

SWISS FEDERAL DNA PROFILE INFORMATION SYSTEM - EDNA

W. Bär, Adelgunde Kratzer and M. Strehler

EDNA Coordination Unit, Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Zurich, Switzerland



The DNA Profile Information System (EDNA) has been in operation since the 1st of August 2000. A national legal ordinance specifies a catalogue of crimes that regulates the admittance of DNA profiles from suspects. There is no restriction for DNA profiles from stains.

Buccal swabs are taken from suspects by the police. Stains are either collected by the police or the Institutes of Legal Medicine. The C.D.S. swap box is usually used. All samples are transferred to the DNA laboratory at the regional Institutes of Legal Medicine, at Basel, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, St. Gallen and Zurich. All samples taken by the police are anonymized by a unique identification number (e.g. PCN 32 800034 56). By this procedure the name of a suspect is never revealed to the lab. The suspect's name and other relevant information together with his/her fingerprints are transferred by the police to the AFIS services (automated fingerprint identification service) at the federal police at Berne.

The forensic genetic laboratories analyze the samples and transmit the DNA profiles to the DNA Coordination Unit that is located at the Institute of Legal Medicine at Zurich that checks and imports these profiles into the CODIS database. Eleven DNA systems are routinely analyzed: D3S1358, vWA, D16S539, D2S1338, D8S1179, D21S11, D18S51, D19S433, TH01, FGA and amelogenin. Automated searches are performed daily and the hits – matches between DNA profiles between stains or between stains and persons - are reported to the AFIS services together with the PCN numbers of the matching samples. The AFIS services will then link these PCN numbers with the corresponding names of the suspects and the crimes and inform the investigating police unit about the hit. By this procedure a strict separation of the DNA profile data and the personal data is achieved.

Approximately 500 DNA profiles are entered monthly into the database and by the end of May 2001, 5082 profiles from suspects and 609 profiles from stains were stored. The number of hits is rapidly increasing and by the end of May 2001, 123 person-to-stain and 67 stain-to-stain hits were registered. The largest groups of crimes linked by hits were burglaries followed by offences of endangering life and against the sexual integrity.

A new federal DNA law is in preparation that will replace the provisional ordinance of June 2000, which in practice tolerates different legal procedures in the 23 states of Switzerland. The federal law will harmonize the legal situation for the whole country and replace the actual regulation that will expire at the end of 2004.