

Effective informal operational and strategic information exchange

A practical guide for LEAs

COMPANION TO INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION
ON MONEY LAUNDERING DETECTION,
INVESTIGATION, AND PROSECUTION HANDBOOK

This brochure seeks to:

- Provide guidance to law enforcement on international co-operation tools and mechanisms.
- Focus on detecting, investigating, and prosecuting transnational money laundering cases.
- Aim to strengthen understanding of law enforcement's role in each phase of the process.
- Encourage improved domestic coordination.
- Promote diagonal co-operation and/or joint investigations across jurisdictions.

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01.

The strategic importance of informal international co-operation

Law enforcement plays a crucial and comprehensive role in securing successful cross-border anti-money laundering enforcement outcomes.

Money laundering is **linked to most predicate crime types**, and targeting its illicit financial flows is the **key to combat** transnational crime.



As money laundering becomes increasingly transnational, **jurisdictions must enhance its international co-operation efforts** to combat this growing threat. Informal co-operation plays a critical role by offering:



Speed and agility: Enables rapid sharing of intelligence that can help identify cross-border criminal networks before assets are dissipated; support ongoing investigations; and aid the identification and/or arrest of wanted individuals; and so on.



Targeted intelligence gathering: Assist the detection of illicit financial flows and identification of criminal assets at the domestic and international levels; reveal the structure of organised criminal groups; and develop joint operational plans for cross-border enforcement action.

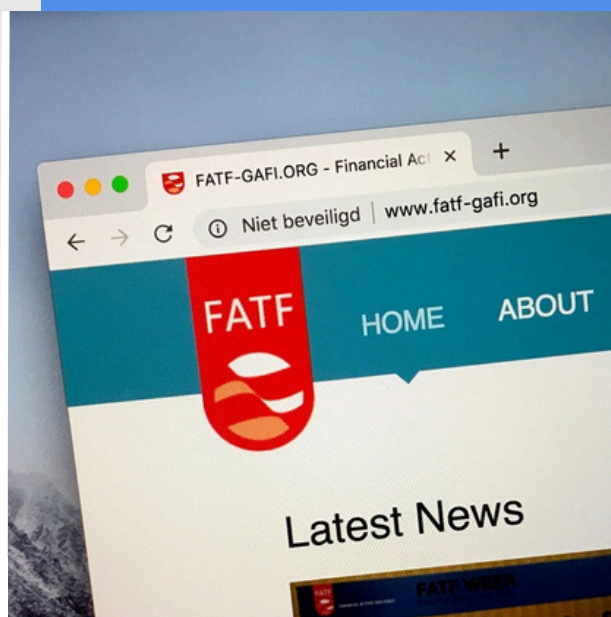


Facilitates and complements the formal co-operation process: Strengthens formal co-operation by alerting foreign counterparts of a potential incoming MLA request, and allowing for an early assessment of the MLA to ensure all requirements are met.

Did You Know?

FATF Recommendation 40

Countries should ensure that their competent authorities can rapidly, constructively, and effectively provide the widest range of international co-operation in relation to money laundering, associated predicate offences and terrorist financing. Countries should do so both spontaneously and upon request, and there should be a lawful basis for providing co-operation.



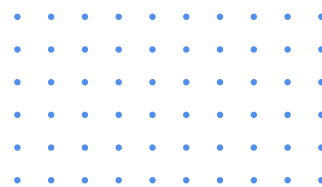
02.

Detection to investigation

During this phase, competent authorities focus on gathering information to verify the details of criminality being investigated, and identify all individuals involved. For international co-operation to work, jurisdictions must have a clear domestic coordination strategy to enable comprehensive information exchange and effective financial investigations.

Role of Law Enforcement	Available Tools and Mechanisms
Directly or indirectly reach out to foreign agencies— Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), customs, tax authorities, etc.) to seek information/details that can further support the investigation. This can include details stemming from land registry checks; company registrations; customs checks; motor vehicle checks; financial transactional details; international police records (such as INTERPOL Notices); previous conviction details; and so on. This can be done through horizontal co-operation request (i.e. through available national agencies of the same mandate) or diagonal co-operation requests.	In addition to known counterparts or contact points: Use recognised and secure communication networks, such as the INTERPOL I-24/7, Egmont Secure Web, or Europol SIENA.
Proactively share information with foreign LEAs on transnational money laundering accounts (including transaction details) and networks discovered during investigations: This will help facilitate the detection of cross-border, large-scale money laundering networks	

Law enforcement should **aim to engage** in informal international co-operation **as early as possible.**



The **information obtained through informal co-operation** during this phase can **strengthen the case for the next phase**—progressing from investigation to prosecution.



Did You Know?

Financial intelligence units (FIUs) are essential to the fight against transnational money laundering.

They act as a hub, providing valuable, actionable intelligence that helps LEAs detect and investigate cross-border financial crime.

FIUs collaborate with their foreign counterparts to track money laundering schemes that span over different jurisdictions, and can also facilitate international co-operation by requesting and sharing information with their foreign FIU counterparts through networks such as the Egmont Secure Web.

There are many FIUs that adopt the law enforcement model and can conduct investigations.

03.

Investigation to prosecution

During this phase, the need to obtain and secure court-admissible evidence through formal procedures becomes increasingly critical. This includes locating witnesses, securing their testimonies, and ultimately extraditing suspects to stand trial. Formal forms of co-operation, such as MLA requests, may eventually be required for judicial purposes.

Competent authorities may also consider engaging in a joint investigation team (JIT), which facilitates the real-time collection and exchange of information and evidence (including electronic evidence) among participating members. Subject to national legal frameworks, such co-operation typically provides a legal basis for the direct use of evidence obtained through the JIT.

Role of Law Enforcement	Available Tools and Mechanisms
Share and corroborate criminal information to plan strategic enforcement actions across involved jurisdictions	In addition to known counterparts or contact points: Use recognised and secure communication channels, such as INTERPOL's I-24/7 and Europol's SIENA Jurisdictions may rely on regional/international organisations to coordinate large scale investigations involving multiple jurisdictions. For instance, INTERPOL can provide tailored operational support to its member countries upon request. This can range from case coordination to facilitate information exchange and develop a combined tactical approach, to the deployment of Operational Support Teams for on-site assistance. Europol can also create Operational Task Forces to support investigations linked to a High Value Target.
Facilitate formal requests to obtain information accessible only through coercive powers (e.g. court orders, banking and financial transaction details, data protection requests from non-law enforcement actors, tax records, etc.) Such informal requests can also help preliminarily assess whether the requested data is available and relevant to the investigation/ prosecution.	An established Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) can help expedite information sharing across jurisdictions. Use recognised and secure communication channels (such as the I-24/7 or SIENA) to ensure the secure transmission of such information. Where counterparts or contact points do not exist, a jurisdiction can also reach out to its INTERPOL National Central Bureau to channel the international co-operation request accordingly.
Locating persons This includes the arrest and extradition of criminals to be prosecuted domestically, and obtaining witness testimony or serving notices to be used as evidence.	The INTERPOL Notices and Diffusions system act as international requests for co-operation, allowing police to share critical crime-related information. The Red Notice (to seek the location and arrest of a wanted person, with a view to his/her extradition) and Blue Notice (to locate, identify, or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation) may be of particular relevance to mutual legal assistance and extradition requests. It also gives weight to prosecutors' work, particularly as Red Notices may only be published when sufficient judicial data (including reference to a valid arrest warrant or judicial decision) has been provided by a country.
Ensure all requirements for a formal request are met An informal request can help relevant authorities to understand the legal requirements and standards of the foreign jurisdiction in processing formal MLA requests, and guide domestic investigators and prosecutors towards that goal. It also allows authorities to obtain an early assessment of the required information, ensuring that the subsequent MLA request is complete and meets the necessary legal threshold.	An informal co-operation request can be made using recognised and secure communication channels (such as the I-24/7 or SIENA) to ensure the secure transmission of such information. Such informal channels can also be used to notify foreign counterparts on the submission of the formal MLA requests, thereby allowing the foreign law enforcement agencies to follow up with their central authorities to review and process the MLA request. The same channels can also be used to send a formal MLA request for processing, particularly when MLA treaties exist.

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04.

Best practices for law enforcement: Raising an international co-operation request



To facilitate a timely and effective response, **law enforcement should keep the following best practices in mind** when sending an informal international co-operation request to its counterparts:

Offer sufficient details for action

- Clearly define the purpose and scope of the request, which can vary depending on the type of co-operation being sought.
- Specify the relevance of this request to its domestic investigation.
- Explain how the investigation is linked to the receiving jurisdiction (i.e. criminal nexus), including detailed references to transactions conducted.
- Minimum case details to be included are brief facts of the case; details of financial transactions; details of the suspected predicate offence; domestic offence code; period under investigation; identifiers relating to the persons of interest.
- Indicate the preferred timeframe for response, with a justification for urgent requests (e.g., imminent financial movement, ongoing criminal activity, etc.).

Provide clarity to facilitate faster processing

- Write in simple, precise language to avoid misinterpretation.
- In the event where terminologies may differ across both jurisdictions, it will be useful to specify the intended/exact meaning.
- Inform the foreign counterpart if the same request is being made through other channels concurrently, and provide relevant reference numbers where possible. This helps avoid duplication and ensures better coordination among foreign agencies for comprehensive information gathering and exchange.

05.

Best practices for law enforcement: Responding to an international co-operation request

Upon receiving an informal international co-operation request, law enforcement should take active steps to act on such requests (in accordance with their national laws), **noting the importance of reciprocity:**



Provide an interim response to the

requesting jurisdiction if further checks are needed or a full response cannot be given immediately. If possible, the receiving agency should also provide partial or preliminary intelligence to support ongoing investigations.

Coordinate with other domestic agencies to provide an integrated response.

Strive to respond within a reasonable timeframe to ensure timely support for the request—this is usually 30 days for routine requests, but should be faster depending on the level of urgency.

Provide a response

Even when there is no information available (i.e. negative result).

Suggest alternative avenues

(if any) for requesting information, if domestic legislation prevents the sharing of information.

05.

Best practices for law enforcement: Responding to an international co-operation request



Successful money laundering enforcement outcomes require both informal and formal international co-operation to be used in a cohesive and complementary manner.

Given that informal international co-operation relies on trust, **jurisdictions must actively work to build and maintain it.**

This can be done by:



- Regular engagement through attendance at the different international/regional meetings to obtain contacts and maintain frequent communication.
- Utilise membership in the various regional/international organisations.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Explore and develop opportunities for joint investigation/analysis teams.
- Establish MoUs with jurisdictions to overcome legal barriers.

Best practices for law enforcement

Raising an international co-operation request

To facilitate a timely and effective response, law enforcement should keep the following best practices in mind when sending an informal international co-operation request to its counterparts:

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- **Specify the relevance of this request** to its domestic investigation.



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- **Write in simple, precise language** to avoid misinterpretation.



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*Effective money laundering enforcement requires **cohesive informal and formal co-operation**. Jurisdictions must build trust through **regular engagement, international partnerships, joint investigations, and strong domestic coordination**.*

This reference sheet is a quick summary of what Law Enforcement should do when raising an international co-operation request.

Responding to an international co-operation request

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Noting the importance of reciprocity:

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- **Coordinate with other domestic agencies** to provide an integrated response.
- **Strive to respond within a reasonable timeframe** to ensure timely support for the request—this is usually 30 days for routine requests, but should be faster depending on the level of urgency.
- **Provide a response** even when there is no information available (i.e. negative result).
- **Suggest alternative avenues** (if any) for requesting information, if domestic legislation prevents the sharing of information.

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- **Utilise membership** in the various regional/international organisations.
- **Public-private partnerships**
- **Explore and develop opportunities** for joint investigation/analysis teams.
- **Establish MoUs** with jurisdictions to overcome legal barriers.
- **A strong domestic coordination is essential** for effective international co-operation. Jurisdictions must first foster a culture of collaboration among their national agencies. For law enforcement, this entails developing close partnerships with all relevant central authorities, FIUs, tax authorities, customs and border agencies, judicial authorities, prosecutors, and the private sector.

Strengthening Global Networks



Empowering LEAs in the fight against financial crime

Strong domestic coordination is essential for effective international co-operation. Jurisdictions must first foster a culture of collaboration among their national agencies. For law enforcement, this entails developing close partnerships with all relevant central authorities, FIUs, tax authorities, customs and border agencies, judicial authorities, prosecutors, and the private sector.

This brochure is intended as a practical tool to guide informal international co-operation. Always ensure that any information exchange complies with your domestic legal frameworks and international standards.

Find out more about
each organisation:

www.egmontgroup.org



www.fatf-gafi.org

www.interpol.int

www.unodc.org