

Italian EU Presidency: newly-established network of contact points on foreign fighters

The Italian project for the establishment of a network of contact points tasked with collecting and exchanging operational information on foreign fighters has officially started, as announced by Interior Minister Angelino Alfano during the last meeting of the Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI) within the Council of the European Union held on December 5, 2014.

The initiative, which was launched by the Italian Minister during the October meeting of the JHA Council in Luxembourg, has been developed by the Working Party on Terrorism, chaired by Claudio Galzerano of the Anti-terrorism Service of the Central Directorate for Anti-terrorism Police and, subsequently, within the COSI itself.

Yesterday, after complex negotiations which took place on the sidelines of the COSI meeting chaired by Deputy Police Chief Matteo Piantedosi, the operational protocol was signed by the first ten Member States joining the network, namely, Italy, Finland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Malta, Austria, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal. Europol's deputy director, who was also attending the meeting, assured the designated contact points would be convened shortly to start operational activities.

The project is an opportunity to enhance at European level the positive experience of the Italian Committee for anti-terrorism strategic analysis, as the place for sharing and assessing information on internal and international terrorist threat, thus becoming the first step towards the establishment of a real fusion center in Europe.

Prefect Piantedosi highlighted the operational nature of the network and invited all Member States to join it, emphasizing its flexibility as an operational and intergovernmental instrument.

In fact, the network will operate consistently with the initiatives already undertaken by Europol and the Member States in the delicate area of counter terrorism, such as Europol's working groups "Dumas" or "Focal point travelers". Yet, the newly established network is unique since it will enable real-time information exchange between national contact points, facilitating prompt responses.

Italian

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