

PROTON, the floor is yours!

The final results of the EU-funded project PROTON have been presented in Ghent (Belgium) on the 18th of September 2019: a new era in the fight against crime and terrorism is about to start



The [PROTON](#) consortium presented its main results at the project's final event, which took place in Ghent (Belgium) on the 18th of September 2019. The results emerged from an innovative combination of social and computational sciences and took form with PROTON-S (a set of agent-based models, ABM) and the PROTON Wizard software tool (watch this [webinar](#) on PROTON-S and PROTON Wizard). The goal is to shed new light on the processes leading to recruitment to organised crime and terrorist networks and to provide policy makers and law-enforcement agencies with instruments to implement more effective, evidence-based security policies. PROTON's final event was part of the programme of the [19th Annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology](#), which took place in Ghent from the 18th to the 21st of September 2019.

PROTON is a three-year European project launched in October 2016. It is run by a Consortium of 21 partners from many European countries, as well as from Israel and the United States. The consortium is coordinated by [Transcrime](#), the Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime of [Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore](#) in Milan (Italy), and it includes leading research institutions and relevant policy makers and enforcement agencies. Its large-scale and heterogeneity reflects the need for international and multidisciplinary cooperation in the combat to criminal and terrorist networks.

The morning session started with an overview of PROTON by project coordinator Ernesto Savona (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Transcrime). It continued with presentations by Francesco Calderoni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Transcrime) and Badi Hasisi ([The Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#)) on the ABM simulations developed by PROTON for the cases of recruitment to organised crime and terrorist networks, respectively, as well as on the tested policy scenarios. Such scenarios are a prototypical northern and southern European city for the model on recruitment to organised crime, and a district in Berlin as a prototypical borough of a major European city in terms of makeup and risk for the case of recruitment to terrorist networks. The models foresee the interaction of thousands of agents for long periods of time. The interactions of

the agents are based on a number of innovative analyses carried out by PROTON on the social, psychological and economic factors leading people to join criminal and terrorist organisations. Giulia Andrighetto ([Laboratory of Agent-Based Social Simulation](#) of the National Research Council of Italy) then described the implementation of PROTON-S and the results of the said ABM simulations. The last presentations of the morning session focused on policy implications of the PROTON results.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the PROTON Wizard. Grzegorz Taberski ([ITTI sp z.o.o.](#)) presented the tool and how it was developed. The PROTON Wizard provides the main end users of PROTON-S, such as policy makers, easy access to the simulation results, without the need for technical assistance (access the PROTON Wizard [here](#)). Secondly, Ernesto Savona presented the PROTON manual and its main content. The manual explains in a plain language what ABM are and how they work. The target users are policy makers and practitioners, who could follow these guidelines when repeating simulations on organised crime and terrorist networks.

The PROTON final conference was a very successful event, which enabled further dissemination of the project outcomes. The results are available on the project website for everyone willing to adopt the PROTON approach and charge into a new era in the fight against crime and terrorism.

FURTHER INFORMATION

ABM are computational simulations aiming to analyse the macro phenomena emerging from agents that are part of an artificial society. This methodological framework has been widely applied in **biology**, **ecology** and in the **natural sciences**. In the last decade it has drawn attention from social scientists and criminologists. The advantages of ABM simulations are: the possibility to test the impact of specific interventions before their deployment; they are faster and cheaper than experiments; it is possible to investigate the long-term effect of policies; no harm to individuals or ethic concerns.