Fight against cross border organised crime: national Asset Recovery Office, tracing and identification of proceeds of crime. Initiative Austria, Belgium, Finland

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Pending the lifting of a reservation by the Irish delegation, the Council broadly agreed on a draft Decision concerning arrangements for cooperation between asset recovery offices of the Member States.

The Council preparatory bodies will be responsible for finalising the text of the Decision, with a view to its adoption at a forthcoming Council meeting.

It should be noted that the main motive for cross-border organised crime is financial gain. This financial gain is a stimulus for committing further crime to achieve even more profit. Accordingly, law enforcement services should have the necessary skills to investigate and analyse financial trails of criminal activity. In order to combat organised crime effectively, information that can lead to the tracing and seizure of proceeds from crime and other property belonging to criminals has to be exchanged rapidly between the Member States of the European Union. It is therefore necessary that close cooperation takes place between the relevant authorities of the Member States involved in the tracing of illicit proceeds and other property that may become liable to confiscation and that provision be made for direct communication between those authorities.

To that end, this Decision will allow Member States to put in place national Asset Recovery Offices with competences in these fields and will ensure that these offices can rapidly exchange information.