



Ministerie van Justitie
en Veiligheid



Ministero della Giustizia
Dipartimento dell'Amministrazione Penitenziaria

CONFERENCE RECAP: ORGANISED CRIME IN PRISONS – INNOVATION, INTELLIGENCE, AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

4 - 6 NOVEMBER 2025
ROME, ITALY



INTRODUCTION

The **Organised Crime in Prisons Conference – Innovation, Intelligence, and International Collaboration** convened **130** experts, practitioners, and policymakers from more than **20** European countries to address the growing challenges of organised crime within prison systems. Held from **4–6 November 2025 in Rome**, the event was jointly organised by the **Italian Ministry of Justice – Department of Prison Administration**, the **Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security**, and **EuroPris**.

OPENING PLENARY

The opening session featured high-level contributions from **Carlo Nordio**, Minister of Justice (Italy); **Ernesto Napolillo**, Director General for Prisoners and Treatment (Italy); **Justus Kox**, Director of Sanctions and Victim Policy (The Netherlands); and **Gustav Tallving**, Executive Director of EuroPris. In addition, a video message from **Arno Rutte**, Dutch Minister for Legal Protection, emphasised the importance of sharing knowledge and working together internationally to combat organised crime originating from prison environments. Collectively, these speeches underscored the urgency of coordinated action and the role of collaboration in safeguarding security and rehabilitation efforts.



Justus Kox (The Netherlands)



Ernesto Napolillo (Italy)

EUROPEAN TRENDS AND RESILIENCE OF ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS

- **Europol** outlined the evolving nature of serious and organised crime, noting increasingly decentralised and borderless structures that enable remote coordination and continuity of operations during imprisonment.
- Findings from the **2025 EU-SOCTA** report highlighted two critical trends:
 - OCGs increasingly operate through flexible, transnational networks, reducing reliance on physical presence and exploiting digital communication channels.
 - **Recruitment of minors** (aged 13–20) **via social media and messaging platforms** is rising, often using gamification and the glorification of violence to draw them into activities such as extortion and contract killings.

ITALY AND THE NETHERLANDS – OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

- The session underscored the value of **intelligence-led placement strategies** to disrupt organised crime group hierarchies, supported by **structured risk assessments, tailored security measures** for high-risk individuals, and **multi-agency collaboration** between prison services, law enforcement, and judicial authorities.
- Both countries highlighted efforts to **restrict criminal communication** while balancing **security, legal safeguards, and reintegration goals**, noting the need for **continuous adaptation** of regimes and procedures to address evolving threats and ensure **staff safety**.

SWEDEN – CASE STUDIES ON OCG RESILIENCE

- Two major Swedish organised crime groups demonstrate the difficulty of disrupting prison-based control: **X-Ray**, whose leader continued attempting to bypass communication filters despite an 18-year maximum-security sentence (2022), and **Saturn**, whose leader, sentenced to life in 2014, maintained influence by circumventing communication restrictions.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1. Nature and Structure of Organised Crime in Prisons

- Organised crime in prisons functions as a distinct and economically significant market, **shaping drug economies, violence, and prison stability.**
- Prison-based organised crime is typically **informal, adaptive, and network-based**, with business-like roles (leaders, intermediaries, and operational members) rather than rigid hierarchies.
- Criminal networks operate through **relational assets, power roles, drug and contraband operations, financial flows, and external associates**, with linkages to actors outside the prison system.

2. Intelligence and Information Gathering

- **Intelligence gathering and analysis are central** to identifying, managing, and disrupting organised crime within prisons.
- **Prison intelligence is under-researched**, with limited evidence on effective intelligence collection by frontline staff.
- Intelligence work involves **tensions between secrecy and transparency** and carries **risks of bias or exclusionary practices.**

3. Staff Vulnerabilities and Whistleblowing

- **Organised crime exploits staff vulnerabilities**, including access, trust, and organisational weaknesses.
- **Whistleblowing** plays a key role in uncovering organised crime but depends on effective systems and protections for staff.
- **Staff training and organisational culture** are critical factors in **preventing corruption and improving intelligence quality.**



Ernesto U. Savona (Italy), Beata Baran-Wesołowska (Poland), Michael O'Mahony (Ireland)

KEY LEARNINGS FROM WORKSHOP SESSIONS

4. Multiagency Cooperation and Information Sharing

- Collaboration between **prison services, law enforcement, and national security agencies** strengthens intelligence capabilities and operational responses.
- Examples from Italy and the UK show that shared intelligence, **joint prioritisation, and coordinated actions** improve responses to organised crime.
- **Limited information circulation** between agencies currently **restricts the full use of prison-based intelligence** at national and international levels.

5. Technology and Security

- **Drones and other technologies** are increasingly used to **deliver contraband**, with criminal groups often innovating faster than authorities.
- **Technological countermeasures** require substantial investment, ongoing adaptation, and staff training.
- **AI** and other technologies can improve prison security and productivity if implemented in line with **European legal requirements and values**.

6. Violence, Group Dynamics, and Radicalisation

- **Identity Fusion** is a key predictor of extreme behaviour, group cohesion, and willingness to make costly sacrifices.
- Gang members show stronger fusion with the group, while jihadist offenders show stronger fusion with values such as religion.
- **Strong family commitment is identified as a protective factor** across both gang-related and terrorist offenders.

7. Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Dynamic Security

- Criminal prosecution alone is insufficient to tackle organised crime; **broader preventive and multi-agency approaches are required**.
- Supply-reduction strategies and increased restrictions can be counter-productive if demand, governance, and personal safety are not addressed.
- **Dynamic security** remains a crucial concept for managing organised crime and maintaining order within prisons.

NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO ORGANISED CRIME IN PRISONS

Discussions highlighted persistent risks linked to organised crime within prison settings and the growing need for coordinated European action. Common challenges include the **continuation of criminal activities during detention, attempts to compromise staff, and the use of technology for illicit purposes**. Responses emphasise **specialised regimes for high-risk prisoners, robust internal controls, and measures to protect staff integrity**, alongside **cross-border cooperation** to strengthen intelligence and operational capacity.

- **France** has introduced **specialised Units Against Organised Crime (QLCO)** following serious security incidents, including an escape during a judicial transfer in 2024. These units apply **strict separation measures, enhanced surveillance, and technical controls** such as mobile phone and drone jammers.
- In **England & Wales**, corruption remains a significant vulnerability. The **Counter Corruption Unit** recorded over 500 cases in 2024, with approximately one-third showing links to organised crime groups. The national approach combines prevention through **staff training and resilience programmes**, pursuit through disciplinary and criminal proceedings, and intelligence-led interventions to disrupt conditioning tactics.
- **Information Exchange**: Case examples from **France, Sweden, and the Netherlands** demonstrate that timely sharing of risk profiles and behavioural intelligence during transfers or extraditions enables appropriate security measures and reduces operational risks. There is a **growing need for a structured information-sharing mechanism or database** to ensure consistency, speed, and security in **cross-border exchanges**.
- **EuroPris' Prison Security Expert Group** facilitates the exchange of best practices on emerging threats such as contraband smuggling, staff corruption, and the use of drones.

OCP 2025 Conference



CONCLUDING WORDS

The conference concluded with final remarks from **General Augusto Zaccariello**, Deputy Director General for Staff at the Italian Penitentiary Administration, followed by a closing panel featuring **Justus Kox** (Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security) and **Gustav Tallving** (EuroPris). Discussions throughout the event underscored that addressing organised crime in prisons requires a **future-oriented approach, balancing secure regimes with rehabilitation and humane detention conditions. Innovation, collaboration, and alignment of policies at the European level emerged as critical factors** for staying ahead of evolving threats and ensuring resilient, rights-based prison systems.



Gustav Tallving (EuroPris), Justus Kox (The Netherlands), Wouter Kurpershoek (moderator)

ABOUT EUROPRIS

The European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris) is a membership association founded in 2011. The initiative to establish EuroPris was taken during the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009 and was brought forward by the European countries of the International Roundtable for Correctional Excellence.

Membership is open to those European national Prison and Correctional Administrations who are able and willing to support the agreed aims and objectives of EuroPris. Public institutions or organisations in the Council of Europe region, which provide prison or correctional services on a legal or statutory basis can become members of EuroPris.

EuroPris brings together practitioners in the prisons' arena with the specific intention of promoting ethical and rights-based imprisonment, exchanging information and providing expert assistance to support this agenda. The organisation exists to improve cooperation among European Prison and Correctional Services, to improve the lives of prisoners and their families, enhancing public safety and security; reducing re-offending; and advancing professionalism in the prisons' field.



EuroPris
Bezuidenhoutseweg 20
2594 AV, The Hague
Netherlands
www.europris.org
secretariat@europris.org

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