

**ARINs´ TALK:**

**the exchange format between the Asset Recovery Interagency Networks**

**Context:**

Contacts and cooperation between Law Enforcement practitioners are becoming increasingly important in view of the growing challenges in the fight against cross-border Illicit financial flows, and especially the challenges of the mutual legal assistance (MLA) procedure. ARIN´s TALK fosters c**ross-regional** contacts of the Law Enforcement Agencies trough their Asset Recovery Interagency Networks from Eastern and Western Africa and Latin America.

In the first ARINs TALK on May 4th, 2021, ARINs, Interpol and CARIN/ Europol kicked-off the ARINs’ TALK format by presenting their latest activities sharing their best praxis and addressing challenges around the international cooperation and especially around secured information exchange possibilities.

**Participants:**

Representatives of the three partner ARINs of the GP IFF (ARIN-EA, ARIN-WA and RRAG) and representatives from CARIN/Europol and Interpol. Find the participants list under Annex I.

**Minutes:**

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|  | **Agenda Item** |
|  | **Opening Session: Official welcome and introductory greetings** |
| *Moderator* | *Olga AMETISTOVA, Advisor of the Global Program Combating Illicit   Financial Flows, GIZ*  **Esteban FULLIN, Executive Secretary of GAFILAT**  I would like to thank the organizers for this event. It is a great opportunity for us to exchange experience of the different Asset Recovery Networks. In order to confront organized crime in a good way we currently face many challenges, some of which are time, workload, resources and finances. We gain more members and need to continue to work together to support the network which so far has created very good results. We need to share our experience and practical solutions with each other because “one size doesn’t fit all”. Let’s have fruitful discussion.  **Johannes FERGUSON, Head of the Global Programme Combating Illicit Financial Flows, GIZ**  I would like to kindly welcome all colleagues to the first ARINs´ TALK meeting of the Asset Recovery Interagency Networks from Latin America, East Africa and West Africa. We are especially delighted, that CARIN/Europol and Interpol are also here to share they expertise and to perfect the exchange between key players in the field of asset recovery at the national, regional and international level. There are issues and challenges, that all ARINs face in one way or another, for example funding of ARINs or secured information exchange. But there are also already answers and solutions that can be easily shared and adopted. The most important thing is direct contact between practitioners, which helps to build trust and cooperation effectively. |
|  | **1st Session: Introduction round and presentation of ARINs’ activities** |
| *Moderator* | *Olga AMETISTOVA, Advisor of the Global Program Combating Illicit   Financial Flows, GIZ*   * Short round of introduction, all participants   **Presentation of ARIN-EA’s activities, Lilian KAFITI, President of ARIN-EA**  Ms. Kafiti, President of ARIN-EA thanked GIZ for their support and stretched that the ARINs need to work together in order to achieve the common goal of Asset Recovery. The event today should function as a platform for discussion and the exchange of strategies to create a basis to further support each other in the future.  After her statement, Ms. Kafiti gave a presentation of the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network for Eastern Africa, in particular an overview of the members, the structure and the objectives of ARIN-EA, as well as their strategic goals and achievements.  For more information, see the slides of the presentation.  **Presentation of ARINWA’s activities, Kylly FERNANDES, President of ARINWA**  ARINWA President, Ms Kylly Fernandes gave a brief presentation of ARINWA’s activities, their structure, goals and achievements.  For more information, see the slides of the presentation.  **Presentation of RRAG’s activities, Alejandra PEREZ, Technical Expert of GAFILAT**  Ms. Perez briefly presented RRAG’s activities, in particular on their structure, goals and achievements and especially on the “Document to strengthen international cooperation through RRAG”. was presented during the virtual meeting.  For more information, see the slides of the presentation and document. |
|  | **2nd Session: Secured information exchange platforms: ARIN´s experiences** |
| *Moderator* | *Kylly FERNANDES, President of ARINWA*  **Adriana LÓPEZ, Contact point from Costa Rica and co-chair of the RRAG**  Ms. López shared the secured information exchange platform which is used by the RRAG focal points. She strengthened the importance of data security and a reliable encryption system that is needed in order to build mutual trust through the platform as it showcases a high level of confidentiality. The platform not only gathers documents from different countries that are relevant for the respective cases but also produces statistics about e.g. which focal points communicated with which other countries, what are the number of cases currently handled, the nationality of the people that are investigated, etc.  The platforms are regularly updated such that the legal frameworks of the RRAG countries are always up to date.  For more information, see the slides of the presentation.  **Munira ALI, Executive Secretary of ARIN-EA**  Ms. Ali stressed that the secured information exchange platform of ARIN-EA works in many ways similar to the platform of RRAG. End-to-end encryption plays a crucial role on the ARIN-EA platform, too. Now all 24 focal points of ARIN-EA are registered and trained such that they are able to use the platform accordingly. Topics, cases, trainings and documents, amongst others, can be accessed through the platform. When a focal point enters a request, the other respective focal points receives an immediate notification in order to accelerate the processes. Other features which were integrated to the platform to achieve a high degree of user-friendliness include a discussion board as well as an information request and case management system.  For more information, see the slides of the presentation.  **Questions and answers**   * CARIN/Europol: What is the status of the secured information exchange platform of ARIN-CARIB? * RRAG: The development of the platform is still being discussed and not yet functional. * GIZ: Also ARIN-WA does not yet have such a platform. Hopefully this will change soon.   How compatible are the different existing platforms of the ARINs so far?   * ARIN-EA: Currently the ARIN-EA platform is not accessible by other members which are not ARIN-EA focal points but changing this should indeed be the next step forward. * RRAG: Our goal is also to make the platform compatible with other platforms but this is not yet the case. Requests coming from outside of the RRAG region are not answered through the platform system. * ARIN-EA: Does Ms. van Berkel of CARIN has access to the RRAG secured information exchange platform? * RRAG: Yes, she is in the list of authorized users who can access the platform, and this is very helpful. In the past, we experienced an increasing exchange between CARIN and RRAG focal points so we looked for ways to create secure means of communication and information exchange. The fastest solution was to give CARIN secretariat access to our platform. In the future we will try to make the process even faster as speed, aside from secure information exchange, is key. * ARIN-EA: Very true, speed in the exchange of information and secure ways of transferring information are the important factors in our work. * CARIN/Europol: At the annual general meeting of RRAG in 2020 we decided that it would be a good idea that CARIN secretariat gets access to the RRAG secured information exchange platform as I normally have regular access to the secured information exchange platform of Europol, too. However, due to the COVID crisis I am not in the office on a daily basis, hence unfortunately not able to transfer the requests from ARINs to the Europol platform. * ARIN-EA: The mid-term goal should be to have one common secured information exchange platform for all ARINs. We should figure out how we can best create such a platform. |
|  | **3rd Session: Secured Information Exchange: opportunities through CARIN/EUROPOL and INTERPOL** |
| *Moderator* | *Valeria CALAZA, RRAG Contact point from Argentina and co-chair of   the RRAG*  **Marcella VAN BERKEL, specialist in asset recovery and CARIN coordinator, CARIN/EUROPOL**  Ms. van Berkel presented CARIN’s model for a secured information exchange platform for asset recovery. So far, most of the members of CARIN can use Europol for secure exchange of information. 86 countries can share their information through this platform. Nonetheless, Ms. van Berkel stressed the importance to develop a secure platform specifically for ARINs. Through Europol’s secure platform, ARINs can make a request for information if they have a clear indication that the requested information may be available in the requested country.  Ms. van Berkel also presented a best practice example of cooperation between countries in regard to the planning of international freezing orders. The countries involved were the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. She acknowledged furthermore the good cooperation with Interpol in 2020 to prevent perpetrators to use the pandemic for fraud.  **Adewale OGUNDELE, Criminal Intelligence Officer at Anti-Corruption Unit, INTERPOL**  Mr Ogundele outlined Interpol’s strategic framework. Since 2009 a global focal point network has been established, especially to enable law enforcement officers across the countries to secure data exchange. All Interpol members have access to information through the secure platform. Focal persons who are registered in their countries have access. Only a few countries are not represented on the platform. Mr Ogundele pointed out that Interpol’s platform brings together practitioners from across countries.  **Questions and answers**   * GIZ (O. Ametistova): We should unite the information channels of ARINs. What would you recommend, which process would be good to intensify information exchange between ARINs and link them with Europol and Interpol? * Interpol (A. Ogundele): With reference to UNCAC and FATF recommendation 4 (international collaboration), Interpol agrees that there is a need to work together. It is emphasized that Interpol has a secure platform which everyone can be part of. Interpol has the base and the outreach for information exchange. It’s possible to reach the platform through national bureaus which makes it secure, fast and easy to be reached. * ARINWA (K. Fernandes): ARINWA faces many difficulties such as language barriers or challenges due to political instability. Focal points are changed frequently and therefore not well informed. There should be a strategic action in 2021 to form a translation unit. * CARIN/Europol (M. van Berkel): Interpol’s platform exchange is secure through NCBs but how can one find their NCB. ARINs should have their own secure information platform system, especially for asset recovery. Interpol doesn’t provide platform for operational information exchange. * ARINEA (L. Kafiti): How can ARINs register on Interpol’s platform to have access? There should be an assessment of the needs from the ARINs before steps towards translation unit are taken. * Interpol (A. Ogundele): On Interpol Platform for non-operational matters, there is another platform which can be used for operational processes for ARINs. * CARIN/Europol (M. van Berkel): There should be a platform for ARINs, e.g. a secured collaboration platform, not specifically for operational matters.   **It was agreed by all participants that the next ARINs TALK will be held on June 29th, 2021, at 4 pm CEST.** |
|  | **4th Session: Funding of ARINs activities – POSTPONED** |
| *Moderator* | *Marcella VAN BERKEL, specialist in asset recovery and CARIN coordinator, CARIN/EUROPOL*  **Juan Cruz PONCE, Deputy Executive Secretary of GAFILAT**  - POSTPONED  **Questions and answers**  - POSTPONED |
|  | **Final discussion: How can ARINs work together in the future (ideas and concrete next steps)? – POSTPONED** |
| *Moderator* | *Munira ALI, Executive Secretary of ARIN-EA*  **All participants**  - POSTPONED |
|  | **Closing** |
| *Speaker* | **Juan Cruz PONCE, Deputy Executive Secretary of GAFILAT**  I would like to thank the organizers for this event which has already produced fruitful outcomes. As global networks are a growing topic in the international debate RRAG/GAFILAT is looking forward to working closer together with other ARINs. We have a lot of common challenges to address and these meetings allow us to find solutions for them. RRAG/GAFILAT is happy to support the organization of such events in the future again.  **Olga AMETISTOVA, Advisor of the Global Program Combating Illicit Financial Flows, GIZ**  I would like to thank RRAG/GAFILAT for their support in hosting this event. Besides, I am grateful for the dedication and engagement of all ARINs as well as Interpol and CARIN/Europol in the exchanges and discussions we experienced. Looking at the current processes at UN and FATF, we see that we right now have the momentum to foster global cooperation. The GP IFF is happy to hear that ARINs want to work closer together with each other in the future. Please also refer to and make use of the working documents of today’s event such as the participants list which includes email addresses of all participants, so you can get in touch bilaterally as well. |

**Annex I: Participants List**

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