

## Rome: 15th Europol Network Conference on Witness Protection

The 15th Europol Network Conference on Witness Protection is being held today and will continue tomorrow in Rome, Italy. The meeting is expected to focus on the training for police officers in charge of protecting cooperating witnesses.

The conference was jointly organized by Europol and the Italian Witness Protection Service (Servizio centrale di protezione). Over 100 delegates from almost all the countries of the European Union are attending the event along with other overseas participants.

The highest public security authorities officially opened the conference at the National Police Academy this morning. The opening remarks by Europol Director Rob Wainwright, Italian Police Chief Alessandro Pansa and Criminal Police Director Francesco Cirillo testify to the attention of the institutions to this particular issue.

"The choice of Italy as the venue for the 15th network conference on witness protection proves that our country is one of the first in Europe which was confronted with this issue", said Police Chief Pansa, "in fact, Italy has more than 5000 people under protection, including their family members." He added that cooperation with other countries is crucial because "combating crime is not just a national issue and Italy's wide experience in witness protection must be shared. In addition, the relocation of witnesses abroad can sometimes facilitate their protection".

During the meeting, delegates discussed the selection process and training needs of police staff in charge of witness and justice collaborators' protection. Police officers performing this job have to carry out very complex tasks on a daily basis, which require a set of skills typical of social workers, psychologists, bodyguards, computer and telecommunication experts. This is why a very careful staff selection is required.

The Europol Network on Witness Protection was established in 2000 and is made up of experts from 64 countries, international organizations and special courts. It is the largest cooperation network worldwide.

Italian

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