

Police and customs cooperation

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Below the level of judicial assistance, police cooperation runs through a bilateral agreement on police and customs cooperation concluded in 2013 and through the joint Police and Customs Cooperation Centre (*Centro di cooperazione di polizia e doganale*, CCPD) in Chiasso. The Swiss services at the Chiasso centre, like those at the corresponding centre in Geneva for cooperation with France, are governed by an agreement on the national management of the two centres approved by the Federal Council on 2 April 2014.¹ At a visit to the Chiasso centre on 23 October 2023 the Italian ambassador to Switzerland described its joint work on organized crime, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, customs offences and economic and financial crime as a concrete example of active cooperation. The Italian national coordinator at the centre is an officer of the *Guardia di Finanza*, and the Swiss side is coordinated by fedpol.² The centre allows police officers of both countries to exchange information quickly, for example on vehicles, persons and telephone numbers that appear in investigations on both sides of the border.

1 Financial intelligence

The third channel is the exchange between the financial intelligence units. The MROS exchanges information with foreign FIUs within the Egmont Group framework. In 2024 it received 780 requests from 96 foreign FIUs and 751 spontaneous communications from 45 countries.³ In 2025 it received 660 requests and 932 spontaneous communications from 56 countries, and sent 236 requests and 223 spontaneous communications to 53 FIUs.⁴ In its report for 2025 the MROS stated that it had stepped up its cooperation with the Italian UIF and with Europol in order to strengthen the exchange of information on the Mafia organizations.⁵ For a Lugano intermediary, this means that a report to the MROS concerning an Italian client can reach the UIF in Rome and from there the Italian prosecutors. Conversely, an Italian suspicious transaction report on a transfer to a

Ticino account can lead to an MROS request to the Swiss bank under Article 11a AMLA.

2 Joint investigations and political dialogue

Joint actions such as those of 21 July 2020 and 16 November 2021 depend on coordination before the arrests, so that suspects in both countries are arrested on the same day and evidence is secured simultaneously. Such coordination requires early exchange of information between prosecutors who know each other's procedures. The Ticino Grand Council's Justice and Rights Committee invited Pietro Grasso, former Italian National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor and former President of the Italian Senate, to a meeting in Bellinzona on 8 March 2024. Grasso described the Italian legislative instruments against the Mafia. The discussion covered anti-Mafia certificates for public procurement, which had been proposed in Switzerland in 2022, the need for effective databases, the use of Kryptowerte und Digital Assets in laundering and the deterrent effect of minimum sentences.⁶ The vice-president of the committee observed that members of organized crime who settled in Switzerland for business and money laundering felt relatively safe because Swiss penalties were lower than Italian ones.⁷ The proposal of an anti-Mafia certificate for Italian companies working in Switzerland, put forward in a postulate of the Ticino National Councillor Marco Romano in September 2022, was rejected by the Federal Council in December 2024. A requirement imposed only on bidders and subcontractors based in Italy would, in its view, be discriminatory and a disproportionate obstacle to their participation in public procurement and could be circumvented by moving a company's seat.⁸

Common misconception. It is sometimes said that Swiss banking secrecy still protects the accounts of Italian Mafia members in Lugano. Article 47 of the Banking Act protects client data against unauthorized disclosure. It does not apply to disclosures that the law requires or allows. A report to the MROS under Article 9 AMLA or Article 305ter(2) SCC, a production order of a Swiss prosecutor and the execution of an Italian request for mutual assistance all override banking secrecy. In Mafia cases the dual criminality requirement is met because participation in a Mafia-type association under Italian law corresponds in substance to the Swiss offence of participation in a criminal organization. The practical limits lie elsewhere: in the time needed to execute requests, in the right of account holders to appeal against the transmission of documents, and in the difference between the Italian and the Swiss standards of proof for membership.

3 Notes

1. Accordo sulla gestione nazionale dei centri comuni di cooperazione di polizia e doganale (CCPD) di Ginevra e Chiasso, approved by the Federal Council on 2 April 2014, at LexFind, <https://www.lexfind.ch/tolv/168354/it>. ↩
2. "Cooperazione di polizia, l'ambasciatore al Centro di Chiasso", laRegione, 23 October 2023, <https://www.laregione.ch/cantone/mendrisiotto/1707257/servizi> (reference to the police and customs cooperation agreement of 2013). ↩
3. MROS, Jahresbericht 2024 (above), 15. ↩
4. MROS, Annual Report 2025 (above), 27. ↩
5. MROS, Annual Report 2025 (above), section 4.3. ↩
6. laRegione, 8 March 2024 (above). ↩
7. laRegione, 8 March 2024 (above). ↩
8. "Discriminatorio il certificato antimafia per le aziende italiane in Svizzera", Ticinonline, 6 December 2024, <https://www.tio.ch/svizzera/attualita/1801794/discriminatorio-il-certificato-antimafia-per-le-aziende-italiane-in-svizzera> (report of the Federal Council's response to the postulate of National Councillor Marco Romano of September 2022). ↩

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