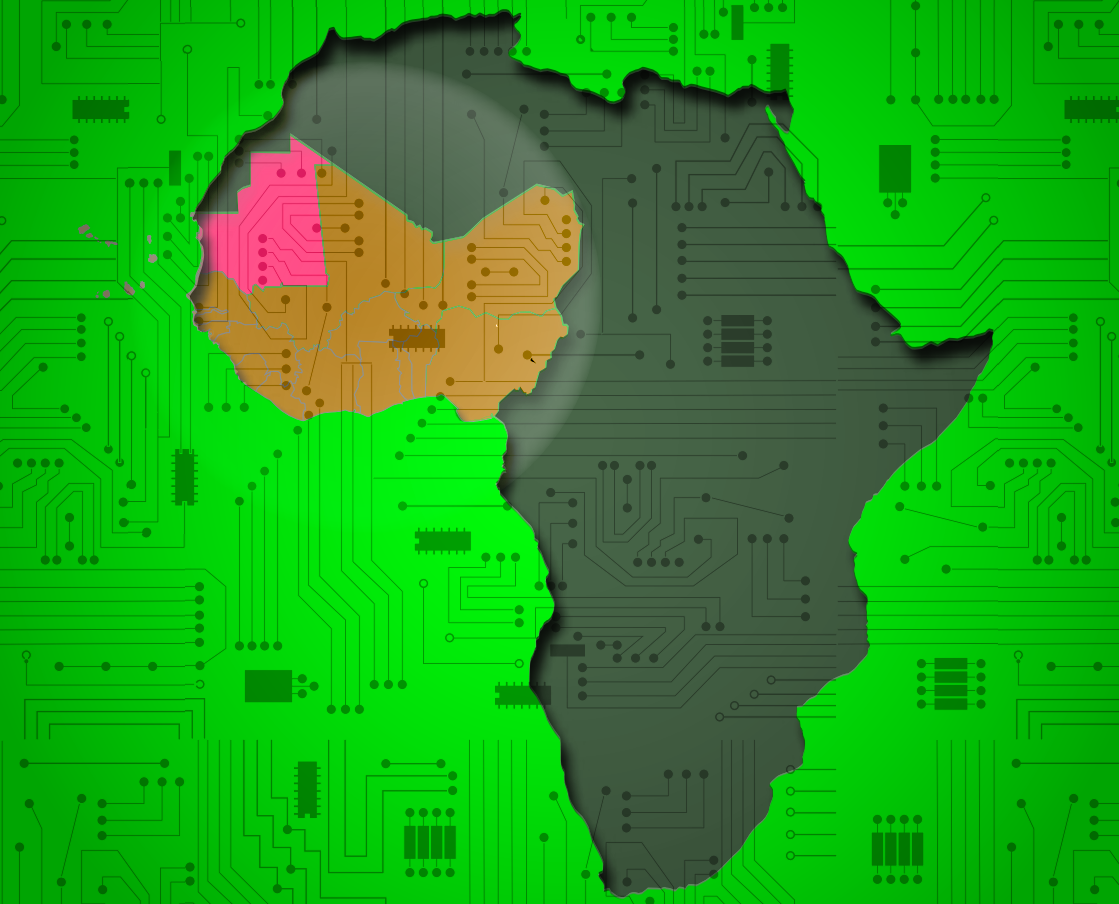
INTERPOL

WAPIS HANDBOOK

WEST AFRICAN POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM



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THE WAPIS POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

WHY DEVELOP A WAPIS POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR THE BROADER WEST AFRICA REGION?

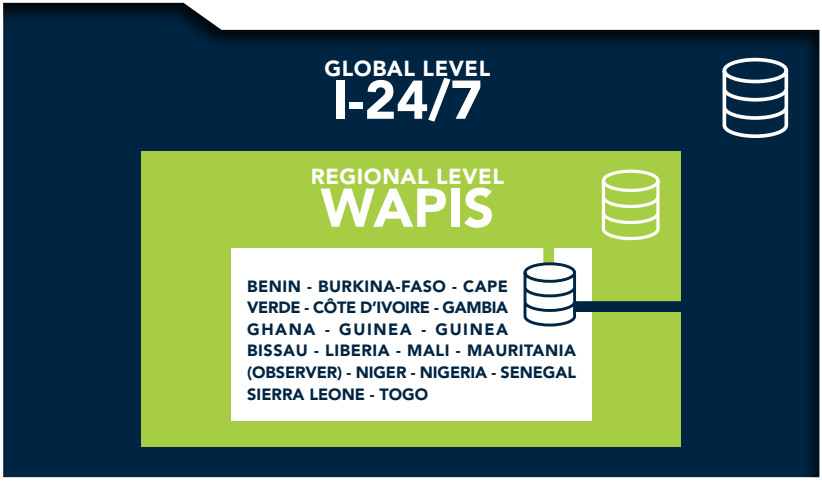
The West African region, like all regions of the world, is facing the threats of transnational organized crime and terrorism. Recognizing that no law enforcement strategy against these threats can be effective without police information sharing, the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) has endorsed the WAPIS Programme. The programme digitizes paper-based police data currently held by West African law enforcement agencies — data that today is difficult to access and to share inside a country, within the region and globally — and centralizes it for easy management; creates a regional police information system for the broader West Africa region, allowing the easy sharing of and access to police data emanating from the region's law enforcement authorities; and serves as an information bridge with INTERPOL's global police data.

The WAPIS police information system operates on three levels:

- **National**: in each country, an electronic police information system will be installed centrally to facilitate the collection, centralization, management, sharing and analysis of police information emanating from all relevant national law enforcement agencies;

- **Regional**: an electronic police information sharing platform will be developed under the aegis of ECOWAS to enable ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania to share police data across West Africa;
- **Global**: countries will be able to share electronic police data with the rest of the world through INTERPOL's secure global police communications system, I-24/7.

The creation of a common police information system across the broader West Africa region will allow the sharing of and access to police information on a timely basis and greater law enforcement cooperation within countries, within the region and with the rest of the world.



HOW DOES THE NATIONAL WAPIS SYSTEM WORK?

The national WAPIS police information system enables authorized law enforcement agencies to create, manage and share files on:

- Criminal cases and events;
- Persons suspected of having committed or participated in a crime or offence, as well as victims and witnesses of crimes;
- Legal proceedings associated to the crimes/suspects;
- Weapons and objects used to commit crimes;
- Stolen vehicles and vehicles associated with a crime;
- Stolen identity documents and documents of persons associated with a crime.

The national WAPIS system is located in a Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) within a designated police facility. The DACORE includes officers from authorized national law enforcement agencies responsible for:

- Registering police data;
- Performing data checks;
- Controlling the validity of police data.

"The WAPIS system includes a list of offences that allows police officers to select the type of crime a person is associated with, ranging from minor offences to serious crimes".

"IMPORTANT: Personal data can be recorded as police data in the WAPIS system only if there is an established link between a person and a crime".

In order to enhance the efficiency of the national WAPIS system, it is critical that connections be established at law enforcement agencies' operational headquarters and as widely as possible in law enforcement sites across the country, including border crossing points. Ultimately, a fully-fledged WAPIS System will:

- Allow the routine creation of electronic police data, which could subsequently be shared regionally or globally;
- Enable law enforcement officers to quickly know if an individual is wanted nationally, regionally (through the regional data-sharing platform) or internationally (through INTERPOL);
- Enable law enforcement officers to quickly know if an ID document, vehicle, or firearm is reported as stolen or associated to a crime;
- Allow investigators to link persons, vehicles, ID documents and firearms to a crime or investigation.

Police data in paper format is difficult to access and share, yet it is very valuable. It is therefore crucial that it be converted to a digital format so it can be inserted into the national WAPIS system. To assist, the WAPIS Programme deploys scanning stations to selected national law enforcement agencies to scan existing paper files and enter critical data for quick and easy searching.

Moreover, the digitization of existing paper police data prevents this valuable data from being accidentally lost or purposely destroyed.

The identification of criminals is considerably enhanced by fingerprint identification. This is particularly true in the broader West Africa

region, where civil registry and quality of identity documents are weak. The WAPIS System therefore integrates the setting up of Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS) in parallel of the establishment of the WAPIS system.

"By contacting the national DACORE, a law enforcement officer will be able to quickly know if a person arrested on the street or at a border is dangerous, carrying a fraudulent ID document, driving a stolen car or wanted by any country in the world"

HOW WILL THE REGIONAL WAPIS SYSTEM WORK?

INTERPOL will work with national and regional authorities to develop and set up, under the aegis of ECOWAS, a regional police data sharing platform for ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania. This platform will allow the instant exchange of police data, including on persons, vehicles and ID documents, among countries of the region. Officers working in a country's DACORE or in the field will be able to:

- Quickly know if an individual is wanted by another ECOWAS country;
- Quickly determine if an ID document, a vehicle or a firearm is reported as stolen or associated to a crime by police in another ECOWAS country.

By allowing more information to be shared and accessed by law enforcement agencies throughout the region, the regional WAPIS system will strengthen police cooperation within the ECOWAS region and augment the efficiency of law enforcement agencies in tackling crime and terrorism.

In addition, statistics produced by the use of the system will allow ECOWAS to develop strategic analysis of crime trends affecting the region, supporting ECOWAS Member States and WAPCCO in the development of more efficient anti-crime strategies.

HOW WILL THE GLOBAL WAPIS SYSTEM WORK?

With the increasing internationalization of crime and terrorism, the likelihood increases that individuals from outside the ECOWAS and G5 Sahel areas will be associated with crimes committed there and, conversely, that individuals from the ECOWAS area will be associated with crimes committed in other parts of the world.

INTERPOL's mission is to facilitate the sharing of police data globally. Each national WAPIS system will therefore be connected to the country's INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) in order share authorized national data globally through INTERPOL's I-24/7 system and to allow checks against INTERPOL's databases directly from each country's DACORE, and from all other remote sites, including border crossing points.

Reinforcing the operational link between law enforcement in ECOWAS and G5 Sahel Member States and the rest of the world through INTERPOL is necessary to effectively combat transnational organized crime and terrorism. Greater inclusion of the broader West African region in global police information exchange through INTERPOL will help better understand global crime trends and devise better enforcement strategies.

IMPLEMENTING THE WAPIS PROGRAMME IN YOUR COUNTRY

APPOINTING A WAPIS SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT AND SETTING UP A WAPIS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Implementing the WAPIS Programme requires a solid commitment from participating countries. The first step requires designating a WAPIS Single Point of Contact (SPOC) as well as two experts, one legal, one technical. The SPOC, chosen from one of the law enforcement agencies taking part in the programme (preferably from the end-user units like judicial police or forensics teams) and holding a position of responsibility, should be able to:

1. efficiently coordinate national efforts towards implementing the WAPIS Programme with all law enforcement agencies participating in the Programme;

2. Facilitate the work of INTERPOL's officials in the country.

The technical expert will be required to supervise and manage the technical aspects of the WAPIS system at national level. The legal expert should have a sound knowledge of national criminal law and, where possible, of data-protection legislation. He/she will be required to examine legal issues arising from, and any developments in, the standards governing the integration of the WAPIS system in his/her country.

Each country should also set up a WAPIS National Committee. Established under the authority of the Head of one of the law enforcement agencies participating in the Programme, the Committee will oversee the implementation of the WAPIS Programme in the country. Its responsibilities include:

- Ensuring efficient cooperation between all law enforcement agencies participating in the Programme;
- Taking key decision on the location, management and composition of the country's DACORE (objectives of data entry, trained staff, etc.);
- Working towards the development and passing of required legislation related to the DACORE, and the processing of personal data by law enforcement agencies.

The WAPIS National Committee should typically be composed of:

- The Head of one of the law enforcement agencies participating in the programme;
- The WAPIS SPOC;

- Senior representatives from all the national law enforcement agencies taking part in the WAPIS Programme;
- A magistrate from the Ministry of Justice (and/or the legal expert);
- The technical expert (and/or the IT administrator of the DACORE);
- The Head of the NCB.

LOGISTICS

Countries taking part in the Programme are also expected to support its implementation by:

- Making available appropriate office space within participating law enforcement agencies for the digitization of existing paper files;
- Holding committee meetings;
- Establishing the DACORE;
- Designating dedicated staff from all participating national law enforcement agencies to receive database training and work in the DACORE or in remote connected sites;
- Ensuring that all goods and materials, including IT equipment, donated in the framework of the WAPIS Programme are exempted from all customs and import taxes.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

A police information system contains sensitive data, including personal data, and therefore must be operated within an appropriate legal framework.

In operating the WAPIS system, countries should comply with the following texts on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, of which they are parties:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The Charter of the United Nations;
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

ECOWAS Member States must also comply with:

- The Treaty of the ECOWAS and its additional protocols.
- The Supplementary Act A/SA.1/01/10 on Personal Data Protection within ECOWAS,

which requires ECOWAS Member States to:

- Establish an appropriate data retention period;
- Establish a Data Protection Authority;
- Officially register the WAPIS system with the Data Protection Authority.

As INTERPOL member countries, participating countries should also comply with INTERPOL's Rules on the Processing of Data.

THE SEVEN STEPS REQUIRED TO PUT IN PLACE A WAPIS, OR WAPIS-TYPE, POLICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

1. Designate a single point of contact (SPOC) and two experts
2. Set up a WAPIS National Committee
3. Study and introduce an appropriate legal framework
4. Allow duty/tax-free importation of the equipment provided
5. Provide premises and offices
6. Appoint dedicated staff to work on the WAPIS system
7. Ensure the sustainability of the WAPIS system

INTERPOL

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