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# PROJECT AQUILA

DATA EXCHANGE IN  
THE AREA OF CT AND  
P-CVE

## **PROJECT AQUILA DATA EXCHANGE IN THE AREA OF CT AND P-CVE**

### **FOREWORD**

In early 2016, in cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Initiative Network (CTI) at operational level, the Counter-Terrorism Network (CTN) under the framework of the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE) defined an opportunity to close the gap in regional criminal intelligence focused on the threat of terrorism and radicalization leading to violent extremism or terrorism. In March 2016 at their 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, the CTN members concluded to proceed, assisted by the PCC SEE Secretariat, with the preparation of a “PCC SEE regional intelligence project” that would eventually result in a “regional intelligence picture” offering useful data input for regional law enforcement cooperation and to intelligence-led police work. The PCC SEE Secretariat has assisted in the development of the project and consultations. The resulting detailed procedure of the project Aquila was presented to the CTN members at their most recent meeting in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia in November 2017, where it was endorsed and further agreed that it is a matter of each PCC SEE Contracting Party to decide whether they will participate in its implementation. The PCC SEE Secretariat also committed to provide additional information and details, in order to facilitate the PCC SEE Contracting Parties’ internal consultations on the involvement of their authorities in the project.

For this purpose, the PCC SEE Secretariat prepared a discussion paper “Data Exchange in the Area of CT and P-CVE (Criminal Intelligence Project Aquila)” that was disseminated to the PCC SEE national contact points in preparation for the discussion during the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PCC SEE Expert Working Group, held in Ljubljana on 13-14 February 2018. The Expert Working Group endorsed the project, however requested that some additional clarifications are provided before the PCC SEE Contracting Parties express their final decision on the involvement of their authorities in the project execution.

This document sets out to provide a more detailed description of the project Aquila.

### **1 PROJECT GOAL**

The goal of the project Aquila is to produce additional criminal intelligence value with a focus on the threat of terrorism and radicalization leading to violent extremism or terrorism, through the application of an organizational and technical solution for one-time-only person-related data matching among the respective authorities of the PCC SEE Contracting Parties. The aim is to come up with an accurate regional/PCC SEE criminal intelligence picture to serve as the necessary input to further development of an improved and targeted regional operational policy and to be applied in the operational work of the respective national authorities.

Participation is on a voluntary basis. Only the relevant police entities of the PCC SEE Contracting Parties that will express a formal commitment to cooperate will take part in the project.

## 2 LEGAL BASIS

From a legal perspective, the project Aquila will be based on the PCC SEE, more specifically on:

- Article 6, regulating information exchange without request,
- Article 2, containing legal definitions,
- Article 4, regulating cooperation upon request,
- Article 5, limiting the scope of information exchange, and
- Article 31, defining data protection principles.

## 3 ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCESS

PC SEE Contracting Parties deciding to take part in the project Aquila (hereinafter referred to as “Parties”) will be represented by two experts: crime analyst and crime investigator, both working in the area of CT and P-CVE at national level.

Three consecutive workshops will take part in a safe and protected environment, suitable for working with sensitive data and information.

At the initial workshop, the PCC SEE Secretariat staff and international experts will present the project methodology to the national experts, followed by a tasking procedure to prepare for the follow-up workshop.

The second workshop will focus on the project execution phase. After the conclusion of this phase, the national experts will return to their respective services and conduct the usual bilateral follow-up procedures for additional and possibly more extensive data exchange.

The last workshop will evaluate the project’s results and produce recommendations.

## 4 PREPARATION FOR DATA MATCHING

### 4.1 Differentiation between hard and soft information

In principle, all police information on a specific individual being the subject of an investigation falls within two main categories:

- The first category, which consists of **hard information**.

This type of information has the attribute of a **legally confirmed** and **substantiated fact**. Examples include records on wanted persons, convicted persons, persons suspected of committing a crime, etc. This information can be relied upon completely.

- The second category, which consists of **soft information**.

This type of information is **not yet** a legally confirmed and substantiated fact. Usually, we consider them as **raw intelligence** or **operational information**, which is still under the

process of either confirmation or rejection. In terms of quality, soft information could be of **high certainty**, enabling solid judgment. It could be of **moderate certainty**, meaning the information can be interpreted in various ways, or the information is credible and plausible but not corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of certainty. Information could also be of **low certainty**, meaning the information is scant, questionable, or very fragmented and it is difficult to make solid analytic inferences, or we have significant concerns or problems with the sources. In order to assess the quality of information and its source, many countries are using the so-called "4 x 4"<sup>1</sup> (or similar) model.

The project Aquila will focus on the **soft information** on individuals, derived from existing criminal intelligence findings of the Parties' respective police authorities. The project's aim is to identify currently not yet detected information, which will either confirm or reject the hypothesis that some locally identified individuals might also be active in other PCC SEE Contracting Parties.

The scope of information in terms of quantity and quality (soft information) and the extent to which information is matched (regional dimension, equal participation of both EU and non-EU Contracting Parties) will represent a unique attempt to further develop the national and regional intelligence capabilities.

#### 4.2 Criteria for the inclusion of information

Each participating police entity will prepare a national list of subjects reasonably believed to have possible **direct** or **indirect connection** to **any type** of the **following activities** in the area of radicalization, violent extremism or terrorism:

- terrorism and criminal offences related to terrorism:
  - battlefield crime
  - war crimes
  - crimes against humanity
  - gender-related crimes
- foreign terrorist fighters' travel
- terrorist financing
- violent extremism
- incitement
- exploiting ICT / Internet for VE/T purposes
  - communication
  - content
- extreme violence
- recruitment
- facilitation of terrorist activities
- organizing
- transporting
- equipping
- entering/transiting
- or any other relevant activity connected to violent extremism or terrorism

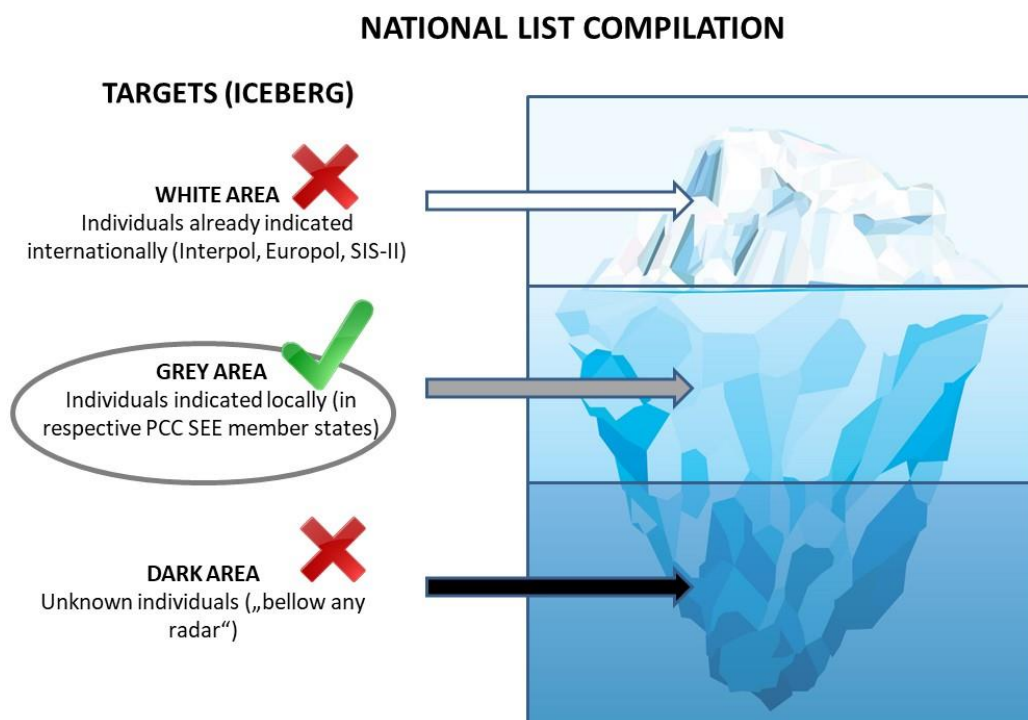
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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Criminal Intelligence Manual, page 57 (English version); available on: <http://www.dcaf-ljubljana.si/116>

The subject shall be recorded to the national list if it falls into any of the **following categories**:

- returning combatants
- foreign terrorist fighters
- extremists
- financial supporters
- facilitators
- ideologists
- propagandists
- radical/extreme religious leaders
- recruiters
- potential recruits
- converts
- refuge providers
- human smugglers
- or any other subject possibly connected to violent extremism or terrorism

The graphic below explains the subject's scope of inclusion with an iceberg analogy. The visible (white) part of the iceberg represents hard information, the invisible (dark) part represents information unknown to the law enforcement agencies, while the part of the iceberg under its surface (grey) is only partially visible. This part represents soft information, which is in the focus of the project Aquila.



#### 4.3 Criteria for inclusion/exclusion of information

Data already recorded in international databases on wanted subjects will in principle not be included into the process. Records in internationally available law enforcement databases (some available to all PCC SEE Contracting Parties, others only to those that are members of the EU or Schengen) are considered hard information (legally wanted persons), which are as such not in the focus of the project Aquila.

##### **GENERAL RULES:**

- 1 PREPARE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE EXTENSIVE LIST OF DATA FOR MATCHING. EXTRACT INFORMATION FROM YOUR NATIONAL DATA SOURCES. NATIONALITY SHALL NOT BE USED AS EXCLUSION CRITERIA.**
- 2 IF DATA ARE ALREADY AVAILABLE TO ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES UNCONDITIONALLY (EVERY AGENCY IN THE REGION HAS UNLIMITED ACCESS), THEN DO NOT INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION TO AQUILA LIST. OTHERWISE, INCLUDE INFORMATION TO THE AQUILA LIST. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO, INCLUDE DATA RATHER THAN EXCLUDE.**

The national lists will in principle not include subjects recorded by Member States of INTERPOL<sup>2</sup>:

- “red notices” (individuals wanted for arrest and extradition)
- “blue notices” (collection of additional information about a person’s identity, location or activities in relation to a crime)
- “green notices” (warnings and intelligence about individuals who have committed a crime)
- “yellow notices” (locating missing persons)
- as well as Interpol - United Nations Security Council “special notice” on individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida and the Taliban (freezing of assets, travel bans and arms embargoes).

Interpol information system is available to all PCC SEE Contracting Parties, both for data input and search, but they contain hard data only. Exclusion criteria applies only to above mentioned notices. Include information of soft category.

The national lists will in principle not include subjects recorded by Member States of EUROPOL in the EIS<sup>3</sup> (Europol Information System):

- shared lists of foreign terrorist fighters.

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<sup>2</sup> Interpol information system is available to all PCC SEE Contracting Parties, both for data input and search, but they contain hard data only.

<sup>3</sup> The Europol Information System contains both soft and hard data, but is limited for the use by Member States only, which excludes some of PCC SEE Contracting Parties from an active role. However, some hard information shared by non-Member States with an operational agreement with Europol have shared hard information on FTF with Europol.

The Europol Information System contains both soft and hard data, but is limited for the use by Member States only, which excludes some of PCC SEE Contracting Parties from an active role. However, some hard information shared by non-Member States with an operational agreement with Europol have shared hard information on FTF with Europol, but according to Europol, not all available information has been shared. Include information not yet shared or information that you are not sure if it was already shared.

The national lists will in principle not include subjects recorded by Member States of the Schengen Area in **SIS II**<sup>4</sup> (Schengen Information System):

- alerts on persons refused of entry or stay
- alerts on persons wanted for arrest or extradition Request
- alerts on missing persons
- alerts on persons sought to assist with a judicial procedure
- alerts on persons for discreet or specific

The SIS II is only available to Member States. The database contains hard information, although some subjects are recorded within SIS II for covert surveillance purposes, which is an intelligence-gathering method. Include information of soft nature not yet recorded in this database.

#### 4.4 Data format

The national lists will be prepared in a data format suitable for computing. Use Excel templates you have received.

The first list in the file named “**AQUILA\_PERSONS.xlsx**” will include only the subject’s first name, family name, any additional names (up to three) and date of birth. Analyst (or CT/CVE expert) responsible for preparing the list can write names in the original national language letters (Cyrillic or Latin) but can also decide to prepare the list directly in common version for matching (this will be Latin). At a later stage, the data will be automatically transliterated with the application of ICAO / Schengen rules<sup>5</sup> for transliteration.

STRUCTURE OF RECORDS IN FILE “AQUILA_PERSONS.xlsx”	
FirstName	Type in (or import) first name of the person
LastName	Type in (or import) last name of the person
Name2	If person has more first or last names, type them (or import) here. Order is not important, as software will calculate all possible permutations.
Name3	
Name4	
BirthDay	Type in (or import) day number of birth in format dd.
BirthMonth	Type in (or import) month number of birth in format mm.
BirthYear	Type in (or import) year number of birth in format yyyy.

<sup>4</sup> The SIS II is only available to Member States. The database contains hard information, although some subjects are recorded within SIS II for covert surveillance purposes, which is an intelligence-gathering method.

<sup>5</sup> Transliteration and transcription rules:

<[Page 6 of 10](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/comitologie/info/2012/D024402-02/COM-AC_DI(2012)D024402-02(ANN2)_EN.doc.></a></p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

The second list in the file named “**AQUILA\_ELETRONIC IDENTIFIERS.xlsx**” will include only one data field, which will contain any type of electronic identifier. Analyst (or CT/CVE expert) responsible for preparing the list will write identifiers in exact form as they appear on the web. To better understand what electronic identifiers are, check the attached presentation titled “**AQUILA\_SCENARIOS\_BY ANALYST ZIGA CELIK.pptx**”, prepared by our colleague, crime analyst from Slovenian police.

STRUCTURE OF RECORDS IN FILE “ <b>AQUILA_ELETRONIC IDENTIFIERS.xlsx</b> ”	
ElectronicIdentifier	Type in (or import) identifiers, which include any alphanumeric or special character

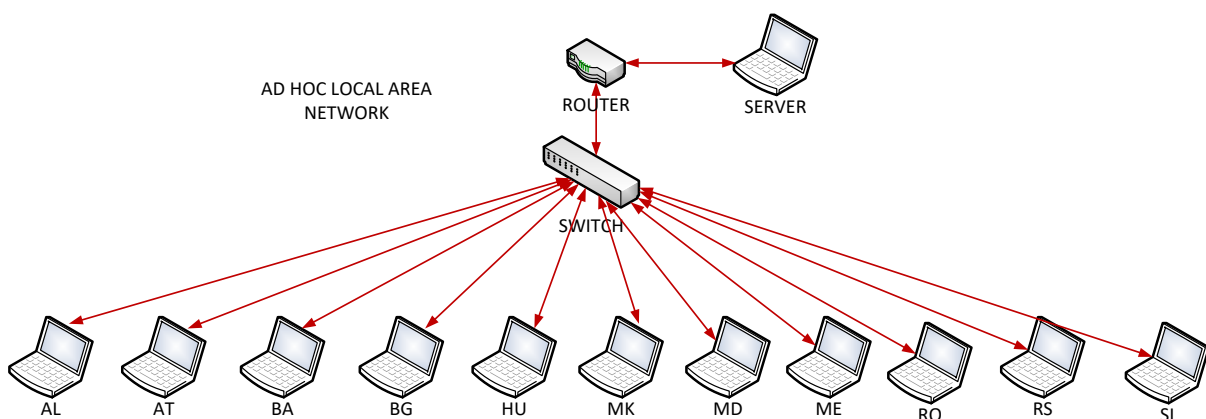
If so decided at a later stage and after the conclusion and evaluation of the project Aquila, other types of data could be used for the same automated data matching procedure (registration plates, weapons numbers etc.).

**5 EXECUTION OF THE PROCESS**

The process of data matching<sup>6</sup> will be based on the principle “one against all - one at a time”, revealing data exclusively in those instances where it had previously been matched (i.e. positive hit made) between at least two Parties. Only those Parties in possession of matched data will learn of the fact that a hit had occurred during the matching procedure.

The procedure will aim to discover previously unknown information on persons for which criminal intelligence findings provide reasons to suspect a possible connection to the phenomena of violent extremism or terrorism.

The PCC SEE Secretariat will provide a software solution that will automatize the process of data matching. The process will be executed on the principle “one-time-only” within a dedicated and secured ad hoc local area network created by national experts’ laptop computers, containing data sets that will be matched one against all others.



<sup>6</sup> The matching process differs significantly from the data exchange process. During electronically executed data matching, no actual records are sent to another party for storage and later use, which typically happens if a data exchange process takes place. The matching process will only create a new record for two partners containing information that their lists have at least one record in common.



The software will contain two components: the server component, which will be used to establish connections among Clients and the Client component, which will handle the data.

The Client software will be used to import and prepare the data and to compute the intersection of each Party's data with all other Parties using a Private Set Intersection (PSI) Protocol<sup>7</sup>.

First, the data (with a predefined structure) will be imported into an application, installed on each user's computer. In the next step, the data will be transliterated according to ICAO / SIS II standards. If there is more than one recommended transliteration, a single record will be transliterated into several records (for instance Å could be transliterated to AE or A). The user will then be able to add comments to individual records (these comments will be shared with other Parties), to review the data and to confirm that the transliteration is correct, i.e. that the data is ready for matching.

In the next step, the Clients will be connected to a server in an ad-hoc local network. When the server establishes a connection with all Clients, the Clients will be in the so-called listening mode and will have a list of all connected Clients.

The server will then initiate the so-called querying mode. In that mode, the querying Client will contact all other (listening) Clients – one by one - and will jointly compute the intersection of their private input sets in a manner that both will at the end learn the intersection of their data (so-called mutual PSI). Both Clients (querying and listening) will then mark which of their data is also present on the other Client and will exchange comments (if there are any).

For instance, if the querying Client from Party A will learn that a specific suspect's name in its database has a "positive hit" on a listening Client from Party B, the Client from Party A will mark that Party B also has this suspect's name in its database, while the Client from Party B will mark that the given suspect's name is also in the database of Party A. The Clients will also exchange user-added comments.

Other Clients will not be notified about positive matches and the server will not record any information about the data or the hits, since the server's role is only to connect all Clients and to establish communication and data exchange among them. The procedure of searching for hits will point out subjects of interest of at least two Parties' police entities.

The procedure will be finished when all Clients go through the querying mode. At the end, the users will be able to export their data – list of "positive hits", together with the original and transliterated records. Data, which will not be matched will stay anonymous and remain known only to the originator of the list.

In case of a hit, further bilateral in-depth communication will follow for the exchange of information.

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<sup>7</sup> Emiliano De Cristofaro, Gene Tsudik. 2010. Practical Private Set Intersection Protocols with Linear Computational and Bandwidth Complexity: <<https://eprint.iacr.org/2009/491.pdf>>

## 6 WHY THE PROJECT AQUILA IS NOT A DUPLICATION

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PCC SEE Expert Working Group, held in Ljubljana on 13-14 February 2018, some of the national representatives raised concerns on the possible duplication of the project Aquila with other existing processes or information exchange systems in the region. The PCC SEE Secretariat strongly believes that the project Aquila is unique from the following perspectives:

1. The project is regional, focused predominantly on the geographical area of the Western Balkans, which represents both a possible direct or indirect source of threat for a much wider geographical area, as well as an area exposed to the threat of terrorism and radicalisation leading to violent extremism or terrorism.
2. Those PCC SEE Contracting Parties, which are at the same time also Member States of the European Union, are also a possible direct or indirect source of threat as well exposed to the threat itself.
3. The actual intelligence points out the transnational nature of terrorism and violent extremism-related phenomena spread over the common geographical area of the PCC SEE Contracting Parties. For this reason, any common action in this area is not only welcomed, but essential.
4. The project Aquila respects the “bridging” principle of the PCC SEE, enabling close cooperation among countries of EU’s inner circle with those in the outer circle by applying the same professional standards.
5. To the knowledge of the PCC SEE Secretariat, no other organization has so far executed a similar exercise in the PCC SEE region and therefore no risk of duplication exists.
6. While the PCC SEE Contracting Parties also Member States of the EU and Schengen Area largely benefit from EU law enforcement capacities, the same is not available for other PCC SEE Contracting Parties, e.g. lack of direct consultation of EU large database systems. To non-EU Contracting Parties only a “one-way-ticket” is available, meaning they can provide input to the EU information systems, but have limited exploitation possibilities.
7. If successful, the principles of the project Aquila could also be applied in other areas of cooperation and coordination among the PCC SEE Contracting Parties (e.g. in the area of countering serious and organised crime).

**ELECTRONIC ATTACHMENTS:**

This document in Word file:

1. **PCC SEE PROJECT AQUILA\_DESCRIPTION\_180221\_VERSION2.docx**

PowerPoint presentation files:

2. **PCC SEE Principle of data exchange\_Sarajevo\_180523\_VERSION2.pptx**
3. **AQUILA\_SCENARIOS\_BY ANALYST ZIGA CELIK.pptx**

Report on Aquila first workshop in Word file:

4. **QUILA FIRST WORKSHOP REPORT\_SARAJEVO\_MAY2018.docx**

Technical requirements for participant's laptops in Word file:

5. **AQUILA\_ELETRONIC IDENTIFIERS.xlsx**

Aquila templates for data collection in Excel files:

6. **AQUILA\_PERSONS.xlsx**
7. **AQUILA\_TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS.docx**