative assisting 190 member countries locate and apprehend fugitives, INTERPOL announced the launch of Operation Hydra, focusing on individuals wanted for people smuggling. Operation Hydra will aim to promote global information exchange on the location of fugitives, enhance networking between fugitive investigators and specialised units, and increase the use of INTERPOL Notices and diffusions.

The meeting was attended by more than 120 participants from some 50 source, transit and destination countries affected by irregular migration flows, as well as from international and regional organisations and the private sector.

A follow-up meeting to this week's forum will be held at Europol headquarters in The Hague on 22 and 23 February 2016.

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## Background information

### Europol's fight against migrant-smuggling networks

Europol has developed tailored operational and analytical tools to support law enforcement operations combating organised criminals facilitating irregular migration. [Joint Operational Team \(JOT\) Mare](#) combines Europol's expertise with national resources from 13 European Union countries,

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and the cooperation of INTERPOL and Frontex. Since its creation in March 2015, over 165 new cases have been initiated, over 3000 facilitators and more than 100 suspected vessels identified.

With social media and the Internet facilitating organised crime and terrorism, JOT Mare also works closely with the EU [Internet Referral Unit](#) to tackle the use of social media by migrant smugglers.

Since September 2015, a permanent Situation Centre at Europol monitors, and produces daily reports on, the migratory flows and criminal activities of the smuggling networks.

The exponential increase of migrants and the involvement of organised crime on a large scale has called for JOT Mare to be developed into the new European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC). The EMSC will strengthen Europol's analytical capabilities and its ability to offer on-the-spot support.

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