



# **Europol Programming Document**

**2024 – 2026**

Adopted by the Management Board of Europol on 28 November 2023.

**Europol Public Information**

The Hague, 18 December 2023

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## **List of Acronyms**

ADEP	Automation of Data Exchange Processes	Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
AML	Anti-Money Laundering	GE	Guest Expert
AP	Analysis Project	GO	Guest Officer
ARO	Asset Recovery Office	HR	Human Resource
BPL	Basic Protection Level	HRCN	High Risk Criminal Networks
CA	Contract Agent	HVT	High Value Targets
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear	IAC	Internal Audit Capability
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training	IAM	Identity and Access Management
COSI	Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security	ICT	Information and Communications Technology
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy	IM	Information Management
CSE	child sexual exploitation	IRU	Internet Referral Unit
CT	Counter-Terrorism	ISF	Internal Security Fund
DAP	Data Analysis Portal	J-CAT	Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce
DPF	Data Protection Function	JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
EC3	Europol Cybercrime Centre	JRC	Joint Research Centre
ECA	European Court of Auditors	LEA	Law Enforcement Authorities
ECTC	European Counter Terrorism Centre	MB	Management Board
EDPS	European Data Protection Supervisor	MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
EEAS	European External Action Service	MS	Member State
EES	Entry-Exit System	MTIC	Excise and Missing Trader Intra Community
EFCEC	European Financial and Economic Crime Centre	OAC	Operational and Analysis Centre
EIS	Europol Information System	OAP	Operational Action Plan (under EMPACT)
EMAS	Europol Malware Analysis Solution	OCG	Organised Crime Group
EMAS	EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme	OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction	OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats	OSP	Online Service Providers
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency	OTF	Operational Task Force
EMSC	European Migrant Smuggling Centre	PERCI	European platform for takedown of illegal content online
EPE	Europol Platform for Experts	PNR	Passenger Name Record
EPPO	European Public Prosecutor's Office	QUEST	Querying Europol's systems
ESOCC	European Serious and Organised Crime Centre	R&D	Research and Development
ETIAS	EU Travel Information and Authorisation System	SIENA	Secure Information Exchange Network Application
EUCP	EU Crisis Protocol	SIS	Schengen Information System
EUIPO	European Union Intellectual Property Office	SNE	Seconded National Expert
Eurojust	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation	SOC	Serious and Organised Crime
Eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.	SOCTA	Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit	TA	Temporary Agent
		TFTP	Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme
		THB	Trafficking in human beings
		TP	Third Part(y)/ies: Third countr(y)/ies and/or international organisation(s)
		UMF	Universal Message Format
		VIS	Visa Information System

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## Mission Statement

Europol's mission is to support its Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious international and organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism.

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## Executive summary

Europol's Programming Document is prepared on the basis of Article 12 of the Europol Regulation and Articles 32 and 33 of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol. An overview of the current and anticipated future policy factors influencing or impacting Europol's work in the coming years is presented in Section I.

The strategic programming of Europol, including resources programming, is provided in Section II - Multi-annual programming 2024-2026. Special focus is placed on six main strategic priorities which have been identified as part of the Europol Strategy "Delivering security in partnership", endorsed by Europol's Management Board in June 2023. These priorities will guide the work of the Agency in the years 2024-2026 to:

- be the EU criminal information hub, including for data acquisition;
- deliver agile, real-time operational support;
- be a platform for European policing solutions;
- bring the relevant partners together for cross-border cooperation and joint action;
- be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research;
- be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation.

In Section III, Europol's Work Programme provides a comprehensive overview of the full work portfolio of the agency, including its regular (recurrent) work and specific annual objectives and actions for 2024; the work is organised around the different areas of operation (Activities).

2024 will be a dynamic year in terms of new initiatives and emerging tasks following the implementation of the amended **Europol Regulation**. The agency will be utilising the new opportunities and will be working on providing new/updated services:

- Enabling the agency to analyse **large and complex datasets**, and thus improve the exploitation of the exponentially growing information flow of data captured during law enforcement investigations;
- Allowing for the establishment of **joint operational analysis** between Europol and Member States in particular when conducting specific investigations against High Value Targets (HVT);
- Fostering effective cooperation with **private parties** and the setting-up of public-private partnerships, especially in areas where information provided by the private sector is essential for preventing and combating crime;
- Facilitating the provision of the result of Europol's analysis of data received from third countries to the frontline officers by assisting MS in entering the data into the **Schengen Information System**;
- Facilitating Europol's cooperation with **third countries** with regards to the transfer of personal data;

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- Fostering identification of key research themes, implementation of **innovation** and the provision of support to Member States in the use of emerging technologies in preventing and countering crimes.

In 2024, Europol will continue providing the Member States with high quality operational support to investigations in the priority areas aligned with the EU Security Union Strategy and following the objectives of the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime, the EU Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade, the Anti-Money Laundering package, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the Counter-Terrorism Agenda, among others.

The planned work of Europol's Operational Centres, as well as the horizontal support functions, is extensive and striving towards further evolution of capabilities, expertise and tools, in order to offer the necessary support to MS' operations. In addition to regular tasks and responsibilities, the key highlights in Europol's planning for 2024 are summarised below:

- The priorities of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (**EMPACT**) **2022-2025** will remain the key driver for the operational support provided to the MS' competent authorities in 2024. Apart from contributing to the implementation of all Operational Action Plans, Europol performs the coordinator role in four Common Horizontal Strategic Goals (Intelligence Picture, High-risk criminal networks, Online and offline trade in illicit goods & services and Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery).
- **Criminal analysis** remains at the core of Europol's business and the agency will be further reinforcing analysis coordination through enhanced attention to quality output and control, standardisation and training. In 2024, the agency's analytical work is expected to benefit greatly from the implementation and operationalisation of the case management system and the joint analysis platform, which will also allow for closer and more effective collaboration with MS. The technical features of the Data Analysis Portal should be further enhanced and new ways of handling complex data should be explored, while ensuring **data protection** by design and by default throughout all data management tools and processes.
- The **Information Management Strategy** developed in 2020 will guide the streamlining and development of information management at Europol in the coming years. The multiannual Business Streams, which encompass the bulk of agency's technology development work, will continue consolidating the most substantial transformation in Europol's analysis capabilities. Europol will also be further improving, as needed, capabilities used directly by Member States, such as SIENA and QUEST, and will support the national authorities for their implementation of SIENA web services, in accordance with the Directive on Information Exchange. Through the Business Streams, Europol will continue contributing to the EU Interoperability, in line with the European Commission's planning and in close cooperation with eu-LISA. Finally, Europol will pursue achieving progress on governance and administration ICT tools with the aim to make these processes more efficient. The pace of this work will be determined by the level of investment necessary to deliver - as a top priority - the capabilities necessary for the operational work of Europol.
- With the setting up of the **Integrated Operational Services** unit in its Operational and Analysis centre, Europol aims at providing efficient and effective crosscutting services to internal and external stakeholders in the areas of interoperability and travel intelligence. In compliance with the various EU legal acts regulating this domain, it will manage the operations that require interaction with the EU information management systems in relation to biographic and biometric data.
- With the ongoing preparations for **ETIAS** operations and the subsequent **VIS** systematic checks against Europol data, the Integrated Operational Services unit will have to deal

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with the huge challenge of building up capacities for providing 24/7 swift follow-up on hits of travel authorisation and visa applications. Furthermore, in 2024 Europol should initiate preparations for the upcoming Prüm II Regulation and the Screening Regulation, which are foreseen to have considerable impact on the agency's workload too.

- Europol will continue providing quality support to Member States in identifying **High Value Targets** (HVT) representing the highest risk of organised and serious crime, and in increasingly complex investigations against HVTs through the implementation of the established HVT/OTF concept and the setting up of **Operational Task Forces** (OTF). In 2024 the **European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)** will assess and further develop, in consultation with MS, the HVT/OTF concept by incorporating a regional approach with strong external orientation. Furthermore, the ESOCC will support MS in developing a standardised concept for the national-level HVT/OTF selection process, which would be linked to the EU-level HVT/OTF concept.
- The combat against **organised property crime** will entail prioritisation of operations countering crimes involving extreme violence and crimes of high frequency and extensive illicit proceeds. The ESOCC intends to extend the scope of its work towards the trafficking of cultural goods and contribute to the implementation of the EU Action Plan tackling this crime phenomenon. The priorities concerning **environmental crime** will remain on supporting cross border waste and pollution investigations. In 2024, the centre will advance with the mapping of the specialised public or private technical support resources in the EU that could be used to address concrete operational needs of MS investigations on environmental crimes.
- In the area of **firearms trafficking**, the ESOCC foresees the further development of a Firearms Intelligence Hub, which should facilitate the cross-border exchange and processing of ballistics and weapons identification information. In parallel, the **European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC)** will be contributing to the objectives of the Renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025 and the European Commission's 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa. EMSC will also participate in the building of an EU wide IT Toolbox capable of providing better analytical situational overviews, timely identification and comprehensive understanding of emerging migratory trends.
- Looking ahead towards the evolution of the threat landscape, it is anticipated that the demand for services of the **European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)** will continue to grow across all crime areas. The new Digital Support Unit at EC3 will streamline and enhance the delivery of crosscutting digital operational support services to Europol's crime centres and to the Member States, while the advanced state of the New Forensic Environment (NFE) should allow for better and faster forensic extraction and reconstruction services.
- In 2024, EC3 is planning to deliver tangible improvements in the operational and technical support to **cryptocurrency**-related investigations, upon the implementation of the CryptoPortal. The MISP Threat Sharing platform at Europol should also be established to further strengthen the operational collaboration between cyber law enforcement- and cyber security network, and information security community. The Digital Support Unit, in cooperation with the JRC, foresees further progress on the development of **forensic tools** for data acquisition from vehicles, and the new International Law Enforcement Ransomware Response Model (IRRM) will expand the operational and tactical response to **ransomware**.
- In 2024, Europol will start preparing for the implementation of the new EU Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat **child sexual abuse**. The agency will undertake the necessary technical and operational adjustments to ensure effective handling of the expected increase in data contributions and effective provision of support to the Member States in case coordination and prioritisation for the anticipated growing number of investigations.

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- In the area of **counter-terrorism**, efforts to achieve greater information exchange among the relevant partners at EU level will continue. The **European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC)** will aim at embedding guest experts from the MS CT units and similarly deploying ECTC members to MS CT units for short-term projects. The centre will work towards establishing closer interaction with priority non-EU competent CT services to obtain dynamically updated **foreign terrorist fighters (FTF)** lists. Following the revised coordinated approach established by the Terrorism Working Party (TWP), Europol will evaluate the information on third-country nationals suspected to be jihadist terrorists and make a proposal for insertion in SIS, once this new alert category on third-country nationals is implemented in the system.
- In 2024, Europol will further enhance and expand the technical aspects of the **EU platform for referrals and removal orders (PERCI)** turning it to a mature communication and coordination tool for handling online terrorist content. In addition, further assessments will be made to identify possibilities to extend PERCI's scope to other crime areas covered by the Digital Services Act. In addition, the **EU IRU** will continue reinforcing its expertise on the abuse of the Internet by right wing violent extremist and terrorist networks, will initiate work on violent left wing extremism and will increase the focus on monitoring channels related to migrant smuggling. In parallel, it will further pursue the development of the new Check-the-Web Portal as an e-Library to store and analyse online terrorist content.
- **The European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC)** is striving to increase Europol's responsiveness and operational performance in the areas of fraud, money laundering, asset recovery, corruption and counterfeiting. The centre provides horizontal operational support to HVTs and OTFs in all crime areas, contributes to the implementation of the EMPACT priorities falling within its mandate and will continue countering attempts of serious and organised crime to target the NextGeneration EU recovery fund.
- One important task for the EFEC in 2024 is to establish a well-functioning working relation with the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) and the Cooperation and Support Mechanism (CSM) for the FIUs. The setting up of secure communication channels, access to information and structured operational collaboration will be a prerequisite for the effective utilisation of **financial intelligence** in crime investigations. The new anti-money laundering legislation, as well as the Directive on asset recovery and confiscation, might, in addition, bring new tasks to the agency.
- The EFEC maintains the **Customs cooperation** function within Europol and pursues the objective of increasing the information exchange between Customs risk profiling and the agency's criminal analysis. At the same time, the EFEC will initiate the implementation of the new agreement with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and will contribute to the development of the EU Toolbox against **counterfeiting** under the lead of the European Commission; it will also reinforce its involvement in illegal Internet Protocol Television, following an updated cooperation agreement with UEFA.
- Europol seeks to be at the forefront of **law enforcement innovation and research** and through its **Innovation Lab**, it facilitates innovation in the law enforcement community and addresses the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies. The Lab acts as the secretariat for the **EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security** and leads the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies to implement the tasks adopted by COSI in 2020 and envisaged in the Multi-Annual plan endorsed in 2023. Moreover, Europol will support the European Commission in identifying key research themes, fostering uptake of research and innovation, as well as providing support to Member States in the use of emerging technologies in preventing and countering crimes. In this respect, as part of the implementation of the amended Europol Regulation, in 2024 the Lab will provide the

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environment for Europol and MS to develop, train and validate models and tools using operational data.

- In the realm of external relations, Europol will deliver the final implementation report on the **External Strategy 2021-2024** and will elaborate the next strategy post- 2024. In parallel to pursuing cooperation with selected high-priority third countries and organisations, the agency will be looking into the effectiveness of already existing agreements and will prepare a strategic review of its cooperation with Colombia. Furthermore, the organisation will develop in 2024 a strategy for steering and coordination of **Private Party cooperation** to optimise private sector partnerships to the benefit of the operational delivery, following a structured approach and established priorities.
- In 2024, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the renewed Europol Strategy, while the Agency will continue making progress in promoting workforce diversity and inclusion, in line with Europol’s **Diversity and Inclusion Strategy**. The HR and Finance Strategies will guide and ensure the efficient and effective management of budget and resources, while the **Strategic Housing Roadmap** will advance further to allow for the agency’s growth.

Table: Overview of Europol’s objectives for the year 2024

Work Programme Activity	Objective 2024
A.1. Development of information technology and information management capabilities	A.1.1 Continue the implementation of the Information Management Strategy.
	A.1.2 Further develop ICT capabilities for Europol’s operations.
	A.1.3 Implement improvements to core MS-facing operational capabilities.
	A.1.4 Advance interoperability and connectivity with information management systems at EU level to enhance information exchange.
	A.1.5 Further implement Europol’s Innovation Strategy and consolidate the structures and processes of Europol’s Innovation Lab.
	A.1.6 Further improve corporate information management and related administrative ICT capabilities.
	A.1.7 Develop and maintain reliable and secure ICT and IM capabilities.
A.2. Operational Coordination	A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing the intake of operational information.
	A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.
	A.2.3 Build-up Europol’s operational services to comply with the legal obligations stemming from the EU information management systems.
	A.2.4 Utilise Europol’s access to EU information management systems to enrich the provision of support to EU Member States’ investigations.
	A.2.5 Provide support to EU Member States in the area of special tactics.
	A.2.6 Manage and support deployments, incl. Europol’s Guest Officers and Guest Experts capabilities.
A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime	A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States’ investigations on SOC and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.
	A.3.2 Provide support to EU Member States’ investigations on drug production and trafficking.
	A.3.3 Provide support to EU Member States’ investigations on weapons and explosives.



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<b>Work Programme Activity</b>	<b>Objective 2024</b>
	<p>A.3.4 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on high risk OCGs and criminal networks.</p> <p>A.3.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised property crime.</p> <p>A.3.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on environmental crime.</p> <p>A.3.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised crime related to migrant smuggling.</p> <p>A.3.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on trafficking in human beings.</p>
A.4. Combating cybercrime	<p>A.4.1 Ensure the effective functioning of EC3 in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on cybercrime and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.</p> <p>A.4.2 Provide digital forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.</p> <p>A.4.3 Provide document forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.</p> <p>A.4.4 Provide cyber intelligence support to EU Member States' investigations.</p> <p>A.4.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on cyber-dependent crimes.</p> <p>A.4.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on child sexual exploitation.</p> <p>A.4.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on payment fraud and online fraud schemes.</p> <p>A.4.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on criminal online trade and use of online environments for criminal purposes.</p> <p>A.4.9 Provide support and operational coordination to the J-CAT operations and activities.</p> <p>A.4.10 Proactively develop expertise and solutions related to challenges in cybercriminal investigations.</p>
A.5. Counter-terrorism	<p>A.5.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ECTC in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations related to counter-terrorism.</p> <p>A.5.2 Provide support to EU Member States' counter-terrorism investigations.</p> <p>A.5.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.</p> <p>A.5.4 Provide support to EU Member States' CT investigations with terrorism-related financial information.</p> <p>A.5.5 Provide CBRN/E support to EU Member States' investigations.</p> <p>A.5.6 Provide support to the ATLAS Network.</p> <p>A.5.7 Provide internet referral services.</p> <p>A.5.8 Further develop the EU platform to tackle illegal content online (PERCI) as a communication and coordination tool for referrals and removal orders within the EU.</p> <p>A.5.9 Provide operational support to EU Member States' CT internet-based investigations.</p>

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<b>Work Programme Activity</b>	<b>Objective 2024</b>
	<p>A.5.10 Provide technical support to CT internet-based investigations and referrals.</p> <p>A.5.11 Provide support to Member States on acquiring cross-border access to electronic evidence.</p>
<p>A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime</p>	<p>A.6.1 Reinforce the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) to extend the provision of strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on financial and economic crime.</p> <p>A.6.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on fraud.</p> <p>A.6.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on money laundering.</p> <p>A.6.4 Increase cooperation with FIUs.</p> <p>A.6.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations in identifying and tracing proceeds of crime.</p> <p>A.6.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on corruption.</p> <p>A.6.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on the production and distribution of counterfeit goods.</p> <p>A.6.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on Euro counterfeiting.</p>
<p>A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination</p>	<p>A.7.1 Reinforce criminal analysis coordination and expertise at Europol to ensure provision of quality analysis support to EU Member States' investigations.</p> <p>A.7.2 Ensure data and analysis quality control at Europol.</p> <p>A.7.3 Reinforce analysis training capabilities and coordination at Europol.</p> <p>A.7.4 Deliver quality strategic reports.</p> <p>A.7.5 Provide support and funding opportunities to EMPACT priorities and actions.</p> <p>A.7.6 Manage cooperation with EU Member States.</p> <p>A.7.7 Manage cooperation with third countries.</p> <p>A.7.8 Manage cooperation with EU institutions, agencies or bodies.</p> <p>A.7.9 Manage cooperation with international and regional organisations.</p> <p>A.7.10 Establish a strategy for managing and enhancing cooperation with private parties.</p>
<p>A.8. Governance, support and administration</p>	<p>A.8.1 Continue optimising Europol's corporate functions.</p> <p>A.8.2 Ensure fundamental rights compliance in all internal and external operational and administrative processes.</p> <p>A.8.3 Ensure efficient internal and external communication.</p> <p>A.8.4 Ensure efficient human resources and budget management.</p> <p>A.8.5 Ensure the necessary level of physical, personal and information security at Europol.</p> <p>A.8.6 Progress towards the rationalisation and expansion of Europol's facilities services and enhanced environmental management</p>

## SECTION I – General Context

This section presents the current and future policy context that is expected to influence Europol's work in the coming years. Through the implementation of its Annual Work Programme 2024, Europol will contribute to the implementation of several EU policies in the JHA domain, as detailed below and under each specific Activity in Section III.

### 1. Security Union

#### 1.1. The EU Security Union Strategy

The EU Security Union Strategy<sup>1</sup> adopted on 24 July 2020 lays out four strategic priorities for action at EU level:

- A future-proof security environment: this priority comprises the establishment of new EU rules on the protection and resilience of critical infrastructure, the revision of the Network and Information Systems Directive and setting up of a Joint Cyber Unit. It will promote public private cooperation to ensure stronger physical protection of public places and detection systems against terrorist attacks.
- Tackling evolving threats: the European Commission will make sure that existing EU rules against cybercrime are fit for purpose and will explore measures against identity theft and to enhance law enforcement capacity in digital investigations, which would include artificial intelligence, big data, etc. The Commission put forward on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 a strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse online and will provide next an EU approach on countering hybrid threats.
- Protecting Europeans from terrorism and organised crime: Steps are underway to strengthen border security legislation and cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations. EU Agenda on Counter-Terrorism, Drug Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 and EU Action Plan against firearms trafficking were issued in 2020, while EU Agenda for tackling organised crime, EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 and renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025 were put forward in 2021.
- A strong European security ecosystem: Key measures include strengthening Europol's mandate and further developing Eurojust to better link judicial and law enforcement authorities. Working with partners outside of the EU is also crucial. Cooperation with Interpol will be reinforced through the planned EU-Interpol Agreement. Research and innovation are powerful tools to counter threats and to anticipate risks and opportunities.

#### 1.2. European Commission's Communication: Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans

In February 2020, the European Commission adopted a communication on "Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans"<sup>2</sup>, which foresees stronger commitments by the EU and the Western Balkans. Credibility should be reinforced through an even stronger focus on fundamental reforms, starting with the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration as well as the economy of the candidate countries.

Ahead of the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 6 December 2022 and the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council on 8 December 2022, the Commission presented also an "EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans" aimed at strengthening cooperation on migration and border management with partners in Western Balkans. In December 2022, the European Council decided to grant the EU candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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<sup>1</sup> COM/2020/605 final

<sup>2</sup> COM/2020/57 final

### **1.3. Joint Communication: Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all**

The European Commission-EEAS joint communication Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020<sup>3</sup> was published on 18 March 2020 and comprises a new policy framework to strengthen resilience in partner countries in light of today's challenges, foster sustainable development and deliver tangible results for citizens. The EU, Member States and partner countries are invited to work together for accountable institutions, the rule of law and security. In particular, the EU shall work to enhance its support to fighting corruption and economic crime and improve cross-border cooperation to better protect people against organised crime. On 23 June 2022, the European Council decided to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and to the Republic of Moldova.

### **1.4. Strengthening cooperation with CSDP missions and operations**

In June 2020, the Council adopted conclusions on security and defence<sup>4</sup>, which initiated the work towards a Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, adopted in March 2022. In the Strategic Compass, MS agreed to develop a new Civilian CSDP Compact by mid-2023.

On 22 May 2023 the Council adopted the new Civilian CSDP Compact<sup>5</sup> reaffirming its full commitment to strengthening civilian CSDP and calling for the enhancement of the civilian CSDP missions' effectiveness, impact, flexibility and robustness, enabling them to tackle more effectively current, emerging and future security challenges across the internal – external nexus. The implementation is taken forward by the EEAS and the Commission through a joint action plan, as well as through MS' own implementation plans. Reinforced cooperation between CSDP and JHA is an important element of the Strategic Compass.

## **2. Serious and Organised Crime**

### **2.1. EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025**

On 14 April 2020, the European Commission presented a Communication on the EU Strategy to tackle organised crime 2021-2025<sup>6</sup> that sets out the strategic framework goals to enhance the fight against organised crime in the EU. The Strategy builds on four main priorities: (1) boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation, (2) effective investigations: disrupting organised crime, (3) eliminating profits generated by organised crime and preventing infiltration into the legal economy and society and (4) making law enforcement and judiciary fit for the digital age. The Europol Regulation Recast and the EU Police Cooperation Package, both adopted, were major pieces of legislation included in the strategy. Europol is an important actor when it comes to the implementation of the Strategy, especially in connection to High-Value Targets, High-risk organised crime groups and digital investigation tools.

### **2.2. EU Drug Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025**

The EU Drugs Strategy<sup>7</sup> provides the overarching political framework for the Union's drugs policy for the period 2021-2025 and is complemented by an EU Drugs Action Plan<sup>8</sup>, which sets out concrete implementation actions. The Action Plan underscores the role of Europol as a central actor for the implementation of the part on supply reduction. The Strategy puts forward the following priorities: targeting high-risk OCGs and disrupting criminal business models; proceeds and instrumentalities of OCGs involved in the drug markets, and social reuse of confiscated assets; international cooperation with third countries and involvement of relevant EU agencies. Further efforts are needed to address smuggling of drugs in and out of the EU by using established trade channels and illicit crossing of the EU borders. The Strategy

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<sup>3</sup> JOIN/2020/7 final

<sup>4</sup> Council 8792/20

<sup>5</sup> Council 9588/23

<sup>6</sup> COM(2021)170 final

<sup>7</sup> Council 14178/20

<sup>8</sup> Council 9819/21

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requires measures for more effective monitoring of logistical and digital channels exploited for drug distribution in close cooperation with the private sector.

Moreover, on 18 October 2023, the European Commission adopted the **EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime**, which aims to reinforce the EU action against the most serious security threats posed by the drugs trade and organised crime groups. It is composed of seventeen Priority Actions organised around four thematic areas: 1) The European Ports Alliance to strengthen the resilience of logistical hubs; 2) Action to dismantle high-risks criminal networks; 3) Prevention; and 4) International cooperation. Europol is mentioned extensively in the Roadmap and will be actively involved in the implementation of most of its actions, in cooperation with MS and other relevant EU Agencies and bodies.

### **2.3. Establishment of the European Union Drugs Agency**

The regulation setting up the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and replacing the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) entered into force on 1 July 2023 and will become applicable on 1 July 2024. This new legal framework will expand the mandate of the agency, expanding its scope of actions to polysubstance use, strengthening its monitoring and threat assessment capabilities and giving the agency a clear mandate to analyse global and third countries developments with potential impact on the EU. Most importantly for Europol, the EUDA will be competent to address drug supply and drug market issues, which will offer increased opportunities for collaboration.

### **2.4. EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking 2020-2025**

In its EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking 2020-2025<sup>9</sup> the European Commission invites MS and south-east Europe partners to improve cooperation among law enforcement authorities and with prosecutors and forensics specialists, to tackle the principal sources and routes of illicit firearms. The Commission will also improve cooperation between law enforcement and parcel and postal operators, to ensure stricter oversight of shipments containing firearms. Cooperation between EU and non-EU partners need to be stepped up in particular with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The Commission will work to establish a systematic and harmonised collection of data on seizures of firearms, and publish annual statistics. In cooperation with Europol, the Commission will explore the feasibility of rolling out an EU-level tool to track in real time firearms-related incidents and develop a permanently up-to-date picture. The Commission invites Europol and MS to keep a focus on firearms cases in the framework of cyber patrolling operations and actions against dark web marketplaces.

### **2.5. Revision of the Regulation on the import, export and transit of firearms**

On 28 October 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal to revise the Regulation setting out rules on the import, export and transit of firearms (commercial policy) to prevent the risk of diversion by improving the traceability of firearms and facilitating information exchange between national authorities. Better data and information exchange will reduce the risk of legally manufactured firearms (civilian use) being diverted to the illegal market. Key provisions for Europol include: the obligation for customs to share information on seizures with competent authorities via SIENA; the alignment of the scope of the regulation to the scope of the Firearms Directive; imposition of stricter rules and controls for deactivated weapons and alarm and signal weapons; stricter rules for the import of semi-finished firearms and essential components; creation of national firearms contact points; enhanced cooperation between LE (including customs) and licensing authorities; development of an EU electronic licensing system for manufacturers and dealers to apply for import and export authorisation, as well as the need to check SIS, ECRIS and the central system containing all refusals before granting import or export authorisations.

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<sup>9</sup> COM(2020) 608 final

## 2.6. New Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 23 September 2020, the European Commission presented the New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>10</sup>. Of relevance for Europol are the proposals for a Regulation introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders (Screening Regulation) and the Regulation on the revision of Eurodac (see section 6). Europol already participates in the regular meetings and reporting of the EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint, as well as the Situational Awareness and Forecasting project.

## 2.7. EU Action Plans on the Central Mediterranean, Western Balkans, Western Mediterranean routes and a Migration Management Toolbox

On 21 November 2022 the European Commission presented the **EU Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean** in response to the large increase in migratory pressure. The Action Plan proposes 20 measures to fight migrant smuggling and human trafficking in close cooperation with EU Agencies (in the context of the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships as presented in the EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling).

On 6 December 2022, the Commission presented the **EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans**, where the fight against migrant smuggling also features, including making full use of Europol's Operational Task Force(s) in the region and enhancing the participation of Western Balkans partners in EMPACT, as well as ensuring implementation of the regional anti-smuggling programme with cooperation of relevant EU Agencies.

On 6 June 2023, the Commission presented the **Action Plan on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes**, with 18 operational measures, of which those in the domain of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings are relevant for Europol. In the context of anti-smuggling operational partnerships, the promotion of structured cooperation between Europol and Morocco in the form of a Working Arrangement is promoted, as well as the implementation of a regional programme (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt) to fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings in cooperation with relevant EU Agencies. Further emphasis was placed on consolidating and ensuring synergies between existing Common Operational Partnerships and Joint Investigation Teams with West and North African countries, as well as promoting their participation in EMPACT.

Also on 6 June 2023, the Commission put forward a new **toolbox of measures to address the increasing misuse of commercial transport by criminal networks to facilitate irregular migration to the EU**, with a focus on airways. In this context, Europol's contributions to an improved situational awareness of relevant transport operators and to flag emerging trends is expected within the Migration and Crisis Preparedness Blueprint Network.

On 17 September 2023, in view of the recent increase in the migratory flows on the Central Mediterranean route directed to Italy, the Commission presented the **10-Point Plan for Lampedusa**, to reduce irregular migration and provide EU assistance to the Italian authorities. The Plan lays out a set of immediate actions to be exercised, in full respect of fundamental rights and international obligations, to, inter alia: reinforce the support to Italy by the EUAA and Frontex; step up returns; take measures to limit the use of unseaworthy vessels and against migrant smuggling; step up border surveillance; support the prevention of departures by establishing operational partnerships on anti-smuggling with countries of origin and transit. Europol will contribute to the implementation of this Plan, including through the establishment of a regional OTF to combat migrants' smuggling across the Mediterranean, supporting with the identification of High Value Targets and ensuring real-time information exchange between Italy, other MS and relevant third countries.

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<sup>10</sup> COM(2020)609 final

## **2.8. Schengen Strategy and the Multiannual Strategic Policy for European Integrated Border Management**

The Schengen Strategy (2021) recalled Europol's renewed mandate as an element for a reinforced Schengen area internally. Europol also features in the new Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism. Europol shall provide expertise, analysis, reports and other relevant information to support the implementation of the Regulation and may be invited to provide experts to carry out evaluations.

On 16 May 2023, the Commission presented the second State of Schengen report<sup>11</sup> with enhanced internal security of the Schengen area to fight against organised crime and drug trafficking featuring as one of the seven priority areas for the coming year. In this context, SIENA as the default law enforcement information exchange channel will reinforce Europol's position as the EU's law enforcement information hub. Moreover, Europol also contributes to the thematic evaluation on identifying best practices of MS in fighting drugs trafficking.

Following the Commission's Policy document on developing a multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management (EIBM), the first such policy was put forward in March 2023. Europol and law enforcement authorities feature as relevant partners in several policy priorities and strategic guidelines for the next five years, including: border control; analysis of risks for internal security; cooperation amongst relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and Agencies, including through regular exchange of information; cooperation with third countries in the areas covered by the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation; technical and operational measures within the Schengen area related to border control and designed to address irregular migration and counter cross-border crime; and research and innovation activities. Frontex will put forward the technical and operational strategy for EIBM by Q4 2023, and Europol may be called upon to implement relevant actions.

## **2.9. Renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025**

Europol will play an active role in implementing the Renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025<sup>12</sup>. In terms of the reinforced cooperation with partner countries and international organisations, Europol is called to offer assistance in line with its mandate. Optimal use of the EMSC should be made, in particular through the Information Clearing House and the sharing of information from immigration liaison officers, common operational partnerships and CSDP mission and operations. The European Commission is due to step up negotiations on cooperation between Europol and partner countries in order to facilitate the exchange of personal data for investigators. EMPACT is also a key tool to implement the Action Plan. The judiciary (e.g. Eurojust) should be more closely involved with the Joint Liaison Task Force on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, while the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities to target the online presence of smugglers, with the support of EU IRU, should be stepped up. The support of the European Economic and Financial Crime Centre should be used to include a financial investigation element into migrant smuggling cases. Finally, joint reports on migrant smuggling with Frontex are encouraged, as well as the establishment of cooperation with the private sector.

## **2.10. EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025**

The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>13</sup> encourages national authorities to strengthen cooperation with labour inspectorates and/or social partners and EU Agencies, in particular with Europol and within its remit with the European Labour Authority and to carry out concerted and joint inspections. Europol's role is highlighted also when it comes to breaking the criminal model to halt the exploitation of victims, since Europol facilitates MS' intelligence-lead and financial investigations and supports effective cross-border operational cooperation. Europol's role is also mentioned when it comes to detection of internet content

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<sup>11</sup> COM/2023/274 final

<sup>12</sup> COM(2021) 591 final

<sup>13</sup> COM(2021)171 final

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used by traffickers. Furthermore, a Common Anti – Trafficking Plan to address the risk of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine was endorsed by the Solidarity Platform on 11 May 2022 highlighting the role of Europol in: monitoring offline and online risks; providing information to MS and the Commission, based on collected intelligence about the threat assessment for the area of trafficking in human beings; training; developing indicators about potential victims of trafficking or *modi operandi* of the traffickers, adapted to the context of the war in Ukraine.

### **2.11. Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) collaboration platform**

On 1 December 2021, the European Commission issued a legislative proposal for a regulation to establish a dedicated JIT platform, to be used on a voluntary basis, to support the functioning of Joint Investigation Teams. To improve and speed up collaboration, the new proposal will set up a collaboration platform for easy and secure exchange of information and files, including evidence, within the joint team and between it and other bodies (e.g. Eurojust, Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office). Adoption of the proposal is expected in 2023.

### **2.12. Revision of the Environmental Crime Directive**

On 15 December 2021 the European Commission submitted a proposal to revise the EU Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law, otherwise known as Environmental Crime Directive. The proposal is part of the wider package of initiatives under the European Green Deal. It broadens the scope of the Directive by introducing new criminal offences, proposes a wider range of sanctions and introduces obligations for MS to provide adequate training and resources to law enforcement. Trilogues started in early May 2023.

### **2.13. EU Action plan on cultural goods trafficking**

On 13 December 2022, the European Commission presented an EU Action plan against trafficking in cultural goods, to deter criminals effectively, to address evolving security threats and to protect cultural heritage within and beyond the EU. The action plan builds on existing EU activity and addresses ongoing challenges through: improving prevention and detection of crimes by market participants and cultural heritage institutions; strengthening law enforcement and judicial capabilities; and boosting international cooperation, including with source and transit countries of cultural goods in conflicts and crises. The document establishes a list of key actions to strengthen the capabilities of law enforcement and the judiciary in that field, including several references to Europol's role and supporting the reinforcement of CULTNET by seconding appropriate staff to Europol.

In this context, on 8 June 2023, the Council adopted **Conclusions on the fight against trafficking in cultural goods**<sup>14</sup>, welcoming the Commission's action plan and encouraging further actions, several of which including direct references to Europol or EMPACT, such as the creation of an EU CULTNET contact point at Europol; the creation, in cooperation with the Innovation Lab, of a specific search engine to detect trafficking in cultural goods; or the need to take full advantage of Europol's and Eurojust's support for cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

### **2.14. 10-Point Plan - For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine**

On 28 March 2022, the European Commission presented the 10 points action plan, which among others, calls for closer cooperation in the area of preventing human trafficking and helping victims. The plan addresses the specific challenges emerging from the Ukrainian war. Furthermore, with a view to addressing the internal security implications of the war in Ukraine, the EMPACT community and Europol should support MS cooperation and investigations, and sustain the sharing of relevant security information. MS should ensure the enforcement of EU sanctions against Russian and Belarussian individuals and entities and take immediate appropriate action at national level concerning sanctioned persons. In this regard, Europol is

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<sup>14</sup> Council 10249/23



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part of the “Freeze and Seize” Task Force set up by the Commission to ensure EU-level coordination on the implementation and enforcement of sanctions.

### **2.15. Council Conclusions on Action Plan for the European Forensic Science Area 2.0**

On 9 March 2023, the Council approved Conclusions on the Action Plan for the European Forensic Science Area 2.0<sup>15</sup>. The Action Plan aims to shape the future of forensics by 2030, and is organised in three pillars, each addressing specific areas and outlining appropriate actions and responsible stakeholders. Europol’s role in the implementation of the action plan has been identified in several areas, e.g. biometrics, artificial intelligence, digitalisation, and emerging technologies.

### **2.16. High-Level Expert Group on access to data for effective law enforcement**

To contribute to the further consolidation of an effective Security Union, in June 2023 the European Commission set up a High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on access to data for effective law enforcement, guided by the input provided by the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI). The HLEG is tasked to explore the problems that law enforcement practitioners face in their daily work, and to define potential solutions to overcome them. Specific focus is on the need for law enforcement practitioners to have adequate access to data. The Group will map, assess, and prioritise the relevant issues and will identify, in a comprehensive manner, the legal, technical, and operational challenges, both current and potential future ones, and assess the practical impact of the lack of access to data on law enforcement’s ability to perform their function. The Group is composed of high-level representatives of the EU MS and the European Commission, relevant EU bodies and agencies (including Europol, Eurojust, ENISA, FRA and CEPOL), the Joint Research Centre of the Commission and the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator.

## **3. Cybercrime**

### **3.1. European Commission’s e-evidence package**

On 27 June 2023, the European Commission adopted a legislative package aiming at accelerating law enforcement and judicial cross-border access to electronic evidence. The objective is to establish a consistent legal framework and avoid conflicting obligations with the law of non-EU countries, as well as to protect the fundamental rights of individuals. Conceived as a judicial cooperation tool, the e-evidence legislation could have implications for Europol, since the SIRIUS capability is mentioned as a possible platform to transmit and facilitate the authentication of orders and as a de-confliction tool. The EU Package entered into force in August 2023 and will start applying as of 2026.

### **3.2. EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse for 2020-2025**

The Strategy published in July 2020 presents a framework for EU action in 2020-2025<sup>16</sup> to respond to the increasing threat of child sexual abuse both online and offline. The key initiatives foreseen were:

- To ensure that providers of electronic communications services could continue their voluntary practices to detect in their systems child sexual abuse after December 2020.
- To propose legislation requiring relevant online services providers to detect known child sexual abuse material and report it to public authorities.
- To establish a prevention network of practitioners and researchers.

### **3.3. Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse**

On 11 May 2022 the European Commission proposed a Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse (CSA Regulation) in order to replace the interim

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<sup>15</sup> Council 7152/23

<sup>16</sup> COM(2020) 607 final

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regulation which expires in August 2024. The proposal introduces i.a., detection and reporting obligations for online service providers, which will inevitably increase the number of referrals to be handled by Europol. The regulation proposal establishes a European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse, in the form of an EU decentralised agency, which should cooperate closely with Europol; it is also proposed that the new Centre would “rely on the support services of Europol (HR, IT including cybersecurity, communication)”.

### **3.4. Digital Services Act**

On 15 December 2020 the European Commission adopted the Digital Services Act (DSA), a legislative proposal to set harmonised new rules for all digital services that operate in the EU. The proposal puts forward measures for countering illegal content online and introduces i.a. obligations for hosting service providers (HSP) to report suspicions of criminal offences to law enforcement or judicial authorities of the MS(s) concerned, once the HSP becomes aware of a threat to the life or safety of person or persons; should the MS concerned be unclear, the HSP must report it to the authorities of the MS in which the company is registered in the EU, or to Europol, or both. Given its experience with the preparations for and implementation of the Terrorist Content Online Regulation, Europol may also support MS law enforcement and the regulator in their preparations for the other provisions under DSA, which are applicable to national law enforcement authorities. The DSA entered into force on 16 November 2022 and its rules should become applicable in full by Q1 2024.

### **3.5. EU’s Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade**

The EU’s Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade<sup>17</sup> adopted on 16 December 2020 seeks to enhance the EU’s resilience to cyber threats. Initiatives include enhancing cooperation and information-sharing amongst the various cyber communities and the establishment of the Joint Cyber Unit. Furthermore, special attention should be given to preventing and countering cyberattacks with systemic effects that might affect EU supply chains, critical infrastructure and essential services, democratic institutions and processes and undermine economic security. The European Commission will, together with the EU Intellectual Property Office, Europol, ENISA, MS and the private sector, develop awareness tools to increase the resilience of EU businesses against cyber-enabled intellectual property theft. In the area of capacity building, the Commission should put forward an action plan to improve digital capacity for law enforcement agencies while Europol is expected to further develop its role as a centre of expertise to support national law enforcement authorities combatting cyber-enabled and cyber-dependent crime, contributing to the definition of common forensic standards.

### **3.6. Proposal for a Regulation laying down measures for a high common level of cybersecurity at the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union**

In March 2022, the European Commission adopted the proposal for a regulation that introduces common binding rules on cybersecurity for all EU Institutions, Bodies and Agencies (EUIBAs). The new mandatory measures include i.a., baseline budget allocation towards cybersecurity and standards, procedures for incident response and maturity assessment. It also proposes the reallocation of resources and staff from relevant EUIBAs to CERT-EU, the EU Computer Security Incident Response Team. Classified environments are broadly excluded from the regulation, but the regulation will likely imply adjustments to Europol’s internal cybersecurity procedures, create new reporting channels and potentially have some impact on resources. The regulation also opens the possibility for cooperation and information exchange between CERT-EU and the European Cybercrime Centre.

### **3.7. Proposal for a Regulation on information security in the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union**

Together with the Cybersecurity draft Regulation, the Commission proposed common information security rules for all EUIBAs that will be mandatory across all EU administration. These aim to create a baseline of security standards applicable to all information handled

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<sup>17</sup> JOIN(2020) 18 final

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within the EU entities, both non-classified and classified, as well as to relevant communication and information systems. This Regulation will likely require some adjustments in the current procedures related to information security at Europol.

### 3.8. Cyber Crisis Task Force

In March 2022, the European Commission established the Cyber Crisis Task Force to ensure coordination at operational and executive levels regarding cybersecurity crisis management. The Task Force is comprised of relevant Commission Services and EU bodies and agencies, including Europol and is mandated to support operational coordination and informed political decision-making, improve crisis management communication flows between civilian, law enforcement, diplomatic and defence cybersecurity communities, and coordinate the implementation of the Joint Cyber Unit.

### 3.9. Cyber Resilience Act

The European Commission adopted the Cyber Resilience Act<sup>18</sup> on 15 September 2022, which introduces mandatory cybersecurity requirements for hardware and software products. The proposed regulation will apply to all devices and software that are connected either directly or indirectly to another device or network, and aims to address the impact of cybercrime, in particular ransomware. Once it enters into force, it will likely have an impact on the ability of law enforcement to counter cybercrime, Europol's procurement of technology and potentially on Europol's role as technology provider for law enforcement.

### 3.10. European Commission Cyber Package

On 18 April 2023 the European Commission adopted a Cyber package, which seeks to strengthen cybersecurity capacities in the EU and contains two main initiatives of relevance for Europol and/or EU MS law enforcement agencies.

- *The creation of a Cybersecurity Skills Academy*, which seeks to help increase the number of skilled cybersecurity professionals in the EU and to increase synergies across cyber communities to fight cybercrime. The academy puts forward new ways for cooperation between Europol, CEPOL, the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and the European Cybersecurity Competences Centre, to establish an operational trainings' need analysis to address cyberattacks. Moreover, cooperation between Europol, CEPOL, the Commission and the EEAS is foreseen for defining specific profiles and respective skills for law enforcement.

- *The EU Cyber Solidarity Act*, which is a regulation proposal to strengthen solidarity at Union level to better detect, prepare for and respond to significant or large-scale cybersecurity incidents. The proposal includes i.a. the creation of a Cybersecurity Emergency Mechanism.

The regulation proposal also establishes an EU Cybersecurity Reserve, comprised of a pool of cybersecurity services from trusted providers to support response to and immediate recovery from significant or large-scale cybersecurity incidents. As an EU Agency, Europol would qualify as recipient of such support, should it suffer a significant cyber incident that goes beyond the agency's cybersecurity capabilities.

### 3.11. AI package

The European Commission presented on 21 April 2021 the so-called 'AI package', setting out the first EU legal framework intended to regulate artificial intelligence (AI) applications at European level. This package will have a strong impact on law enforcement agencies and Europol, in particular due to the paradigm according to which AI-based techniques are forbidden for law enforcement activities, with some exceptions. In line with the Proposal, six categories of AI systems used for LEA purposes are defined as "high risk", and would be subject to heavy authorisation schemes. Trilogues commenced in June 2023.

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<sup>18</sup> COM(2022) 454 final

## 4. Terrorism and radicalisation

### 4.1. A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond

On 9 December 2020, the Commission presented a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda<sup>19</sup> for the EU to step up the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and boost the EU's resilience to terrorist threats. The Commission, in cooperation with Europol, supports the development of further guidance for the implementation of the EU Crisis Response Protocol. It also foresees a specific proposal for the establishment of a mechanism of information exchange in CT cases among JHA agencies, and for a network of CT financial investigators involving Europol.

### 4.2. Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism

On 15 June 2020, the Council adopted Conclusions on EU External Action on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism<sup>20</sup>. Key areas include the Western Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East, Sahel and the Horn of Africa. The misuse of the internet and new technologies for terrorist purposes are specifically addressed, as well as the need to cut off sources of terrorism financing. Furthermore, the Council recognises that Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) will remain a major common security challenge which should be better tackled through enhanced and timely cooperation and information sharing among MS, INTCEN, Europol, Eurojust and Interpol.

### 4.3. Council Conclusions on protecting Europeans from terrorism

On 10 June 2022, the Council adopted Conclusions on protecting Europeans from terrorism<sup>21</sup>. The conclusions focus on: the persistent high level of terrorist threat; the need to strengthen the use of SIS to monitor, detect individuals posing a terrorist threat, and better coordinate national entry bans and expulsion measures; the need to combat the threat stemming from actors contributing to radicalisation leading to terrorism; and access to essential data to fight terrorism.

### 4.4. Policy recommendations in counter-terrorism

Every semester, the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) is tasked, if required by changes to the terrorist threat picture, to prepare conclusions and policy recommendations or to adjust the existing ones, based on INTCEN's assessments and Europol's six monthly reports on the terrorism threat to the EU. The latest report<sup>22</sup> was presented to the TWP on 28 March 2023 and updated recommendations were endorsed by COSI on 16 May 2023<sup>23</sup>, including, i.a.:

- Continuous monitoring by EU MS, with the support of INTCEN and Europol, of the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on terrorist activities and narratives;
- Continuous development and use of EU IRU capabilities to support MS' actions to prevent the dissemination of all types of terrorist content; the EU IRU should continue its efforts to flag violent extremist and terrorist content online;
- Further development of the cooperation with key third countries and international partners on access to battlefield information;
- Call for the use of innovative tools and new technologies to counter terrorist threats and funding of research, innovation and development activities at EU level.

Moreover, in February 2023, COSI endorsed a **Revised coordinated approach**<sup>24</sup> - Defining a process for Evaluating information on third- country nationals suspected to be jihadist terrorists received from third parties or a Member State for possible processing in the

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<sup>19</sup> COM(2020)795 final

<sup>20</sup> Council 8868/20

<sup>21</sup> Council 9997/22

<sup>22</sup> Council 7796/23

<sup>23</sup> Council 8876/23

<sup>24</sup> Council 5606/23

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Schengen Information System, replacing the Protocol endorsed in 2020. This new approach reinforces the role of Europol in supporting MS with processing data it has received from third countries or international organisations on persons involved in terrorism.

### **4.5. EU Crisis Protocol (EUCP)**

On 7 October 2019, the EU Internet Forum committed to a common approach in addressing the online dimension of terrorist and violent extremist attacks as set out in the EU Crisis Protocol (EUCP). The EUCP requires the EU IRU to assume a central role in the coordination of the emergency responses in the event of a terrorist attack with a significant online component. Furthermore, the EUCP points out that a designated platform is needed that would enable two-way communication among Europol, MS authorities and hosting service providers (HSP). The EUCP was updated in May 2023, including improved interoperability, a stronger protection of fundamental freedoms, and a clarification between legislative and voluntary obligations for Online Service Providers.

### **4.6. Regulation on preventing the dissemination of Terrorist Content Online (TCO)**

The TCO Regulation entered into application on 7 June 2022. It provides a legal framework to ensure that hosting service providers will take down terrorist content online within one hour and requires MS to inform and cooperate with each other and make use of structures set up by Europol, including the PERCI platform. The aim is to ensure coordination and de-confliction with regards to removal orders and referrals. An evaluation of the TCO regulation is foreseen by 7 June 2024.

### **4.7. EU anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025**

On 18 September 2020, the European Commission presented a new EU anti-racism Action Plan<sup>25</sup> promoting fair policing and protection against discrimination. MS are encouraged to step up efforts to prevent discriminatory attitudes by law enforcement authorities and to boost the credibility of law enforcement work against hate crimes. The Commission will work together with MS to better address violent extremist groups, including by mapping of national responses to violent extremism. The Commission is also working with IT companies to counter online hate speech.

### **4.8. Violent right-wing extremism and terrorism**

On 8 October 2019, the Council endorsed four work strands to combat the threat stemming from violent right-wing extremism: 1) Creating a better situational overview of violent right-wing extremism and terrorism; 2) Developing and sharing good practices on how to strengthen the prevention, detection and addressing all forms of violent extremism and terrorism; 3) Addressing the spread of unlawful right-wing extremist content online and offline; and 4) Cooperating with key third countries, including by addressing the topic in counterterrorism dialogues. COSI endorsed an update of the four work strands to provide a common ground for continued work to handle the constantly evolving threat of violent right-wing extremism and terrorism on 16 May 2023.

### **4.9. Digital information exchange in terrorism cases**

On 1 December 2021, the European Commission adopted a new initiative on the digital information exchange in terrorism cases. In December 2022, co-legislators reached an agreement on a proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1727 of the European Parliament and the Council and Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, as regards the digital information exchange in terrorism cases ('CTR'). According to the compromise text, each MS shall take the necessary measures to ensure that at least the information concerning criminal investigations for terrorist offences which affect or may affect two or more MS,

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<sup>25</sup> COM(2020) 565 final

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gathered by the relevant authority, is transmitted to Europol, in accordance with national law and with the Europol Regulation. The final adoption is pending.

### **4.10. Directive on the exchange of information and cooperation concerning terrorist offences**

On 1 December 2021, the European Commission published a Proposal for a Directive amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA on the exchange of information and cooperation concerning terrorist offences, as regards its alignment with Union rules on the protection of personal data. The Council Decision covers information exchange between Europol and MS, as well as between MS related to terrorist offences. Transmission of personal data to Europol is foreseen for the purpose of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of terrorist offences and other criminal offences in respect of which Europol is competent, as listed in Annex I of the Europol regulation. The final adoption is pending.

## **5. Financial crime**

### **5.1. Revision of the Directive on freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.**

On 25 May 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal for a new Directive on Asset Recovery and Confiscation. It provides a new comprehensive set of rules that addresses asset recovery from beginning to end. In particular, the proposal foresees:

- Clear rules on asset tracing and identification, providing the Asset Recovery Offices (AROs) with the powers and information needed to trace and identify assets and facilitate cross-border cooperation.
- New powers to freeze assets and make sure that they do not disappear before the criminal proceeding is finalised.
- A new confiscation framework to ensure criminals are deprived of their illegal assets.
- An effective management of assets to ensure that property does not lose value.
- Strengthening cooperation among different actors - Europol, Eurojust, EPPO and third partners.
- The mandatory use of SIENA for all communications among asset recovery offices.

### **5.2. Revision of Directive 2019/1153 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences**

On 16 May 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal to amend Directive 2019/1153, to allow designated competent authorities responsible for the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences to access and search MS' centralised bank account registers through a single access point. This would enable them to establish almost immediately whether an individual holds bank accounts in other MS and identify to which MS they should make a formal request for additional information. The new Directive will also enable FIUs to invite Europol to support them in the joint analysis, with the agreement of all FIUs and within Europol's mandate.

### **5.3. EU's anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism legislative package**

On 20 July 2021, the European Commission presented a package of legislative proposals to strengthen the EU's anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) rules. The AML package consists of four legislative proposals: New regulation on AML/CFT, 6th Directive on AML/CFT, revision of the 2015 Regulation on Transfers of Funds (crypto-assets and limit large cash payments) expanding traceability requirements to crypto-assets and a new EU AML Authority (AMLA), including a Coordination and Support Mechanism for FIUs. Trilogue commenced in May 2023.

### 5.4. Tax Package

The European Commission adopted on 15 July 2020 a new Tax Package to ensure that EU tax policy will boost the fight against tax abuse, curb unfair tax competition and increase tax transparency. The most relevant initiative for Europol would be a mutual communication channel with Eurofisc, the network of MS liaison officers facilitating multilateral efforts against cross-border VAT fraud.

### 5.5. New customs reform

On 17 May 2023, the European Commission adopted the Customs reform<sup>26</sup>, which seeks to establish a more cost-efficient and effective cooperation framework governing the Customs Union. The Commission proposes to set up two key enablers:

- The EU Customs Authority, to pool expertise and competences that are currently scattered across the EU, to steer, coordinate, and support national customs authorities in the EU. EU Customs Authority is expected to assume its tasks on 1 January 2028.

- The EU Customs Data Hub to gradually integrate and replace the existing Customs IT infrastructure and enhance interoperability with related policy fields. It will collect, process, connect and store all relevant data, and also run EU-level risk analysis, to better protect the EU's external border for goods.

Furthermore, the Council resolution on custom cooperation in the area of law enforcement<sup>27</sup> adopted on 8 June 2023 highlights the vital contribution of customs and other competent authorities of MS to the internal security of the EU through the prevention, detection and investigation of activities involving irregular or illegal cross-border movements of goods and money laundering. Active cooperation between custom authorities and Europol, as well as other relevant EU agencies, was noted with satisfaction.

### 5.6. Update of the anti-corruption legislative framework

The European Commission adopted a new anti-corruption legislative proposal on 3 May 2023. The package consists of 1) A Communication on the fight against corruption in the EU, which provides an overview of existing EU anti-corruption legislation and policies, takes stock of challenges and reflects on how to step-up EU action; and 2) A Directive on fighting corruption. The proposal establishes rules which update and harmonise definitions and penalties for corruption offences to ensure that high standard criminal law tools are in place to better fight and prevent corruption and to improve enforcement. Specific focus is given to cooperation between MS authorities, the Commission, Europol, Eurojust, OLAF and EPPO.

## 6. Information exchange and interoperability

### 6.1. Regulations establishing a framework for interoperability

On 20 May 2019, two Interoperability Regulations were adopted to set up a framework for interoperability between existing and future EU information systems for police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration. The regulations established:

- A common identity repository (CIR) that would create an individual file for each person recorded in the EES, the VIS, the ETIAS, Eurodac or the ECRIS-TCN.
- The European search portal (ESP) to enable the simultaneous querying of EES, VIS, ETIAS, Eurodac, SIS, the ECRIS-TCN as well as of Europol's and Interpol's databases.
- A shared biometric matching service (shared BMS).
- A multiple-identity detector (MID).
- A central repository for reporting and statistics;

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<sup>26</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee: Customs reform: taking the Customs Union to the next level.

<sup>27</sup> Council 10247/23

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- A new framework for MS law enforcement authorities' and for Europol's access to the EES, VIS, ETIAS provided by the CIR and ESP.

### **6.2. Entry-Exit System (EES)**

The Regulation establishing the EES was adopted on 30 November 2017. The EES will replace the stamping of passports and will apply to all non-Schengen nationals admitted for a short stay in the Schengen area. Expected to be operational in 2024, the system's objective is to improve the management of external borders; prevent irregular immigration and facilitate management of migration flows; detect over-stayers and support the identification of undocumented persons. Europol will be able to request access to the EES under specific conditions and process.

### **6.3. European Travel Authorisation System (ETIAS)**

On 12 September 2018, the Regulation establishing ETIAS was adopted, which will allow visa-exempt third country nationals to obtain a travel authorisation prior to their travel to the Schengen Area. The data provided by applicants will be automatically cross-checked, amongst others, against Europol data. The agency is expected to provide a reasoned opinion to the ETIAS National Units on hits against Europol data and its entries in ETIAS Watchlist. Additionally, Europol will be able to request access to data stored in the ETIAS Central System. ETIAS is expected to be fully operational in 2025, and its functioning will start with a grace period during which the travel authorisation will not be mandatory yet.

### **6.4. ECRIS-Third Country National (TCN) system**

Established in 2012, the European Criminal Records Information system (ECRIS) enables national judicial authorities to receive information on previous criminal convictions in other MS. On 17 April 2019, the Regulation establishing a centralised system for the identification of MS holding conviction information on third-country nationals (TCN) was adopted to supplement ECRIS. Europol is granted direct access to ECRIS-TCN data in order to identify the MS holding information on previous convictions of third-country nationals. ECRIS-TCN is expected to enter into operation in 2025.

### **6.5. Recast of the Visa Information System**

The VIS Regulation Recast was adopted on 7 July 2021 and foresees the extension of the scope of the VIS to include data on long-stay visas and residence permits. The data provided by visa applicants will be automatically cross-checked against Europol data and Europol will provide a reasoned opinion on the hits that occur against its data and against its entries in ETIAS Watchlist. The system is planned to enter into operation in 2026.

### **6.6. Recast of Eurodac Regulation**

The 2020 proposal of the Eurodac Regulation aims at transforming Eurodac into a common European database to support EU policies on asylum, resettlement and irregular migration. Among others, it will better assist the control of irregular migration and the detection of unauthorised movements by counting individual applicants in addition to applications. The proposal includes a Europol access point and the agency may access Eurodac for consultation, when Europol consults the Central Identity Repository (of biometric or alphanumeric data) and this indicates that data is stored in Eurodac. Trilogues started in 2023 and depending on the final adoption, the updated system is expected to become operational from 2027 onwards.

### **6.7. Screening regulation**

The proposal for a Screening Regulation introduces searches against the European databases for the purpose of security checks; this includes searches against Europol data, for all persons who do not fulfil the entry conditions to the EU. When a query provides a match against Europol data, an automatic notification is sent to Europol, in order for the agency to inform, where needed, whether the person could pose a security risk. In the LFS of the proposed



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Regulation, there are no additional resources foreseen for Europol for this purpose, even if this promises to be a resource intensive task. Trilogues started in 2023.

### 6.8. Revision of the Advance Passenger Information Directive

On 13 December 2022, Commission published the Advance Passenger Information (API) proposals that provide for the mandatory collection of API data for the purposes of border management and for countering serious crime and terrorism. On the latter, the mandatory collection of API data on intra-EU flights will strengthen the reliability and effectiveness of PNR data as a law enforcement tool. Negotiations are ongoing.

### 6.9. Prüm II Regulation

The proposal for a revision of Prüm intends to reinforce and modernise the existing Prüm framework by improving the technical architecture, introducing new categories of data, enhancing the follow-up communication process, and involving Europol. The proposed involvement of Europol aims to enable (1) MS to search and cross-check the third country biometric data held by Europol in an automated manner and (2) Europol to cross-check data received from third countries with the MS' databases. Europol is also tasked to develop and maintain EPRIS (European Police Record Index System), which forms the technical basis for the exchange of police records. Negotiations are still ongoing.

### 6.10. Directive on information exchange

The Directive on information exchange entered into force on 12 June 2023. The Directive is highly relevant for Europol and will have a significant impact on Europol's resources since it intends to establish SIENA as the mandatory channel for the exchange of criminal information by default and by introducing a provision to put Europol in copy for every information exchange concerning crimes falling under its mandate. MS have 18 months from the entry into force to transpose it into national law (with the exception of the provision on secure communication channel, which has to be transposed four years after entry into force).

### 6.11. Council Recommendation on operational police cooperation

The Council Recommendation on law enforcement cooperation<sup>28</sup> was adopted on 10 June 2022 and aims at creating shared standards for operational cross border cooperation between MS. This includes a common list of crimes for which hot pursuits across borders are possible and secure messenger tools for police officers to communicate with their counterparts when conducting operations in other EU countries. The proposal emphasises use of the different possibilities Europol offers to support operational cooperation between MS, especially with regard to secure communication tools, such as SIENA or the Virtual Command Post (VCP).

## 7. **IMPACT 2022-2025**

The Council adopted in 2021 the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for the period 2022-2025 and these comprise:

1) High-risk criminal networks; 2) Cyber-attacks; 3) Trafficking in human beings; 4) Child sexual exploitation; 5) Migrant smuggling; 6) Drugs trafficking: the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin; the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS); 7) Fraud, economic and financial crimes: Online fraud schemes, excise fraud, MTIC fraud, Intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies, Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery; 8) Organised Property Crime; 9) Environmental Crime; 10) Firearms trafficking. Document Fraud is also included as a cross-cutting threat.

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<sup>28</sup> Council 8720/22

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On 9 March 2023, the Council adopted conclusions on the permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime: **EMPACT 2022 +**<sup>29</sup>, as well as on the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022-2025<sup>30</sup>. These documents reflect 1) the replacement of annual Operational Action Plans (OAP) with biennial OAPs from 2024; 2) the removal of the mid-term and final assessment of the achievement of the common horizontal strategic goals that will be newly part of independent evaluation at the end of the cycle, and 3) in case of emergency situations/threats, adjustment of the operational actions during the implementation of the OAPs.

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<sup>29</sup> Council 7100/23

<sup>30</sup> Council 7101/23

## SECTION II - Multi-annual programming 2024 – 2026

### 1. Multi-annual programme

This section references the **Europol Strategy “Delivering security in partnership”**, endorsed by the Management Board in June 2023, following several consultations with Member States, Europol’s Management Board and its Working Groups, the HENUs and Europol’s management. The renewed Strategy paves the way to further improve Europol’s performance, while benefitting from new opportunities introduced by the amended Europol Regulation, in order to better address the operational needs of the Member States and the security threats they are facing. To do so, it builds further on the five strategic priorities of the previous Europol Strategy 2020+, which remain relevant, and adds an additional priority aimed at addressing the increased complexity of law enforcement cooperation, and strengthening the role of Europol in bringing relevant partners together for international cooperation.

As a result, the following strategic objectives will continue guiding the work of the Agency in the years 2024-2026 to:



Be the EU criminal information hub, including for data acquisition



Deliver agile, real-time operational support



Be a platform for European policing solutions



Bring the relevant partners together for cross-border cooperation and joint action



Be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research



Be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation

The areas of specific focus for the years 2024-2026 are presented below:

#### **Strategic Objective 1: Be the EU criminal information hub, including for data acquisition**

Europol’s function as the EU criminal information hub will be further expanded to enable compliant access to data stored outside Europol’s own data repositories, within legal and practical possibilities. This includes operational use of EU databases (such as SIS, VIS, EES, ETIAS, and Eurodac) and the provision of support for the exchange of information involving national repositories (e.g. Prüm, ADEP-EPRIS).

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Data gathering at Europol should be aimed at minimising criminal intelligence gaps and focus on data from live, complex investigations. The latter goes hand-in-hand with the prioritisation of Europol's support to coordinated action against High-Value Targets (HVTs) and Operational Task Forces (OTFs), including those with a regional focus.

Europol will prioritise the acquisition of data that fulfils this purpose, such as real-time data from large and complex investigations, lawfully-intercepted and decrypted communications of criminal networks, and seized darknet servers used for criminal purposes. The Agency will also focus on data concerning crime hubs, hotspots and key crime enablers, as well as priority areas, such as financial crime, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, cybercrime, the illicit weapons trade and large-scale fraud schemes.

Member States will have access to more self-service tools, including for data and operational contributions.

### Highlights:

- Conducting targeted data collection with specific interest for Europol's focus areas;
- Facilitating instant communication, swift transfers from national data repositories, and integration with (joint) case management capabilities;
- Enhancing the intake of information through short-term on-the-spot deployments of frontline support officers;
- Enabling smooth data intake from private parties in relevant sectors (e.g. online service providers, the banking sector, crypto-currency exchangers), in consultation with Member States;
- Furthering Europol's role in EU information exchange by implementing related policies and enabling new initiatives, including the creation of a dedicated unit to coordinate Europol's work concerning interoperability and travel intelligence;
- Defining criteria for operational deployments to increase relevance and effectiveness, including for data collection.

## **Strategic Objective 2: Deliver agile, real-time operational support**

Europol's operational support to Member States' investigations consists of several elements, chief among which are operational analysis, specialised capabilities, and the facilitation of operational coordination. Increasing the operational relevance of Europol calls for continued efforts and investments in such areas.

Europol's capabilities should, wherever possible, be targeted towards the kind of investigations and operations, on which Europol can have most impact and added value. These investigations and operations are primarily large and complex cross-border investigations requiring real-time support.

### Highlights:

- Furthering the OTF and HVT concepts for operational support;
- Supporting the investigation of all aspects of the criminal business model, including criminal finance, logistics, communication, corruption and intimidation;
- Creating an analysis training and coaching programme to increase the number of qualified operational and strategic analysis at Europol and in Member States, while promoting harmonisation of methodology;
- Expanding the flexible deployment of short-term SNEs/guest experts;
- Optimising internal coordination of OSINT monitoring across Europol's centres;
- Stepping up support for migrant smuggling cases with essential partners for data collection outside the EU, with additional support coming through regional OTFs;

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- Nurturing (new) partnerships for combating corruption and environmental crime through dedicated alliances, including relevant private parties;
- Specialised and coordinated support in financial investigations, crypto-currency tracing and online crimes through knowledge management among experts.

### Strategic Objective 3: Be a platform for European policing solutions

Europol's role of offering a platform for competent authorities to develop and use policing tools and expertise has benefitted from the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) and Operations Network Experts Platform (ONEP). These will be further developed in line with user needs and technical developments.

In addition, Europol will seek, where relevant and possible, to invest in platforms that can contribute to operational coordination between partners. These may also serve joint capacity building and the sharing of expertise and tools.

#### *Highlights:*

- Enabling the coordination of the collective response to the criminal threats through EMPACT and, where relevant, by suitable means for counter-terrorism;
- Creating a coordination and de-confliction solution for HVTs;
- Facilitating rapid crisis response mechanisms;
- Providing guidance for Member States' users to find the right products and services, including technical tools and extended support services to manage their expected growth;
- Creating a single digital portal for accessing Europol's processing systems, specialised tools, services, data, contacts and expertise;
- Rolling out in-built translation tools to facilitate communication for users in Member States' competent authorities and other partners.

### Strategic Objective 4: Bring the relevant partners together for cross-border cooperation and joint action

Operational support to Member States often involves the facilitation of contacts with law enforcement from non-EU countries, with Interpol and other international organisations, and increasingly with private parties. In the interest of coordination at EU level, the engagement with EU Agencies in the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) is also indispensable.

Since its establishment, Europol has developed into a strong enabler that brings the relevant partners together, with the significant and valuable community of Liaison Officers at its heart. The Agency intends to foster this evolution in the coming years to maximise operational results, first and foremost for the Member States, but also for our other partners. Europol will especially invest in its partnerships with the Schengen Associated Countries, Interpol, and key JHA agencies such as Frontex.

#### *Highlights:*

- Intensifying the cooperation with the Schengen Associated Countries, as essential partners of the EU Internal Security Architecture;
- Seeking practical solutions for a more targeted operational cooperation with strategic third parties within the applicable legal frameworks;
- Assessing roles and competences that will enable cooperation between Europol and Interpol, with a view to address Member States' needs for products and services in relation to Third States;
- Coordinating with other EU JHA Agencies, to offer an aligned set of products and services to Member States;

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- Stepping up cooperation with other (non-EU) Agencies and international organisations, including operational cooperation where possible;
- Developing a dedicated strategy for cooperation with private parties, including NGOs and academia, to optimise their engagement, both for operational interests and to nurture potential innovation.

### Strategic Objective 5: Be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research

The Innovation Lab and its structured connection to Member States serves as a solid foundation for well-coordinated, collective innovation in the coming years. The operational relevance of innovation is a leading principle in the Lab's work. As a consequence, the connection to the operational needs of the Member States, JHA partners, as well as within Europol, has to be fostered and promoted.

The extended legal possibilities for the processing of personal data for research and innovation purposes are to be explored and acted upon in an adapted development environment.

#### Highlights:

- Identifying the innovative tools and processing capabilities Member States need most, and enabling their development together with specialised law enforcement services, as well as research and industry partners;
- Pursuing the rapid development of tools supporting data collection and processing, including through data science and artificial intelligence;
- Expanding the Europol Tool Repository with new cutting-edge technology;
- Optimising the possibilities for funding and priority attribution for grant schemes;
- Engaging proactively with private sector, academia and research institutes, including through Industry & Research Days;
- Stimulating a culture of innovation across Europol.

### Strategic Objective 6: Be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation

The operational mission of Europol must stand out in all aspects of its work. This applies also to the internal support functions that should fulfil their tasks with operational delivery in mind. The consideration for the specific needs of the law enforcement context in which Europol operates will be made a priority throughout the Agency, optimising our performance and output.

#### Highlights:

- Investing to attract, train and retain specialists in relevant domains of expertise;
- Increasing the encouragement of personal development, talent management and empowerment;
- Work with the Management Board and Member States to address legal and administrative impediments to operational delivery;
- Creating an Operational Readiness Function, including relevant internal support services, for rapid operational response to crises and emergency situations;
- Identifying possibilities for a more flexible incorporation of tools and services within the ICT environment;
- Acting on our environmental responsibility to minimise carbon emissions;

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- Creating a dedicated change management capability across the organisation, in which in particular the applicable requirements are structured and applied for every technical solution, process or work practice;
- Fostering continued engagement with former Europol staff by investing in the Europol community, even after their employment with the Agency has ended.

Table: Key Performance Indicators for measuring multi-annual performance of the agency

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Indicative targets	
	2024	2025	2026
Number of Accepted Contributions by Europol <sup>31</sup>	101,000	101,000	102,000
Number of Operations Supported by Europol	2,350	2,400	2,400
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by Europol	31	31	31
Number of Operational Analysis Reports produced by Europol	260	270	270
Number of Action Days organised/supported by Europol	310	325	325
Satisfaction with Operational Support delivered by Europol	8.5	8.5	8.5
Number of Cross Match Reports and SIENA hit notifications produced by Europol	15,000	15,000	16,000
Number of searches through EIS and QUEST	15,500,000	16,000,000	17,000,000
Number of SIENA messages exchanged	1,800,000	1,900,000	1,900,000
Number of Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol	30	32	35
Satisfaction with Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol	8.5	8.5	8.5
Satisfaction with Operational Training delivered by Europol	8.5	8.5	8.5
Implementation of Audit Recommendations <sup>32</sup>	85%	85%	85%
Vacancy Rate	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
% Female staff	35%	36%	36%
Budget Commitment Rate	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Emissions (CO <sub>2</sub> ) <sup>33</sup>	2,993	2,804	2,615

<sup>31</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

<sup>32</sup> % of pending critical/very important audit recommendations implemented within the timeline committed to by Europol and agreed with the auditing body.

<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that measurement of this indicator is done on a yearly basis with results for year N being available well into year N+1; despite this time lag, Europol considers it important to monitor this KPI.

## **2. Human and financial resource outlook for the years 2024-2026**

### **2.1. Overview of the past and current situation**

Europol’s role in the security landscape of the EU has been recognised and, as a result, the agency was entrusted with several important functions, such as the European Cybercrime Centre, the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, the European Internet Referral Unit, within the European Counter-Terrorism Centre, and most recently, the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre and the Innovation Lab. Although resources were provided to perform new and additional tasks, Europol has always had to rely on the shifting of posts from support functions to the Operations Directorate or internal re-allocation of operational staff. In June 2022, the revised Europol Regulation entered into force; the Europol Regulation Recast reinforced Europol’s financial and human resources, beyond the initial MFF 2021-2027. In addition, from 2024, some additional posts will be transferred from Frontex to Europol, based on an agreement between the two agencies, for implementing, in particular, tasks related to ETIAS. Finally, some additional resources are foreseen in the Prüm II regulation proposal as of 2024 (pending adoption).

### **2.2. Outlook for the years 2024 - 2026**

A significant portion of the resources foreseen in the Europol Regulation Recast became available in 2022. For the years 2024-2026, more moderate increases are envisaged. Resource pressures are expected to continue when it comes to the implementation of the Interoperability-related regulations, in particular ETIAS and VIS. A number of policy proposals under discussion may have an impact on the resource needs of the Agency, which cannot be quantified at the time of writing.

### **2.3. Resource programming for the years 2024 - 2026**

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

##### **Temporary agents**

Starting from the 2023 Establishment Plan of 716 posts, the net number of posts in 2024 is envisaged to increase by 38 Temporary Agent (TA) posts, including 26 posts stemming from the amended Europol Regulation, 7 posts from the Prüm II regulation and 5 posts (as a result of the foreseen transfer from Frontex) related to the implementation of the Interoperability agenda.

The following allocation of grades is envisaged for the new posts, based on the approach of having most resources dedicated to non-managerial tasks.

	2024	2025	2026
<b>AD9</b>	1		
<b>AD7</b>	9	5	1
<b>AD6</b>	28	14	6
<b>AST2</b>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>



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**Contract Agents**

As a result of the agreement with Frontex, the number of CAs in 2024 is envisaged to rise by 20 posts related to the implementation of the Interoperability-related regulations, to a total number of 255 and remain stable in the following years.

**Seconded National Experts**

The number of Seconded National Experts (SNEs) in 2024-2026 is foreseen to remain at the same level as in 2022, thus maintaining the number at 121, including the 50 SNE FTE envisaged for short-term deployments during the year (GE/OTF, costed, short term SNEs). For detailed data and numbers per staff category, see Annex IV.

**Staff financed with Grant Agreements / Contribution Agreements / Service Legal Agreements (SLAs)**

For 2024 Europol will continue having a number of Contract Agents (CAs) and SNEs directly funded via grant, contribution or service legal agreements. For detailed information and numbers per agreement and staff category, see Annex XI.

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

**Revenue:**

The main financial source of Europol is the regular Community subsidy. The envisaged revenue for 2024 is € 218.2M.

Item	Heading	Revenue 2022	Revenue 2023	Budget 2024	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
9000	Regular subsidy from the Community	192,380,773	207,176,212	218,227,705	223,614,697	235,648,699
9010	Other subsidies and grants	1,030,000	1,030,000	P.M	P.M	P.M
9101	Denmark contribution	4,348,949	4,719,597	P.M	P.M	P.M
9200	Other revenue			P.M	P.M	P.M
	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>197,759,722</b>	<b>212,925,809</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>223,614,697</b>	<b>235,648,699</b>

**Expenditure:**

The budget structure for Europol consists of administrative and operational appropriations. The appropriations are split into commitment and payment appropriations:

- Commitment appropriations (CA) – cover the total cost of the legal obligations entered into for the current financial year.
- Payment appropriations (PA) – cover expenditure arising from commitments entered into in the current and/or earlier financial years

Apart from one budget chapter (Chapter 39 – Grants), all other appropriations are non-differentiated (NDA), meaning that the commitment and the payment appropriations are of the same amount. Non-differentiated appropriations are used to finance operations of an annual nature (principle of annuality). Chapter 39 – Grants includes multiannual activities that are usually committed in the year they are decided and paid over several years, therefore it is defined as differentiated appropriations (DA) with different commitment and payments appropriations.

## Commitment Appropriations (CA)

Title	Heading	Outturn 2022	Budget 2023 <sup>34</sup>	Budget 2024 (CA)	Diff 2024/2023	% of the budget
1	Staff	100,108,826	112,382,112	117,817,323	5,435,211	54.0%
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	11,643,924	15,160,400	15,105,338	(55,062)	6.9%
3	Operational Activities	74,116,614	79,633,700	85,305,044	5,671,344	39.1%
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>185,869,365</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>11,051,493</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Payment Appropriations (PA)

Title	Heading	Outturn 2022	Budget 2023	Budget 2024 (PA)
1	Staff	100,108,826	112,382,112	117,817,323
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	11,643,924	15,160,400	15,105,338
3	Operational Activities	74,116,614	77,556,900	82,796,844
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>185,869,365</b>	<b>205,099,412</b>	<b>215,719,505</b>

### **Title 1 – Staff expenditure:**

Staff related expenditure in 2024 amounts to € 117.8M and represents 54% of the total Budget 2024. It reflects an increase of € 5.4M or 4.8% compared to the 2023 budget.

The budget for Staff in active employment (Chapter 11) comes to € 106.4M, which is € 3.5M or 3.4% above 2023 budget, and it is related to the additional posts, salary adjustments and to other “staff and salary related allowances” (e.g. recruitment expenditure, relocation allowances, shift work and other staff allowances) for TAs and CAs.

The Budget 2024 foresees an expenditure related to overall 754 TAs and 255 CAs. Moreover, the 2024 estimate considers the full year financial effect of new staff in 2023 (+30 TAs), a high indexation and weighting coefficient for The Netherlands related to 2023 adjustments and the assumptions for salary adjustments in line with the guidelines from the Budget Circular 2024<sup>35</sup>.

The budget for Socio-medical infrastructure, such as catering, medical service and social & sport activities (Chapter 13) and training for personal development (Chapter 14) is € 1.4M and it is kept at the same level as the budget 2023. The budget for other staff related expenditure (Chapter 15) is envisaged to reach € 9.9M, which is an increase of € 1.8M or 23% compared to budget 2023. The increase is foreseen for additional external security officers and consultancy services, required for the new developments of the Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR).

Title 1 remains non-differentiated and, as such, there is no change between commitment and payment appropriations.

<sup>34</sup> The 2023 budget reflects the budget as per September 2023 after all transfers executed during the year.

<sup>35</sup> Salary adjustments consider a 2% salary increase plus the weighting coefficient for The Netherlands at the same level as 2023 (111.8).

**Title 2 – Other Administrative Expenditure:**

The budget for other administrative activities comes to a total of € 15.M and represents 6.9% of the total Budget 2024. It is in line with the 2023 budget.

The total Budget for 2024 for the rental of buildings and associated costs (Chapter 20) came to € 11.1M, which is an increase of € 1.2M or 12.4% compared to the 2023 budget. Beside the regular running costs<sup>36</sup> for the Headquarters (HQ) and the first Temporary Satellite Building (TSB1), the additional budget is foreseen for additional works and services as part of the SHR program, new investments in the HQ related to the Long Term Replacement Plan (LTRP), as well as higher running costs of electricity and gas due to the latest price developments on the market.

The Budget 2024 for administrative ICT expenses (Chapter 21) amounts to € 1.3M and it is envisaged mainly for ICT costs such as administrative purchase and maintenance of hardware and software, licenses management and administrative ICT consultancies.

The Budget 2024 for other governance, administrative and telecommunication expenditure (Chapters 22 – 24) comes to € 1.7M, which is a decrease of € 0.7M or 29.9% versus the budget 2023. This budget is foreseen for the continuation of regular business activities, such as open source and database subscriptions, legal services, administrative expertise services, uniforms, furniture, car fleet, office supplies, postal and courier services. A reason for the decrease is the merging of telecommunication costs in this area with the ones for operational activities (Chapter 32).

The Budget 2024 for the activities of the Management Board (MB) and its Working Groups (WGs)<sup>37</sup>, included under Chapter 25, reaches a total of € 1M, which is € 54K or 5.6% higher than the 2023 budget. This budget is foreseen to cover four physical and two virtual (topical) MB meetings, as well as four physical WGs meetings.

Title 2 remains non-differentiated and, as such, there is no change between commitment and payment appropriations.

**Title 3 – Operational activities:**

The Budget 2024 for Operational activities comes to € 85.3M and represents 39.1% of the total Budget 2024. The increase for operational activities compared to the budget 2023 amounts to € 5.7M or 7.1%, mainly due to the new budget estimated for the implementation of differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the EMPACT grants related budget.

The differentiated appropriations (DAs) were introduced in 2022 with the set-up of a new budget structure; however, it is only as of 2023 that Europol establishes multi-annual grant scheme planning, with a differentiation between commitments and payments appropriations. This new way of implementing the budget will enable to support grant beneficiaries (mainly law enforcement entities) with multi-annual funding and planning<sup>38</sup>, allowing additional time to implement the respective grants budgets.

The Budget 2024 for Operations (Chapter 30) comes to € 15M, which is € 1.5M or 9% lower than the budget 2023. This budget is foreseen for operational support and strategic meetings, conferences, staff missions and deployments of guest officers, providing training for 3<sup>rd</sup> parties and investing in external operational expertise. Moreover, also included in this area, are the costs for operational WEB campaigns, audio-visuals services, operational equipment and

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<sup>36</sup> Preventive and corrective maintenance, electricity, water, cleaning, rents, insurance and other building-related investments.

<sup>37</sup> Corporate Matters Working Group (CMWG) and Information Management Working Group (IMWG).

<sup>38</sup> Further details are provided in the annex on grants (Annex XI).

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operational training. The decrease compared to the 2023 budget is mainly related to the deployment area, where the costs significantly increased in the last years, 2023 included.

The Budget 2024 for operational ICT services and programmes (Chapters 31 and 32 together) comes to a total of € 47.6M, which is an increase of € 5.2M or 12.3% compared to the budget 2023, mainly related to Prüm II, the replacement needed for End of Life (EoL) ICT equipment (€ 2.6M), the connectivity works of the TSB2 (€ 2.9M) as well as merging telecommunication costs from Title 2.

The Budget 2024 for Seconded National Experts (Chapter 33) comes to a budget of € 7.7M and it is € 0.4M or 6% above the budget 2023. This budget is foreseen to cover allowances for 71 Seconded National Experts (€ 4.4M) and 50 Guest Experts for the dedicated support to MS investigations for the Operational Task Forces (OTF) (€ 3.3M).

The Budget 2024 for high-level external stakeholder meetings, Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs), and events such as the Europol Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC) (Chapters 34 and 35), come to a budget of € 0.4M which is in line with the budget 2023.

The Budget 2024 for the Decryption platform (Chapter 38) is € 1M<sup>39</sup> and is envisaged to cover operational running costs of the platform, mainly electricity as well as other maintenance and security services.

A new Grants Chapter (Chapter 39) was added in 2023 to centralise grants budget activities. The Budget 2024 included in this area, foresees commitment appropriations for a total of € 13.5M necessary to cover the total legal obligations related to operations to be carried out over more than one financial year. This budget includes € 8M for EMPACT grants (under DAs as of 2023), € 2M for OTF grants, € 0.3M for grants support against EURO counterfeiting, € 3M for ATLAS grants and € 0.18M for Innovation grants.

The related payment appropriations amount to € 11M, which represent the actual payments planned to be made to beneficiaries during the 2024 financial year and refers to € 5.5M for EMPACT, € 0.18M for support against EURO counterfeiting grants, € 2M for OTF, € 3.1M for ATLAS and € 0.14M for Innovation grants.

Item	Heading	Budget 2024 (CA)	Budget 2024 (PA)
B3-920	EMPACT grants	8,000,000	5,500,000
B3-930	SA Euro CF Grants	300,000	180,000
B3-940	OTF Grants	2,000,000	2,000,000
B3-950	ATLAS Grants	3,000,000	3,146,800
B3-960	Innovation Grants	175,000	140,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,475,000</b>	<b>10,966,800</b>

<sup>39</sup> Provisional – subject to Steering Committee (JRC and Europol) discussions.

## **2.4 Efficiency gains**

Initiatives and practices that are used to achieve efficiency gains include:

- A dedicated ICT Business stream, encompassing a set of administrative ICT solutions such as e-procurement, e-signature, etc.
- Robust monitoring of budget implementation and regular forecast exercises to ensure the most efficient use of financial resources, together with the implementation of new automated reporting tools for a faster data analysis as well as enhanced cost allocation capabilities.
- Close monitoring of the vacancy rate in an effort to maximise the use of resources made available to the agency.
- Shared procurement procedures with other agencies and introduction of the ABAC legal commitments module (LCK) bringing added control on Europol spending and contractual ceilings.
- Use of Video conferencing capabilities, limiting increases to the mission and meeting budgets.
- Green energy and long-term replacement plan reducing cost for maintenance and risk of equipment failure.
- Implementation of the HR strategy, incl. digitalisation of services, work-life balance through teleworking/smart working and ensuring the right skills for Europol's workforce, utilising e-recruitment and appropriate training and development programmes

## **2.5 Negative priorities/decrease of existing tasks**

No substantial negative priorities or decrease of existing tasks is foreseen.

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## SECTION III - Work Programme 2024

### Activities

#### A.1. Development of information technology and information management capabilities

##### Overview



As the European criminal information hub, and in order to provide operational support to MS investigations, Europol makes a continuous effort to evolve its information management and information technology capabilities following a business-driven approach in line with the renewed Europol Strategy.

Europol's Information Management (IM) Strategy developed in 2020 will guide the streamlining and development of information management at Europol in the coming years.

A significant part of Europol's work in this domain was realised through the New Environment for Operations (NEO) programme, which is now incorporated in the governance model of the ICT work plan (Business Streams model). In 2024, Business Streams will continue to enhance existing capabilities and develop new ones, including those related to the implementation of the amended Europol Regulation.

The work on EU Interoperability will also continue as part of the new ICT governance model, in line with the European Commission planning and in close cooperation with eu-LISA. The Europol Roadmap on EU Interoperability (endorsed by the MB) and subsequent implementation plan will be regularly reviewed and, as required, adjusted following new developments, such as adoption of new legal instruments, adoption of new implementing acts or re-planning of activities by the European Commission and/or eu-LISA. Also, support will be provided to the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries for their implementation of SIENA web services in accordance with the Directive on Information Exchange.

In line with the renewed Europol Strategy, Europol seeks to be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research. The Innovation Lab will facilitate innovation in the wider law enforcement community and will support Member States in addressing the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies. Via the European Clearing Board (EuCB), the Europol TechWatch Forum, and the Europol Pool of Experts, the Innovation Lab will coordinate the regular collection of MS and Europol's needs for tools based on new technologies and will identify and suggest potential solutions from existing research projects and innovation networks. As part of the implementation of the amended Europol Regulation, the Lab will provide the environment for Europol and MS to develop, train and validate models and tools using operational data. Also stemming from the amended Europol Regulation, Europol will assist the European Commission in identifying key research themes and implementing the Union framework programmes for research and innovation that are relevant to Europol's objectives. The Innovation Lab will continue to act as the secretariat for the EU Innovation

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Hub for Internal Security and lead the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies to implement the tasks and functions adopted by COSI in 2020.

Europol Research and Innovation projects will develop AI tools, trained with data provided by MS for that purpose, to facilitate investigations.

A dedicated Business Stream will continue working to renovate the way the agency operates in the administration domain. The target is to rationalise the diverse application landscape by streamlining the corporate processes and exploring the possibilities for their further automation, and by leveraging and integrating in a coherent manner EU Commission-developed, in-house and cloud solutions. The pace of the Stream is dictated by the availability of resources, in light of major developments in the operational domain, which remain the agency's highest priority.

The implementation of all initiatives will duly incorporate data protection safeguards as prescribed in the Europol Regulation. Any work on interoperability and connectivity with information management systems at EU level will build on the provisions for protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons in the legal instruments of the respective systems and other relevant EU law (e.g. on data protection, privacy, non-discrimination, etc.).

## 2024 Objectives

<b>Information Management Strategy</b>
Objectives and actions
<b>A.1.1 Continue with the implementation of the Information Management Strategy<sup>40</sup>.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Coordinate and manage information management products and services in accordance with the business demand and organisational strategy.</li><li>○ Further develop and enforce information management standards and a single information management governance for Europol.</li><li>○ Continue aligning the Catalogue of Products &amp; Services and underlying information such as process landscape, data flows, and performance reporting.</li><li>○ Further connect Law Enforcement experts communities through specialised tools and platforms, in particular by advocating the EPE as the central inventory of skills available across the MS Law Enforcement communities and gateway to (national) Law Enforcement specialist databases.</li><li>○ Continue efforts to promote best practices in relation to Member States' information management capabilities and strategies.</li><li>○ Develop and maintain one comprehensive multiannual business capabilities roadmap and a business roadmap for every business capability, while ensuring evolution in alignment with Europol's strategy and needs.</li><li>○ Continue monitoring the roles and interactions of stakeholder bodies &amp; streamlining reporting and consultations, in agreement with Member States.</li><li>○ Continue integrating relevant changes stemming from the amended Europol Regulation and the renewed Strategy in the Information Management Strategy of Europol and the ICT planning.</li><li>○ Further develop benefits management within IM/ICT planning and prioritisation, in order to support strategic alignment of initiatives.</li></ul>

<sup>40</sup> Strategic objectives 1 and 2 of the Information Management Strategy are implemented through the initiatives under the Work Programme's annual objectives A.1.2, A.1.3 and A.1.4.

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- Continue strengthening the overall management coordination for information management at Europol and improving the coordination of operational demand for information management capabilities.

Expected results: Core Business Systems and the Member States receive a reliable and secure service with minimal interruptions.

Business needs are met in an appropriate and coordinated manner, in line with the amended Europol Regulation and the renewed Strategy.

Operational users at Europol and in the Member States benefit from improved information management capabilities, for use in criminal investigations and related information exchange and analysis.

Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

### **Develop Europol's ICT capabilities – Analysis Capability and Specialised Capabilities**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.1.2 Further develop ICT capabilities for Europol's operations.**

##### **Analysis Capability**

Analysis is one of the core services that Europol provides to the Member States. In 2024, Europol will:

- Develop further the Visualisation Analysis Toolbox based on analysis and developments from 2023, including by improving the backend application components and supporting OSINT data.
- Ensure that developments are in line with security and accreditation rules, DPF, EDPS feedback and relevant provisions of the amended Europol Regulation.

##### **Data Management Capability**

- Initiate the Analysis Capabilities Discovery Program with the aim to support Europol's Operational and Analysis Centre with defining and implementing a Data Quality framework.
- Enhance the Data Analysis Portal (DAP) by releasing key features such as the Dataset Import, Data Review, Data Retention and Cross-Matching. The DAP project will also be developing capabilities for Case Management, evolution of the User Interface and User Experience and work towards a feature based authentication to ensure a feature level based granularity access control.
- Develop further Europol's operational data environment, by evolving the existing Business Intelligence solution and the File Metadata Management System (FMMS). This will also offer cross-stream support for the ETIAS Watch List in the Entity Management System (EMS) and the DAP.
- Focus on further developing the Case Management and introduce Joint Analysis capabilities; further develop the Search module, in line with business needs, including by releasing the solution for querying the OLAF Customs information system for cash seizures.
- Continue supporting other key technology developments, such as data refinery in the New Forensic Environment or alphanumeric visualisations for EU Interoperability.

##### **SMART Capabilities**



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- Enhance existing and develop new smart capabilities in line with business needs, including capabilities related to biometrics, SIENA message exchange and the information flows of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

### Specialised Capabilities

- Focus on maintaining the EU platform for referrals and removal orders (PERCI) by stabilising and further improving its functionalities.
- Perform the technical discovery work for assessing the possible extension of the use of PERCI for the implementation of relevant provisions of the DSA Regulation.
- Finalise the solution design and deliver a new Cryptoportal capability.
- Explore and implement AI modules for Check the Web (expected to be delivered in 2023 with basic functionality).
- Initiate the integration of the Internet Facing Operational Environment (IFOE) capabilities, starting with the data protection impact assessment and design work required to deliver the IFOE-Quick Response Area, identified as the area with the highest business value. A phased approach will then be followed for the integration of the other components.
- Establish the supporting infrastructure for the development of the EU Firearms Intelligence Hub capability at Europol, as a basis for further developments at a later stage. The project will entail the installation of a Ballistic Identification System at Europol and the creation of a central European Ballistics dataset. It will also aim to connect individual MS datasets to the central dataset for periodic updates.
- Finalise the market analysis, select a suitable product in line with the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and business requirements, and implement an EMPACT collaboration platform.
- Develop additional functionalities in line with the needs of the investigations supported at that time.

### New Forensics Environment (NFE) and capabilities

- Further enhance the NFE capabilities, aiming at a full accreditation to operate and delivering better forensic extraction and reconstruction capabilities, including shortened delivery times and completed cross-domain interactions, and services integration.
- Finalise the development of the Malware Information Sharing platform focusing on the DPIA process, solution design and subsequent implementation.

### Operations support capabilities

- Provide ad-hoc capabilities to support law enforcement operational needs, incl. design, engineering and deploying of ad-hoc processing environments and software solutions (proof of concept level applications, data pre-processing, etc.).
- Enable and promote cloud experimentation to enhance operational capabilities by resource provisioning.
- Explore further opportunities for utilising a highly trusted and secure EU cloud provider to enhance operational capabilities.

Expected results: An improved set of capabilities to maximise the value of data.  
Enhancement of analysis products.  
Improved investigation collaboration and support to Member States.

**Develop Europol’s ICT capabilities MS-facing core operational ICT capabilities**

Objectives and actions

**A.1.3 Implement improvements to core MS-facing operational capabilities.**

**Secure communication, information exchange and knowledge sharing – SIENA, LFE, EPE, ONEP, VCP and VCOP**

- Support the roll-out of SIENA to more law enforcement communities and competent authorities such as Police Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs).
- Connect more authorities to SIENA, including at SIENA BPL, Restricted and Confidential levels via system-to-system integration (web services) or web application.
- Support MS in implementing relevant obligations stemming from the Directive on Information Exchange, in particular by supporting the integration of the MS and SAC Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) with the SIENA web services and the extension of SIENA access to all competent authorities.
- Maintain SIENA’s high level of performance.
- Continue improving the SIENA user experience, for example by user interface changes, further extensions of smart services, or better use of structured information.
- Maintain alignment of the SIENA training and production environments.
- Initiate the development effort to establish Large File Exchange (LFE) interoperability with SIENA and continue establishing the interoperability of SIENA with other Europol capabilities.
- Continue automating immediate follow-up processes through SIENA for successful searches and hits resulting from cross-checks against Europol data and between Member States.
- Ensure that the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) and its counterpart in the Operations Network (ONEP) develop in line with business needs as formulated by the platform managers, for example by adding new capabilities or enhancing existing ones.
- Ensure the EPE and ONEP solutions remain secure and relevant.
- Utilise EPE and ONEP as a gateway to (national) Law Enforcement specialist databases.
- Dependent on the outcome of the VCP-Connect pilot project, further mature the VCP-Connect solution in line with business demand. Ensure VCP remains secure and relevant.
- Keep the VCOP ecosystem up-to-date with latest technological developments.
- Continue supporting improvement of the Universal Message Format (UMF) standard through participation in UMF related initiatives. Increase the use of structured data by Europol and further facilitate the provision of structured data by MS by using UMF in line with the Commission implementing decision 2023/220.

**Search, cross checking & (self-)data management – EIS, QUEST**

- Advance with redesigning the EIS from a technical perspective as a future component of the Europol Data Sharing Capability in accordance with the new ICT environment.
- Continue improving data quality in the EIS including by implementing automated data compliance checks. Based on the assessment carried out in 2023 on the biometric data stored in the EIS, implement additional measures to ensure biometric data quality and quantity and step up awareness efforts in the MS and TP to this end.
- Initiate the integration of biometric searching capability with the (new) EIS, dependent on the outcome of the feasibility analysis done in 2023.

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- Revise and expand automated data loading services. Further proceed with the development of a new generation dataloader and improve Lightweight Data Loader solution according to MS/TP needs. Enable BPL data loading capability.
- Explore the possibilities for automated provisioning of data into the EIS by MS/TP through other channels such as SIENA.
- Continue improving the search mechanism of QUEST according to MS and Europol business needs.
- Continue supporting rollout of QUEST (BPL and EU-RESTRICTED) in all Member States.
- Maintain alignment of the EIS training and production environments.
- Dependent on the outcome of the QUEST+ pilot project, finalise the implementation of the full scope of QUEST+ and further roll-out Member States access to Europol's Analysis Projects on a hit/no hit basis.
- Support preparatory work for the possible implementation of hit/no-hit access to Europol data for EPPO, Eurojust<sup>41</sup> and OLAF, within the legal provisions of their mandates and the Europol Regulation (dependent on the outcome of the inter-Agency work carried out exploring the best way forward and technical maturity of the connecting EUIBAs).

### Information management enablers - IAM and secure lines

- Harmonise further the IAM landscape of Europol by integrating more systems with IAM and taking further steps towards establishing single enterprise identity. Proceed with the implementation of an enhanced IAM capability in the Internet Access Zone.
- Continue improving IAM functional capabilities, providing more flexibility in IAM workflows and enhance further implementation of attribute based access control.
- Further implement secure lines to allow new partners to gain access to the Europol secure network and the applications and services that Europol provides through these lines (e.g. SIENA and IAM).
- Enable MS' and TPs' connectivity to all Europol web applications available to MS/TP not only over EU-R connections but also over BPL and EU-C infrastructure based on business needs while respecting the rules of security.

Expected results: An improved secure communication service to Member States and other partners.  
A re-designed and robust data sharing capability fit for future use with new search services.  
Increased efficiency of compliance checks on data.  
A streamlined way for users to access Europol's systems.  
Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

## **Develop Europol's ICT capabilities - Europol Roadmap on EU Interoperability and biometric capabilities**

Objectives and actions

### **A.1.4 Advance interoperability and connectivity with information management systems at EU level to enhance information exchange.**

<sup>41</sup> Europol and Eurojust have agreed to a streamlined manual process to this end while waiting for the technical integration to be implemented (subject to the further development of Eurojust technical capabilities and the developments in the EU Interoperability programme). A pilot project is currently ongoing and is expected to be evaluated in 2024.

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In close cooperation with the European Commission and eu-LISA and in line with the timeline set by the Justice and Home Affairs Council, in 2024 Europol will:

- Contribute to the work on interoperability and connectivity of IM systems at EU level by participating in relevant committees, advisory groups, product management fora and project boards, e.g. IXIM, SIS, VIS, EURODAC, EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN, UMF and EPRIS. Provide technical advice on initiatives related to the implementation of the EU Interoperability Agenda.
- Finalise the work on implementing and launching into operation Europol access to EES data for law enforcement purposes.
- Continue the work enabling the systematic check of all travel authorisation applications from ETIAS against Europol Regulation Article 18.2(a) data, and ensure readiness for the entry into operation of ETIAS: participate in formal testing, conduct business testing and end-user training, develop the Europol internal solutions supporting the ETIAS processes, including automated searches against Europol data, automated notifications in relation to hits against certain data sets, manual processing of hits and providing Europol opinion, and Europol access to ETIAS data for law enforcement purpose. Participate in ETIAS Screening Board under the lead of Frontex.
- Continue the work enabling the systematic check of all visa applications against Europol Regulation Article 18.2(a) data, including biometric data and ensure readiness for the entry into operation of VIS Recast: develop the Europol internal solutions supporting the VIS processes, including automated searches against Europol data, automated notifications in relation to hits against certain data sets, manual processing of hits and providing Europol opinion, and upgrade Europol access to VIS data for law enforcement purpose. Participate in VIS Screening Board under the lead of Frontex.
- Further enhance Europol's capabilities related to biometrics, in particular fingerprints, facial recognition and DNA to meet the business needs and technical requirements in support of the EU Interoperability framework and Europol's core tasks.
- Continue working on implementing Europol access to ECRIS-TCN.
- Continue working on implementing Europol access to Common Identity Repository for the purpose of 2-step law enforcement access.
- Continue working on implementing QUEST for allowing MS and Eurojust to query Europol data via the ESP for law enforcement purposes.
- Follow up on the proposals of the Eurodac Recast and the Screening Regulation and take appropriate actions based on the obligations and opportunities stemming from these.
- In line with the outcome of the negotiations on the legislative proposal on the revision of the Prüm Regulation, start the implementation of: 1) MS access to biometric data provided to Europol by Third Parties and the development of QUEST-BIO; 2) Europol's access to MS databases to cross-check data received from third countries; 3) develop and implement EPRIS to support the search of police records. Continue supporting the EPRIS project.
- Ensure support to and implement relevant improvements in business processes and technical solutions supporting Europol's tasks in relation to SIS and VIS.
- Subject to the outcome of the negotiations for a suitable location by the Host State, launch appropriate actions to prepare for the implementation of the new Europol Data Centre as of 2025 in support of the ETIAS and VIS solutions and Europol's core ICT capabilities.
- Support the work of CEPOL's Knowledge Centre (CKC) on Interoperability, Information Exchange and Law Enforcement Cooperation, and eu-LISA and Frontex in EU interoperability and large-scale EU systems' related training activities.

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Expected results: Europol is a fully integrated part of the European security architecture in accordance with respective EU legislation.

The Member States' needs in terms of efficient access to information are better met.

Interoperability and complementarity of Europol systems and tools with other EU information management systems leads to increased and more efficient exchange of information.

Enhanced Europol contribution to relevant EU policies.

### Innovation Lab

#### Objectives and actions

##### **A.1.5 Further implement Europol's Innovation Strategy.**

- Implement the new research and innovation provisions of the Europol Regulation, in particular by making use of the Research and Innovation Sandbox (RIS), i.e. a separate, isolated and protected data processing environment within Europol for the sole purpose of carrying out and supporting research and innovation projects. Finalise internal policies and procedures, identify and receive datasets for the explicit purpose of pursuing and supporting research and innovation projects, and continue to incrementally develop the technical environment in line with the 'Binding Document' adopted by the Management Board in 2023<sup>42</sup>. The implementation is planned in phases, subject to ICT work plan prioritisation.
- Develop further the Research and Innovation Pipeline initiated in 2023, i.e. the structured process to manage the various stages of research and innovation activities, from initial idea generation to the development of new products, services, and technologies for Europol or MS.
- Factor in fundamental rights compliance throughout the innovation process, in cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer.
- Further develop the foresight and horizon scanning activities of the EU Observatory for innovation. Deliver relevant input to strategic analysis and produce regular reports on trends and foresight.
- Explore the possibilities to establish an administrative framework for the temporary embedment of academic experts within innovation projects to swiftly enable their participation. Explore new resourcing models, for example, the temporary insourcing of skillsets and the clarification of intellectual property rights (IPR) when co-creating new solutions.
- Act as the secretariat for the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security and lead the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies<sup>43</sup>, and implement the tasks and functions adopted by COSI on 15 May 2020<sup>44</sup>, and in the Multi-Annual Plan endorsed by COSI in February 2023<sup>45</sup>. These include the continuation of the Accountability Principles for Artificial Intelligence (AP4AI) project, the Darknet Monitoring project and

<sup>42</sup> Binding document defining the general scope for the research and innovation projects (application of Article 8 of the Management Board Decision further specifying procedures for the processing of information for the purposes listed in Article 18(2) (e) of the Europol Regulation), 23 February 2023.

<sup>43</sup> eu-LISA, EMCDDA, Frontex, Eurojust, FRA, CEPOL, EIGE and EUAA. eu-LISA has also provided a full time staff member for the Hub Secretariat.

<sup>44</sup> EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security main principles for establishment, Council Secretariat reference 7829/20 LIMITE COSI 77 ENFOPOL 109 CYBERE 69 JAI 341.

<sup>45</sup> Multi-annual work plan 2023-2026 of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security, Brussels, 16 February 2023, 5603/23, COSI 21, ENFOPOL 60, CYBER 28, JAI 146.

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supporting the Commission with the possible creation of an EU Security Data Space for Innovation (SDSI).

- Act as the secretariat of the European Clearing Board (EuCB), a coordination and prioritisation structure composed of EU Member States' representatives. The EuCB channels Member States' needs and operational requirements to the Lab, discusses the creation of core groups and decides on priorities.
- Expand the work of the Project function of the Innovation Lab by supporting an increasing number of initiatives. Establish corresponding Core Groups with participation of MS to contribute to the project implementation. Foster the co-creation of innovative tools with Member States.
- Contribute to R&I activities by implementing the Innovation Low Value Grants scheme launched in 2023, in order to provide targeted financial support from the EU Innovation Lab budget to Member States (EuCB Core Groups) in their efforts to co-create innovative tools.
- Continue to promote the Europol Tool Repository (ETR) as the primary platform for the sharing of innovation tools by, and for, Member States, in line with Europol's task to disseminate the results of the R&I activities of the Member States and of the EU-funded projects.
- Continue to feed the ETR with innovative tools developed by EU MS, external partners and Europol.
- Manage the Europol Code Repository (ECR) in support of Core Group projects and Europol's projects.
- Further develop networks of relevant partners in the industry and academia and organise Industry Days in partnership with existing LEA and industry networks.
- Assist the European Commission in identifying key research themes, drawing up and implementing the Union framework programmes for research and innovation that are relevant to Europol's objectives. Contribute to the development of solutions by facilitating their operational testing and validation.
- Act as a liaison between EU-funded research projects, DG Home and the European law enforcement community (represented by the EuCB) by monitoring and assessing the continued relevance of EU-funded research projects related to Europol's mandate.
- Coordinate the implementation of Project Starlight, a Horizon 2020 project which aims to deliver a set of AI tools for LEA purposes. The Innovation Lab will coordinate the input of the 15 LEAs involved in the research project.
- Maintain dedicated Innovation EPEs (Lab, Hub, Core Groups, Observatory, etc.).
- Facilitate the training of law enforcement in the field of innovation in close cooperation with CEPOL.
- Ensure that Europol can identify and adopt innovative and novel technologies, to improve the efficiency and added value of Europol's services to the EU MS LEAs.
- Based on the work of the European Clearing Board, Core Groups and Europol Innovation Lab, facilitate the rapid embedment of emerging technology solutions in Europol's overall information management landscape in line with architecture and compliance standards.

**Expected results:** Europol contributes to the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning tools, and other research and innovation projects based on datasets provided by Member States.

A substantiated overview of the risks, threats and opportunities of emerging technologies.

Coordinated efforts in research and development leading to greater realisation of common projects and technical solutions.

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Alignment of Europol's innovation activities with MS law enforcement needs and priorities. Alignment of EU funding for security research with the needs of law enforcement.

Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

### Corporate information management

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.1.6 Further improve corporate information management and related administrative ICT capabilities.**

- Improve IM for non-operational information as well as the underlying IM capabilities to increase the efficiency of documents management (DM), records management (RM) and archiving.
- Manage and enhance corporate IM capabilities and collaboration tools for non-operational information including end-user support and training.
- Progress in establishing IM capabilities that enable electronic workflows, electronic approval and e-Signature.
- Progress with the Records Management Programme, including by developing a File Plan and reviewing the Retention schedule for prioritised areas. Review and improve the related governance framework.
- Continue the transition to a new electronic Document, Records and Workflow management platform.
- Progress with the Archiving Programme: maintain the central archive of official documents and corporate records in hard copy and electronic format; progress with the restructuring of the corporate archive facilities and the implementation of a historic archive (EU Archive Regulation 2015/496 amending Council Regulation 354/1983).
- Maintain the overall organisational structure and support business stakeholders when defining and implementing organisational change; coordinate the implementation of organisational changes in IM capabilities to guarantee consistent information ownership and information security.
- Advance Europol's Process Landscape and ensure its alignment with the renewed Europol strategy; facilitate the development, analysis, improvement and automation of business processes in prioritised areas of organisational development in line with the amended Europol Regulation.
- Enhance business process management at Europol. Ensure that processes and protocols for new initiatives are in place to guarantee the methodological consistency of the work and compliance with internal and external requirements.
- Implement improvements to the corporate risk management, internal audit and business process management platform.
- Progress with the development and implementation of a corporate analytics and reporting capability.

Expected results: Effective processes, systems and tooling are in place to ensure proper corporate risk, internal audit and business process management.  
Reduced bureaucracy and time spent on document and records management and reporting while ensuring the availability of reliable information on decision-making, corporate performance and level of compliance.

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Rationalisation of the application landscape by streamlining corporate processes and leveraging and integrating in a coherent manner EU Commission-developed, in-house and cloud solutions.

### **Provide and maintain ICT capabilities**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.1.7 Develop and maintain reliable and secure ICT capabilities.**

- Develop a timely, comprehensive ICT portfolio work plan on a yearly basis, including demand management and resource allocation, and monitor its implementation.
- Design, build, maintain and manage the product lifecycles of Business applications, their processes and their evolution in alignment with the relevant stakeholders and strategies, legal, security and data protection requirements.
- Create enabling technology roadmaps, including retirement / replacement of obsolete solutions and identification of technology-driven innovation opportunities, with attention to integration, interoperability and data management.
- Develop and maintain the Business, Solution, and Information architecture, as well as the portfolio of ICT capabilities, to enable deliberate decision-making and ensuring evolution in alignment with Europol's strategy, business needs, and compliance standards.
- Guided by ICT Architecture, procure new ICT capabilities or develop new solutions according to agile practices and Secure Coding techniques while applying high standards of Quality and Assurance.
- Continue optimisation of ICT costs, including license spending, right-size security measures, capacity and availability of Systems and Services.
- Assure uptime and availability according to the set SLA's with the stakeholders.
- Provide workplace-related services and customer service and support to users of all Europol ICT capabilities, in-house, in MS and Third Partners. Maintain an up-to-date Service Catalogue.

Expected results: Member States, Partners and Europol staff receive reliable and secure systems and services that enable the achievement of Europol's renewed strategy.



## Europol Public Information

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024 <sup>46</sup>
Core Business Project Delivery	39%	75%
Operational Stability - Uptime of Core systems	99.8%	98.0%
Number of Searches through EIS and QUEST	7,118,511	15,500,000
Number of SIENA Messages exchanged	882,581	1,800,000
Number of SIENA Cases initiated	74,952	150,000
% of Active Users on the EPE	37.6%	45.0%

<sup>46</sup> A number of indicators throughout the Work Programme also depend on MS demand for Europol's products and services. All indicators and their targets are reviewed annually, on the basis of actual performance data, as part of the final version of the Programming Document.

## A.2. Operational Coordination

### Overview

Europol's Operational and Analysis Centre is responsible for handling all incoming information and for managing the workflow of non-prioritised cases in terms of data processing, data handling and hit reporting. The Centre provides support to specific operations and action days both from the Europol headquarters and on the spot. In case of serious incidents, it initiates emergency procedures and coordinates Europol's immediate response.



Internally, the Operational and Analysis Centre presents up-to-date business intelligence to Europol's management, enabling decision making on a permanent 24/7 basis and assures the continuity of the operational business outside office hours.

For its part, the brand new Integrated Operational Services Unit is responsible for the SIRENE Office of Europol. In this capacity – among other tasks – it acts as a single point of contact for SIRENE Bureaux, managing communications with them and all criminal information exchanged through the SIRENE communications infrastructure in line with the SIS regulations. The Unit has also assumed the handling and comparison of the biometric data received across different cases (prioritised and non-prioritised), and the management of the existing dedicated databases for fingerprints (ABIS), face recognition and DNA.

An increasingly important and considerable part of the work conducted by the Integrated Operational Services Unit is the implementation of Europol's role in relation to the EU large-scale information management systems. In particular, with the ETIAS and VIS-recast mechanisms becoming operational in 2025 and 2026 respectively, Europol is expected to build up a 24/7 service providing swift follow-up and reasoned opinion on hits of visa or travel authorisation applications against Europol data.

In parallel, the Operational centre at Europol offers specialist law enforcement techniques (Special Tactics) assisting MS investigations in any of the three priority areas of serious and organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime. Whilst remaining open to new developments, the following areas of knowledge and expertise are being currently supported: covert human intelligence sources, covert surveillance, covert entry, counter-kidnapping and -extortion, hostage negotiation, specialist intervention, witness protection and fugitive active search.

Finally, the Deployment Management Team provides horizontal support to Europol's operational centres by dealing with Europol's large scale/long term deployments, as well as deployments linked to first responses or specific expertise requested by MS and partner countries. Currently, one of the main tasks of the team is to manage the training and deployment aspects of the Guest Officer project with deployments to migration hotspots (Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta), but also to other areas at the request of the MSs and the European Commission, such as countries bordering Ukraine and Belarus.

2024 Objectives

<b>Operational Centre</b>	
Objectives and actions	
<p><b>A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing the intake of operational information.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monitor operational data on 24/7 basis as the single point of entry for any incoming information from stakeholders.</li> <li>○ Decide on the acceptance of information into Europol’s databases.</li> <li>○ Process and handle urgent messages in priority cases, in close cooperation with competent analysis projects.</li> <li>○ Handle non-priority cases and manage hits on related information including evaluation and reporting of matches.</li> <li>○ Accommodate the growing task of following-up hits with Europol’s analysis data once MS obtain hit/no hit access to the Analysis Projects via QUEST.</li> <li>○ Provide permanent monitoring and reporting of Open Source information about incidents related to the mandate of Europol.</li> <li>○ Manage EIS operational data including the insertion of data on behalf of third parties and hit management.</li> <li>○ Manage operational information exchange with third parties.</li> <li>○ Prepare daily situation and weekly criminal intelligence briefing reports to inform internally about main operations, trends and patterns. Host the daily briefing of operational heads of units (TOT meeting).</li> <li>○ Contribute to the evaluation of business needs and technical requirements for data intake and related operational procedures, following the adoption of the Directive on information exchange.</li> <li>○ Continuously develop, maintain and deliver the 2-month induction training for newly recruited analysts. Contribute to the delivery of the criminal analysis, EIS and SIENA trainings.</li> </ul>	
Expected results:	Increased quality and completeness of Europol’s criminal intelligence picture allows for more effective response to MS operational cases and crisis situations.

<b>Operational Centre</b>	
Objectives and actions	
<p><b>A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Act as 24/7 contact point for urgent operational requests from MS Liaison bureaux/ Europol National Units/competent authorities and for officers’ reporting during on-the-spot deployment.</li> <li>○ Initiate the emergency procedures and crisis response steps in case of operational emergencies / terrorist attacks within the EU or affecting the security of the EU.</li> <li>○ Ensure a coordinated application of the crisis response mechanism and the different protocols in the cybercrime, counter-terrorism and migrant smuggling areas.</li> <li>○ Coordinate Europol’s immediate response together with other relevant units and stakeholders.</li> </ul>	

## Europol Public Information

- In close cooperation with the Special Tactics team and other Centres, guarantee 24/7 access to expertise and specialised operational knowledge, such as the European Tracking Solution.
- Liaise with Europol's partners (MS and third parties) affected/involved.
- Provide remote support to on-going actions/operations/major events/on-the-spot deployments. Provide support to the Olympics 2024. Broaden the scope of the major events which could be supported in addition to international sport events (e.g. major political events).
- Following the establishment of the EU platform for referral and removal orders (PERCI, as described in Activity 5), consolidate the capacity of the Operational Centre to handle MS requests on a 24/7 basis in the case of activation of the EU Crisis Protocol in coordination with the ECTC/EU IRU.
- Fulfil the role of business product manager of the mobile office solution. Manage the overview of mobile offices and other operational equipment.
- Support the coordination of operations and joint actions.

Expected results: Member States' operations and emergency cases and crisis response receive quality operational support.

## Integrated Operational Services

Objectives and actions

### **A.2.3 Build-up Europol's operational services to comply with the legal obligations stemming from EU information management systems.**

- Consolidate Europol business processes to fulfil legal obligations emanating from the EU PNR, EES, ETIAS, SIS and VIS.
- Operate the SIRENE office within Europol and implement the agency's tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources) under the SIS Recast, which include:
  - Handling hits on terrorist alerts on 24/7 basis;
  - Exchanging supplementary information with MS SIRENE Bureaux;
  - Making (justified) searches in the alerts and data stored in SIS.
- Execute a specific workflow for Europol to propose to MSs the creation in SIS of information alerts in the interest of the EU following the new provisions of the Europol Regulation.
- Prepare for the initiation of ETIAS operations, ensuring the implementation of Europol's tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources)<sup>47</sup>, which include:
  - 24/7 availability to process the hits of ETIAS applications against Europol data and provision of reasoned opinion within 60 hours;
  - Participation in the ETIAS Screening Board hosted by Frontex; contribution to the definition of ETIAS screening rules and security related risk indicators and management of Europol's entries in the ETIAS Watchlist;
  - Making (justified) searches in the data stored in the ETIAS Central System.
- Process and compare the biometric data received at Europol (fingerprints, faces and DNA profiles), being the Agency's point of contact and knowledge hub for handling biometric data.

<sup>47</sup> LFS of ETIAS Regulation, LFS for Interoperability and LFS for Europol Regulation Recast did not foresee additional resources for Europol for ETIAS purposes. Subsequently an agreement was reached for a temporary transfer of 25 posts from Frontex, which covers partially the estimated resource gap.

## Europol Public Information

- Contribute to the evaluation of business needs and technical requirements for managing biometric data.
- Prepare for the initiation of VIS Recast operations, advancing Europol's readiness to implement its tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources), which include:
  - 24/7 availability to process the hits of visa applications against Europol data (including biometrics) and provision of reasoned opinion within 60 hours;
  - Participation in the VIS Screening Board hosted by Frontex; contribution to the definition of security related risk indicators;
  - Making (justified) searches in the data stored in VIS.
- Initiate preparations for Prüm II, Screening Regulation and any other relevant information management legislative frameworks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).
- Search operational data provided by third partners in the VIS, EES and SIS on a case by case basis and include the relevant information retrieved in the operational outputs.

### **A.2.4 Utilise Europol's access to EU information management systems to enrich the provision of support to EU Member States' investigations.**

- Utilise opportunities stemming from the EU PNR/API, EES, ETIAS, SIS, VIS, ECRIS-TCN and other relevant information management initiatives, including the crosschecking of fingerprint (dactyloscopic) data where possible, in order to enrich the criminal intelligence picture of law enforcement.
- Deliver operational and strategic products and services on the basis of accessible data from the EU information management systems.
- Provide support to PNR related projects of Member States and other relevant partners; host the Secretariat for the informal working group on PNR and support the organisation of IWG-PNR events.
- Provide support to Passenger Information Units (PIUs) in MS and TP to increase the use of SIENA in the exchange of PNR data.
- Contribute to the coordination and delivery of dedicated training for the analysis of travel related information in partnership with CEPOL.
- Enhance cooperation with private partners relevant for the collection of travel intelligence. Utilise the opportunities provided by the amended Europol Regulation regarding information exchange with private parties.

Expected results: Operational readiness for the implementation of SIS, ETIAS, EES, ECRIS-TCN and VIS capabilities.

Europol's compliance with its new tasks in the framework of the implementation of EU large-scale systems and other horizontal interoperability components.

Increased quality and completeness of Europol's criminal intelligence picture with regards to the identification and movement of persons, including travel information and biometric data.

Member States' investigations receive the required support for the processing of travel data and the results of such processing through Europol's operational products.

**Special tactics**

Objectives and actions

**A.2.5 Provide support to Member States in the area of special tactics.**

- Act as the EU knowledge and expertise broker on specialist law enforcement techniques supporting MS investigations in the area of SOC, terrorism and cybercrime.
- Continue developing and maintaining expertise on covert human intelligence sources, covert surveillance and controlled delivery, covert entry, counter-kidnapping and - extortion, fugitive active search, specialist intervention, witness protection and undercover policing.
- Develop and maintain expertise about all counter measures used by OCGs to defeat police operations in general and special tactics policing operations in particular.
- Develop in-house expertise on crowd-sourcing tools and special tactics open source intelligence.
- Support the drafting and implementation of OAPs through the involvement in joint investigations, large-scale operations, on the spot deployments and/or joint action days.
- Manage the EU Most Wanted List containing high-profile internationally wanted criminals. Deliver operational support in fugitive search cases by using Europol’s core capabilities. Organise an annual public awareness campaign. Update the EU Most Wanted website.
- Manage the High Risk Informant Database (HRIDB) - a coded database allowing a more accurate risk assessment when working with foreign informants.
- Manage and monitor the European Tracking Solution (ETS). Ensure the operational availability at large and aim to connect all interested MS and third parties.
- Manage the Virtual Command Post tool for live information exchange during special tactics operations. Initiate the upgrade of the tool if operational needs arise.
- Act as the EU Single Point of Contact for all Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (drones) related matters, including MS requests for information and analysis.
- Follow up on the research on the operational use of geospatial images (Copernicus Programme, Frontex, EMSA and EUSATCEN) and other space assets for law enforcement by:
  - Extending the use of Europol’s access to Integrated Maritime Services Portal at the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to the MS;
  - Exploring modalities for obtaining EUSATCEN services;
  - Implementing a central point of access for LEA to use the European Commission’s Copernicus services; and
  - Supporting the informal network of experts on the use of geospatial images for law enforcement purposes.
- Explore new areas of special tactics support which Europol could potentially provide.
- Implement the Guest Experts (GE) concept to create a pool of experts in the area of special tactics.
- Support the work and strengthen the implementation of the newly established EU wide informal expert network on covert surveillance.
- Manage additional EPE networks under the sosXnet<sup>48</sup> umbrella and give guidance to the related networks.

<sup>48</sup> Specialist Operational Support Exchange Network

## Europol Public Information

- Organise strategic expert meetings, training, awareness raising and prevention activities in the area of knowledge management and in support of specialist networks.
- Contribute to the delivery of training by CEPOL, e.g. on Witness Protection and Informant Handling.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality special tactics support.

### **Deployment management and support**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.2.7 Manage and support deployments, incl. Europol's Guest Officers and Guest Experts capabilities.**

- Manage and support medium to long-term deployments by Europol, as well as deployments linked to first responses requested by Member States or partners, such as deployments to hotspots and other EU security-related incident areas.
- Coordinate, manage and support the guest officer (GO) deployments, including:
  - Maintaining a pool of GOs ready for deployment;
  - Managing ongoing deployments of GOs;
  - Delivering the GO training programme on Europol systems and the mobile office, as well as modalities for operating under Europol's aegis;
  - Providing input to the development and common training materials of the Migration Management Support Teams (MMST) together with FRONTEX and EUAA;
  - Further implementing the mobile team arrangements and rapid deployments upon operational needs (subject to availability of resources);
  - Extending the network of national contact points to ensure that more disembarkation points/areas of interest have a designated national contact point;
  - Maintaining and updating operational plans with the host MS/partner states in areas where Europol is deploying GOs;
  - Liaising with and raising awareness amongst seconding states so as to ensure a sustainable level of secondments to the GO deployment pool.
- Advance the implementation of the Guest Expert (GE) concept; finalise the preparation of GE profiles in line with the Member States' operational needs and Europol's priorities.
- Create a pool of Guest experts - short-term costed SNEs for future deployments requiring specific expertise and remaining on stand-by after recruitment to be activated when necessary.
- Support Europol's operational centres in utilising the Guest expert concept as indicated in their planning: in the area of special tactics (A.2.5), cyber-crime (A.4.1), counter-terrorism (A.5.1) and asset recovery (A.6.5).
- Provide basic training to selected GEs according to the specific operational purposes.

Expected results: Provision of efficient support to deployments in response to migration management developments, and smooth collaboration with the authorities in host and seconding countries.  
Enhanced exchange of expertise and specialised support according to MS operational needs and Europol's priorities.

## Europol Public Information

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Speed of first-line response to MS requests	5.0	5.0
Number of Accepted SIENA contributions by OAC <sup>49</sup>	tbc	tbc <sup>50</sup>
Number of deployments of Guest Officers (number of deployment months)	403	650

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<sup>49</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

<sup>50</sup> The targets related to the accepted contributions per centre will be provided at a later stage as the methodology for measuring this indicator is being currently revised.



### A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime

#### Overview

The work of Europol in the fight against serious and organised crime is delivered through the European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC). The centre aims at providing the most effective operational support to priority cases and this encompasses criminal intelligence analysis, on-the-spot and real time information exchange and expertise, and operational capabilities support to Member States.



The ESOCC's primary goal is to deliver operational support to MS priority cases and High Value Target investigations focusing on individuals and poly-criminal networks posing the highest risk of serious and organised crime to the EU. This is achieved by implementing a case prioritisation mechanism and a High Value Target (HVT)/Operational Task Force (OTF) concept, ensuring a standardised application of operational services on the basis of case categories, improving internal and external coordination, allocating resources in a flexible manner and using a Task Force/project based working method with horizontal support from other centres to respond to emerging threats.

Europol has embedded the principles of criminal intelligence-led policing in its structure, processes and resources. The agency is currently supporting and facilitating EMPACT 2022-2025, which will be again a key driver for the operational support provided by Europol to MS competent authorities in 2024.

In 2024, ESOCC will continue targeting high-risk and cross-border Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) active in the areas of drugs, weapons and explosives, property crime and environmental crime, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and different forms of human exploitation. Within each crime group the Analysis Projects (APs) are clustered and aligned to the EMPACT priorities. In addition, the agency has assumed the coordinator's function for the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal on Investigations and judicial response, with a specific focus on high-risk criminal networks (HRCN) and key individuals and thus ensures the overall coherence of actions targeting key criminal structures and individuals (HRCN/HVT).

Europol is following closely EU policy developments and in 2024 it will be contributing to the implementation of, among others, the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025, the EU Strategy and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025, the EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking 2020-2025, the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025.

2024 Objectives

<b>European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)</b>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU MS’ investigations on SOC and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Handle ESOCC information; monitor information flows; coordinate ESOCC operations.</li> <li>○ Support MS with operational capabilities and expertise that are not available widely at national level to enhance cost-effectiveness; the focus should be on developing actions bringing high operational added value to the investigations.</li> <li>○ Ensure collaboration with front-line investigators by providing real-time operational analysis, operational coordination, information exchange and tactical expertise, including short and longer-term deployments of Europol experts.</li> <li>○ Use data from real-time investigations supported by the ESOCC to maintain an intelligence picture on SOC.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of Operational Action Plans (OAP) under EMPACT priority threats.</li> <li>○ Monitor for threats stemming from Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Support MS/TP corresponding operations and the identification of new or updated EMPACT actions to counter the emerging risks.</li> <li>○ Ensure the provision of support to Member States in identifying High Value Targets (HVT) - individuals and criminal organisations constituting the highest risk of organised and serious crime.</li> <li>○ Support Member States in establishing and operating Operational Task Forces (OTF) facilitating complex and high profile resource-intensive investigations against HVTs, taking into account, where appropriate, the regional approach and the requirements for specialised skills and expertise in multiple domains, including seizure and confiscation of criminal assets.</li> <li>○ Provide management, administrative and logistical support to the OTFs. Ensure the timely exchange of information within the OTF, in particular regarding the analysis of the OTF findings.</li> <li>○ Support the Member States in developing a standardised concept for the national-level HVT/OTF selection process, which could be linked to the EU-level HVT/OTF concept.</li> <li>○ Assess and further develop the HVT/OTF concept by incorporating a regional approach with strong external orientation, in consultation with MS.</li> <li>○ Promote the use of the dedicated OTF grant to finance the application of special investigative techniques and other resource demanding activities in MS. Ensure the complementarity of the grant mechanism to the EMPACT funding provided by Europol.</li> <li>○ Utilise, where appropriate and subject to checking potential and actual conflicts of interest as well as checking available capacities, funding opportunities in relation to calls within Europol’s remit for which the agency is eligible to apply together with MS. Depending on the call eligibility rules this may include the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF).</li> <li>○ Support MS participation in OTFs including by promoting the recruitment of short-term SNEs and deployment of national investigators to reinforce the operational support for HVT cases.</li> </ul>

## Europol Public Information

- Utilise new opportunities enabling joint operational analysis between Europol and Member States when conducting specific investigations (in line with corresponding technical advancement).
- Develop the capacity of the ESOCC in financial investigations and the tracing of proceeds of crime with the support of the EFEC.
- Develop the capacity of the ESOCC in open source and social media monitoring with the support of the ECTC/EU IRU.
- Support development and implementation of tools, including the related funding opportunities, enabling fast operational support (e.g. money drops). Support the preparation of prevention materials and campaigns.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to SOC.

Enhanced law enforcement coordination of actions and operational cooperation in the EU against organised crime groups constituting the highest risk for the internal security.

Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

### **Operations on Drugs**

Disrupt the Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) involved in the illicit trafficking of cocaine, heroin, cannabis and synthetic drugs, as well as the illegal supply of logistical support, precursors and other services.

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.3.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on drug production and trafficking.**

- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of drug production and trafficking, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plans on cannabis, cocaine and heroin, and on synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances.
- Support the activities of the Programme Board on drug supply reduction. Contribute to the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025, and the newly adopted EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the drug logistical facilitators involved in the production, transportation or financing of the drug related illicit activities.
- Support MS in identifying, tracking and dismantling illicit drug producing facilities in the EU, including by targeting precursors and designer precursors, by improving and making better use of forensic investigations, criminal intelligence and by developing and expanding detection techniques. Provide a training on Illicit laboratory dismantling together with CEPOL.
- Support investigations targeting criminally dedicated encrypted communications used by organised crime groups. Further develop Europol's capacity to address encrypted communication and other new technology-related methods used by organised crime groups to protect criminal activities and to conceal related communications.

## Europol Public Information

- Operate the drug intelligence fusion platform within Europol that includes MS representatives, and has contact points with secured information exchange capacities in third countries and regions constituting drug trafficking hubs. Facilitate the exchange of intelligence in real time, analysis and support to live operations targeting international drug trafficking organised crime groups affecting the EU.
- In cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) support the EU Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances. Exploit opportunities for expanding the cooperation with the new European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) replacing EMCDDA following the new mandate of the organisation becoming applicable in July 2024.
- Exploit the operational use of the new tool for monitoring and analysis of drug activity on Dark Web markets developed jointly with EMCDDA and JRC.
- Reinforce cooperation with the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) by promoting awareness sessions, workshops and joint operations in order to improve effectiveness of information flow and operational collaboration.
- Strengthen operational cooperation with major seaports that are being abused for large-scale drug trafficking.
- Utilise new opportunities stemming from the amended Europol Regulation enabling more effective cooperation with private parties and foster the setting-up of public-private partnerships such as with relevant EU courier/parcel post companies, aviation and maritime authorities concerning trafficking of drugs or precursors; or with relevant chemical and pharmaceutical industries concerning suspicious orders or purchases.
- Prioritise cooperation with high-risk countries<sup>51</sup> from a drug production and smuggling perspective in order to support MS investigations, and trace and identify drugs-related criminal proceeds.
- Support EU dialogues on drugs that focus on specific drug trafficking routes, involving producer, transit and consumer markets<sup>52</sup>.
- Support MS investigations against environmental crime related to illicit drug production and trafficking.
- Organise and fund the annual Drug Conference.

Expected results: Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.  
Reduction of the drug supply by facilitating arrest and prosecution of its main criminal actors.  
Enhanced law enforcement coordination and efficiency of action in the EU in the area of drug supply reduction.

### **Operations on Weapons & Explosives**

Disrupt illicit trafficking in firearms and explosives.

Objectives and actions

**A.3.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on weapons and explosives.**

<sup>51</sup> Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, UAE, Morocco and China.

<sup>52</sup> Regular EU dialogues should be conducted with the Western Balkan region and countries, Eastern Partnership countries, Central Asia region and countries, Colombia, China, USA, Latin America and the Caribbean regions and countries.

## Europol Public Information

- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of weapons and explosives trafficking, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Firearms trafficking.
- Support the implementation of the EU action plan on firearms trafficking 2020-2025.
- Support the implementation of the actions to counter firearms and other small arms and light weapons diversion in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>53</sup>.
- Respond to the impact of the revised Regulation on the import, export and transit of firearms, once it becomes applicable.
- Further develop a Firearms Intelligence Hub at ESOCC to facilitate the cross-border exchange and processing of ballistics and weapons identification information.
- Support MS investigations countering the diversion of firearms and explosives and illicit trafficking of precursors, weapon parts and pyrotechnic products.
- Use biometric technologies (facial recognition) to support surveillance work targeting international weapons trafficking networks.
- Conduct proactive criminal intelligence gathering on (dark web) online weapons and explosives trade, with the support of EC3's DarkWeb team.
- Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the weapon/explosives production and trafficking logistical facilitators (defined as facilitators involved in the production, transportation or financing of weapons-related illicit activities).
- Develop capacities for weapons and explosives tracing and utilise the access to CAR's iTRACE and Interpol's iARMS. Resume discussions with the US ATF's eTRACE<sup>54</sup> in view of establishing access.
- Focus on trafficking of weapons through postal and fast parcels.
- Focus on the analysis of open source intelligence to identify and analyse patterns of firearms-related violence and firearms trafficking by utilising horizontal support from the EU IRU.
- Develop, in cooperation with the European Commission, common reporting on firearms seizures to create conditions towards establishing a standard EU statistical data collection procedure, and an EU-level tool to track in real-time firearms-related incidents and seizures.
- Contribute to the Frontex Firearms Handbook for Border Guard and Customs updates and regional versions.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to illicit trafficking weapons and explosives.

Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

<sup>53</sup> Council 5605/23

<sup>54</sup> CAR - Conflict and Armament Research; iARMS - Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System; US ATF - US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

**Operations on High Risk Organised Crime Groups (OCG) and criminal networks**

Disrupt structures of high risk OCGs and criminal networks.

Combat Organised Crime related violence (e.g. murders).

Disrupt the capacity of Organised Crime facilitators and enablers.

Objectives and actions

**A.3.4 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on high risk OCGs and criminal networks.**

- Support investigations on high risk OCGs and criminal networks in accordance with the new mandate of AP High Risk OCGs, especially those criminal activities involving extensive money laundering, extreme violence (murders, kidnap and torture) and corruption.
- Support umbrella investigations against organised criminal groups offering facilitation services to other OCGs, criminal networks or individual criminals.
- Maintain Europol's expertise in the organised crime networks targeted by the previous Analysis Projects merged into AP High Risk OCGs (i.e. mafia-structured OCGs originating in Italy, Ethnic Albanian and Eastern European Organised Crime Networks, and Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs).
- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of high risk OCGs and criminal networks, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support as a coordinator the implementation of the Common Horizontal Strategic Goal and as a co-driver the Operational Action Plan under the EMPACT priority High Risk Criminal Networks (HRCN).
- Ensure the overall coherence of actions targeting key criminal structures and individuals (HRCN and HVT). Inform regularly the EMPACT community about the strategic implications of the implementation of the OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EU Strategy on Organised Crime 2021-2025.
- Contribute to the development of innovative tools (e.g. machine learning tools) in view of facilitating data processing and analysis in support of HVT and priority cases.
- Further develop Europol's capacity to address encrypted communication and other new technology-related methods used by organised crime groups to protect criminal activities and to conceal related communications.
- Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the illicit activities of the members of high risk OCGs, including their money laundering operations.
- Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meeting and other dedicated meetings, as needed.
- Establish cooperation with relevant EU-financed projects, which seek to support MS in identifying international organised crime groups and criminal networks through intelligence-led actions, centralised analysis and effective use of forensic tools, and promote the use of Europol's services in achieving the objectives of such projects.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to high risk OCGs and criminal networks.  
Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

**Operations on Organised Property Crime**

Combat organised property crime committed by Mobile Organised Crime Groups.

Objectives and actions

**A.3.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised property crime.**

- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of organised property crime, including cultural goods, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying HVT/OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Organised Property Crime.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Prioritise investigations and promote the establishment of OTFs to counter property crime featuring extreme violence, high frequency and/or extensive illicit proceeds (such as attacks on ATMs).
- Contribute to the implementation of the EU Action Plan tackling trafficking in cultural goods by supporting investigations. Provide expertise to the Core Group on the trafficking of cultural goods established within the EU Clearing Board for Innovation.
- Enhance the collaboration with the EU CULTNET through the newly established contact point at Europol who will streamline initiatives, explore new opportunities for cooperation, facilitate the interaction between Europol and the network and promote the implementation of the EU action plan.
- Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting to present developments in the property crime domain and Europol's tools and services.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to organised property crime.  
Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

**Operations on Environmental crime**

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in environmental crime.

Objectives and actions

**A.3.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on environmental crime.**

- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of environmental crime, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Environmental crime.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support MS investigations in cross border waste and pollution crime and cases of infiltration of criminal networks in the respective legal business structures.
- Focus on trafficking of fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases) and ozone depleting substances and in particular on cases that include infiltration of legal business structures and internet enabled activities.



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- Focus on the illicit management of Electronic and Electric Equipment Waste, especially the export to third countries.
- Conduct mapping of the specialised public or private technical support resources (such as accredited laboratories, sampling companies, etc.) in the EU which could be used to address concrete operational needs of MS investigations on environmental crimes.
- Boost partnerships for the combating of Environmental Crime through dedicated alliances, including relevant private parties, to strengthen targeted operational cooperation, addressing intelligence gaps, sharing of expertise, innovation, capacity building and joint constraint resolution.
- Respond to the impact of the revised Environmental Crime Directive, once it becomes applicable.
- Provide support to the EnviCrimeNet Secretariat and the activities of the network.
- Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality technical, analytical and operational support related to environmental crimes.

Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

### **European Migrant Smuggling Centre**

**Migrant Smuggling:** Disrupt OCGs and criminal networks involved in the facilitation of illegal immigration into and within the EU Member States.

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.3.7. Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised crime related to migrant smuggling.**

- Support large scale investigations into criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling by consolidating cooperation with source, transit and destination countries as well as EU Agencies and International Organisations.
- Identify HVT(s) active in migrant smuggling and related document fraud, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Migrant smuggling.
- Fight organised crime in the main migratory routes and hubs at EU external borders; identify links between migrant smuggling and other crime areas and terrorism.
- Contribute to the objectives of the renewed EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling 2021-2025, in the area of dismantling migrant-smuggling networks, including the cooperation with third countries, in particular with the Western Balkans.
- Support the implementation of the European Commission's 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa.
- Contribute to the EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Management Mechanism Network and support the implementation of the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint.
- In consultation with the Management Board, contribute to the "Situational Awareness, Early Warning and Forecasting Capacity Development Project" of the European Commission, which is building an EU wide IT Toolbox capable of providing better



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<p>analytical situational overviews, timely identification and comprehensive understanding of emerging migratory trends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support the Joint Liaison Task Force on migrant smuggling and THB embedded within the EMSC and composed of a permanent operational team of MS, third countries liaison officers and Eurojust representatives.</li> <li>○ Maintain the Information Clearing House (ICH) with the participation of EUNAVFOR MED, Frontex and Interpol.</li> <li>○ Collaborate with Frontex to utilise the synergies in the work of the two agencies with regards to migrant smuggling counteraction and THB, including operational personal data processing (once the new working arrangement is concluded and the requirements for the data exchange are met).</li> <li>○ Promote, with the support of the European Commission, cooperation with Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships, Immigration Liaison Officers Networks, CSDP missions and relevant EU funded projects and initiatives in the third countries which are considered to be the source and transit countries for migrant smuggling.</li> <li>○ Actively participate in different types of cooperation with relevant multi-actor platforms, acting as an intelligence collection hub, such as possible Joint Investigative Cells or any controlled centres, if established.</li> <li>○ Support the investigative and referral work in the area of social media, which are frequently abused by criminal groups by selling stolen or lost travel documents by utilising support by the EU IRU.</li> <li>○ Intensify the financial investigation angle of the support provided to investigations of migrant smuggling criminal networks, in close cooperation with the EFEC.</li> <li>○ Support, through a co-ordinated and multi-disciplinary approach, the law enforcement response against criminal groups producing and distributing fraudulent documents to facilitate migrant smuggling. Enhance the criminal intelligence picture regarding the use of identity and document fraud.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Europol is able to base its operational support functions on real time information and to respond swiftly on changing organised migrant smuggling trends.</p> <p>Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support in relation to dismantling of organised crime groups active in migrant smuggling.</p> <p>Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p>

### European Migrant Smuggling Centre

**Trafficking in Human Beings:** Disrupt OCGs and criminal networks involved in intra-EU human trafficking and human trafficking from the most prevalent external source countries for the purposes of any form of exploitation (e.g. sexual, labour, forced begging, forced criminality, organ removal etc.), targeting their leadership, operations, facilitators and financial structures.

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.3.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on trafficking in human beings.**

- Support Member States and operational partner's investigations concerning trafficking in human beings affecting EU for the purpose of any form of exploitation (e.g. sexual, labour, forced begging, forced criminality, organ removal etc.).

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify HVT(s) active in THB, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations on these individuals by applying the HVT/OTF concept.</li> <li>○ Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Trafficking in human beings.</li> <li>○ In cooperation with MS, enhance the collection and exchange of operational and strategic information on trafficking in human beings by increasing the quantity and improving the quality of the contributions.</li> <li>○ Develop knowledge on key organised criminal groups involved in THB in the EU.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025.</li> <li>○ Improve the use of PNR data in THB investigations to identify victims and suspects and further develop effective targeting rules for red-flagging aviation-related trafficking situations.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to THB.</p> <p>Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p>

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by ESOCC <sup>55</sup>	tbc	tbc <sup>56</sup>
Number of Operations supported by ESOCC	797	600
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by ESOCC (where ESOCC is in the lead)	n/a	15
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ESOCC	2,720	4,250
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by ESOCC	112	150
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by ESOCC	9.5	8.5
Number of Operations supported by EMSC	121	170
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EMSC	581	1,300
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EMSC	21	40
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EMSC	n/a	8.5

<sup>55</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

<sup>56</sup> The targets related to the accepted contributions per centre will be provided at a later stage as the methodology for measuring this indicator is being currently revised.

## A.4. Combating Cyber Crime

### Overview

The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) is devoted to combating cybercrime by delivering operational and investigation support to the services in the Member States competent to fight organised crime and terrorism. The Centre is tasked to focus on three main areas, namely:



- Cybercrimes committed by organised groups, particularly those generating large criminal profits such as online fraud,
- Cybercrimes which cause serious harm to their victims, such as online child sexual exploitation and
- Cybercrimes (including cyber-attacks) affecting critical infrastructure and information systems in the European Union.

EC3 supports the EU Member States in preventing and combating different forms of cyber criminality affecting critical infrastructure and information systems, such as malware, ransomware, hacking, phishing, intrusion, identity theft and internet related fraud. The support provided to MS extends also to tackling criminality on the Dark Web and alternative platforms.

EC3 works towards preventing and combating all forms of criminality associated with the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It provides assistance and expertise in combatting the creation and distribution of online child abuse material, as well as tackling forms of criminal online behaviour against children, such as grooming, self-generated indecent material, sexual extortion and live child abuse.

Another area of focus for the EC3 services is international payment fraud investigations. The aim is to respond effectively to new threats and target the criminal networks that affect electronic payments and ensure customers' security and trust in electronic and online payments inside a fast-growing digital payments market.

The EC3 Digital Forensics provides on-the-spot and in-house forensics support, computer forensic support services, including decryption, live forensics, vehicle forensics, mobile device and counterfeit banknote analysis. It delivers agile research and development of new digital forensic tools in response to operational requests. Gathering forensic data is of utmost importance for collecting evidence for investigations, and for the better understanding of cybercriminals' tools and methods, thus providing valuable knowledge for use in prevention.

Cybercriminals have strongly professionalised their capabilities to hide their tracks. For Law Enforcement to respond effectively, it is increasingly important to combine different and complex datasets, both seized within investigations as well as from other sources. In order to support this, EC3's Cybercrime Intelligence acts as a gateway focusing on the streams of cyber threat intelligence namely on actors, tactics, techniques, and procedures, malware and criminal services (enablers), as well as on cyber financial intelligence (cryptocurrency) tracing and blockchain analysis. The priority is set on the latest data science approaches from legal, technical and organisational perspectives, to ensure that data is available, enriched and actionable through the data and intelligence full cycles.

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The secondary goal is to expand the intelligence picture on cybercrime across Europe in order to be more proactive or rapidly identify emerging trends and threats, and update the stakeholders accordingly.

EC3 hosts the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT) which is composed of liaison officers from various EU Member States, non-EU law enforcement partners and EC3. The Taskforce members propose, select and work in a collaborative manner on high-profile cases for investigation.

Research and Development (R&D) and innovation are key for the evolution of combating cybercrime. In this context, EC3 has established a forum to consult digital forensics experts from the EU Member States to understand their needs and/or to provide expertise to them when required. Also, EC3 actively contributes to R&D developments and projects related to cybercrime, such as projects funded under the European Commission's Programme Horizon 2020 or Internal Security Fund (ISF) Police programme.

### 2024 Objectives

<b>European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)</b>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.4.1 Ensure the effective functioning of EC3 in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on cybercrime and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Serve as the EU law enforcement hub for collecting, processing, analysing and exchanging information and criminal intelligence of relevance for cybercrime and cyber-enabled investigations.</li><li>○ Provide cross-checking, operational analysis, support, coordination and de-confliction to MS cybercrime investigations in the areas of cyber-dependent crimes, payment fraud and online fraud schemes, child sexual exploitation, Dark Web and cross-cutting crime enablers.</li><li>○ Provide an on-the-spot service by deploying cyber analysts and/or specialists to support ongoing operations.</li><li>○ Provide 24/7 support to MS for immediate reactions to urgent cyber cases and cyber crises situation via stand-by duty and the EU Law Enforcement Emergency Response Protocol (EU LE ERP).</li><li>○ Support the implementation of Operational Action Plans under EMPACT priority threats.</li><li>○ Strengthen the support to Member States on Operational Taskforces, the effective prioritisation of HVTs and identification of optimal follow-up response measures.</li><li>○ Perform tactical analysis on contributed complex datasets, if possible combined, in order to identify key facilitators within the cybercriminal landscape, and support follow-up operations by MS and TP.</li><li>○ Explore the opportunities offered by the Guest Experts concept for deploying short-term costed SNEs to MS requiring specific expertise in the cybercrime domain.</li><li>○ Serve as the voice of EU law enforcement within the framework of the EU-wide Coordinated Response to Large-Scale Cybersecurity Incidents and Crises (EU Blueprint) and the EU Cyber Crisis Taskforce.</li><li>○ Facilitate the multi-disciplinary interaction between partners and stakeholders, including Advisory Groups, Governance network, Eurojust and the European Judicial Cybercrime Network, ENISA, Europol Financial Coalition, EUCTF and academia for the purposes of establishing cooperation and information-sharing.</li><li>○ Develop new thematic cooperation in the EC3 Advisory groups and working-subgroups, to foster information exchange on trends and criminal new modus operandi.</li></ul>

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- Coordinate and support efforts to strengthen operational cooperation of law enforcement with the Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRT) community and in particular with the CSIRTs Network.
- Interact with law enforcement representatives in the EU, industry and academia to develop and present collective views in the global discussion on Internet Governance, in forums such as the Internet Cooperation for Assigning Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC), and in relation to the EU policy making and legislative process.
- Chair and facilitate the work of the European Group of Heads of Lawful Interception Units and the European Working Group on Standardisation on Internal Security. Ensure the representation of the law enforcement interests related to lawful interception at the EU level.
- Participate and contribute in the discussions of the High Level Expert Working Group on access to data for effective law enforcement and its working groups.
- Participate in the discussions on the establishment of the EU Joint Cyber Unit put forward by the EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade.
- Contribute from an operational perspective to the overall monitoring of developments of new policy/legislative initiatives and their potential impact on Europol, such as the Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse, the Digital Services Act, the Cyber Resilience Act and the Artificial Intelligence Package.
- Contribute with expertise to the elaboration of the DNS4EU - European Commission's initiative to develop a public European Domain Name System (DNS) resolver service, as an alternative European service for accessing the global Internet.
- Organise flagship events, such as the annual cybercrime conference of EC3, to foster synergies, promote EC3 capacities and achievements and identify new cooperation opportunities with the private sector and other communities involved in Cybersecurity or E-governance.
- Contribute to the preparation and delivery of standardised prevention and awareness campaigns and activities in the cybercrime-mandated areas as detailed in the EC3 Cybercrime Prevention and Awareness Programme 2024. Facilitate the interaction and cooperation with partners such as the Cybercrime Prevention Network.
- Coordinate and support the demand, development and delivery of comprehensive cybercrime training under the umbrella of a Training Governance Model or Cybercrime Capacity Building Strategy at EU level, including the CEPOL Cybercrime Academy.
- Promote the EC3 Secure Platform for Accredited Cybercrime Experts (SPACE) as a centre of excellence where relevant experts exchange strategic information and best practices.
- Continue to use the EC3 Twitter Account as a fast dissemination channel for EC3's products and services, as well as to engage with the relevant external stakeholders.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to cyber-crime.  
Enhanced joint operational activities with public and private partners of relevance.  
More effective levels of cooperation leading to better coordination and increased operational and strategic results.  
Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

**Digital Support Services - Digital Forensics**

Deliver digital operational support services to MS investigations across all crime areas.

Objectives and actions

**A.4.2 Provide digital forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.**

- Deliver digital operational support services, such as criminal infrastructure oriented cyber forensics to tackle encrypted communication networks (in close cooperation with Cyber Intelligence) and ransomware infrastructure.
- Strengthen and prioritise the support to MS on Operational Task Forces targeting High Value Targets and priority investigations.
- Provide decryption services using Europol Decryption Platform to effectively decrypt data from criminal IT infrastructure and devices seized during the course of a criminal investigations.
- Continuously monitor new trends and actively support MS in overcoming the technical challenges to their cyber and cyber-facilitated investigations, by identifying suitable tactics, performing agile research, developing digital forensic tools and sharing best practices to respond to the emerging operational needs.
- Support the further improvement of the New Forensic Environment. Utilise the NFE to provide and develop better and faster forensic extraction and reconstruction services.
- Collaborate closely with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission to identify and develop new tools for law enforcement at the Europol-JRC common activity laboratory. Further create a set of forensic data extraction tools to enable data acquisition from vehicles with different hardware/software specificities.
- Increase R&D activities of the EC3 Forensics Lab in the area of decryption to maximise practical output of the Decryption Platform. In cooperation with MS and partner LE agencies further develop new decryption tools, alternative decryption and live forensic methods and share them on Europol Code Repository.
- Design the further evolution of the Decryption Platform on the basis of previous experience and developments of new technologies.
- Improve capabilities to perform in-depth hardware analysis and reverse engineering, to increase capacity to tackle encrypted communication networks, to extract data from mobile devices, portable encrypted devices, cryptocurrency wallets, as well as Internet of Things (IoT) devices.
- Establish capacity to use custom data extraction methods from mobile devices, not supported by commercial forensic tools.
- Establish capacity to provide blockchain forensic services.
- Maintain and support Forums and communities on EPE in relevant forensic areas such as digital forensics, vehicle forensics, decryption, etc. Organise annual meetings of the Forensic Expert Forum, Vehicle Forensic Experts, Law enforcement password recovery (LEPRReCon) and Decryption Experts Network.
- Contribute to the implementation of the EU Forensic Science Area 2.0 Action Plan, in particular in the areas of biometrics, artificial intelligence, digitalisation and emerging technologies.
- Provide highly specialised training on decryption in cooperation with ECTEG. Support ECTEG in the development of other training courses on encryption.
- Support CEPOL in delivering trainings in the area of Forensic Support Team expertise.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality digital forensics support and enhanced access to criminal evidence.

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Increased capacity and functionalities of Europol's Decryption platform.  
Continuously developed expertise of the EC3 Forensic Lab to be in the forefront of R&D and in tackling technical challenges.

### Digital Support Services - Document Forensics

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.3 Provide document forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.**

- Support MS investigations concerning false documents, counterfeit currency and printing devices.
- Provide forensic services, reports and examinations, including forensics services accredited to ISO17020:2012.
- Maintain ISO17020:2012 accreditation concerning forensics examinations on Euro counterfeited banknotes.
- Assist in the dismantling of clandestine print shops.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT cross-cutting threat and common horizontal strategic goal on document fraud and related investigations.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT OAP on Intellectual Property (IP) Crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies.
- Share the expertise and provide training in false document and currency identification.
- Explore new areas of R&D in the domain of Document Forensics to prepare tackling emerging challenges such as criminal abuse of AI and machine learning techniques in the area of biometrics e.g. face, fingerprints and iris manipulation, which will become increasingly a cross cutting factor in many crime areas.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality document forensics support.  
Continuously developed expertise of the EC3 Forensic Lab to be in the forefront of R&D and in tackling technical challenges.

### Cyber Intelligence

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.4 Provide cyber intelligence support to EU Member States' investigations.**

- Collect information on cybercrime and cyber-facilitated crime threats and trends from a wide array of public, private and open sources.
- Provide knowledge products with regard to technology and new criminal modi operandi online.
- Improve the criminal intelligence position of EC3 and the Member States by proactively identifying significant cybercriminal facilitators and other HVTs involved in the most prominent cyber threats.
- Provide data extraction, transformation and loading services for the large datasets contributed by the EU MS to EC3 and other Europol's crime centres, given the availability of resources, in line with the provisions of the amended Europol Regulation.
- Enhance the operational and technical support to crypto-currency-related MS investigations through the implementation of the CryptoPortal and the upgrade of the

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tool for tracking and attribution of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Implement workflows to flag suspicious transactions reported by law enforcement to exchangers and for receiving HIT/NO HIT notifications from exchangers on crypto assets of interest for law enforcement.

- Support EU MS with Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) collection, analysis, production of intelligence products and expertise, and the development of national cyber intelligence models.
- Build and develop a network of points of contact with expertise within the cyber intelligence domain, including threat intelligence, cryptocurrency and data science with solid focus on advanced operational support.
- Provide a dedicated, secure and automated malware analysis platform to MS through the Europol Malware Analysis Solution (EMAS).
- Utilise the MISP Threat Sharing platform (MISP)<sup>57</sup> at Europol to further strengthen the operational collaboration between cyber law enforcement and cyber security/network, and information security community.
- Establish a platform for operational data enrichment to the data contributed by MS with information coming from private partners, relevant EU bodies and OSINT through the implementation of MISP and other pipelines related to the NFE project and transfer of information to OPS environment.
- Maintain and support forums and communities on EPE in relevant Cybercrime intelligence areas such as cryptocurrency and block chain technologies, cyber threat intelligence/OSINT, malware (EMAS) data science, encrypted communication, etc.
- Organise the annual meeting of the Cybercrime Intelligence Network, and the conference on Cryptocurrency, as well as tactical training workshops on malware (EMAS) and cryptocurrency.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality cyber intelligence support and benefit from improved criminal intelligence picture.

### **Operations on Cyber-Dependent Crimes**

Disrupt criminal networks involved in cyber-dependent crimes associated with internet and ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on cyber-dependent crimes.**

- Provide operational coordination and support to Member States' investigations with regards to cyber-dependent crimes of greatest concern.
- Focus on preventing and combating cyber criminality affecting critical infrastructure and network and information systems.
- Focus on investigating, targeting and disrupting cybercrimes associated with organised groups and /or most prolific cybercriminal facilitators generating greatest harm or large criminal profits, and cybercrime-as-a-service schemes.
- Provide technical support and in-depth analysis on top malware in light of the proliferation of the threat and the exponential increase of requests for technical and financial investigative support by MS.

<sup>57</sup> The original Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) was extended to cover threat intelligence, financial fraud information, vulnerability information and counter-terrorism information.



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- Contribute to the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Cyber Attacks, with an emphasis on key facilitators within the ransomware landscape.
- Strengthen the support to the MS on Operational Taskforces, effective prioritisation of HVTs and identification of optimal follow-up response measures.
- Expand the new International Law Enforcement Ransomware Response Model (IRRM), which was developed jointly with the J-CAT, in view of reinforcing the operational and tactical response to ransomware. Focus on developing pro-active counter measures against prioritised HVTs and key enablers in the ransomware ecosystem.
- Contribute to the US-EU Ransomware Working Group and other pertinent international fora in order to enhance international collaboration.
- Further implement the No More Ransom project.
- Pro-actively share technical expertise and support tools on analytics of large data sets (e.g. EC3 Search Box) with MS and participate in collaborative international efforts to standardise and further develop tools and procedures (e.g. Tools4LEAs among others).

Expected results: Member States' investigations on cyber-dependent crimes receive quality analytical and operational support.

### **Operations on Child Sexual Exploitation**

Disrupt criminal networks involved in sexual exploitation of children, including the production of child abuse images and online dissemination.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on child sexual exploitation.**

- Support the MS in tackling forms of criminal online behaviour against children, such as grooming, self-generated indecent material, sexual extortion and coercion, and web live streaming.
- Fight distribution of child sexual exploitation material including preventing, intercepting and stopping the sharing through peer-to-peer networks, commercial platforms, and the Dark Web, as well as addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Tackle the phenomenon of transnational child sex offenders by supporting the EU MS in detecting and intercepting travelling child sexual offenders.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- Strengthen the support to the MS on Operational Taskforces, effective prioritisation of HVTs and facilitating criminal platforms, and identification of optimal follow-up response measures.
- Identify High Value Targets, both abusers and their facilitating platforms, among the Dark Web's most prolific perpetrators and set up an annually recurrent OTF to coordinate and de-conflict operations.
- Develop a more pro-active approach to identify investigation possibilities for MS. Provide packages with necessary analysis and information to successfully start investigations.
- Prepare to implement effectively the EU Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse. Assess EC3 data collection modalities and the possibilities for establishing a data warehouse to ensure effective handling of the expected increase in data contributions. Support MS in case coordination and prioritisation for the anticipated growing number of investigations.

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- Contribute to the setting up of the EU Centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse to the extent possible given the availability of resources<sup>58</sup>.
- Continue hosting the Victim Identification Taskforce to foster cooperation and pooling of expertise from different police agencies and Interpol.
- Deliver expertise within initiatives dealing with victim identification, such as Victim Identification Taskforces, investigational sprints and/or OTF's undertaken by and with partners.
- Enhance the support provided to the MS in the area of victim identification by further developing the existing Image and Video Analysis Solution (IVAS) with AI functionalities and the internal expertise.
- Update regularly MS experts on criminal intelligence relating to online platforms being set up, maintained or abused for the purpose of child sexual exploitation.
- Utilise the benefits from the newly set up automated referral system, the European Union Child Abuse Referral Service (EU-CARES), facilitating the receiving, processing and disseminating of information on suspected child sexual exploitation online from pertinent non-law enforcement actors to the relevant competent authorities in the EU MS, and the automatic cross check of data against EAS and IVAS.
- Provide expertise, evidence and data, including trends and statistics, to the various studies that will be carried out in the framework of the different EU policy initiatives. In particular, contribute to the identification of areas of improvement at EU and national level where strengthening of law enforcement efforts in the fight against child sexual abuse will be required.
- Build on existing structures such as the EU Financial Cybercrime Coalition and relations with partners through EC3 Advisory Groups and the EFEC to ensure effective cooperation and collaboration with private sector partners and NGOs in countering CSE, including in terms of receiving intelligence and information for operational and strategic purposes (in line with the provisions of the amended Europol Regulation).
- Continue providing support to the Virtual Global Taskforce, to deliver innovative and global strategies for all, ensuring the use of the most relevant tools to counter CSE.
- Deliver and support training courses on Victim Identification (in cooperation with CEPOL) and Combating Online Sexual Exploitation of Children.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to child sexual exploitation.

### **Operations on Payment Fraud and Online Fraud Schemes**

Disrupt criminal networks involved in payment fraud and online fraud schemes.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on payment fraud and online fraud schemes.**

- Support the MS in combating forms of payment fraud such as skimming (duplication of a card's magnetic strip often through devices hidden within compromised ATMs and Point-Of-Sale terminals), banking phishing and online fraud (cyber-enabled fraud) schemes, incl. payment process compromise (business e-mail compromise BEC).
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Online fraud schemes.

<sup>58</sup> This initiative has not been yet adopted at the time of the writing of this document.

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- Strengthen the support to MS on Operational Taskforces, the effective prioritisation of HVTs and identification of optimal follow-up response measures.
- Target and identify online marketplaces offering illegal services using compromised credit card information, including illegal services (transport, accommodation, game tickets, etc.) offered on the occasion of large events.
- Coordinate the detection, identification, dismantling, prosecution and prevention of money mules networks, associated to online fraud schemes, together with private industry (banking sector, Fintechs, etc.).
- Support the MS in addressing emerging threats and new criminal Modi Operandi (e.g., digital skimming, Account Takeover, ATM malware, Black Box attacks, compromise of Near Field Communication transactions, etc.).
- Coordinate and execute a coordinated joint action against digital skimming or other new forms of digital payment frauds, in cooperation with the Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRT) community and private partners.
- Improve criminal intelligence on account takeover attacks (affecting financial institutions, payment gateways, airline, hotel and e-commerce sector) and create operational opportunities.
- Execute joint operational actions against telecom fraud, including International Revenue Share Fraud, vishing, spoofing caller ID, SIM swapping or smishing<sup>59</sup>, in collaboration with law enforcement, judiciary and relevant private partners.
- Facilitate cooperation among LEAs, the private sector and regulators (the European Central Bank at the European level and National Banks at a domestic level).
- Actively engage with priority regions to address payment fraud migration. In particular, continue expanding the operational and strategic collaboration on payment fraud migration and card-not-present fraud.
- Deliver the annual training course on Payment Card Fraud Forensics and Investigations.
- Explore platform/framework options to enable bi-directional communication on non-cash payment fraud cases and online fraud and exchange of crime-relevant information with key private sector partners, by utilising new opportunities for cooperation with private parties stemming from the Europol Regulation.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to non-cash payment fraud.

### **Operations on Criminal Online Trade and Use of Online Environments**

Disrupt OCG and HVTs involved in the criminal online trade and the use of online environments for criminal purposes.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on the criminal online trade and use of online environments for criminal purposes.**

- Support the MS and Europol's Analysis Projects in combating criminal networks involved in the administration and moderation of Dark Web related activities, the related commodity-based vendors and buyers, as well as alternative communication platforms.

<sup>59</sup> Smishing is a phishing cybersecurity attack carried out over mobile text messaging, also known as SMS phishing.

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- Coordinate, plan and execute joint technical, investigative and prevention actions to maximise impact and reduce crime on the Dark Web and alternative communication platforms.
- Strengthen the support to the MS on Operational Taskforces, effective prioritisation of HVTs and identification of optimal follow-up response measures.
- Provide in-depth operational analysis on Dark Web data repositories to enhance the data enrichment and the identification of High-Value Targets involved in crime on the Dark Web and alternative platforms.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal on Coordinated controls and operations targeting the online and offline trade in illicit goods & services, assuming the coordinator's functions (for the online component).
- Maintain the strategic criminal intelligence picture for the online trade in illicit goods and services, in particular on the Dark Web and alternative platforms for threat intelligence and trend scenario purpose. Collaborate with private sector partners through EC3 Advisory Groups to enrich the intelligence picture.
- Maintain knowledge and expertise on tools, tactics and techniques for conducting Dark Web investigations and the misuse of cryptocurrencies.
- Further develop knowledge, expertise and the EU tools-box for the technical aspects related to the gathering and exploitation of data on Dark Web investigations in particular those that focus on dismantling the technical and operational criminal infrastructure.
- Acquire and integrate on premise solutions for the collection and scraping (data extraction) of information related to the criminal use of the Dark Web, in coordination with JRC.
- Provide an annual platform for experts to share knowledge and expertise on developments and investigations on the Dark Web.
- Support the delivery of training related to Dark Web investigations.

Expected results: Member States' Dark Web investigations receive quality analytical and operational support.

### **Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT)**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.9 Provide support and operational coordination to the J-CAT operations and activities.**

- Host and support the work of the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT) composed of Cyber Liaison Officers from closely involved Member States, non-EU law enforcement partners and EC3.
- Stimulate and facilitate the joint identification, prioritisation, preparation, initiation and execution of cross-border investigations and operations by the J-CAT partners.
- Expand the utilisation of the new International Law Enforcement Ransomware Response Model (IRRM), in view of reinforcing the operational and tactical response to ransomware.
- Continue the support provided by EC3 to cases prioritised by the J-CAT in order to process the increasing amount of data contributed within the framework of the taskforce in a swift manner and address the growing amount of submitted cases.
- De-conflict and identify synergies for joint operational activities with the other global cybercrime taskforces and key cyber operational centres (e.g. NCFTA and Interpol) towards optimising resources and the effectiveness of operations.

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- Facilitate the collaboration and operational engagement with Eurojust on cybercrime cases via the dedicated Eurojust liaison officer.
- Continue to engage with non-Taskforce members from relevant law enforcement agencies on cases affecting two or more J-CAT existing members.
- Continue to collaborate with key industry partners, including those of EC3 Advisory groups, to enable the undertaking of joint initiatives between J-CAT, EC3 and the private sector.
- Organise the annual J-CAT Board meeting.

Expected results: J-CAT investigations receive quality analytical and operational support.  
Improved joint operational activities with public and private partners of relevance.

## Research & Development

### Objectives and actions

#### **A.4.10 Proactively develop expertise and solutions related to challenges in cybercriminal investigations.**

- Collect, analyse and manage strategic criminal intelligence, and further develop expertise with a view to supporting pro-active and innovative approaches.
- Develop capacities to apply the latest data sciences approaches from legal, technical and organisational perspectives.
- Support the interaction and cooperation with partners, including academia and other expert networks and EU entities, to facilitate cooperation in the development and delivery of strategic analysis, detailed analysis of law enforcement needs and of existing gaps, threat intelligence and forward-looking products including Europol's contribution to the Observatory Report on Encryption. Identify common challenges to combating cybercrime with Eurojust.
- Coordinate the demand and development of new technical solutions, including R&D with the Forensic Experts Forum and other relevant networks and platforms. Provide advice to R&D priorities at national and EU level and support the uptake of relevant project results, particularly in relation to EU funding programs, if and where appropriate.
- In coordination with Europol's Innovation Lab and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. JRC), organise a Cyber Innovation Forum for Law Enforcement to exchange best practices in combating cybercrime and cyber-enabled crime by employing innovative tools, tactics and techniques.
- In coordination with Europol's Innovation Lab and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. JRC), further develop expertise on technological innovation such as 5G, AI, encryption, anonymisation services and any other relevant developments.
- Re-assess the possible role of Europol (in the context of the Europol Regulation Recast) to facilitate access to WHOIS data for MS law enforcement authorities.
- In coordination with Europol's Innovation Lab, broaden and continue to implement the technology watch function to pro-actively inform about criminal abuse of new technology while ensuring the consideration of the law enforcement angle in the process of development and innovation.

**Europol Public Information**

Expected results: Coordinated efforts in research and development lead to greater realisation of common projects and technical solutions in the cybercrime area.  
Member States' investigations receive up-to-date technical support in the cyber domain.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by EC3 <sup>60</sup>	tbc	tbc <sup>61</sup>
Number of Operations supported by EC3	260	430
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by EC3 (where EC3 is in the lead)	n/a	2
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EC3	1,907	3,200
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EC3	15	30
Number of Decryption platform successes	16	25
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EC3	10	8.5

<sup>60</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

<sup>61</sup> The targets related to the accepted contributions per centre will be provided at a later stage as the methodology for measuring this indicator is being currently revised.

## A.5. Counter-Terrorism

### Overview



The European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC) works towards the maximisation of operational, technical and overall information exchange capabilities in the area of counter-terrorism and aims to ensure added value for EU Member States, as well as third party cooperation partners, namely by providing:

- An information hub for counter terrorism, with unique information and criminal intelligence sharing capabilities for law enforcement authorities in EU Member States and beyond.
- Effective operational support, coordination and expertise for Member States' investigations, by developing and deploying a comprehensive portfolio of support services.
- Proactive mitigation of the use of social media for radicalisation purposes through terrorist and violent extremist online content, as well as cyber-terrorist attack scenarios and support to operational analysis.
- A central strategic support capability, to identify European wide counter-terrorism implications and promote outreach with relevant (international) partners.

The ECTC also prevents and combats terrorism by supporting Member States with terrorism-related financial information. The Centre provides the information processing means by which the Agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on the Processing and Transfer of Financial Messaging Data from the EU to the US for the purposes of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP) is implemented.

Furthermore, the ECTC holds Europol's expertise in the area of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear & Explosives (CBRN/E) and provides support to EU Member States' investigations on war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity.

The EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) of the ECTC coordinates and shares the identification tasks of terrorist and violent extremism online content with relevant competent authorities; carries out and facilitates referrals in an effective manner in close cooperation with the industry; and supports Member States' internet-based investigations and technical requests. The Unit is at the forefront of the development of PERCI, a collaborative tool facilitating EU-wide coordination and transmission of removal orders resulting from the TCO Regulation.

The EU IRU acts as a knowledge hub for Europol and the EU Member States in the field of cross-border access to e-evidence. The internet investigation field is a fast evolving environment where methodologies and tools get rapidly outdated. Market research activities, trends and upcoming milestones in the e-evidence field are key to delivering excellence and cutting edge products to Member States.

The EU IRU also acts as a centre of excellence for Europol and the EU Member States in the field of new technologies that could potentially be abused by criminals as regards online content, and in identifying and leveraging new technologies to support law enforcement leads.

Since 2019, the ATLAS Network of Special Intervention Units has been affiliated with Europol. The ECTC holds the ATLAS Support Office (ASO), which connects the ATLAS Network and Europol's counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime communities by facilitating the exchange of strategic and operational expertise and practices.



2024 Objectives

<u>The European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC)</u>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.5.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ECTC in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States’ investigations related to counter-terrorism.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Serve as the EU law enforcement hub for collecting, processing, analysing and exchanging information and criminal intelligence of relevance for a wide range of terrorism-related areas, including the response to major terrorist crises.</li> <li>○ Provide cross-checking, operational analysis, coordination and de-confliction to MS counter-terrorism investigations. Provide technical/forensic support and operational support to MS on-the-spot.</li> <li>○ Identify new terrorist Modi Operandi, emerging threats and developments. Detect links between terrorism and organised crime and follow, in particular, the evolution of hybrid threats with the terrorism dimension.</li> <li>○ Provide tailored newsfeeds and contribute to strategic reports, including trend analysis, early warnings, the 6-month high profile Outlook on developments in terrorism, and the annual high profile TE-SAT report.</li> <li>○ Administer and support the CT Program Board (CTPB) as the MS steering governance tool of the ECTC. Ensure the ECTC involvement and coordination of the implementation of the CTPB work plan.</li> <li>○ Manage the Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team (CT-JLT) operational platform and ensure its performance as an effective mechanism for accelerating exchange of information and coordination.</li> <li>○ Enhance the establishment of OTFs targeting HVT individuals who represent an immediate threat to EU security and aiming to dismantle terrorist/violent extremist organisations.</li> <li>○ Take actions to meet the exponentially growing need for de-confliction of CT-related data with national CT units. Contribute to the development of a de-confliction solution at EU level by utilising PERCI for this purpose.</li> <li>○ Evaluate information on third-country nationals suspected to be jihadist terrorists received from TP or MS for possible processing in the SIS and support the voluntary process (coordinated approach) established by the Terrorism Working Party (TWP).</li> <li>○ Propose the insertion of the new information alerts on third-country nationals in the interest of the Union, once this new alert category is implemented in the Schengen Information System, following the new provisions of the amended Europol Regulation.</li> <li>○ Increase the exploitation of SIS information on terrorist alerts obtained through the Europol SIRENE Office.</li> <li>○ Scope out opportunities and establish direct interaction with priority non-EU competent CT services to obtain dynamically updated FTF lists.</li> <li>○ Foster the complementarity between CT strategic work, operations and online investigations within the ECTC in view of maximising the response to right-wing violent extremism and terrorism.</li> <li>○ Aim to increase cooperation between the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) members and Europol in areas of common interest, where appropriate, while fully respecting the sole responsibility of Member States for national security.</li> </ul>



## Europol Public Information

- Embed guest experts from the CT units or other experts from EU bodies/agencies into the ECTC, and similarly ECTC staff members into CT units for short-term operational or strategic analysis joint projects.
- Scope out opportunities for deploying ECTC staff members on a temporary basis in operational cases into Crime Information Cells (within CSDP missions/operations) or other fusion cells and platforms dealing with specific CT related subjects, with the aim to increase information sharing and enhance (pan-) European coordination.
- Oversee the establishment of CT-related cooperation with EU institutions and agencies, international organisations, law enforcement, academia and private sector entities with a particular focus on stakeholders at policy level.
- Explore opportunities for potential joint thematic trend reporting with agencies that hold relevant information on the topic concerned. Specific thematic trends to be identified and linked to current or emerging trends.
- In line with the External Strategy, contribute from an operational perspective to the development and increase of the strategic cooperation with the United Nations (UNCTED, UNOCT, UNODC), EU institutions and bodies (EEAS CSDP missions, CT/Security experts in EU delegations, the EU Institute for Security Studies), NATO, etc. or regional agencies active in the CT field and exchange strategic outputs and products in consultation with Member States.
- Continue enhancing cooperation with the Western Balkan countries on the basis of the operational agreements and the Western Balkan CT Action Plan.
- Continue enhancing cooperation with the MENA countries and Türkiye:
  - 1) Through CT dialogues and by supporting CT/security experts deployed by MS to EU Delegations and CSDP-missions/operations;
  - 2) By participating in capacity building initiatives offered by CEPOL and EU-funded programmes, such as the CT JUST<sup>62</sup> or CEPOL INFLOW<sup>63</sup>;
  - 3) By participating in the Working Group on FTF and returnees of the EU-MENA Information Sharing and Analysis Network (EMISA); and
  - 4) By identifying strategic/technical partners for the establishment of a common product or specific strategic initiative.
- Conduct targeted scoping and outreach with other non-EU CT units active in areas of possible interest for the EU internal security, in particular in the Caucasus and West Africa.
- Organise stakeholder events, including the ECTC Advisory Network on Terrorism and Propaganda meetings and the annual conference.
- Contribute to and support the delivery of training by CEPOL Knowledge Centre on Counter-Terrorism (CKC CT).

Expected results: Member States' counter-terrorism investigations receive quality analytical and operational support.

Improved joint operational activities with EU institutions, bodies and agencies, as well as with public and private partners of relevance.

More effective levels of cooperation leading to better coordination and increased operational and strategic results.

Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

<sup>62</sup> CT JUST Project: Counter Terrorism in the MENA region, West Africa & the Horn of Africa

<sup>63</sup> Counter-Terrorism Information Exchange and Criminal Justice Responses (CT INFLOW)

**Operations on terrorist activities**

Identify activities of terrorist groups listed by the Council of the European Union as posing a serious threat to the security of the EU and Member States, and any associate criminal activities within Europol's mandate uncovered in the course of the investigations into these terrorist networks (including ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, left-wing and anarchist terrorism, right wing and single-issue terrorism).

Prevent and combat crimes committed or likely to be committed in the course of terrorist activities against life, limb, personal freedom or property, and related criminal offences associated with terrorism perpetrated by individuals, groups, networks or organisations that evoke religiously inspired justification for their actions.

Prevent or combat terrorism by sharing analysis on related travel activities to terrorist hotspots, e.g. conflict zones and training venues.

Objectives and actions

**A.5.2 Provide support to EU Member States' counter-terrorism investigations.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support Member States with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Continue performing secondary security checks through the deployment of Guest Officers in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, and wherever needed. Manage CT-related operational information received from the secondary security checks.
- Provide support to an increased number of Operational Task Forces (OTFs) following an adjusted concept for establishing OTFs in the CT area.
- Support an increased number of operations of the Terrorist Identification Task Force (TITF) targeting CT suspects for whom there is not enough evidence for opening prosecutions. Organise four TITF sessions per year focusing on the most significant and threatening terrorist phenomena. Place focus on terrorist financing by means of cryptocurrencies. Assess the results of operations and present the assessment to Member States via all appropriate channels.
- Perform priority actions related to right-wing terrorism and violent extremism, aiming at identifying targets (Organisations/Individuals) in high profile cases.
- Following the continued increase in MS' and TP' operational contributions related to right wing terrorism and violent extremism, develop and facilitate a coordination mechanism, by means of clustering countries based on common targeting and tailored activity, for the effective disruption of networks and organisations.
- Set up (in consultation with the MB) a new Analysis Project to support EU MS and TP exclusively on right-wing terrorism and violent extremism investigations.
- Contribute to the update of Frontex's Common Risk Indicators to enhance rules-based screening and risk identification.
- Make effective use of the new face recognition tool.
- Contribute to the collection of intelligence, analysis and reporting on used/seized terrorist weapons.
- Explore opportunities to enhance Europol's capabilities to support MS through acquiring additional translators for Arabic, as well as Farsi, Urdu, Pashto and Kurdish.

Expected results: Member States CT investigations receive quality analytical and operational support.

**Operations on War Crimes, Genocide, Crimes against Humanity**

Support Member States in the fight against impunity of War Crimes, Genocide, Crimes against Humanity.

Objectives and actions

**A.5.3 Provide support to EU Member States’ investigations on war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity.**

- Streamline the gathering and processing of information at EU level for selected priority cases of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support Member States with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Provide support to the Operational Task Force and the Joint Investigation Team established in the area of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
- Streamline the gathering of information and the exploitation of the available tools to assist investigations on war crimes committed in Ukraine. Manage the dedicated OSINT taskforce comprised of OSINT experts from different MS providing targeted support to ongoing investigations.
- Utilise new opportunities stemming from the amended Europol Regulation regarding cooperation with private parties in terms of collecting data from new sources (NGOs, UN, ICC, military, private, etc.).
- Initiate the development of sustainable practices for the pro-active detection of witnesses to atrocities. Explore modalities for appealing to witnesses to atrocities to come forward and provide information on perpetrators.
- Develop a joint cooperation platform with Eurojust to ensure judicial guidance in the prioritisation process of investigations with the highest prosecutorial potential.

Expected results: Member States’ investigations on war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity receive analytical and operational support within the framework of available resources.

**Counter Terrorism Financing**

Prevent and combat terrorism by supporting Member States with terrorism-related financial information.

Prevent and combat terrorism and its financing by providing the information processing means by which Europol can fulfil its obligations in respect of the Agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on the Processing and Transfer of Financial Messaging Data from the EU to the US for the purposes of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP).

Objectives and actions

**A.5.4 Provide support to EU Member States’ CT investigations with terrorism-related financial information.**

- Support MS’ investigations targeting networks that are facilitating the financing of terrorist actions or organisations.
- Provide support, including information on financial transactional data, to all operations where there is a link to terrorism.
- Deal with MS requests for data on financial payments linked to terrorism including in accordance with the EU-US Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme Agreement (TFTP).

## Europol Public Information

- Verify the link to terrorism in requests for data on financial payments.
- Enrich the leads that are received when appropriate. Disseminate other leads received from the US Treasury (Article 9).
- Actively promote awareness of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program and provide training to MS on the possibility to request searches in financial payments data.
- Provide feedback to the US Treasury on the effectiveness of the TFTP. Explore mutually the potential to maintain a dynamic, accurate and result-oriented TFTP protocol.
- Liaise with Europol's Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) and with the competent ESOC and EC3 units to close information gaps and receive specialised support for complex cases. In particular, increase the interaction with EC3 on the use of cryptocurrency by a wide range of terrorist groups.
- Support the Europol Financial Intelligence Public Private Partnership (EFIPPP).
- Progress with the establishment of collaboration with national customs authorities competent in the area of CT and terrorism financing in view of setting up a network engaging at EU level to generate operational actions and investigations.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support with regards to terrorism-related financial information.

## **Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear & Explosives Support (CBRN/E)**

### Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.5 Provide CBRN/E support to EU Member States' investigations.**

- Provide support and expertise to Member States on CBRN/E security.
- Support the exchange of information and best practices on explosives and/or CBRN cases among Member States.
- Manage and administer the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) pages:
  - EPE/EBDS (European Bomb Data System);
  - EPE/EEODN (European Ordnance Disposal Units Network).
- Ensure the permanent secretariat and the continuity of the activities of EEODN.
- Organise a conference/seminar for the EEODN and deliver a training for EEODN experts.
- Support the ISF project on EEODN aiming to reinforce activities in explosives and CBRN areas of expertise, in order to further develop technical skills of the bomb technicians and the CBRN experts from MS competent authorities.
- Liaise with AP Weapons and Explosives to track possible new threats, trends and modus operandi involving CBRN materials and Explosives.
- Prepare strategic and technical reports on CBRN and Explosives, including reporting on trends and statistics to policy-makers.
- Monitor for new CBRN threats stemming from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Support MS/TP corresponding operations and the identification of actions to counter the emerging risks.
- Provide support to Member States' prevention programmes.
- Contribute to capacity-building initiatives, in particular trainings, for Member States on CBRN and Explosives.
- Provide input to the European Commission's policy initiatives and contribute to the work of the different Working Groups, e.g. the CBRN Advisory Group, Standing Committee of Precursors, Chemical Detection Group, Civil Explosives WG, etc.

## Europol Public Information

- Liaise and cooperate with other relevant partners in the area of CBRN/E.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational CBRN/E support.

Alignment of Member States operational needs and European Commission's policy initiatives.

### **ATLAS Support Office (ASO)**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.6 Provide support to the ATLAS Network.**

- Serve as the main interface of the ATLAS Network for Europol's CT and SOC communities and support the establishment of links with other relevant law enforcement expert networks supported by Europol.
- Facilitate the exchange of strategic and operational expertise and practices with ATLAS in accordance with the applicable rules.
- Provide administrative and logistical support to the implementation of the ATLAS Multi Annual Work Programme.
- Further develop and manage the ATLAS connectivity initiative (EPE, ONEP-EPE, SIENA, NEOS, Pooling & Sharing, etc.).
- Support New Operations System (NEOS) training activities and further the development of operational communication systems.
- Continue the development of Pooling & Sharing programmes for specialised equipment as well as joint training facilities.
- Organise the annual ATLAS Points of Contact meeting.
- Conduct the ATLAS MB and ATLAS Commanders Forum every six months in cooperation with the ATLAS Executive Bureaux.
- Initiate and implement seminars on the use of the EPE and on financial rules for ATLAS network members.
- Act as a full member of the ATLAS Forum C4 (Command, Control, Communication, Coordination).

Expected results: Stable a more efficient administration of ATLAS through the use of Europol's existing structures and tools.

Utilisation of links and synergies in terms of strategic and operational expertise between ATLAS, Europol and law enforcement networks.

Aligning EU standards through best practice findings, standard operational procedures, Manuals of Guidance and sharing outcomes across the ATLAS network members.

### **EU IRU Prevention and Crisis Response**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.7 Provide quality internet referral services.**

- Perform the scanning of the cyber environment, including the decentralised web, gaming and adjacent platforms and terrorist operated websites, within the framework of prioritised areas (jihadist and right-wing terrorism) or act upon Member States' specific requests (terrorism, migrant smuggling).

## Europol Public Information

- Coordinate and share the identification tasks (flagging) of online terrorist and violent extremist content with a network of national counterparts.
- Reinforce and streamline the ECTC expertise on the abuse of the Internet by right-wing terrorist and violent extremist networks.
- Establish initial monitoring capabilities, referral processes and analytical procedures in the area of violent left wing extremism and violent anarchism with the aim of improving the operational knowledge and countermeasures.
- Increase the operational resources for referral and monitoring of channels related to migrants smuggling and reinforce the operational and analytical support provided to the EMSC in this area.
- Play a central role in the coordination of the emergency responses in the event of a terrorist attack with a significant online component following the EU Crisis Protocol (EUCP). Deliver an annual Table Top Exercise to test the protocol. Review the effectiveness of the EUCP after activation.
- Deliver operational and strategic products.
- Organise and coordinate Referral Joint Action Days in cooperation with experts from MS and online service providers (OSPs), targeting terrorist content online, as well as online migrant smuggling.
- Support the activities of the EU Internet Forum's (EUIF) Action Plan. Maintain a close dialogue with the internet industry in the framework of the Forum.
- Contribute to the updating of the Commissions' Knowledge Package for the EU Internet Forum on violent extremist groups by supplying content and expert assessment.
- Engage with the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) and other initiatives that focus on Crisis Response.
- Engage with relevant OSPs, also outside the scope of GIFCT and the EU Internet Forum, in the context of referrals and content moderation.
- Expand the EU IRU capabilities to the extent possible to meet the increasing workload from managing the PERCI platform, supporting Member States in using PERCI and utilising the crime intelligence emerging from the flagging of content.
- Contribute to the development of the new Check-the-Web Portal as the e-Library to store and analyse terrorist content online.
- Support capacity building in IRU work in MS and prioritised Third parties (Western Balkans, MENA region) in the field of Internet-based monitoring and electronic evidence investigations.

Expected results: The referral process is managed efficiently.  
Cooperation with the private sector on content detection and referrals is growing.  
Increased number of online terrorist and violent extremist content and content promoting illegal immigration services is taken down.  
Countries and online service providers are provided with crisis response mechanism enabling them to respond rapidly, effectively and in a coordinated manner to the dissemination of terrorist or violent extremist content following a terrorist event.

**EU IRU Prevention and Crisis Response**

Objectives and actions

**A.5.8 Further develop the EU platform to tackle illegal content online (PERCI) as a communication and coordination tool for referrals and removal orders within the EU.**

- Following the launch of PERCI in 2023, maintain and fine-tune its functionalities as a cooperation platform to implement the Terrorist Content Online (TCO) Regulation and as a collaborative tool connecting, in real time, MS competent authorities, Europol's Internet Referral Unit and Hosting Service Providers (HSPs), including:
  - the issuing of referrals and transmission of removal orders for terrorist content online;
  - de-confliction and coordination of action among EU MS;
  - the status check of content one hour after the transmission of the removal order;
  - the possibility for HSPs to update the status of referrals and removal orders;
  - the possibility for HSPs to report content that presents an imminent threat to life;
  - the possibility for MS to work on the scrutiny process of cross-border removal orders; and
  - transparency reporting.
- Subject to a technical and resource assessment, ensure PERCI's processes are adapted and organised for the application of the Digital Services Act (DSA) regarding notifications of imminent threat to life, as the scope of notifications will be related to illegal content involving all crime areas.
- Make an assessment on the operational, legal and resource implications of extending PERCI's scope to handle the referral and removal of illegal content related to the crime areas covered by the DSA.
- Manage the PERCI Focus Group enrolling MS in support of the technical and operational development of the platform, and afterwards annual PERCI-meetings.
- Organise tailored trainings for MS competent authorities' use of PERCI.
- Use PERCI platform as the operational platform for EUCP crisis mechanism to enable the 24/7 real time crisis response and knowledge sharing across sectors.
- Based on the consultation of Member States within the framework of the dedicated working group, further improve of the Whitelist functionality in PERCI to reinforce the protection of content put under de-confliction.
- Expand PERCI's functionalities to allow for the setting up of sub-clusters of national users according to the needs of Member States.
- Explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the context of PERCI ecosystem. Identify the potential business opportunities of AI to enrich the existing dataset, improve the data quality and identify trends on online illegal content dissemination.
- Advance with the automation of data extraction, ingestion and real time crosschecks with Europol Databases.
- Enhance the search experience in the existing dataset as well as the provision of detailed statistics.
- Support the monitoring and evaluation of the TCO Regulation to enable the Commission to report on the application and the evaluation of the regulation.
- Utilise new opportunities stemming from the amended Europol Regulation with regards to receiving personal data from private parties in view of ensuring the efficient use of PERCI as a toolbox of data processing in emergency cases.

## Europol Public Information

Expected results: Coordination and de-confliction of the EU fight against terrorist content online.  
Increased efficiency of the work of the Member States' IRUs and increased performance of the response from the HSPs on taking down illegal content.

### **EU IRU - Internet Investigations**

Prevent and combat terrorism by sharing analysis regarding the use of the Internet by terrorist organisations.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.9 Provide support to EU Member States' CT internet-based investigations.**

- Provide operational support and facilitate coordination of CT internet-based investigations.
- Act as a knowledge hub within Europol with regards to internet-based investigations and provide support to other crime areas. In particular, contribute to the ESOCC's HVT cases of trafficking in firearms and human beings, and migrant smuggling.
- Perform open source investigations using latest OSINT techniques and tools to swiftly provide relevant and actionable intelligence.
- Keep abreast MS and TP on a regular basis of the latest OSINT techniques and tools relevant for the CT area.
- Enhance OSINT capabilities in investigation on gaming platforms and Metaverse to retrieve actionable intelligence.
- Perform big data analysis on open source information to deliver actionable intelligence in support of CT cases.
- Deliver strategic assessments and draw up the online profile of targets using OSINT and information related to terrorist propaganda collected by the EU IRU.
- Provide social network analysis of information extracted from social media platforms to identify relevant users and key players in support of CT cases.
- Support the ESOCC with the development of capacity in open source investigations and social media monitoring.
- Improve capacities on crypto-currencies investigations and develop the tracing of decentralised assets within the frame of CT cases.
- Participate as expert to EU Core groups and EU project related to the use of AI and Machine Learning for big data analysis.

Expected results: Member States' CT internet-based investigations receive quality analytical and operational support.

### **EU IRU – Advanced Technical Solutions**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.10 Provide technical support to CT internet-based investigations and referrals.**

- Explore leading technologies and perform market researches with a clear focus on the ones affecting the CT field.
- Provide advanced technical support to the EU IRU.



## Europol Public Information

- Assess, select and initiate the purchase of technical solutions that can support EU IRU's mandate.
- Develop or purchase innovative OSINT tools in coordination with MS/TP to remain up to speed in the dynamic internet evolution.
- Develop methodologies and tools to investigate decentralised platforms and web 3.0 (Web3) based on blockchain technologies in coordination with MS/TP.
- Implement the use of tools enabling Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to quickly analyse and assess open source information to identify possible risks and threats linked to terrorism, in compliance with the European legal framework related to the use of AI by Law Enforcement.
- Explore the possibilities to develop software solutions for countering fake news and trolls-driven communication within the realm of counter terrorism.
- In coordination with Europol's Innovation Lab explore new technologies to find suitable solutions for the operational needs, including engagement with relevant private sector stakeholders and setting up point of contacts with the industry on specific matters.

Expected results: CT internet-based investigations and referrals receive adequate technical support.  
EU IRU's toolset remains at the forefront of the available technology.  
Better cooperation with external partners on technical research and development.

### **EU IRU – Cross-border access to electronic evidence**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.5.11 Provide support to Member States on acquiring cross-border access to electronic evidence.**

- Finalise the implementation of Phase 2 of SIRIUS Project on access to cross-border electronic evidence in the context of criminal investigations and proceedings in cooperation with Eurojust and in close partnership with the European Judicial Network.
- Support Member States in connecting with service provider (SPs) and analysing the digital footprint of a target in CT investigations through the SIRIUS capability.
- Continue improving the knowledge of Member States' law enforcement and judicial authorities on access to digital data from SPs, via general and targeted resources published on the SIRIUS platform on the EPE, co-created with Eurojust.
- Build the capacities of MS law enforcement and judiciary authorities to produce quality information requests to SPs.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among the Single Point of Contacts (SPoCs) in EU LEAs and/or officers in charge when a SPoC is not in place.
- Strengthen and speed up voluntary cooperation between EU LEAs and SPs for access to e-evidence through targeted exchange of practical experience and guidelines, as well as through training activities.
- Follow closely legislative developments impacting EU Law Enforcement, e.g. the EU E-evidence package and the Second Additional protocol to Convention on Cybercrime, to effectively prepare and train LEAs on new rules or channels for data disclosure orders.
- Expand the SIRIUS Project's geographical scope, as a central hub for knowledge sharing on electronic evidence, to different regions and partners and support EU efforts in promoting EU standards and international legal instruments.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prepare for a potential Phase 3 of SIRIUS project which would be implemented beyond 30 June 2024, if agreed with the European Commission.</li> <li>○ Lay the basis for setting up SIRIUS as a permanent team in the EU IRU to ensure the continuation of its services to MS.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Improved Europol’s capabilities in the area of digital cross border investigations which leads to better and extended support to MS. Increased MS capacity to prepare effective digital data requests to SPs and obtain electronic evidence. Increased mutual trust and understanding between MS and SPs.</p>

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by ECTC <sup>64</sup>	tbc	tbc
Number of Operations supported by ECTC	533	900
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by ECTC (where ECTC is in the lead)	n/a	8
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ECTC	821	1,900
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by ECTC	14	32
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by ECTC	n/a	8.5
Volume of content assessed by EU IRU related to terrorism and violent extremism	8,302	20,000

<sup>64</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

## A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime

### Overview

The European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) is dedicated to maximising Europol's responsiveness and operational performance in the areas of fraud, money laundering, asset recovery, corruption and counterfeiting.



The EFECC strives to achieve the following goals:

- Reinforced operational effectiveness: by concentrating all financial intelligence and economic crime capabilities under one coordinated entity, developing synergies between MS demands for vertical support (stand-alone investigations in money laundering cases) and requirements for horizontal operational support to other investigations with regards to financial intelligence as referred to in EMPACT;
- Increased operational visibility: by bringing a higher degree of organisational clarity, facilitating for both internal and external stakeholders the identification of the main sources of knowledge, expertise and operational support and a better understanding of the allocation of responsibilities; and
- Enhanced stakeholder management and funding opportunities: the Centre offers a single point of contact and is a reference for key operational stakeholders in the Member States (Financial Intelligence Units), as well as relevant institutional partners in the EU and private sector.

The EFECC follows closely the constant evolution of financial and economic crimes and relevant emerging threats in the EU and beyond. It provides specialised operational support to law enforcement and relevant public authorities in their international financial investigations and acts as the EU law enforcement hub for collecting, processing, analysing and exchanging information and criminal intelligence on financial and economic crime. At the same time, the Centre strives to support joint operations with the other Europol operational centres based on the relevance of the financial related aspects in their criminal investigations.

In the area of fraud, the EFECC provides strategic and operational support in the fight against organised crime groups involved in serious and complex fraud, excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud. The Centre also supports Member States in relation to fraud targeting the NextGEN EU Funds, in cooperation with OLAF, EPPO and the EU 'Recovery and Resilience' Task force.

The EFECC provides strategic and operational support in money laundering and criminal finances investigations and strives to identify High Value Targets and set up Operational Task Forces (OTFs) specific to targeting money laundering. In 2024, Europol will start preparations to establish cooperation with the new Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA), which will become a key partner following the adoption of the AMLA Regulation.

In the area of asset recovery, the EFECC is the main contact point for the national Asset Recovery Offices (AROs) and hosts the secretariat of the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN). Europol is also part of the 'Freeze and Seize' Task Force established by the European Commission to coordinate MS enforcement of the adopted sanctions against Russian and Belarusian individuals and companies in the context of the war of aggression against Ukraine, in coordination with other EU agencies and bodies.

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The Centre provides criminal intelligence, strategic and operational support, including on-the-spot support to investigations in all forms of corruption, including public and private corruption, and sports corruption. Europol follows closely the negotiations on the new anti-corruption legislative framework and will contribute to its implementation as of 2024.

Finally, in the area of counterfeiting, the EFECC supports Member States by providing criminal intelligence, expertise, strategic and operational support to disrupt OCGs involved in the production and distribution of counterfeit goods. In this respect, Europol continues to manage the Intellectual Property Crime Coordination Coalition (IPC<sup>3</sup>) established in cooperation with EUIPO.

## 2024 Objectives

<b>European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC)</b>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.6.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the EFECC in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on financial and economic crime.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Serve as the EU law enforcement hub for collecting, processing, analysing and exchanging information and criminal intelligence of relevance for financial and economic crime. Provide operational support, expertise and stakeholder management in the field of fraud, money laundering, asset recovery, corruption and counterfeiting.</li><li>○ Promote the systematic use of financial investigations as an investigative technique into organised crime and forge alliances with public and private entities in order to trace, seize and confiscate criminal assets in the EU and beyond.</li><li>○ Increase the support to High Value Targets investigations of Member States and the work of the Operational Task Forces.</li><li>○ Support the implementation of the EMPACT priorities on MTIC, excise fraud, counterfeiting, criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery. Furthermore, contribute to the priority online fraud and migrant smuggling.</li><li>○ Provide horizontal operational support in financial investigations to the other Europol centres, prioritising joint operations (to the extent possible given the availability of resources). In particular, strive to enhance the support to EMSC, encouraging the launch of financial and asset recovery investigations on migrant smuggling cases.</li><li>○ Following the legal clarity stemming from the amended Europol Regulation in regards to processing of bulk data, increase the number of contributions (containing Suspicion Transaction Reports, Currency Transaction Reports, cash seizures or any information gathered under administrative powers) in particular from FIUs, Customs and Tax Agencies.</li><li>○ Manage all EPEs relating to financial intelligence (FCIC, ALEFA, AMON, anti-corruption portal, Bank statements O.A.3.6, CARIN, EFIPPP) and handle their growth.</li><li>○ Contribute to dedicated risk and threat assessments, strategic and situation reports in the areas of EFECC competence.</li><li>○ Further extend and manage the Joint Financial Intelligence Group (JFIG) at Europol to improve communication and cooperation between Europol Liaison Bureaux and EFECC Analysis Projects in order to better align investigative priorities and effectiveness of pursued cases.</li><li>○ Maintain the Customs cooperation function within the EFECC, including the cooperation with the Commission Service competent for customs matters. Host and support the J-Customs Task Force.</li></ul>

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- Further promote the automated cross-checks of the Customs Information Systems (CIS) administrated by OLAF, in particular facilitating access to cash declarations contained therein.
- Encourage the active participation of MS customs authorities in the relevant EMPACT OAPs and the Europol Analysis Projects.
- Foster the established cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO) in line with the requirements of the amended Europol Regulation. Support an increasing number of EPPO operations.
- Enhance operational cooperation and exchange of strategic and technical information with OLAF by making extensive use of the established SIENA connection and dedicated OLAF Liaison Officer posted within the EFECC.
- Develop strategic cooperation with the European Banking Authority and the European Investment Bank as key partners of the EFECC.
- Increase the outreach towards the most relevant third countries in the field of EU related economic and financial crime, including China, UAE, Türkiye, Brazil and Morocco.
- Enhance Europol's capabilities in providing a swift feedback to stakeholders concerning tracing and analysis of virtual assets taking into account the high number of cases contributed to the EFECC.
- Enhance the quantity and quality of EFECC external communication and visibility.
- Contribute to policy development such as drafting of guidelines or revision of standards when requested by the Commission.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive better and extended analytical and operational support related to financial and economic crime.  
 Improved cooperation and joint undertakings with stakeholders and financial institutions leading to an increased operational impact.  
 Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

### Operations on Fraud

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in serious and complex fraud.

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in excise fraud.

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on fraud.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS and EPPO with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Set up operational meetings and support priority- and HVT investigations.
- Support the implementation of EMPACT Operational Action Plans on Excise Fraud and MTIC fraud.
- Support at least one joint operation (Week of Action, Joint Action Day, etc.) developed in the frame of the EMPACT OAP Excise Fraud, also involving other EU bodies or agencies (OLAF, FRONTEX, etc.).
- Contribute to at least one operation in the framework of EMPACT priority Online Fraud.
- Support the Member States in close cooperation with EPPO, OLAF and the EU Task Force Recover to protect the financial interests of the EU, with particular emphasis on

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countering attempts of serious and organised crime to target the NextGeneration EU recovery fund.

- Organise a public/private partnership conference on tobacco excise fraud, combined with the annual plenary meeting on excise fraud.
- Continue developing cooperation with Eurofisc, including by extending Europol's operational and analytical support to Eurofisc investigations.
- Organise a workshop on VAT fraud with the participation of relevant stakeholders such as Eurofisc, OLAF, EPPO and the European Commission.
- Contribute to the launch of a prevention campaign in the area of fraud.
- Continue implementing the Service Level Agreement with the EUIPO on acquisition fraud targeting IP Offices and Trademarks/Registered Community Designs users by producing operational and tactical analysis, and one annual strategic report.
- Organise a multi-stakeholder meeting on a selected fraud phenomenon involving specialised national agencies, EU agencies and private sector.
- Support to the extent possible strategic activities, including policy developments, relating to fraud.
- Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meetings on serious and complex fraud, excise fraud and MTIC Fraud.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to fraud. Cooperation between Europol and other EU bodies and agencies is strengthened.

### **Operations on Money Laundering**

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in money laundering.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on money laundering.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Provide analytical and operational support to the ESOCC, EC3 and the ECTC (with regards to terrorist financing) in joint operations.
- Support the implementation of EMPACT Operational Action Plan on criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery.
- Perform the role of coordinator of the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal of criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery.
- Identify High Value Targets - individuals or entities - facilitating money laundering. Promote the proactive setting up of Operational Task Forces (OTFs) targeting money laundering criminal syndicates.
- Enhance operational support against organised crime groups and professionals providing money laundering services to other criminal groups (crime as a service).
- Improve operational support by enhancing virtual assets expertise and provide tracing and analysis support to financial investigations involving virtual assets.
- Support the strategic and operational information exchange between the Member States' Financial Investigators.
- Detect novel money laundering methods, vulnerabilities, and risks that aid and support organised crime.

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- Contribute to the development of the Supra-National Risk Assessment and high-risk third countries assessment on money laundering and terrorist financing in the framework of the Expert group on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.
- Support and host the secretariats for the Anti-Money Laundering Operational Network (AMON) and the Association of Law Enforcement Forensic Accountants (ALEFA).
- Support the Joint Working Group on criminal finances and cryptocurrencies (co-host the secretariat jointly with the Basel Institute on Governance).
- Promote and support the Europol Financial Intelligence Public Private Partnership (EFIPPP).
- Continue engaging with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Egmont group in view of developing global cooperation on money laundering and terrorist financing. Support targeted FATF projects when operational needs are identified.
- Prepare for taking up any potential new task arising from the anti-money laundering legislative proposal for a comprehensive Union policy on preventing money laundering and terrorism financing<sup>65</sup>.
- Establish a well-functioning working relation with the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA), if founded in 2024. Undertake preparations for setting up secure channels of communication (i.e. SIENA and FIU.net), participation in the Joint Analysis Teams, and a mutual hit- no hit access to data (if applicable).
- Contribute to developments in the field of Countering Financing of Terrorism (CTF) and its links to AML, in particular by leading or supporting strategic CFT projects.
- Support the Counter Terrorism Financial Investigators Network, which facilitates the exchange of investigation techniques and experiences on CT financial investigations.
- Organise the Annual Plenary Meeting on money laundering.

Expected results: Enhanced law enforcement capacity to combat organised crime by disrupting their financial structures and dismantling the networks that fund criminal activities for others or provide money laundering services (crime as a service).  
Investigations on organised crime and terrorism benefit better from synergies between financial and criminal intelligence.

### **Operations on Money Laundering**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.4 Increase cooperation with FIUs.**

- Work towards the improvement of the cooperation with the FIUs and increase the number of countries contributing financial intelligence to Europol (Suspicious Transactions Reports (STRs), Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) and cash declarations).
- Prepare the grounds for establishing close cooperation with the future Cooperation and Support Mechanism (CSM) for the FIUs, including possible secondment of liaison officers, SIENA connection, use of FIU.net, etc.
- Negotiate an SLA regarding the "Europol node" when the CSM/ new Authority takes over the FIU.net as a channel of operational communication with EU FIUs and FIU Norway.
- Provide information sessions on the use and benefits of matching technologies to APs.

<sup>65</sup> C(2020) 2800 final, published by the European Commission on 7 May 2020.



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- Identify which FIUs would be interested in having/reactivating a/their SIENA connection/mailbox. Support technically the connection/reactivation of interested FIUs in SIENA.
- Set-up a system to collect and report transparent and unambiguous statistical data on AML/CFT information received and activities executed.
- Set-up a feedback system on the usefulness of STR-related information received by Europol to improve the data quality.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Europol's implementation of the Directive (EU) 2019/1153<sup>66</sup>, in particular the possibility for Europol to request financial information from FIUs and information held in the national centralised bank account registries.

Expected results: Improved cooperation and joint undertakings with stakeholders and financial institutions leading to an increased operational impact.  
Improved cooperation with FIUs and increased contribution of financial intelligence to Europol via FIUs.  
Member States' operations receive better and extended financial investigation support.

## **Asset Recovery**

Support investigations in order to identify the criminals involved, disrupt their associates and recover and confiscate the proceeds of their crimes.

### Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations in identifying and tracing proceeds of crime.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Set up operational meetings and support priority- and HVT investigations. Provide analytical and operational support to joint OTFs with the other Europol crime centres to the extent possible given the availability of resources.
- Support the implementation of EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery.
- Support the European Commission in the peer-reviews of the EU Asset Recovery Offices (ARO).
- Co-chair with the European Commission the ARO platform meetings. Host the meeting of the ARO platform. Liaise with each Asset Recovery Office within the Member States to increase visibility of the EFECC's work.
- Support and host the secretariats of the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN).
- Connect to Siena EU Asset Recovery Offices that are not directly connected yet and strengthen MS AROs partnership with the EFECC resulting in an increase of their contribution level.
- Contribute to the work of the Task Force 'Freeze and Seize' established by the European Commission to coordinate MS enforcement of the adopted sanctions against Russian and Belarusian individuals and companies in the context of the war of

<sup>66</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1153 of 20 June 2019 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences.



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aggression against Ukraine, in coordination with other EU agencies and bodies, such as Eurojust.

- Continue following closely the developments in the area of sanctions and contribute to the coordination of criminal investigations related to the enforcement of EU restrictive measures.
- Improve operational support by enhancing virtual assets expertise and provide tracing and analysis support to ARO and the MS investigators involving virtual assets.
- Exploit the opportunities provided by the EU Directive 2019/1153 to request from Member States bank account information and financial information and intelligence.
- Follow the adoption of the new Directive on Asset Recovery and Confiscation. Facilitate the mandatory use of SIENA for all communications among AROs under this Directive.
- Promote and utilise the Guest Expert concept in terms of receiving additional expertise from MS in the area of asset recovery.
- Organise the Annual Plenary Meeting on asset recovery.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to asset tracing and recovery.  
Improved asset recovery rate within criminal investigations.

### **Operations on Corruption**

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in all forms of corruption (public and private corruption, sports corruption, grand corruption, business corruption, political corruption and administrative corruption - including corruption in central or local governments, judiciary and law enforcement).

#### Objectives and actions

##### **A.6.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on corruption.**

- Perform corruption-related criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Set up operational meetings and support priority investigations.
- Support the operational actions related to corruption stemming from the relevant EMPACT OAPs.
- Organise and fund the AP Corruption Annual Plenary Meeting.
- Organise a major event (conference) on corruption.
- Support strategic activities and policy developments, relating to sports corruption, including relevant activities of the Council of Europe such as the MARS Network<sup>67</sup>.
- Prepare the drafting of a strategic product in the field of corruption.
- Support operationally and strategically the implementation of the Commission's Anti-Corruption package. Contribute to the work of the new EU Network against Corruption<sup>68</sup>. Provide technical advice, if requested, on the new anti-corruption legislative proposal.
- Promote the use of the dedicated Corruption-SIENA for the information exchange between anti-corruption authorities and Europol/AP Corruption following its technical implementation in 2023.
- Implement joint actions or cooperation activities with external partners from the private sector that Europol has a MoU with, such as the International Olympic

<sup>67</sup> Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors dedicated to corruption in sport

<sup>68</sup> Envisaged in the Communication on the fight against corruption in the EU from 3 May 2023.

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Committee (IOC), World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), Union of European Football Association (UEFA), International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA), Sportradar and United Lotteries for Integrity in Sports (ULIS).

- Promote the cooperation with the UN GLOBE network (Anti-corruption Network for Law enforcement practitioners) following the formal acceptance of Europol to the Network as an Observer in 2022.
- Contribute to the work of the European Anti-Corruption Network (EACN) and the European Partners Against Corruption (EPAC) network.
- Contribute to the work of the Internal Criminal Investigations Network (ICIN), for activities that are directly associated and relevant to corruption.
- Further strengthen the engagement with relevant stakeholders active in combating corruption through nurturing (new) partnerships and dedicated alliances, including with private parties.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive qualitative analytical and operational support related to corruption.

### **Operations on Counterfeiting**

Disrupt the OCGs involved in the production and distribution of counterfeit goods violating health, safety and food regulations, and those producing sub-standard goods.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on the production and distribution of counterfeit goods.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT priority on Intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies.
- Coordinate operational actions in the area of counterfeit and illicit food and beverages.
- Coordinate operational actions in the area of falsified medicines.
- Coordinate operational actions in the area of counterfeit toys.
- Coordinate operational actions in the area of counterfeit cosmetics and perfumes that are traded illegally on online platforms and on physical markets.
- Coordinate operational actions in the area of counterfeit electronics and electronic accessories.
- Continue to improve cooperation with OLAF in the fight against Intellectual Property Rights infringement, in particular through OLAF's participation to Europol operations on fake medicines, toys, pesticides, food and beverages, etc.
- Continue to improve operational actions to fight against illegal Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), which is an increasing concern for intellectual property rights holders. Extend the scope of the cooperation with UEFA to cover IPTV on the basis of an updated cooperation agreement (if concluded in 2023).
- Contribute to the development of the EU Toolbox against counterfeiting under the lead of the European Commission.
- Support and host the secretariat of the IP Crime Network of the intellectual property crime experts from specialised LEAs.
- Manage the Intellectual Property Crime Coordination Coalition (IPC<sup>3</sup>) established in cooperation with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), and undertake work according to the amended SLA for 2024-2027.

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- Gather information and monitor relevant trends in the field of counterfeiting and piracy with particular emphasis on online IPR infringement. Collaborate with EUIPO to prepare reports intended to inform policy makers, law enforcement authorities and other relevant stakeholders.
- Raise awareness on instruments which Europol and EUIPO offers to assist in the fight against IPR infringements. Develop and publicise crime prevention and other communication materials on intellectual property crime.
- Organise and financially support meetings, training, seminars and a conference at Europol and/or in the Member States on intellectual property crime.
- Organise the IP Crime Units network meeting.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to counterfeiting.

### **Operations on Counterfeiting**

Disrupt the OCGs involved in Euro counterfeiting.

Objectives and actions

#### **A.6.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on Euro counterfeiting.**

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT priority on Intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies.
- Provide financial support to Member States' Euro counterfeiting operations.
- Provide to Member States technical-tactical training on Euro counterfeiting.
- Support strategic activities, including policy developments, relating to Euro counterfeiting.
- Strengthen cooperation with the European Central Bank in the field of (online) distribution of counterfeit banknotes and coins.

Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to Euro counterfeiting.  
Member States' investigations in relation to Euro counterfeiting are initiated based on Europol's analysis.

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Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by EFECC <sup>69</sup>	tbc	tbc
Number of Operations supported by EFECC	254	400
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by EFECC (where EFECC is in the lead)	n/a	6
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EFECC	1,271	1,900
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EFECC	64	83
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EFECC	9.9	8.5

<sup>69</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

## A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination

### Overview



Criminal analysis remains at the core of Europol's business and it continues being a service that is highly demanded by the law enforcement agencies in Member States. Europol has a considerable wealth of knowledge, capabilities and expertise in this area, which the agency strives to further strengthen through enhanced coordination and attention to quality output and control, standardisation, training, specialised analysis and a more efficient and flexible reassignment of resources.

The area of data quality coordination, data analysis deployment and support is growing in importance and significance within the work of Europol, mainly due to the introduction of a new technical environment for the data handling and data processing for the purpose of strategic and operational analysis, and the increase of supervision from the European Data Protection Supervisor. The amended Europol Regulation has strengthened the focus on data protection by design and by default, pushing the work of data quality coordination to the front line.

Strategic analysis in the context of law enforcement aims at informing decision makers on current and emerging trends in serious crime and terrorism landscapes and helps with the identification of critical areas for prioritisation and policy development. The use of strategic intelligence analysis is one of the pillars of the EMPACT, as it promotes an intelligence-led approach to fight international serious and organised crime in a cooperative fashion among the EU law enforcement authorities, JHA agencies and external partners. The strategic analysis produced by Europol provides guidance also to the agency's management and the work of the Operational Analysis Projects (APs).

The Analysis Training coordination function at Europol has two aspects: 1) internal – which comprises the responsibility to assess in-house skills, training needs and requirements; and to develop and provide in-house analysis trainings; and 2) external – which includes reviewing and responding to Member States' analysis training needs in collaboration with CEPOL. The team in charge is also assessing the possibilities for accreditation of analysis training at Europol and organises the Europol Summer School. Within the renewed Europol Strategy "Delivering Security in Partnership", it is foreseen that a new analysis training and coaching program for Europol staff and Europol partners will be developed with the aim to satisfy the needs for state-of-the-art analytical competences.

Europol support to the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) is also essential for ensuring operational and strategic coordination of MS efforts to fight organised crime at the EU level. The EMPACT team facilitates the development, monitoring and reporting of the EMPACT operational action plans (OAP) and supports their implementation. With dedicated funds, the agency is in a position to financially support actions of the OAPs in the form of EMPACT grants. EMPACT is an essential part of the actionable operational mechanism for EU MSs to react to major security crises, as demonstrated through the EMPACT drivers' response during the Ukraine war to adjust OAPs according to the emerging operational needs.

Facilitating the cooperation among all competent law enforcement authorities, including Customs and Counter-Terrorism services in the Member States, is a crucial element of

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Europol's work and mandate. The agency supports the Liaison Bureaux of Member States and other cooperation partners at Europol and maintains Europol liaison offices in other countries and organisations.

In view of the global challenges facing the EU, effective investigations depend often on information exchange with third countries and private partners. In the past years, Europol succeeded in establishing cooperation with key external partners and it will continue working on the implementation of the different cooperation agreements. The agency aims at increasing its outreach to other priority partners, in line with its External Strategy 2021-2024.

At the same time, Europol pursues the further strengthening of its partnership with Interpol, the EU Institutions and relevant EU agencies, in particular those active in the area of Justice and Home affairs, in order to ensure complementarity and maximum benefit from possible synergies. The establishment of a strategy for cooperation with private parties will be also among Europol's priorities in 2024.

### 2024 Objectives

<b><u>Analysis coordination</u></b>
Objectives and actions
<b>A.7.1 Reinforce criminal analysis coordination and expertise at Europol to ensure provision of quality analysis support to EU Member States' investigations.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Expand the support to the work on criminal analysis at Europol by:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Further developing the Visualisation and Analysis Toolbox, including a tool for OSINT;</li><li>- Enhancing the Data Analysis Portal (DAP), including discovering potential new AI solutions for improving its functionalities; and</li><li>- Establishing a pool of analysts specialised in technical analysis and specialised methods and tools to support all Europol's Centres with expertise.</li></ul></li><li>○ Act a single point of contact for new tools for data handling, processing and analysis.</li><li>○ Coordinate user feedback and requirements in relation to the core Europol analysis, data sharing and messaging capabilities from an internal business need perspective.</li><li>○ Monitor and enforce the standards related to the different process steps in the operational information management lifecycle to improve and maintain the quality and speed of Europol's services.</li><li>○ Implement a case management system at Europol and introduce the Joint Analysis Platform.</li><li>○ Further invest in the development of handling and processing complex datasets.</li><li>○ Develop mechanisms, based on data science to increase efficiency in monitoring and detecting trends in crime and terrorism data.</li><li>○ Further automate data quality control and review via the Data Review Module in the DAP.</li><li>○ Act as a central contact point for the Operations Directorate for business intelligence, and provide statistics and reports on operational data in relation to the Europol Regulation.</li></ul>
<b>A.7.2 Ensure data and analysis quality control at Europol.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Ensure that the Deputy Executive Director Operations can fully fulfil his responsibilities as Data Controller.</li></ul>

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- Fully establish the Data Quality Control Office under the lead of the Data Quality Control Coordinator.
- Ensure the implementation of the current data review mechanism and that data processing is performed in line with Europol’s legal framework.
- Further implement a systematic review of all APs, including data quality reviews on biometric and travel related data.
- Strengthen the focus on data protection by design and by default throughout all data management tools and processes by further fine-tuning the Data Review module within the Data Analysis Portal.
- Work in close cooperation with the DPF and ensure compliance with the data protection rules.
- Report internally on regular basis on the enhanced data review activities; Provide progress reports to DPF.
- Provide guidance and training to improve the quality of analytical reporting.

Expected results: Compliance with the legal requirements for data processing.  
 Increased efficiency of handling, processing, analysing and monitoring of data.  
 Increased standardisation and quality of products.  
 Enhanced quality of Europol’s operational analysis support to Member States.

### **Analysis coordination**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.7.3 Reinforce analysis training capabilities at Europol to ensure full coverage of training needs on the new analysis environment.**

- Maintain a centralised overview of in-house analytical competencies and knowledge.
- Provide regular in-house analysis training. Further develop the new Europol criminal intelligence training curriculum. Train all relevant staff on the new features of the analysis environment for Operations, the Data Analysis Portal and related tools.
- Review the strategic analysis training package.
- Further develop the analysis training environment and a learning management solution for assessing the impact of training on quality.
- Further progress with the accreditation process of analysis training in Europol (provided that there was a positive initial assessment in 2023).
- Review and respond to Member States’ analysis training needs in collaboration with CEPOL. Coordinate Europol’s contribution to CEPOL’s training activities (e.g. content development, expert presentations, moderation, etc.).
- Train MS on the use of the Joint Analysis Platform.
- Provide regular training to MS on specific topics such as Data Subject Categorisation (DSC).
- Deliver together with CEPOL the training on Operational Intelligence Analysis and Train the Trainer on Operational Intelligence Analysis.
- Develop the concept for an Analysis Training and Coaching program to satisfy the need for state-of-the-art analytical competence at Europol and the national competent authorities.
- Manage the online Intelligence Analysis Platform CONAN.

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- Organise the annual EU Crime Analysis Conference.
- Organise the Europol Summer School.

Expected results: Provision of effective and up-to-date operational and strategic analysis training for Europol's analysts leading to increased quality of Europol's analysis support to Member States.

Fully trained criminal intelligence analysts at Europol.

More efficient and faster processing and analysing of data.

Increased standardisation and quality of products.

### Strategic analysis

#### Objectives and actions

##### **A.7.4 Deliver quality strategic reports.**

- Deliver Flagship reports on serious and organised crime, cybercrime or terrorism that have a key importance for Europol, such as:
  - Criminal networks active in the EU describing their threat level (Pre-product of the SOCTA 2025)
  - Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA)
  - EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)
  - Report on future of SOC and terrorism
- Deliver Threat Assessments on current or future threat by one or more crime areas (e.g. drug trafficking, migrant smuggling) or types of terrorism and by criminal networks.
- Deliver Early warning notifications giving rapid alert on new and emerging threats and modi operandi.
- Deliver Intelligence notifications identifying intelligence gaps, recommendations or key areas to target, and present a basis for decision making.
- Deliver Joint reports with EU agencies/national authorities, such as:
  - Joint analysis with Frontex, Joint analysis with Frontex and EUAA on secondary movements, Joint analysis with EUIPO, Joint analysis with EMCDDA (European Drug Markets reports modules)
- Deliver Crisis response reports on crisis situations (geo-political crises or crisis events).
- Deliver ad-hoc reports requested by COSI or in the framework of VISA and Schengen evaluations, and risk assessments requested by the Council and Commission.
- Maintain a common, consistent and holistic approach towards strategic analysis across the Operations Directorate.
- Enhance networking with experts (e.g. SOCTA, TE-SAT Advisory Group) to advance methodologies, increase access to information and improve the quality of reports.
- Support as a coordinator the implementation of the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal on Criminal intelligence picture.
- Support strategic analysis in the MENA region by contributing to the EU funded project Euromed Police V.
- Support strategic analysis in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region by contributing to the EU funded project EaP Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP).

Expected results: Provision of timely and quality strategic reports.



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Enhanced analytical capacities of the EU Neighbourhood countries to perform threat assessments and other strategic analysis.  
Strengthened strategic cooperation between national law enforcement authorities, as well as between the EU Neighbourhood countries and the EU MS and EU agencies.

### EMPACT support

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.7.5 Provide support and funding opportunities to EMPACT priorities and actions.**

- Contribute to the identification of key issues and good practices related to EMPACT and provide input to the Council's Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI).
- Provide methodological, administrative and logistical support to the drafting of the Operational Action Plans (OAPs) and facilitate communication and collaboration between the crime priorities and horizontal goals. Provide support to the implementation of the operational actions.
- Facilitate the activation of the EMPACT community as an essential part of the actionable operational mechanism for EU MSs to react to major security crises by supporting EMPACT drivers to adjust/reshape OAPs accordingly and by providing the pertinent intelligence picture.
- Manage the EMPACT Grant scheme, adapted to the new biannual model and inform MS systematically about funding opportunities.
- Coordinate and support the planning of Joint Action Days.
- Monitor the implementation of the Operational Action Plans.
- Support the development of the Online EMPACT tool (EMPACT Goes Green).
- In cooperation with CEPOL, contribute to the delivery of EMPACT-related training seminars and webinars to MS.
- In cooperation with CEPOL, contribute to the delivery of training to the Western Balkan countries on EMPACT priorities within the framework of the EU funded project WB Partnership against Crime and Terrorism (WBPACT) (if extended beyond 2023).
- Continue implementing the funding mechanism<sup>70</sup> earmarked for (Member-States-led) EMPACT-related projects for the benefit of the law enforcement authorities of the EU Eastern Neighbourhood countries.

**Expected results:** Member States receive efficient support for the implementation of their OAPs, including the activation of EMPACT community as emergency mechanism.  
Administrative aspects of EMPACT are improved in efficiency due to digitalisation.  
Europol's support to EMPACT increasingly contributes to operational outcomes in the Member States.  
Strengthened partner countries' institutional knowledge of and criminal intelligence capacity in the EMPACT priority crime areas.  
Enhanced operational and strategic cooperation of partner countries with EU Member States and agencies.

<sup>70</sup> Funded through a grant from the European Neighbourhood East Instrument and based on an agreement with the European Commission on concrete priorities to be pursued by the programme.

**Cooperation with Member States**

Objectives and actions

**A.7.6 Manage cooperation with EU Member States.**

- Manage strategic cooperation of Europol with Member States' competent authorities including Law Enforcement, Counter-Terrorism services and Customs.
- Ensure appropriate intake of Member State's needs and priorities across all relevant areas of Europol's work.
- Coordinate Europol contribution to the Management Board/MB Working Groups ensuring submission of the relevant documentation according to the established deadlines, and follow up to MB decisions.
- Coordinate and prepare meetings of the Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs).
- Support the implementation of the operational agreement with Denmark.
- Support the liaison officers' community based at Europol, including by facilitating the regular meetings of the Heads of Liaison Bureaux (LB) and the newly established informal Consultation Group.
- Provide information to MS on agency's wide operational activities via Operational Meeting updates.
- Support Member States' cooperation on matters outside Europol's mandate by offering a specific EPE platform dedicated for such communication and exchanges of information.

Expected results: Effective involvement of Member States' competent authorities in the consultations and decision-making on Europol matters.  
Enhanced cooperation with and between LBs, their respective national authorities and related stakeholders for the additional benefit in the operational area.

**Cooperation with third countries**

Objectives and actions

**A.7.7 Manage cooperation with third countries.**

- Support the implementation of the operational agreements with Albania, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States, and the working arrangements with Andorra, Armenia, Chile, Israel, Japan, Kosovo<sup>71</sup>, Mexico, New Zealand, Qatar, San Marino, South Korea and the United Kingdom.
- Support the implementation of the strategic agreements with Brazil, China, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates.
- Monitor the implementation of cooperation agreements and the fulfilment of obligations and commitments.
- Manage Europol's Liaison Office in Washington.
- Support the establishment of new Partner Liaison Bureaux and their Liaison Officers at Europol.

<sup>71</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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- Establish or reinforce cooperation with selected high-priority third countries in line with Europol's External Strategy 2021-2024 and as listed in the Management Board decision on Europol's external relations priorities.
- Complete the final implementation report of Europol's External Strategy 2021-2024.
- Assess the methodology and outcomes from the current strategy and prepare the next External Strategy. Consider possible ways to enhance the cooperation with the third countries and partners in line with the objectives of the renewed Europol Strategy.
- Review the model of the working arrangement with third countries for potential updates.
- Further foster the cooperation with the Western Balkan (WB) countries, following the recommendations of the strategic review of the cooperation (from 2023). Specifically, encourage WB competent authorities to increase the quantity and quality of shared information and their proactive engagement in EMPACT, Europol's APs and relevant OTFs.
- Contribute to the next iteration of the EU funded project Western Balkan Partnership against Crime and Terrorism (WBPACT), if confirmed, and monitor the future development of an EU funding scheme to support the operational cooperation in the region.
- Contribute to the EU funded projects in the Eastern Neighbourhood region: 1) EaP Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP) and 2) Fighting against Organised Crime in the EaP Region.
- Explore possibilities to extend cooperation with the EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine, paving the way for Mission's support to Ukrainian authorities in addressing threats for EU internal security and in facilitating information exchange. EU technical assistance to Ukrainian law enforcement authorities might require Europol's contribution.
- Further develop Europol's relations with the countries from the MENA region. Continue introducing the concept of Policing Partnerships and enhance cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council – Police Network (GCCPOL) and the Arab Interior Ministers Council (AIMC) as a gateway to the region.
- Continue contributing to the EU funded project Euromed V.
- Progress in building cooperation with Singapore, Pakistan and other priority partners in Asia, provided there is mutual interest.
- Strengthen cooperation with Brazil and Colombia and further develop Europol's relations with Chile and Mexico according to the concluded agreements. Establish cooperation with Ecuador once the working arrangement is finalised. Utilise the linkages to the EU funded project EL PACCTO<sup>72</sup> as a gateway to other countries in the region.
- Prepare a strategic review of the cooperation with Colombia.
- Assess the potential and added value of establishing cooperation with further countries along the key smuggling routes, which are part of the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships when preparing the new External Strategy.
- Assist the European Commission, where required and requested, in the negotiation of international agreements according to Art.218 TFEU.
- Take appropriate actions to implement any concluded international agreements between the EU and third countries, in particular the upcoming agreements with the Latin America countries, with regards to the exchange of personal data between Europol and the national competent authorities.

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<sup>72</sup> EL PACCTO is an EU funded project which provides technical assistance to Latin American States to efficiently fight organised crime.

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- Elaborate legal advice on new possibilities for case by case cooperation with any third country, in the absence of an agreement or adequacy decision.
- Provide legal advice as regards the new possibilities stemming from the amended Europol Regulation concerning the exchange of personal data with third countries.

Expected results: Increased involvement of Europol in information exchange with third countries and better access to criminal intelligence from abroad.  
Enhanced cooperation and joint undertakings with third countries leading to an increased operational impact.

### Cooperation with EU institutions, agencies or bodies

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.7.8 Manage cooperation with EU institutions, agencies or bodies.**

- Manage strategic cooperation of Europol with EU institutions, agencies or bodies, including EU CSDP missions and operations; manage the Liaison Office in Brussels.
- Manage and coordinate the interaction with the European Commission, the External Action Service (EEAS), including the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN), and EU Council and Parliamentary committees, including the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG).
- Provide (technical) advice and contribute to the preparation of new EU policy and legislative initiatives.
- Follow closely the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy and relevant EU policies and initiatives<sup>73</sup>, for emerging tasks falling within Europol's mandate.
- Contribute to the annual Schengen Cycle, which provides a new governance model for the Schengen area. Support activities regarding Schengen evaluations on police cooperation, such as evaluations, on-site visits to Schengen countries and training.
- Support the implementation of the operational agreements with Eurojust and Frontex. Facilitate the exchange of Liaison officers with Frontex and the liaising of Eurojust SNEs with Europol's crime centres.
- Support the implementation of the strategic agreements, MoUs and administrative and working arrangements with CEPOL, ECB, ECDC, EIB, EEAS, EMCDDA, EMSA, ENISA, EPPO, EUIPO, EU-LISA, the European Commission, FRA and OLAF.
- Continue the reinforced cooperation between the Eurojust Contact Points and Europol's Analysis Projects with regard to exchange of information, identification of HVT and Eurojust's participation in EMPACT. Support the coordination of the annual networking meeting.
- Support the Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) of the Member States in cooperation with Eurojust and OLAF including the provision of complementary funding and training.
- Foster the implementation of the working arrangement with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the working modalities for Europol's support, taking into the account the relevant provisions from the Europol Regulation. Ensure synergies with Eurojust and OLAF in the respective efforts to collaborate with the EPPO.
- Enhance the cooperation with Frontex by concluding a new working arrangement, including exchange of personal data.
- Enhance the cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) by concluding a new working arrangement.

<sup>73</sup> The strategies, policies and legislative initiatives mentioned in Section I – General Context.

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- Enhance the cooperation with the European Labour Authority (ELA) on the basis of a new working arrangement.
- Assess the possible need for updating the cooperation agreement with Eurojust and agree on the way forward, on the basis of legal and operational requirements.
- Develop cooperation with new bodies established by the EU involved in crime areas covered by Europol's mandate, such as the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority.
- Contribute to the work of the JHA Agencies Network.
- Progress with embedding the law enforcement component into CSDP missions and operations, in line with the Civilian CSDP Compact, as endorsed in May 2023. Establish structured cooperation based on operational needs with selected CSDP missions.
- Follow the implementation of Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, in particular the actions planned for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030 regarding cyber attacks and terrorism as key threats against the EU.
- Explore the establishment of links with EU defence structures and relevant bodies including the European Defence Agency (EDA), countering hybrid threats in order to enrich the intelligence picture with strategic information from military sources, while fully respecting the mandate of INTCEN and the mandate of national security and intelligence services.

Expected results: Utilisation of synergies, optimisation of information flow and alignment of actions between Europol and other EU institutions, agencies and bodies leading to better operational impact.

### Cooperation with organisations

#### Objectives and actions

##### **A.7.9 Manage cooperation with international and regional organisations.**

- Support the implementation of the operational agreement with Interpol and manage Europol's Liaison Office at Interpol.
- Support the implementation of the new EU-Interpol agreement and assist with the preparation of the Administrative and Working Arrangements to give effect to this agreement. (Subject to progress in 2023).
- Support the implementation of the strategic agreements with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO). Continue to build relations with relevant UN offices for establishing of cooperation in line with Europol's operational needs.
- Strengthen the cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC) based on the working arrangement concluded in 2023.
- Pursue progress in concluding a working arrangement with NATO in order to enrich the criminal intelligence picture with strategic information from military sources.
- Continue to enhance cooperation with the Council of Europe, in areas of mutual interest.
- Monitor developments in relevant regional organisations and collaboration platforms such as the Baltic Sea Task Force, Danube River Strategy group, the Western Balkan regional initiatives, SELEC, MAOC-N, and EUMed, Afripol, GCCPOL, the Western Africa Platforms, Aseanapol and Ameripol, and identify areas of collaboration depending on operational needs.
- Establish cooperation agreement with AMERIPOL, provided AMERIPOL's legal framework allows for it (subject to progress in 2023).

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- Provide legal advice related to Europol's negotiation and conclusion of working arrangements with international organisations.

Expected results: Cooperation with international and regional organisations brings forward better criminal intelligence picture and operational results.

### **Cooperation with private parties**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.7.10 Establish a strategy for managing and enhancing cooperation with private parties.**

- Develop a Strategy for the steering and coordination of Private Party cooperation to optimise private sector partnerships to the benefit of the operational delivery, taking into account the respective interests, capabilities, resource constraints, Member States' priorities and the principles of fundamental rights and data protection.
- Assess the relevance of the various (sectors of) partners for the different business areas at Europol; identify the interests of the private parties to cooperate in order to achieve optimal outreach.
- Assess the possibility to increase effectiveness of prevention outreach, through the involvement of relevant companies and NGOs.
- Provide legal advice as regards the new possibilities stemming from the Europol Regulation concerning the exchange of personal data with private parties.
- Establish a model Working Arrangement for private parties.
- Fine-tune the operational process for obtaining relevant information from the private sector enriching the criminal intelligence picture.

Expected results: Cooperation with private parties improves in effectiveness and reduces information gaps.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Strategic Analysis Reports	13	30
Satisfaction with Strategic Analysis Reports	8.9	8.5
Satisfaction with Operational Analysis	9.0	8.5
Satisfaction with Operational Training delivered to MS/TP	9.5	8.5
Number of SIENA messages exchanged by Third Parties <sup>74</sup>	122,973	230,000

<sup>74</sup> The responsibility for this indicator is shared by Europol and its partners (MS, TP). As such, the target is indicative and used to monitor the trend of accepted contributions.

## A.8. Governance, support and administration

### Overview

As provided for in Article 32 of the Europol Financial Rules, the Europol Internal Control Framework (ICF), adopted by the Europol MB in December 2018, represents the overall strategy on the organisational and internal control approach, as well as for Europol's ethics, compliance, corporate risk management and anti-fraud related components. The ICF is monitored through a set of control indicators that are integrated in Europol's corporate performance monitoring. The Code of Conduct, Europol's cornerstone for the organisational ethics, was put in force in an updated version at the end of 2019, including based on a review of staff from across the organisation. The Code of Conduct gives an essence statement for each of the six Europol Values (Service, Integrity, Accountability, Initiative, Partnership and Diversity), underlining a zero tolerance to fraud and the requirement to perform duties impartially and without favouring any particular individual, group, organisation or country, for preventing any potential conflict between personal and work related interests.



Europol strives for full compliance with principles of sound financial management, security, data protection, fundamental rights protection and internal control standards, as demonstrated by the overall positive findings resulting from the internal and external audit mechanisms. In the spirit of ensuring clear accountability towards its stakeholders, Europol adheres to a systematic performance monitoring and reporting practice and applies robust document and records management procedures.

In 2024, the role of the Fundamental Rights Officer will be further consolidated to ensure compliance with fundamental rights across all Europol's operational and administrative processes. Moreover, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the renewed Europol Strategy while the Agency will continue making progress in promoting workforce diversity and inclusion, in line with Europol's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

The HR and Finance Strategies will continue to guide and ensure the efficient and effective management of budget and resources.

The agency aims at maintaining effective communication to both external partners and stakeholders, and internally to staff. Increasing the awareness of the general public and the law enforcement community of Europol's work is continuously pursued. The broader awareness of Europol's products and services among MS' competent authorities is a prerequisite for their full and effective utilisation, and for bringing forward better operational results. Transparent communication towards staff is an important factor to ensure engagement and motivation.

The growth of the agency led to the establishment of the Strategic Housing Roadmap, which comprises the relocation of part of Europol's staff to temporary satellite buildings in the short to mid-term and the arrangement of second permanent headquarters in the longer term. At the same time, existing workspace is regularly re-organised to ensure optimal utilisation and compliance with the new governmental standards. These activities require a major effort and ultimately an expansion of the necessary facilities, ICT, security and administrative services for the years ahead.

**Objectives 2024**

<b><u>Corporate affairs and services</u></b>	
Objectives and actions	
<p><b>A.8.1 Continue optimising Europol’s corporate functions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coordinate and oversee the implementation of organisational initiatives and changes in line with the renewed Europol Strategy and External Strategy.</li> <li>○ Support and promote the implementation of the Diversity &amp; Inclusion Strategy.</li> <li>○ Provide policy, technical and expert advice, and prepare related policy documents; Identify key strategic opportunities for Europol's growth in priority areas.</li> <li>○ Establish a compliance management framework at Europol, to effectively implement (internally and externally driven) change across the organisation, including regulatory changes impacting the agency, such as the amended Europol Regulation, and interoperability.</li> <li>○ Coordinate all audit activities and Europol’s response to audit activities and findings.</li> <li>○ Ensure monitoring and annual assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system, based on a dedicated list of internal control indicators.</li> <li>○ Define the scope of a new internal control and compliance management tool to be implemented as of 2025.</li> <li>○ Monitor Europol's corporate risks. Continue implementing the risk management policy and enhance awareness, through training and communication measures.</li> <li>○ Contribute to the annual risk peer review exercise of the EU Agencies Network, requested by the European Commission.</li> <li>○ Prepare Europol’s multi-annual and annual business planning documents, and quarterly, bi-annual and annual corporate performance reporting.</li> <li>○ Streamline the use of corporate analytics and reporting to ensure high quality and accurate corporate performance measurement and reporting.</li> <li>○ Maintain and further develop the User Survey.</li> <li>○ Provide legal advice on the implementation of Europol’s legal framework and data protection rules. Advice on legality and compatibility of new Europol initiatives with EU law, as well as on new EU initiatives having an impact on Europol.</li> <li>○ Coordinate strategic, legal and internal data protection aspects, including operational elements, in matters related to the interaction with the EDPS.</li> <li>○ Develop and maintain Europol’s legal framework for finance, procurement, grants and facilities.</li> <li>○ Provide internally legal support on contracts, service level agreements, licenses, grant agreements, etc. Handle contract related complaints and court cases.</li> <li>○ Develop and maintain the HR legal framework and implementing rules to the EU Staff Regulations. Handle staff related complaints, requests and court cases.</li> <li>○ Manage public access to Europol’s documents.</li> </ul>	
Expected results:	<p>Europol progresses along the strategic priorities; areas for further development are identified and utilised.</p> <p>Transparency and accountability of the organisation's strategic planning and performance. Increased benefits to Europol's stakeholders.</p> <p>Legal frameworks, implementing rules and corporate processes are up-to-date and compliant.</p>



**Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO)**

Objectives and actions

**A.8.2 Ensure fundamental rights compliance in all internal and external operational and administrative processes.**

- Monitor Europol internal and external operational processes, including deployments, and ensure their compliance with fundamental rights.
- Advice on fundamental rights compliance in the innovation domain, including on AI.
- Initiate an assessment of cooperation agreements with Third Parties and on the strategy for cooperation with private parties, with a view to ensure fundamental rights compliance.
- Promote Europol’s respect of fundamental rights in the performance of its tasks and activities, including by regularly organising targeted training activities for staff and senior management.
- Network and ensure coordination with the fundamental rights officers of FRA and CEPOL, including via the newly established network of FROs.

Expected results: Fundamental rights compliance in all Europol’s operational and administrative processes.  
Well established role of the FRO in the organisation.

**Corporate communications**

Objectives and actions

**A.8.3 Ensure efficient internal and external communication.**

- Maintain and further develop media, press and public relations; develop and coordinate external and internal communication networks and coordinate external publications.
- Manage, maintain and continuously develop Europol’s website. Maintain the EU Most Wanted website.
- Continue mapping and documenting processes and workflows in the area of digital communication.
- Revise Europol’s communication strategy, including by aligning it with the strategic objectives and actions of the renewed Europol Strategy.
- Continue evaluating external communication campaigns, including by further developing an impact-based approach to (digital) communication evaluation.
- Further explore and develop actions to engage with MS on awareness and prevention activities, based on the principle of joint responsibility between Europol and MS.
- Provide corporate audio-visual productions and campaigns targeting awareness raising of Europol’s products and services, including a dedicated campaign on Europol’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- Provide user support and training on the use of Open Source (OS) tools and databases and implement newly identified OS/OSINT solutions. Produce OS reports and contribute to country reports to support governance activities.
- Deliver the annual Europol Excellence Award in Innovation.
- Deliver effective media monitoring, crisis monitoring and media impact products and services.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain and develop Europol’s intranet as the main internal communication tool. Continue work towards the implementation of an upgraded internal communication platform.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Europol maintains effective communication to external partners and stakeholders. Europol and its brand identity are well positioned among media.</p> <p>A wider group of MS’ law enforcement officers are aware of Europol’s products and services and of the benefits of international law enforcement cooperation.</p> <p>Effective media monitoring and open sources tools are in place and broadly used.</p> <p>Europol maintains effective internal communication.</p>

### Administration of Human and Financial resources

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.4 Ensure efficient human resources and budget management.**

- Plan and monitor the implementation of the budget and staff establishment plan.
- Develop and update finance related policies, implementing rules and processes.
- Execute financial initiation of revenue and expenditure; Perform ex-ante and ex-post financial verification of all financial operations while advancing towards the full ex-ante model as per Finance Unit Strategy, subject to available resources.
- Manage tender planning and procedures in line with annual business and budget planning.
- Further review the contract management, budget planning and reporting, and financial and grant administration activities performed by Europol, and assess the need for further centralisation, in accordance with the Finance Unit Strategy, and outcomes of the Root Cause Analysis performed in 2023.
- Further improve sustainable procurement by integrating social consideration elements, stemming from the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.
- Expand financial reporting via the new automated reporting solution.
- Coordinate the implementation of the HR Strategy and relevant actions stemming from the renewed Europol Strategy, as well as other organisational changes across Europol as approved by the MB.
- Coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, in line with the approved D&I Implementation Plan, which includes key actions, tasks and responsibilities addressing i.a. gender balance.
- Coordinate the elaboration and related implementation of the Europol Health & Wellbeing (H&W) Policy, in line with the HR Strategy.
- Manage the salary administration and payment of allowances to staff and SNEs.
- Manage the HR Management System (SYSPER) and coordinate the implementation of additional modules and functionalities. Review HR related processes in view of the implementation of new SYSPER modules.
- Maintain the Travel Management System and, if and once approved, implement the Missions Integrated Processing System (MiPS) as the new travel management system at Europol.
- Continue preparations for the replacement of the current accounting system ABAC at Europol by the new system provided by the European Commission.

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- Ensure the coordination of talent acquisition, learning and development, appraisal, probation and reclassification, on boarding and personnel administration for staff, SNEs, interns and law enforcement trainees.
- Coordinate training of Europol staff. Further implement the Leadership and Management Development Program.
- Manage the administration and coordination of grants, including EMPACT, OTF/HVT, ATLAS, EaP, Euro counterfeiting and Innovation.
- Assess and utilise, where appropriate and subject to checking potential and actual conflicts of interest as well as confirming availability of capacities, funding opportunities in relation to calls within Europol's remit for which the agency is eligible.
- Deliver health and wellbeing-related services.
- Ensure the quality of the services after the insourcing of the medical service.

Expected results: Ensured reliability and accuracy of Europol's budget management.  
 Increased HR efficiency, effectiveness and customer service delivery.  
 Increased efficiency and effectiveness of financial processes and client satisfaction.

### **Physical, personnel and information security**

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.5 Ensure the necessary level of physical, personal and information security at Europol.**

- Ensure the physical security of Europol's buildings. Execute protective security operations for the Executive Director, staff and participants at high-level meetings and events.
- Continuously strengthen operational effectiveness, improve incident response and security compliance capabilities, enhance the security posture and foster cross-departmental cooperation.
- Ensure that security requirements concerning the expansion of Europol to a third temporary satellite building are fulfilled.
- Continue supporting the preparations for acquiring Europol's second permanent headquarters in terms of security requirements.
- Continue upgrading the Security Control Room to cope with expanding security tasks (e.g. monitoring of the satellite buildings).
- Identify innovative ways to communicate security awareness to Europol users.
- Continue providing awareness and risk assessment for Europol staff deployed in mission.
- Update the threats and risks assessment in light of the changes stemming from Europol's amended Regulation, and the strategic objectives of the renewed Strategy.
- Ensure timely accreditation of information systems to ensure Information Security; assess information security risks and provide risk treatment options.
- Perform technical security assessments of Europol's ICT systems and propose appropriate actions.
- Subject to the final adoption of 1) the Proposal for a Regulation laying down measures for a high common level of cybersecurity and 2) the Proposal for a Regulation on information security in the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union, assess the impact on Europol's information security rules and procedures and start

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implementing necessary adjustments. Develop, implement and validate the business continuity framework.

- Coordinate Europol's overall crisis management capability and Disaster Recovery activities. Review and revise the current recovery strategies and develop alternative ones.
- Initiate the revision of the Europol Anti-Fraud Strategy.
- Implement the overall Business Continuity Strategy.
- Implement new logbook or workflow application for physical security shift controllers, to optimise and modernise the process, following the increase of the number of buildings under Europol's responsibility.

Expected results: Improved safety and security for Europol's buildings, staff and visitors. Europol fulfils its obligations in terms of confidentiality and information security.

### **Housing, facilities services and environmental management**

Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.6 Progress towards the rationalisation and expansion of Europol's facilities services and enhanced environmental management.**

- Develop, maintain and implement the policies, guidelines and processes related to services and products.
- Develop, maintain and implement the budget, contracts and agreements related to services and products.
- Manage the non-ICT related assets and ensure compliance with the financial processes and insurance scope.
- Develop, maintain and implement digital workflows and self-service functionalities via the Facilities Management Information System (FMIS).
- Provide integrated, cross-horizontal services, with a focus on prioritising sustainability.
- Support high-level visits and organise high-level events such as the European Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC).
- Continue with the implementation of the Strategic Housing Roadmap:
  - Advance with the implementation of the Mid-Term Housing Solution (MTHS) project in the HQ to increase workplace capacity, provide additional meeting rooms and other related facilities, and strengthen the building according to the applicable governmental building regulations.
  - Temporary Satellite Building 1 (TSB 1) project: safeguard the building's availability until the delivery of TSB 3 in Q1 2025. Prepare the decommissioning of the building for a return in 2025.
  - Temporary Satellite Building 2 (TSB 2) project: create additional workplaces, meeting rooms and other related facilities to support the implementation of the MTHS in the HQ and cover organisational growth and new business demands until the delivery of HQ2 in 2029 - 2030.
  - Temporary Satellite Building 3 (TSB 3) project: create additional workplaces, meeting rooms and other related facilities to support organisational growth and new business demands, until the delivery of HQ2.
  - Long-Term Housing Measures (LTHM) project: deliver a second permanent headquarters (HQ2) forecasted in 2029 - 2030.

### Europol Public Information

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Hot Data Centre (HDC) project: Align with the Host State on the location and development of the HDC for the establishment of a second Data Centre in the Netherlands, to ensure Europol's business continuity in accordance with business requirements.</li><li>- Low-rise Toren van Oud project: develop a Medical Centre and Gym &amp; Fitness facilities, in order to create space in the HQ for the implementation of the MTHS.</li><li>- Alternative Temporary Housing: continue investigating and establishing alternative temporary workplaces and meeting spaces to support organisational growth and new business demands until the delivery of HQ2.</li><li>- Workplace Allocation Plan (WAP); Continue with the implementation of the WAP to coordinate the shortage of workplaces and the increasing demand in the organisation.</li><li>o Manage and improve Europol's environmental management system and maintain the registration of the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).</li><li>o Undertake initiatives to improve the environmental performance of the organisation in terms of sustainable procurement, carbon footprint, paper and water consumption, and waste management and separation, in line with the Environmental Vision 2030 and the Environmental Objectives and Action Plan for the period 2023 – 2025.</li></ul>
<p>Expected results: The existing and new workplaces, including meeting rooms and other related facilities, are used in an efficient and effective manner to support organisational growth, new business demands and establish a pleasant work environment.</p> <p>Effective processes and tooling are in place to ensure optimal facilities services and proper corporate environmental management.</p>

### Europol Public Information

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
% of pending critical/very important audit recommendations implemented within the timeline committed to by Europol and agreed with the auditing body	100%	85%
Total number of News Articles mentioning Europol (high-impact web-based media)	3,441	4,800
User Satisfaction	92%	85%
Vacancy rate	5.2%	2%
% of Female Staff	33%	35%
Budget Outturn Rate	n/a	5%
Budget Commitment Rate	85.2%	95%
Budget Payment Rate	39.4%	90%
% of Late Payments (in value)	2.3%	5%
Emissions (tonnes CO2)	n/a	2,993

## Management Board Functions

### Accountancy Unit (ACCU)

The Accountancy Unit is an independent unit within Europol with its Accounting Officer appointed by/reportable directly to Europol's Management Board (MB). Its main tasks and responsibilities are to:

- Implement all payments (including salaries and allowances);
- Collect revenue and recovering amounts established as being receivable;
- Implement the accounting rules and chart of accounts in accordance with the provisions adopted by the European Commission;
- Keep, prepare and present the annual accounts of Europol (financial statements and reports on the implementation of the budget);
- Lay down and validating the accounting systems; Manage the Treasury.

### Data Protection Function (DPF)

The DPF is an integral part of Europol and the initial point of contact for all data protection matters. The Data Protection Officer who acts as the Head of DPF is appointed by the MB in accordance with Article 41 ER. DPF main tasks and responsibilities are to:

- Ensure lawfulness and compliance in regards to data protection (e.g. compliance reviews, annual activity report, written record of the transmission of data, register of processing operations, handling of data subject request, handling of inquiries etc.);
- Provide consultation in relation to legal and technical-organisational data protection safeguards;
- Provide training and awareness program for staff handling personal data;
- Perform as the main contact point to external data protection supervisors (e.g. Europol Data Protection Supervisor / National Data Protection Authorities).
- Following the amended Europol Regulation, establish in timely manner new data protection safeguards in order to ensure compliance with the amended rules.

### Internal Audit Capability (IAC)

The IAC's mission is to enhance Europol's organisational value, by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight. Its main tasks and responsibilities are to:

- Evaluate the appropriateness of Europol's risk identification and management system, and the effectiveness of the Internal Control Framework;
- Review the arrangements established to ensure compliance with applicable legislation, policies, plans and procedures;
- Review the reliability and integrity of significant operating and financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information;
- Evaluate the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed;
- Review programs or operations to ascertain whether results are consistent with established plans and objectives, and determine whether goals have been achieved;
- Monitor and report on the implementation of audit recommendations issued by IAC.

### Management Board Secretariat (MBS)

MBS is responsible for supporting the Chairperson of the Management Board in compliance with the Europol Regulation. Its main tasks and responsibilities are to:

- Support the coordination of the MB's work and ensure its coherence;
- Organise activities and meetings of the MB and its Working Groups on Corporate matters (legal, financial and personnel issues) and on Information Management, as well as ad hoc meetings and working groups established by the Board;
- Provide the MB with the necessary administrative support;

### **Europol Public Information**

- Support oversight and policy-making activities regarding matters such as the appointment of Executive Directors and Deputy Executive Directors, corporate governance, human resources and external relations.



## **ANNEXES**

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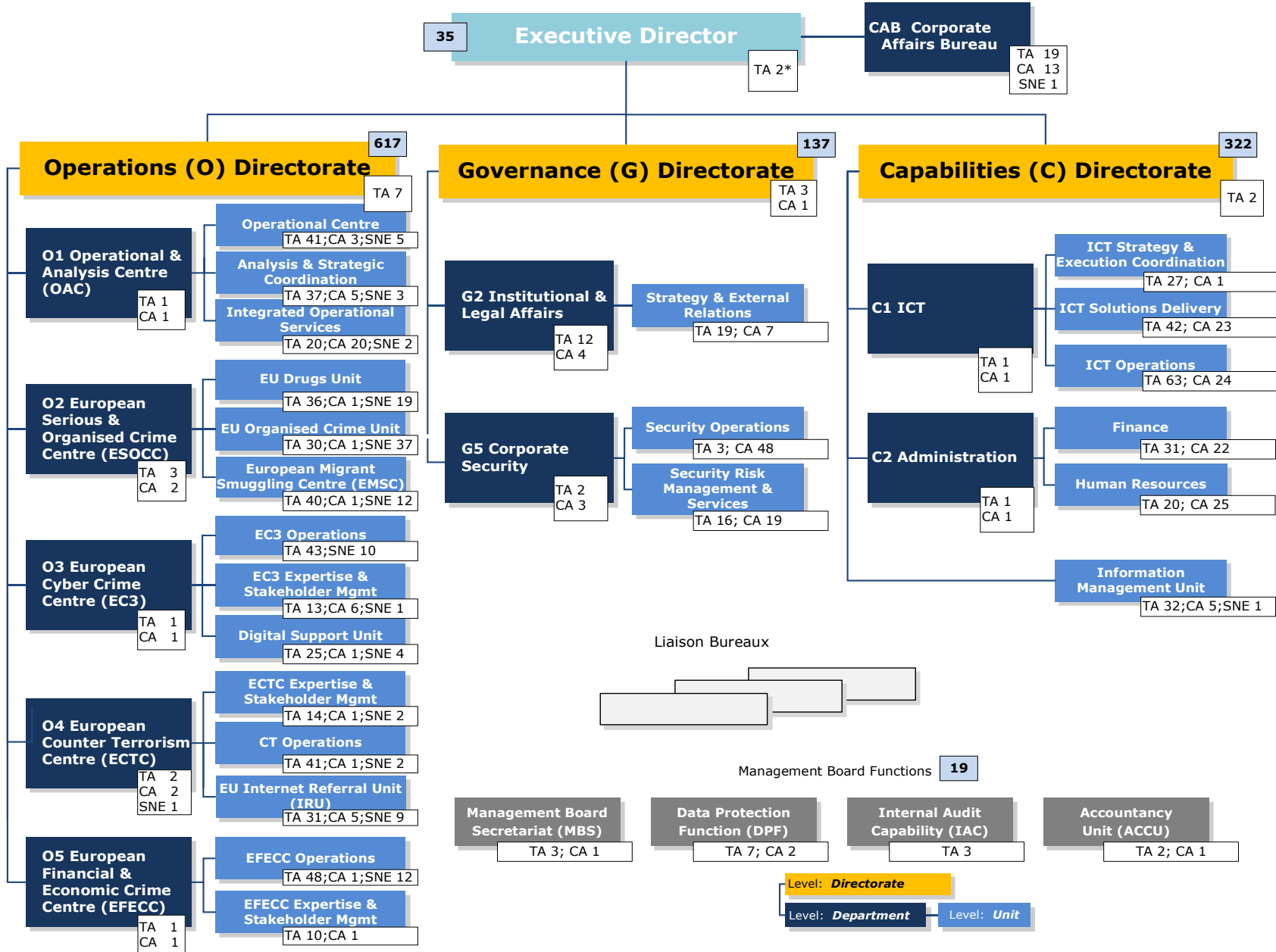
**Annex XI:** Grants

**Annex XII:** Strategy for cooperation with third countries and/or international organisations

**Annex XIII:** Procurement Plan 2024

**Annex XIV:** Corporate Risks 2024

Annex I: Organisational chart of the Agency for year 2024



\* Including the Fundamental Rights Officer

**Annex II: Resources allocation per activity 2024 – 2026**

	Year 2023			Year 2024 Resource estimates			Year 2025 <sup>75</sup> Resource estimates			Year 2026 <sup>76</sup> Resource estimates		
	TA	CA & SNE (FTE)	Budget allocated	TA	CA & SNE (FTE)	Budget allocated	TA	CA & SNE (FTE)	Budget allocated	TA	CA & SNE (FTE)	Budget allocated
<b>A.1. Development of operational ICT and IM capabilities</b>	152	55	71,391,600	165	55	77,966,300	168	56	80,722,400	169	56	86,382,900
<b>A.2. Operational Coordination</b>	67	14	15,756,400	73	34	16,802,300	74	34	17,648,000	75	34	18,609,500
<b>A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime</b>	105	28	28,997,500	109	28	30,457,700	111	28	27,936,900	112	28	31,170,100
<b>A.4. Combating Cyber Crime</b>	82	23	16,088,600	83	23	16,955,800	83	22	16,351,700	84	22	18,334,700
<b>A.5. Counter-Terrorism</b>	85	23	18,418,500	88	23	18,333,200	91	22	22,097,600	92	22	17,406,500
<b>A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime</b>	56	10	11,244,400	59	10	11,643,400	61	10	10,706,900	62	10	13,034,400
<b>A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination</b>	48	10	8,423,800	50	10	8,979,300	53	10	9,491,200	54	10	10,297,300
<b>Total Operational Activities</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>170,320,800</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>181,138,000</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>184,954,700</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>195,235,400</b>
<b>A.8. Governance, support and administration (incl. MBF)</b>	121	143	36,855,412	127	143	37,089,705	132	144	38,659,997	132	144	40,413,299
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>223,614,697</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>235,648,699</b>

<sup>75</sup> Figures for 2025 and 2026 are indicative.

<sup>76</sup> idem

**Annex III: Financial Resources 2024 - 2026**

**Table 1 - Revenue  
General revenues**

REVENUES	2023	2024
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
EU contribution	207,176,212	218,227,705
Other revenue		
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>

REVENUES	General revenues						
	Executed 2022	Estimated by the agency 2023	2024		VAR 2024/ 2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>1 REVENUE FROM FEES AND CHARGES</b>							
<b>2 EU CONTRIBUTION</b>	192,380,773	207,176,212	218,227,705		105.3%	223,614,697	235,648,699
- Of which assigned revenues deriving from previous years' surpluses	3,349,469	5,098,619	10,315,153				
<b>3 THIRD COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTION (incl. EEA/EFTA and candidate countries)</b>							
- Of which EEA/EFTA (excl. Switzerland)							
- Of which candidate countries							
<b>4 OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS</b>							
<b>5 ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS</b>							
- Of which interest generated by funds paid by the Commission by way of the EU contribution (FFR Art. 58)							
<b>6 REVENUES FROM SERVICES RENDERED AGAINST PAYMENT</b>							
<b>7 CORRECTION OF BUDGETARY IMBALANCES</b>							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>192,380,773</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>		<b>105.3%</b>	<b>223,614,697</b>	<b>235,648,699</b>

## Europol Public Information

### Additional EU funding: grant, contribution and service-level agreements

REVENUES	2023	2024
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	3,212,496	2,009,712

REVENUES	Additional EU funding: grant, contribution and service-level agreements						
	Executed 2022	Estimated by the agency 2023	2024		VAR 2024/20 23 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM GRANTS (FFR Art.7)</b>	1,807,626	579,661	222,800		38.44%	167,100	-
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENTS (FFR Art.7)</b>	1,065,003	1,422,835	656,912		46.17%	-	
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (FFR Art. 43.2)</b>	1,572,164	1,210,000	1,130,000		93.39%	1,030,000	1,030,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,444,793</b>	<b>3,212,496</b>	<b>2,009,712</b>		<b>62.56%</b>	<b>1,197,100</b>	<b>1,030,000</b>

## Europol Public Information

**Table 2 - Expenditure**

Expenditure	2023		2024	
	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations
<b>Title 1 - Staff expenditure</b>	112,382,112	112,382,112	117,817,323	117,817,323
<b>Title 2 - Infrastructure and operating expenditure</b>	15,160,400	15,160,400	15,105,338	15,105,338
<b>Title 3 - Operational expenditure</b>	79,633,700	77,556,900	85,305,044	82,020,044
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>205,099,412</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>214,942,705</b>

EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Budget 2024		VAR 2024/ 2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>Title 1 Staff Expenditure</b>	<b>100,108,826</b>	<b>112,382,112</b>	<b>117,817,323</b>		<b>105%</b>	<b>124,590,607</b>	<b>132,065,420</b>
11 Salaries & allowances	92,007,321	102,922,112	106,471,800		103%	113,018,174	120,261,537
- of which establishment plan posts	76,310,521	86,341,712	88,718,800		103%	94,238,114	101,105,876
- of which external personnel	15,696,800	16,580,400	17,753,000		107%	18,780,060	19,155,661
13 Socio-medical infrastructure	873,605	1,153,700	1,074,318		93%	1,095,804	1,117,720
14 Training	144,470	175,000	292,500		167%	298,350	304,317
15 Other staff-related expenditure	6,982,832	8,022,300	9,867,205		123%	10,064,549	10,265,840
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	100,598	109,000	111,500		102%	113,730	116,005
<b>Title 2 Other administrative expenditure</b>	<b>11,643,924</b>	<b>15,160,400</b>	<b>15,105,338</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>15,407,445</b>	<b>18,551,302</b>
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	6,433,102	9,843,800	11,061,114		112%	11,282,336	14,343,691
21 Administrative information technology	1,677,535	1,941,700	1,339,000		69%	1,365,780	1,393,096
22 Movable property and associated costs	1,133,326	752,500	1,082,888		144%	1,104,546	1,126,637
23 Current administrative expenditure	493,000	531,500	540,036		102%	550,837	561,853
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,099,694	1,132,500	70,300		6%	71,706	73,140
25 Statutory expenditure	807,267	958,400	1,012,000		106%	1,032,240	1,052,885
<b>Title 3 Operational activities</b>	<b>74,116,614</b>	<b>79,633,700</b>	<b>85,305,044</b>		<b>107%</b>	<b>83,616,645</b>	<b>85,031,978</b>

## Europol Public Information

EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
30 Operations <sup>77</sup>	22,788,694	16,496,100	15,012,475		91%	15,312,725	15,618,979
31 Operational information technology	42,884,568	40,588,600	45,845,456		113%	46,762,365	49,697,612
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	1,849,316	1,840,000	1,803,113		98%	1,839,175	1,875,959
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) <sup>78</sup>	5,229,338	7,300,000	7,739,000		106%	7,893,780	8,051,656
34 EPCC	276,566	285,000	270,000		95%	275,400	280,908
35 Heads of Europol National Units	91,475	153,000	160,000		105%	163,200	166,464
38 Decryption Platform	996,656	1,162,000	1,000,000		86%	1,020,000	1,040,400
39 Grants <sup>79</sup>		11,809,000	13,475,000		114%	10,350,000	8,300,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>185,869,365</b>	<b>207,176,212</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>		<b>105%</b>	<b>223,614,697</b>	<b>235,648,699</b>

EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>Title 1 Staff Expenditure</b>	<b>100,108,826</b>	<b>112,382,112</b>	<b>117,817,323</b>		<b>105%</b>	<b>124,590,607</b>	<b>132,065,420</b>
11 Salaries & allowances	92,007,321	102,922,112	106,471,800		103%	113,018,174	120,261,537
- of which establishment plan posts	76,310,521	86,341,712	88,718,800		103%	94,238,114	101,105,876
- of which external personnel	15,696,800	16,580,400	17,753,000		107%	18,780,060	19,155,661
13 Sociomedical infrastructure	873,605	1,153,700	1,074,318		93%	1,095,804	1,117,720
14 Training	144,470	175,000	292,500		167%	298,350	304,317

<sup>77</sup> As of 2023, differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the grants related budget items are introduced - a new Chapter (Chapter 39 – Grants) has been created and budget accordingly moved from Chapter 30.

<sup>78</sup> Including for 2024 EUR 3.3M for Short-term SNEs.

<sup>79</sup> Including for 2024 differentiated appropriations amounting to EUR 13,475,000 (EUR 8 000 000 for EMPACT, EUR 300 000 for fighting EURO counterfeiting, EUR 2 000 000 for HVT/OTF, EUR 3 000 000 for ATLAS and EUR 175 000 for Innovation grants).

## Europol Public Information

EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
15 Other staff-related expenditure	6,982,832	8,022,300	9,867,205		123%	10,064,549	10,265,840
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	100,598	109,000	111,500		102%	113,730	116,005
<b>Title 2 Other administrative expenditure</b>	<b>11,643,924</b>	<b>15,160,400</b>	<b>15,105,338</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>15,407,445</b>	<b>18,551,302</b>
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	6,433,102	9,843,800	11,061,114		112%	11,282,336	14,343,691
21 Administrative information technology	1,677,535	1,941,700	1,339,000		69%	1,365,780	1,393,096
22 Movable property and associated costs	1,133,326	752,500	1,082,888		144%	1,104,546	1,126,637
23 Current administrative expenditure	493,000	531,500	540,036		102%	550,837	561,853
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,099,694	1,132,500	70,300		6%	71,706	73,140
25 Statutory expenditure	807,267	958,400	1,012,000		106%	1,032,240	1,052,885
<b>Title 3 Operational activities</b>	<b>74,116,614</b>	<b>77,556,900</b>	<b>82,796,844</b>		<b>107%</b>	<b>81,334,145</b>	<b>86,099,478</b>
30 Operations <sup>80</sup>	22,788,694	16,496,100	15,012,475		91%	15,312,725	15,618,979
31 Operational information technology	42,884,568	40,588,600	45,845,456		113%	46,762,365	49,697,612
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	1,849,316	1,840,000	1,803,113		98%	1,839,175	1,875,959
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) <sup>81</sup>	5,229,338	7,300,000	7,739,000		106%	7,893,780	8,051,656
34 EPCC	276,566	285,000	270,000		95%	275,400	280,908
35 Heads of Europol National Units	91,475	153,000	160,000		105%	163,200	166,464
38 Decryption Platform	996,656	1,162,000	1,000,000		86%	1,020,000	1,040,400
39 Grants <sup>82</sup>		9,732,200	10,966,800		113%	8,067,500	9,367,500
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>185,869,365</b>	<b>205,099,412</b>	<b>215,719,505</b>		<b>105%</b>	<b>221,332,197</b>	<b>236,716,199</b>

<sup>80</sup> As of 2023, differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the grants-related budget items were introduced: a new Chapter (Chapter 39 – Grants) was created and the related grants budget was moved from Chapter 30.

<sup>81</sup> Including for 2024 EUR 3M for Short-term SNEs.

<sup>82</sup> Including for 2024, among others, differentiated payments appropriations amounting to EUR 10,966,800 (EUR 5,500,000 for EMPACT, EUR 180,000 for fighting EURO counterfeiting, EUR 2,000,000 for HVT/OTF, EUR 3,146,800 for ATLAS and EUR 140,000 for Innovation grants).



**Table 3 Budget outturn and cancellation of appropriations 2019-2022 (N-4 – N-2)**

Budget outturn	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue actually received (+)	143,094,062	160,660,117	177,370,336	201,325,849
Payments made (-)	(128,591,904)	(132,636,293)	(148,871,757)	(165,414,326)
Carry-over of appropriations (-)	(22,802,657)	(32,201,626)	(37,028,367)	(40,478,220)
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	1,557,227	2,471,557	2,926,585	3,802,497
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriations from previous year (+)	9,108,957	5,056,138	10,702,251	11,078,105
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	(2,137)	(424)	(428)	1,248
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (-)				
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,363,548</b>	<b>3,349,469</b>	<b>5,098,619</b>	<b>10,315,153</b>

**Descriptive information and justification on:  
Budget outturn**

The overall budget result for the financial year 2022 comes to € 10.3M. This includes the following:

- An amount of € 6.5M of the 2022 budget was not committed and lapsed.
- An amount of € 3.8M of appropriations carried forward from 2021 to 2022 was not used.
- The exchange rate difference in 2022 was € 1.248 (gain).

**Cancellation of payment appropriations carried forward**

The carry forward to 2022 came to a total of € 25.95M to cover existing commitments. The final implementation rate of the carry forward was 85.3% at the end of the year. A total of € 3.8M was not used and is thus incorporated in the final budget outturn.

- € 200.4K relates to Title 1, which is 14.3% of the carried forward amount under Title 1 (€ 1.4M);
- € 263.0K relates to Title 2, which is 5.9% of the carried forward amount under Title 2 (€ 4.4M); and
- € 3.3M relates to Title 3, which is 16.6% of the carried forward amount under Title 3 (€ 20.1M).

**Annex IV: Human resources quantitative**

**Table 1: Staff population and its evolution; Overview of all categories of staff**

**A. Statutory staff and SNE**

Staff	Year 2022			Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026
ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS	Authorised Budget	Actually filled as of 31/12/2022	Occupancy rate %	Authorised staff	Envisaged staff	Envisaged staff	Envisaged staff
Administrators (AD)	654	660	100.9%	693	731	750	757
Assistants (AST)	32	22	68.8%	23	23	23	23
Assistants/Secretaries (AST/SC)							
<b>TOTAL ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>99.4%</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>780</b>
EXTERNAL STAFF	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2022 <sup>83</sup>	Execution rate %	Headcount as of 31/12/2022	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget <sup>84</sup>	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE
Contract Agents (CA)	235	212.2	90.3%	217	255	255	255
Seconded National Experts (SNE)	71	59.3	83.5%	55	121	121	121
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL STAFF</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>271.5</b>	<b>88.7%</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>TOTAL STAFF</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>953.5</b>	<b>96.1%</b>				

<sup>83</sup> CA financed from the EU contribution: 217 Headcount (212.2 Annual average FTE); CA financed from other sources: 19 Headcount (19.5 Annual average FTE). SNE financed from the EU contribution at 31/12/2022: 55 Headcount (59.3 Annual average FTE) and Short-term costed SNE: 39 Headcount (20.71 Annual average FTE). SNE financed from other sources: 7 Headcount (7 Annual average FTE). Cost free SNE: 27 Headcount (34 Annual average FTE); SNE Guest Officers: 79 Headcount (60.91 Annual average FTE).

<sup>84</sup> As of 2022, next to the regular SNE categories, an additional 50 SNE FTE for GE/OTFs (short-term, costed) were introduced. Europol reported on the budgetary and HR related implementation in the regular updates to the MB throughout 2022 and will include the figures in the consolidated annual activity reporting and in the annual accounts 2022. The short-term Seconded National Experts posts were filled in 2022 with MS' experts as per the rules on the secondment of Seconded National Experts adopted by the MB in October 2021 and in accordance with the corresponding Guest Experts concept (thus the short-term Guest Experts will not be deployed to perform tasks of the regular 71 Seconded National Experts). As of 2023, this category of short-term costed SNEs (50 FTE) is included in the authorised budget, as part of the overall SNEs category – reporting has been adjusted accordingly in 2023.

## Europol Public Information

### B. Additional external staff expected to be financed from grant, contribution or service-level agreements

Human Resources	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026
	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE
<b>Contract Agents (CA)</b>	26	16	5	2
<b>Seconded National Experts (SNE)</b>	8	8	8	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>

### C. Other Human Resources

Structural service providers<sup>85</sup>

	Actually in place as at 31/12/2022
IT	168
Facilities	39
Security	15
Other	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>225</b>

Interim workers

	Total FTEs in year 2022
<b>Number</b>	N/A

<sup>85</sup> Service providers are contracted by a private company and carry out specialised outsourced tasks of a horizontal/support nature. At the EU Commission, following general criteria should be fulfilled: 1) no individual contract with the EU Commission 2) on the EU Commission premises, usually with a PC and desk 3) administratively followed by the EU Commission (badge, etc.) and 4) contributing to the added value of the EU Commission. Similarly, Europol reports on the number of contractors with IT access.

Europol Public Information

Table 2 – Multi-annual staff policy plan 2024 - 2026

Function group and grade	Year 2022				Year 2023		Year 2024		Year 2025		Year 2026	
	Authorised budget		Actually filled as of 31/12		Authorised budget		Envisaged		Envisaged		Envisaged	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts	Perm. Posts	Temp. posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts
AD 16				1		1		1		1		1
AD 15		1						1		1		1
AD 14		3		3		3		2		2		2
AD 13		1				2		3		4		4
AD 12		10		10		11		11		11		11
AD 11		8		6		10		11		12		14
AD 10		18		19		21		24		26		30
AD 9		43		42		47		51		53		52
AD 8		83		66		92		105		104		128
AD 7		193		219		216		239		241		223
AD 6		285		285		282		276		288		285
AD 5		9		9		8		7		7		6
<b>AD TOTAL</b>		<b>654</b>		<b>660</b>		<b>693</b>		<b>731</b>		<b>750</b>		<b>757</b>
AST 11												
AST 10												
AST 9												
AST 8		2		1		1		1		1		1
AST 7		5		1		2		3		3		3
AST 6		6		4		5		5		6		6
AST 5		7		4		4		3		2		2
AST 4		6		4		3		3		3		3
AST 3		3		2		2		3		4		4
AST 2		3		6		6		5		4		4
AST 1												
<b>AST TOTAL</b>		<b>32</b>		<b>22</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>23</b>
AST/SC 6												
AST/SC 5												
AST/SC 4												

## Europol Public Information

Function group and grade	Year 2022				Year 2023		Year 2024		Year 2025		Year 2026	
	Authorised budget		Actually filled as of 31/12		Authorised budget		Envisaged		Envisaged		Envisaged	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts	Perm. Posts	Temp. posts	Perm. posts	Temp. posts
AST/SC 3												
AST/SC 2												
AST/SC 1												
AST/SC TOTAL												
TOTAL		686		682		716		754		773		780
GRAND TOTAL	<b>686</b>		<b>682</b>		<b>716</b>		<b>754</b>		<b>773</b>		<b>780</b>	

### External personnel

#### *Contract Agents*

Contract agents	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2022	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2022	Headcount as of 31/12/2022	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2023	FTE envisaged 2024	FTE envisaged 2025	FTE envisaged 2026
Function Group IV	59	53.87	59	59	79	79	79
Function Group III	118	104.86	108	118	118	118	118
Function Group II	58	53.47	50	58	58	58	58
Function Group I							
TOTAL	<b>235</b>	<b>212.2</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>255</b>

#### *Seconded National Experts*

Seconded National Experts	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2022	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2022	Headcount as of 31/12/2022	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2023	FTE envisaged 2024	FTE envisaged 2025	FTE envisaged 2026
TOTAL	<b>71</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>121</b>

## Europol Public Information

**Table 3 - Recruitment forecasts 2024 following retirement/mobility or new requested posts**

(information on the entry level for each type of posts: indicative table)

Job title in the Agency	Type of contract (Official, TA or CA)		TA/Official Function group/grade of recruitment internal (brackets) and external (single grade) foreseen for publication*		CA Recruitment Function Group (I, II, III or IV)
	Due to foreseen retirement/mobility	New posts requested due to additional tasks	Internal (brackets)	External (brackets)	
Allocation of new posts / replacement of staff members due to resignation / contract expiry and definition of profiles will be done in line with Europol's mandate and business priorities and on the basis of the MASPP.	Number of anticipated compulsory retirements: 5 (2 TAs and 3 CAs)  End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> contracts: - TA contracts: 16 (restricted) + 21 potentially (non-restricted – pending outcome of different indefinite contract procedures)  - CA contracts: 15 (5 FGII, 7 FGIII and 3 FGIV)	38 TA posts (including 26 stemming from amended Europol Regulation, 7 from Prüm II regulation and 5 for Interoperability – ETIAS operations)  20 CA posts for Interoperability – ETIAS operations <sup>86</sup>	Will be updated once the final budget is adopted; however most internal recruitments will be in the brackets AD5-AD12 and AD7-AD12	Will be updated once the final budget is adopted; however most recruitments will be AD6/Specialist or AD7/Senior Specialist	No significant change expected vis-à-vis current CAs.

\*Indication of both is required

Number of inter-agency mobility Year 2023 (1 January - 5 October 2023) from and to the Agency:

- 7 staff members joined Europol from another EU Agency;
- 18 staff members left Europol to another EU Agency.

<sup>86</sup> See Annex II for more information on additional posts for ETIAS.

**Europol Public Information**

**Annex V: Human resources qualitative**

**A. Recruitment policy**

Implementing rules in place:

		Yes	No	If no, which other implementing rules are in place
Engagement of CA	Model Decision C(2019)3016	x		
Engagement of TA	Model Decision C(2015)1509		x	Decision of the Management Board of Europol of 28 February 2019 laying down general implementing provisions on the procedures governing the engagement and use of temporary staff under Article 2(f) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union
Middle management	Model decision C(2018)2542		x	Decision of the Management Board of Europol of 04 October 2019 on middle management staff
Type of posts	Model Decision C(2018)8800	x		
Function of Adviser	Model Decision C(2018) 2209		x	<u>Decision of the Management Board of Europol of 23 May 2019 concerning the function of adviser</u>
Others				Decision of the Management Board of Europol of 28 June 2022 defining the Europol posts that can be filled only by staff engaged from the competent authorities of the Member States ("restricted posts")  Decision of the Management Board of Europol of 21 March 2023 laying down rules on the secondment of national experts to Europol  Rules for the selection, extension of the term of office and removal from office of the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Directors (adopted by the MB)

**B. Appraisal and reclassification/promotions**

Implementing rules in place:

		Yes	No	If no, which other implementing rules are in place
Reclassification of TA	Model Decision C(2015)9560	X		
Reclassification of CA	Model Decision C(2015)9561	X		

**Europol Public Information**

Appraisal of TA	Model Decision C(2015) 1513		X	Automatic entry into force of the Commission Decision C(2013)8985 and C(2016) 7270
Appraisal of CA	Model Decision C(2015) 1456		X	Management Board Decision of 3 December 2014 adopting the Commission Decision C(2014)2226 by analogy
Others				Decision of the Management Board of Europol on the appraisal, probationary period and management trial period of the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Directors.

**Table 1 - Reclassification of TA/promotion of officials**

Grades	Average seniority in the grade among reclassified staff						
	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Actual average over 5 years	Average over 5 years (According to Decision C(2015)9563)
<b>AD05</b>		4.0			5.3	4.7	2.8
<b>AD06</b>	3.7	5.0	4.8	5.3	5.0	4.8	2.8
<b>AD07</b>	4.3	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.0	5.0	2.8
<b>AD08</b>	7.5	5.8	7.1	5.8	7.3	6.7	3
<b>AD09</b>	7	7.2	8.2	3.9	3.9	6.0	4
<b>AD10</b>			6.8	7	10	7.9	4
<b>AD11</b>				5.5	6.8	6.2	4
<b>AD12</b>							6.7
<b>AD13</b>							6.7
<b>AST1</b>							3
<b>AST2</b>					6.8	6.8	3
<b>AST3</b>					4.4	4.4	3
<b>AST4</b>	2.42	2.3	3.4		9.0	4.5	3
<b>AST5</b>	5			5.71	3.25	4.5	4
<b>AST6</b>							4
<b>AST7</b>			8.0				4
<b>AST8</b>							4
<b>AST9</b>							N/A
<b>AST10 (Senior assistant)</b>							5
<b>AST/SC1</b>							4
<b>AST/SC2</b>							5
<b>AST/SC3</b>							5.9
<b>AST/SC4</b>							6.7
<b>AST/SC5</b>							8.3



**Europol Public Information**

**Table 2 -Reclassification of contract staff**

<b>Function Group</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Staff in activity at 1.01.2022</b>	<b>How many staff members were reclassified in Year 2023</b>	<b>Average number of years in grade of reclassified staff members</b>	<b>Average number of years in grade of reclassified staff members according to decision C(2015)9561</b>
<b>CA IV</b>	17	1			N.A
	16	13	2	3.6	Between 5 and 7 years
	15	7			Between 4 and 6 years
	14	39	5	3.4	Between 3 and 5 years
	13	9			Between 3 and 5 years
<b>CA III</b>	12	9			N.A
	11	31	6	5.6	Between 6 and 10 years
	10	28	2	5.4	Between 5 and 7 years
	9	36	5	4.4	Between 4 and 6 years
	8	6			Between 3 and 5 years
<b>CA II</b>	7	2			N.A
	6	12	2	5.6	Between 6 and 10 years
	5	34	6	4.8	Between 5 and 7 years
	4	3	1	3.5	Between 3 and 5 years
<b>CA I</b>	2				Between 6 and 10 years
	1				Between 3 and 5 years

**Europol Public Information**

**C. Gender representation**

**Table 1 - Data on 31/12/2022 /statutory staff (only officials, TA and CA)**

		Official		Temporary		Contract Agents		Grand Total	
		Staff	%	Staff	%	Staff	%	Staff	%
<b>Female</b>	Administrator level			160	91%				
	Assistant level (AST & AST/SC)			16	9%				
	<b>Total</b>			176	29%	119	50%	295	35%
<b>Male</b>	Administrator level			433	99%				
	Assistant level (AST & AST/SC)			6	1%				
	<b>Total</b>			439	71%	117	50%	556	65%
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>615</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2 - Data regarding gender evolution over 5 years of Middle and Senior management<sup>87</sup>**

	2018		2022	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Female Managers</b>	4	12%	6	18%
<b>Male Managers</b>	30	88%	28	82%

<sup>87</sup> Staff defined as middle manager by the applicable General Implementing provisions on middle management. 138

**Europol Public Information**

**D. Geographical Balance**

Explanatory figures to highlight nationalities of staff (split per Administrator/CA FG IV and Assistant /CA FG I, II, III)

**Table 1 - Table on 31/12/2022 - statutory staff only (officials, AD and CA)**

Nationality	AD + CA FG IV		AST/SC- AST + CA FGI/CA FGII/CA FGIII		TOTAL	
	Number	% of total staff members in AD and FG IV categories	Number	% of total staff members in AST SC/AST and FG I, II and III categories	Number	% of total staff
Austria	8	1%			8	1.0%
Belgium	33	5%	5	3%	38	4.9%
Bulgaria	21	3%	7	4%	28	3.6%
Croatia	15	2%	2	1%	17	2.2%
Cyprus	5	1%			5	0.6%
Czech Republic	6	1%	2	1%	8	1.0%
Denmark		0%				0.0%
Estonia	5	1%			5	0.6%
Finland	7	1%	3	2%	10	1.3%
France	48	8%	4	2%	52	6.7%
Germany	44	7%	4	2%	48	6.2%
Greece	63	10%	10	6%	73	9.4%
Hungary	16	3%	8	5%	24	3.1%
Ireland	7	1%	3	2%	10	1.3%
Italy	61	10%	14	8%	75	9.6%
Latvia	3	0%	2	1%	5	0.6%
Lithuania	13	2%	4	2%	17	2.2%
Luxembourg		0%	1	1%	1	0.1%
Malta	2	0%			2	0.3%
Netherlands	60	10%	59	34%	119	15.3%
Poland	31	5%	4	2%	35	4.5%
Portugal	32	5%	9	5%	41	5.3%
Romania	75	12%	26	15%	101	13.0%
Slovakia	6	1%	1	1%	7	0.9%
Slovenia	9	1%	2	1%	11	1.4%
Spain	85	14%	14	8%	99	12.7%
Sweden	8	1%			8	1.0%
<i>United Kingdom</i>	4	1%		0%	4	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>111%</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>105%</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>109%</b>

**Table 2 - Evolution over 5 years of the most represented nationality in the Agency**

Most represented nationality	2018		2022	
	Number	%	Number	%
The Netherlands	102	13%	119	15%

In case of significant continuous imbalance, please explain and detail action plan implemented in the agency: N/A

## Europol Public Information

### E. Schooling

<b>Agreement in place with the European School(s) of The Hague</b>				
Contribution agreements signed with the EC on type I European schools	Yes		No	X
Contribution agreements <sup>88</sup> signed with the EC on type II European schools	Yes	X	No	
Number of service contracts in place with international schools:	N/A			
Description of any other solutions or actions in place: N/A				

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<sup>88</sup> A *Contribution Agreement* was concluded between the European Commission and Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum to define the conditions for payment of the *EU Contribution* for pupils of Europol staff enrolled in the European School in The Hague. A *Mandate and Service Agreement* was concluded between Europol and the European Commission to define the collaboration with respect to the implementation of the aforementioned *EU Contribution*.

## Annex VI: Environment management

### 1. Context of the Agency and its environmental management strategy

Europol recognises its responsibility for making a positive contribution to sustainable development and commits itself to protect the environment by limiting the environmental impact of its activities and to continuously improve its environmental performance.



### 2. Overview of the agency's Environmental Management System

Europol uses and maintains an Environmental Management System (EMS), implemented in line with the requirements of EMAS and ISO 14001:2015. Its components, scope, responsibilities, activities of yearly cycle, processes and related EMS documentation are documented in the *Environmental Management System Manual* (Europol internal document). The EMAS process descriptions are integrated in the Europol process landscape.

The implementation of EMAS directly supports Europol's Strategy "Delivering Security in Partnership", and in particular, the strategic priority number 6, which is to 'be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation'. EMAS also supports Europol in its commitment to contribute to the EU Green Deal's main objective of a climate neutral Europe by 2050.

### 3. Environmental areas, indicators and targets

Europol's activities, products and services have both direct and indirect impacts on the environment. Under EMAS, Europol monitors those activities and significant environmental aspects that influence Europol's carbon footprint and impact for environment. In particular, the **environmental areas** defined in the EMS and implemented at Europol, are the following:

- Carbon footprint
- Energy efficiency
- Water consumption
- Waste management (separation and generation)
- Paper consumption
- Sustainable procurement (green public procurement)
- Biodiversity

Europol's **Environmental Vision 2030** was finalised and approved by Europol management and the Management Board in July 2023. The Vision establishes the organisational long-term ambitions and objectives and also addresses a set of short to mid-term measures that support the new EMAS perspective 2023- 2025.

The agency has committed to reducing its emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 2018. Since the vast majority of Europol's emissions (more than 90%) are related to business travel, in particular flights, rationalising the business travel policy is treated as a priority.

This strategy is intended to contribute to the goals of the EU Green Deal and to guide Europol's development with respect to the environment by taking into account the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) due to the climate change.

The main pillars of the strategy are the following:

- Sustainable business travel;
- Sustainable meetings and events;
- Zero-emission vehicle fleet;
- Efficient use of the building.

For each pillar, specific initiatives and measures have been defined that will ultimately support the sustainable development of the Agency and help achieve its environmental vision.

## Europol Public Information

Europol will publish in the beginning of 2024 its third updated environmental statement demonstrating the implementation of EMAS at Europol and the Agency's environmental performance for 2022. Europol has succeeded in achieving almost all the targets set for 2022. In most cases, the performance exceeds the targeted values, while only the waste separation rate was slightly below the assumed level. However, while the core environmental performance indicators in 2022 demonstrate that the targets are significantly exceeded in most cases, it should be taken into account that the year 2022 was to some extent still affected by the constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 4. Actions to improve and communicate environmental performance

Europol has an action plan in place, which defines three areas for sustainable and environmental improvement:

- *Structural environmental management and compliance*; is related to the environmental management and communication of the organisation;
- *Sustainable operations*; is the overall reduction of the carbon footprint and improved environmental performance by implementing organisational measures to reduce water, energy and paper consumption, waste generation and improved waste separation, reduce CO<sub>2</sub> impact of business related travel, as well as employing sustainable procurement processes and awareness raising activities e.g. on promoting virtual meetings;
- *Social responsibility*; includes initiatives to small-scale nature development possibilities in the direct surrounding of Europol's accommodation.

The aim is to implement environmentally friendly measures to improve the environmental performance of the organisation and organise the involved processes in a sustainable manner, with the support of EMAS and implemented EMS tools.

Integral elements of the actions for improving environmental performance are the following:

- Development and implementation of a new business travel policy ensuring that the annual emission target for business travels and missions is being achieved. The policy will address aspects, such as the assessment of the necessity of a business travel, type of travel, etc.
- In cooperation with the Central Government Real Estate Agency (CGREA) of the Host State, implement various actions significantly improving environmental aspects pertaining to the operation of Europol's building such as energy and gas efficiency, water and waste management.
- Furthermore, Europol will continue to include and consider EMAS and organisations' environmental requirements in the development process of Strategic Housing Roadmap (referred to in Annex VII).
- Lastly, in line with the EMAS regulation, Europol intends to continue publishing annually its Environmental Statement, reporting on its environmental performance.

Europol's intended actions can be summarised as follows:

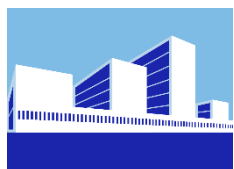
- Maintaining of EMAS certification:
  - Implement the annual Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (PDCA);
  - Conduct annual internal and external audits (surveillance and re-certification);
  - Prepare and publish annually the Environmental Statements demonstrating the implementation of EMAS at Europol and the Agency's environmental performance for the previous year.
- Implementing its *Environmental Vision 2030*, particularly by implementing the supporting actions of its short to mid-term action plan (2023-2025).

**Annex VII: Buildings – year 2024**

#	Building Name and type	Location	SURFACE AREA (in m <sup>2</sup> )			RENTAL CONTRACT					Host country (grant or support)
			Office space	non-office	Total	RENT (€/year)	Duration of the contract	Type	Breakout clause Y/N	Conditions attached to the breakout clause (if applicable)	
1	Headquarters	Eisenhowerlaan 73, 2517 KK, The Hague Netherlands			32,500	N/A	20 years	Lease agreement			Host State support by providing and maintaining the accommodation regarding the owner related elements.
2	Temporary Satellite Building I	Jan Willem Frisolaan 13, 2517 JS The Hague			2,700	N/A	4 years	Lease agreement			Host State support by providing and maintaining the accommodation regarding the owner and user related elements.
<b>TOTAL</b>											

Building projects in planning phase:

**Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR)**



In 2011, the Host State delivered the Headquarters (HQ1) with 850 workplaces and 750 conference and training seats. Since then, the capacity of the HQ1 was optimised into 1,025 workplaces to cover the organisational growth and new business demands.

In 2016, the Host State and Europol established a Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR) Programme<sup>89</sup> to be implemented during the period 2016 – 2031. The main objective of the SHR is to proactively align Europol’s growth and new business demands with the housing needs of the organisation, enabling timely planning and development of the necessary housing solutions. The SHR enables the necessary updating and planning of real estate developments covering a larger time span until 2045.

The provision of 500 temporary workplaces is of high importance until the implementation of the Long-Term Housing Measures, which is the delivery of a second headquarters forecasted in 2029 – 2030. This provision is essential for supporting organisational growth and new business demands and making the construction works of the Mid-Term Housing Solution in the HQ1 possible.

<sup>89</sup> In line with the recommendations of the ECA report "Office accommodation of EU institutions – Some good management practices but also various weaknesses" of 2018, the Host State and Europol will maintain a strong SHR Programme governance structure, including a formalised cost demarcation.

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An overall minimum capacity of 2,100 permanent workplaces (WP) is essential, for up to 2,500 employees until 2045, taking into account the flex ratio of 0.8 (1 FTE : 0.8 WP). In 2023, Europol implemented this flex ratio of 0.8 in the office environment by applying a flexible office concept in combination with hybrid working.

### Mid-Term Housing Solution (HQ1)

Via the Mid-Term Housing Solution (HQ1), the spaces (m<sup>2</sup>/m<sup>3</sup>) in the building will be further optimised to increase workplace capacity, meeting spaces and other supporting spatial functions. This will help accommodate organisational growth, support new working arrangements, as well as provide agile and hybrid workplace solutions (physical workplaces in combination with teleworking solutions).

The total number of physical workplaces foreseen to be realised in the office environment is 1,077 functional workplaces, including 48 silent workplaces and 30 meeting rooms, with a total capacity of 144 seats.

Additionally, 58 workplaces will be created via a new Operational Collaborative Centre, including 2 meeting rooms, with a capacity of 10 seats each, while the number of meeting seats in the conference and restaurant area will be increased, aligned to the overall new capacity of the building and the number of daily users. The Host State foresees the construction works to be executed during the period mid 2025 – 2028.

In the aftermath of the parking building partial collapse at the Eindhoven Airport, the Host State implemented a national review procedure for all buildings where the same Plank Floor Slabs (PFS) have been used. The Headquarters underwent the procedure and the outcome is the Host State's recommendation to Europol for safe usage measures to be adopted as a first step, by reducing the floor load, where appropriate. In 2021, the Host State reiterated this advice towards Europol, based on a subsequent analysis. Beyond the mitigation measures, precautionary remedial measures will also be carried out in the building, by strengthening the floors, as part of the Mid-Term Housing Solution.

The replacement of the Local Operational Network (LON), part of the Building Automation System (BAS), started in 2022 as the LON was no longer supported by the market and business continuity was at risk. The LON has been replaced by new technologies, which is a Local Area Network (LAN), and was completed in 2023.

### Temporary Satellite Building 1

The Host State established a Temporary Satellite Building (TSB) 1 in The Hague in 2019 due to Europol's organisational growth and capacity reduction of workplaces in the Headquarters because of the Plank Floor Slabs issues.

The usage of the building is necessary for the implementation of the Mid-Term Housing Solution (HQ1) and until the completion of the Long-Term Housing Measures (HQ2), the delivery of another long-term office building in close vicinity to HQ1.

The Host State is negotiating the extension of the lease of TSB 1, which is due to expire on 31 December 2023. The Host State and Europol agreed to elaborate on defining the interim duration of the extension of the current lease, taking into account the availability of TSB3.

### Temporary Satellite Building 2

The Host State was successful in establishing a lease agreement for an office building, to fulfil the function of Temporary Satellite Building 2, in close proximity to the Headquarters.

The building is located in the green neighbourhood district "Zorgvliet", in the city centre and International Zone of The Hague, easily accessible to/from the Headquarters. The building's quality location offers the opportunity to implement the security requirements in the public surroundings, inside the building and on its premises.

The net rentable floor space is 2,275 m<sup>2</sup>; the building consists of 5 storeys and supports the accommodation of 150 workplaces. The distance from the Headquarters is 700 metres. The building is in very good condition and certified with energy label A+.



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The design process is in progress to convert Europol's Programme of Requirements in the development plans to be implemented in the building and its premises.

### Temporary Satellite Building 3

Due to the expiration of the lease of TSB1, an alternative office building is required for the implementation of the MTHS in HQ1, as well as covering organisational growth and supporting new business demands until the delivery of HQ2.

The Host State was effective in establishing a lease agreement for an office building in the close vicinity of the HQ. The building is located in the green neighbourhood district "Statenkwartier", in the city centre and linked to the International Zone of The Hague. It is easily accessible to/from the HQ.

The construction of the building took place in 1989, was renovated in 2009 and can provide 280 workplaces. It is in very good condition and certified with energy label A+.

A feasibility study is in progress to investigate how Europol's security requirements can be implemented in the building and its premises, as well as how the building can be made available for operational usage in a short timeframe.

### Long-Term Housing Measures (HQ2)

In 2019, the Host State completed its acquisition of an additional HQ2 office building, within the International Zone. As further optimisation of the current Headquarters (HQ1) is limited, this permanent expansion is therefore necessary to accommodate Europol's growth and spatial needs for the period 2031-2045. The office building will be developed by the Host State for single usage of Europol as HQ2 via the Long-Term Housing Measures.

Europol completed its user Spatial-, Functional- and Technical Programme of Requirements in 2021. Following-up on this, the Host State and Europol are conducting two studies. The first study focuses on the implementation of the security requirements in the building and its public surroundings, taking into account the Urban Zoning Plan of the "Zorgvliet" neighbourhood, and the building's historical and architectural value. The second study focuses on examining the maximum number of workplaces that can be realised, taking into account possible extensions to increase the building volume.

Europol's Programme of Requirements of the Long-Term Housing Measures includes a second *high-availability* "(Hot) Data Centre". As both buildings HQ1 and HQ2 are connected to the same electricity grid in The Hague, Europol requested the Host State to establish this data centre at a different, highly secure location within the Netherlands.

The Host State completed the shortlisting exercise with eight possible locations in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the Host State and Europol initiated a Feasibility Study on two locations, which is still in progress, to select the most suitable site, which can support Europol's security, business continuity and ICT requirements. The establishment of a (Hot) Data Centre is of key importance for the agency, in order to ensure business continuity of the current information systems towards the Member States and Third Parties.

### Data Recovery Site Austria

Europol's Data Recovery Site is hosted at a location owned by the Republic of Austria. The original contract, running from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2021, has been renewed by an Addendum for a period of 5 years, starting as of 1 August 2021 until 31 July 2026. The Data Recovery Site is used to continuously store a backup of Europol's data and is therefore important for Europol's ICT business continuity.

### Brussels Office

Due to the increased interaction with EU institutions and other EU agencies, a Europol office in Brussels was established in 2019. The office is composed of two TA staff permanently based in Brussels. The office space is 44m<sup>2</sup> and is located within the Council building. The administrative Arrangement with the General Secretariat of the Council was signed in 2018, and is extended tacitly, unless terminated by a party with six months written notice. The rental fee is per year and amounts to EUR 15,500 in 2024.

**Annex VIII: Privileges and immunities**

Agency privileges	Privileges granted to staff	
	Protocol of privileges and immunities / diplomatic status	Education / day care
<p>According to Article 63(1) Europol Regulation the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the European Union ("Protocol No. 7"<sup>90</sup> to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) applies to Europol. The Protocol is supplemented by the Agreement of 15 October 1998 between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Europol concerning the Headquarters of Europol (<i>see Art. 70 Europol Regulation</i>).</p>	<p>According to Article 63(1) Europol Regulation the following legal acts apply to Europol's staff (including the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Directors):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the European Union ("Protocol No. 7" to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU)</li> <li>- Regulation (Euratom, ECSC, EEC) No. 549/69 of 25 March 1969 determining the categories of officials and other servants of the European Communities to whom the provisions of Article 12, the second paragraph of Article 13 and Article 14 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the Communities apply (as last amended by Regulation (EC) No. 371/2009 of 27 November 2008)</li> </ul> <p>Protocol and Regulation are supplemented by the Agreement of 15 October 1998 between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Europol concerning the Headquarters of Europol (<i>see Art. 70 Europol Regulation</i>), which is itself supplemented regarding staff privileges and immunities by a number of <i>Notes Verbales</i> some specific to Europol and others directed towards all international and EU organisations in The Netherlands. The most significant of these is an exchange of <i>Notes Verbales</i> of 25 October 2007.</p>	<p>Europol staff members are eligible to receive national childcare and education allowances provided that they satisfy the criteria imposed by the applicable Dutch laws and regulations.</p>

<sup>90</sup> Please note: Protocol No. 7 has been renumbered, compared to the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities. Its Article 15 empowers the European Parliament and the Council to determine acting by means of regulations the categories of officials and other servants of the Union to whom the provisions of Article 11, the second paragraph of Article 12, and Article 13 of this Protocol shall apply, in whole or in part. -Regulation No. 549/69 (see above) has not been amended following the entry into force of the new Protocol No. 7 (1 Dec. 2009), thus still contains the references to the old numbering.

### Annex IX: Evaluations

From an overall perspective, evaluation activities are an integral part of Europol's governance set-up. Europol assesses the recommendations, observations and opportunities for improvement put forward during internal and external audits, inspections and other review or supervisory activities which are facilitated by the Agency. The implementation of corresponding action plans is monitored and reported upon, including in the CAAR.

#### Internal monitoring & evaluation

Europol management monitors the implementation status of all planned actions, projects and indicators on a quarterly basis, to assess the overall progress and to take corrective actions where needed.

The **Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR)** is submitted on behalf of the Executive Director of Europol to the Management Board (MB) and presents the activities performed to implement the annual Work Programme. The document provides an overview of the extent to which the annual objectives were achieved, information about the budget implementation, human resources, risk management activities, efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system and audit results. All building blocks of assurance are also included in the report. An analysis and assessment of the CAAR is made by the MB.

#### Internal Audit Capability (IAC)

The function and role of the IAC are enshrined in Article 78 of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol and defined further in the IAC Charter. The mission of the IAC is to enhance and protect Europol's organisational value, by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight. The IAC helps Europol in accomplishing its objectives by bringing a systematic and disciplined approach to evaluate the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes, and by issuing recommendations for their improvement, thereby promoting a culture of efficient and effective management within Europol.

As part of its audit work, the IAC issues recommendations and opportunities for improvement. Europol has a system in place to develop and monitor the implementation of actions to address the risks identified by the IAC and reports in the CAAR on the progress achieved in implementing the audit recommendations.

#### Data Protection Function (DPF)

The tasks of the Data Protection Officer (DPO) are provided in Article 41 of the Europol Regulation and the related MB Implementing Rules. The DPO and Head of the Data Protection Function (DPF) is accountable to the MB and has to ensure, in an independent manner, that the processing of personal data by Europol, including personal data relating to staff members, is done in a way that is both lawful and in compliance with the provisions set out in the Europol Regulation. According to his mission the DPO provides objective assurance and consultation, which is designed to add value to and improve Europol's data processing operations. In the performance of his duties the DPO is supported by the DPF.

The protection of personal data remains a key factor that enables Europol to successfully fulfil its mission. Europol's tailor-made data protection framework is widely recognised as adhering to the highest standards of data protection in law enforcement. It is designed to serve the needs of the operational units in preventing and combating serious and organised crime and terrorism, while simultaneously protecting the personal data processed in Europol's systems. In addition to law enforcement data, the DPO also ensures the protection of Europol staff data as determined by Regulation (EC) No 2018/1725<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Regulation (EC) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

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### External monitoring & evaluation

The **Internal Audit Service (IAS)**, supported by the IAC and Europol, regularly performs a risk assessment on Europol's governance, administrative and support process areas, with a view to identifying the overall risk profile of these processes outside the core business area. On the basis of the IAS risk assessment concerning Europol's governance, administrative and support processes, the Europol MB endorses a multi-annual IAS Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP) for Europol, subsequently implemented by corresponding IAS audit engagements at Europol. The latest risk assessment was initiated in 2021 and the resulting SIAP 2022-2024 for Europol outlines three prospective audit topics, namely: (1) coordination and working arrangements in the Directorate General (DG) Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) with EU decentralised agencies CEPOL, EUAA, EMCDDA, Europol and eu-LISA (completed in 2023), (2) Europol's information management strategy – design of key controls, and (3) Innovation lab.

The **European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS)** exercises continuous inspection and oversight activities at Europol which also involve the Data Protection Function (DPF) of Europol.

The **European Court of Auditors (ECA)** conducts in particular annual audits on the accounts of Europol to issue a statement of assurance on the reliability of the annual accounts, and the legality of regularity of the underlying transactions. In addition to the examination of the annual accounts, the ECA examines topics of horizontal nature across EU Agencies. The ECA also conducts performance and ad-hoc audit engagements with respect to the mandate of Europol.

An **independent external auditor** also verifies that the annual accounts of Europol present fairly, in all material aspects, the revenue, expenditure and financial position of Europol at the end of the respective financial year, in line with Article 104 of the Financial Regulation (FR) applicable to Europol. The findings and related audit opinion of the external audit inform the statement of assurance in the annual report of the ECA.

#### **Ad-hoc evaluations**

In the area of the Finance Unit, evaluation related tasks are envisaged to be performed by an external auditor with an aim to improve efficiency, effectiveness and to roll out some structural alignment on roles and responsibilities across Europol.

Other evaluations planned for a specific year are referred to in the Annual Work Programme.

## Annex X: Strategy for the organisational management and internal control systems

The renewed Europol Strategy sets out the strategic direction for Europol and the six strategic priorities. Europol's **Internal Control System (ICS)** is a key component to help deliver the renewed Europol Strategy and achieve the corresponding objectives for Europol.

### Organisational management

The Executive Director is responsible for the implementation of the tasks assigned to Europol and puts in place the necessary organisational structure and the ICS. The Executive Director is supported in the design and implementation of internal controls by the Deputy Executive Director in charge of the Governance Directorate, as the directorate member in charge of risk management and internal control, senior management, the Internal Control Coordinator (ICC), (IT) security, financial actors and the planning and performance and process management functions. The Management Board and independent functions have a distinct role in Europol's administrative and management structure.

Organisational management integrates the Three Lines of Defence model with a dedicated risk management and compliance function, a Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO), an Internal Audit Capability (IAC), an Accounting Officer (ACCO) and a Data Protection Officer (DPO), which is designed in line with the applicable regulatory framework.

### Internal Control System (ICS)

The **ICS** translates the **Europol Internal Control Framework (ICF)**, adopted by the Management Board, and which was developed in line with the COSO Integrated Internal Control Framework and the ICF of the European Commission. Europol's ICS represents the system of controls including the regulatory instruments, delegations, processes, resources (technical and human) and organisational structure to enable Europol to achieve its strategy and objectives.

The ICS aims at providing reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the elements of internal control, as set out in the FR applicable to Europol, with regard to the implementation of the budget, namely:

- a. effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations;
- b. reliability of reporting;
- c. safeguarding of assets and information;
- d. prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities;
- e. adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the (multi-) annual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments concerned.

The Europol ICF consists of five components<sup>92</sup> and seventeen principles - underpinned by fifty-eight so-called 'Points of Focus'<sup>93</sup> - to achieve the operational, reporting and compliance objectives.

Europol continuously monitors, using both quantitative and qualitative measurements, including a set of internal control indicators and an annual assessment, the functioning of the ICS to determine whether each of the five components of internal control, including the underlying principles, is present and functioning and whether the components operate in an integrated manner and effectively reduce, to an acceptable level, the risk of not achieving the (multi-) annual objectives - relating to the operations, reporting, and compliance. Europol also assesses the costs and benefits of control. Improvements identified in the annual

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<sup>92</sup> (1) Control environment, (2) Risk assessment, (3) Control activities, (4) Information and communication, (5) Monitoring activities

<sup>93</sup> Important characteristics of the internal control principles

## Europol Public Information

assessment of the ICS set the strategy for the further development of the existing internal controls.

Further to the control environment, control activities, management of information and communication as well as monitoring activities, a corporate **risk management** process aggregates and assesses risks (including the related responses) at organisational level. Risk management is expanded from a vertical (e.g. in departments or programmes/projects) to a horizontal perspective (corporate, organisational wide view) in line with the four principles and related points of focus of the risk assessment component, and Europol's risk management policy and process, whereby corporate risks are considered internally by Europol at regular intervals throughout the year and on an immediate ad hoc basis in the event of the identification of corporate risks which are of a time-critical or high impact nature. A risk management tool is envisaged for implementation and organisational wide roll-out in 2024.

Measures to prevent cases of conflict of interest, irregularities and fraud include a robust ethics framework and dedicated rules and guidance, including mechanisms to report issues, management supervision and delegations - observing the segregation of duties and sound financial management principles, monitoring and regular reporting, ex-ante and ex-post controls and anti-fraud risk assessment and specific actions. Europol has an Internal Investigations Service (IIS) to investigate suspected breaches of professional obligations.

### Anti-Fraud Strategy

In March 2022, the Management Board adopted the revised Anti-Fraud Strategy for the period 2022-2024. The Anti-Fraud Strategy reflects the principles, an evaluation of the implementation of the previous strategy 2017 to 2020, a fraud risk assessment including the fourteen common fraud risk scenarios as defined by OLAF, anti-fraud objectives and actions.

The three Anti-Fraud Strategy objectives are to:

- Maintain and expand anti-fraud culture and awareness;
- Manage sensitive positions;
- Manage fraud risk scenario process improvements.

Based on the fraud risk assessment and to achieve the three objectives, Europol defined thirteen detailed actions, calling for cross-departmental cooperation to provide required deliverables and meet predefined performance indicators. The actions refer to, in particular, anti-fraud awareness and training, management of sensitive staff positions, and process improvements in the area of human resources management, conflict of interest management, and procurement and contract management.

The implementation of the defined actions is regularly assessed. A next revision of the Anti-Fraud Strategy will be initiated in 2024.

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### Annex XI: Grants

#### A. Grant, Contribution and Service-level Agreements resulting in revenue and additional budget

	General information					Financial and HR impacts								
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description	N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)		
<b>Grant agreements</b>														
3. H2020 - GRACE 883341 - part of consortium coordinated by Vicom, ES	18/05/2020 (starting date 1/6/2020)	6,823,512.50 for the consortium of which 747,550 for Europol	42 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Global Response Against Child Exploitation based on big-data technologies supported by advanced AI powered algorithms	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							195,787	195,787	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		0		0		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
4. H2020 - INFINITY 883293 - part of consortium coordinated by Airbus, FR	11/05/2020 (starting date 1/6/2020)	6,866,503.75 for the consortium of which 481,100 for Europol	39 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	a project that revolutionises how LEAs view, analyse and share information to combat crime and terrorism	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							98,687	98,687	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	1		0		0		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
5. H2020 - AIDA 883596 - part of consortium coordinated by Ingegneria Informatica, IT	20/05/2020 (starting date 1/9/2020)	7,690,272.50 for the consortium of which 935,800 for Europol	30 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Artificial Intelligence and advanced Data Analytics for Law Enforcement Agencies	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							62,387	62,387	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	5		0		0		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
6. H2020 - STARLIGHT 101021797 - part of consortium coordinated by CEA, FR	05/05/2021 (starting date 1/10/2021)	17,000,000 for the consortium of which 891,200 for Europol	48 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Sustainable Autonomy and Resilience for LEAs using AI against High priority Threats	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							222,800	222,800	222,800	222,800	167,100	167,100	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		3		3		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
Total grant agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							579,661	579,661	222,800	222,800	167,100	167,100	-	-
						Number of CAs	12		3		3		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	

	General information					Financial and HR impacts								
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description	N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)		
<b>Contribution agreements</b>														
1. EaP EMPACT ENI/2020 / 416-376	11/06/2020 (starting date 1/7/2020)	2,500,000	48 months	European Commission DG Near	Fighting organised crime in the EaP region	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							625,000	625,000	312,500	312,500	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	2		2		0		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
2. SIRIUS phase 2 New Agreement	21/12/2020 (starting date 1/1/2021)	3,491,891.50 (2,226,456 Europol, 1,265,435.50 Eurojust)	42 months (staff for year 1 still in SIRIUS I)	European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments	International Digital Cooperation - Cross border access to electronic evidence	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							797,835	797,835	344,412	344,412	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	7		7		0		0	
	Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0						
Total contribution agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							1,422,835	1,422,835	656,912	656,912	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	9		9		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	

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	General information					Financial and HR impacts								
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description	N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)		
Service-level agreements														
1. EUIPO - IP Crime	07/11/2019 (starting date 1/1/2020)	maximum 3,800,000	48 months	The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)	To support law enforcement authorities preventing crime related to Intellectual Property Rights	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							950,000	950,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	2		0		0		0	
2. EUIPO - Fraud	13/08/2019 (starting date 1/1/2020)	80,000 per year	48 months	The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)	Preventing fraud against users of the European Union Intellectual Property Systems	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							80,000	80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	0		0		0		0	
3. EUIPO - IP Crime and Fraud	26/07/2023 (starting date 1/1/2024)	maximum 4,120,000 (1,030,000 per year)	48 months	The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)	To support law enforcement authorities preventing crime and fraud related to Intellectual Property Rights	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							-	-	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000
						Number of CAs	0		2		2		2	
3. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (funded via Contribution Agreement with DG Near)	05/08/2020	880,000	Maximum duration until 1/9/2024	The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training	EUROMED POLICE V (Contract No. ENI/2020/414- 940), WB PaCT (Contract No. 2019/ 413-822) and TOPCOP (Contract No. ENI/2020/415-941) projects	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							180,000	180,000	100,000	100,000	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		2		0		0	
Total service-level agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							1,210,000	1,210,000	1,130,000	1,130,000	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000	1,030,000
						Number of CAs	5		4		2		2	
						Number of SNEs	8		8		8		8	

	General information					Financial and HR impacts								
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description	N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)		
TOTAL AGREEMENTS						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							3,212,496	3,212,496	2,009,712	2,009,712	1,197,100	1,197,100	1,030,000	1,030,000
						Number of CAs	26		16		5		2	
						Number of SNEs	8		8		8		8	



### B. Grants to be awarded

Since 2006, Europol has supported the law enforcement community with grants. Initially for the support in the fight against Euro counterfeiting via Low Value Grants (LVGs). Later, from 2014 onwards, Europol started supporting the EMPACT activities via High Value Grants (HVGs) under a Delegation Agreement with DG Home.

In 2017, the Europol Regulation allowed the agency to support activities directly from the budget, other than Euro Counterfeiting, via grants. This additional support was initially provided through one or more HVGs for each Operational Action Plan (12-15 annually) and through LVGs for operational activities for EMPACT. This last category has been progressively utilised since and grew from six applications in 2017 to 108 applications in 2022.

Grant activities further increased in 2020 by the inclusion of the direct award of a grant to the ATLAS community after the support from the ISF Police had stopped. Europol also developed the new grant scheme for the Operational Task Forces for High Value Targets. For this scheme 12 LVG applications were received in the first year (2020), 51 LVG applications in the second year (2021) and 53 LVG applications in the third year (2022) of existence.

From 2023 onwards, Europol implements another LVG scheme dedicated to the support of the EU MS in the field of innovation. The objective is to provide targeted and agile financial support to group of EU MS and Schengen-associated countries that are working to co-develop the future services and tools that the EU LEA community will use in the future.

The total annual amount budgeted to award grants comes to roughly € 10M per year.

Running grant schemes under strictly annual budgets ("non-differentiated appropriations") was causing more and more challenges, especially because grants must be closed before the end of year N+1 and the peaks in workload are difficult to manage with limited staff resources.

In addition, Europol's beneficiaries, mainly the MS law-enforcement community (law-enforcement public bodies such as police, criminal investigation offices, gendarmerie, border guards, customs, etc.) were seeking possibilities for multi-annual funding and planning. As an example, for EMPACT, the Council requested Europol to introduce grants that run over multiple years, in support of the development of multi-annual Operation Action Plans (OAP) and similar signals are received from the ATLAS community.

In 2023 Europol already introduced differentiated appropriations but continued to support Member States via the different grant schemes with annual budgets. From 2024 onwards, Europol aims at introducing calls and invitations for periods longer than one year via differentiated appropriations.

#### **1. Restricted call for proposals to support the implementation of activities identified by the Council – EMPACT High Value Grants**

##### **Legal basis**

Article 4 and Article 61 of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

Council conclusions on setting the EU's Priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2022 and 2025, doc. 8665/21 COSI 90 of 12 May 2021.

##### **Budget line**

3920 EMPACT Grants

##### **Priorities of the years, objectives pursued and expected results**

## Europol Public Information

Enhancing the fight against serious and organised international crime during the third and fourth year of implementation of EMPACT activities 2022-2025.

The call is restricted to EMPACT participants, while all relevant documents are published on the Europol Platform for Experts – a communication tool with EMPACT participants used to reach all potential applicants. In accordance with the Europol legal basis, the Europol National Unit (ENU) shall be the liaison body between Europol and the competent authorities of the Member States. Thus, the applications must always be submitted via the ENU of the Lead Applicant.

The objective of the call is to provide support to Operational Actions laid down in the fifteen Operational Action Plans (OAPs) as adopted by the Council. EMPACT 2022-2025 addresses the following crime areas: High-risk criminal networks; Cyber-attacks; Trafficking in Human Beings (THB); Child sexual exploitation; Migrant smuggling; Drugs trafficking: (i) the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin, (ii) the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS); Fraud, economic and financial crimes: (i) online fraud schemes, (ii) excise fraud; (iii) MTIC fraud, (iv) intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies, (v) Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery; Organised Property Crime; Environmental crime; and Firearms trafficking.

It is expected that the support will provide for improved cooperation between Member States law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies and relevant third parties, while delivering coherent actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU.

### **Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals**

Transnational operational and non-operational activities addressing in each of the EMPACT Priorities at least one of the following objectives: awareness raising and exchange of best practices; improving data gathering and intelligence sharing, providing strategic support for current or proposed operational activities; enhancing operational support and cross-border cooperation.

Grants may not be awarded for activities that are funded under another EU programme or from Europol's budget. In this respect, it is noted that Europol is active in an environment which has undergone a proliferation of EU funding sources. A statement to ensure respect for the principle of no double funding from EU sources must be made by applicant(s) in the Application form. Europol is entitled to perform checks in this respect, including by liaising with external partners (e.g. DG HOME, Eurojust).

Calls will be designed with the aim of promoting one or more of the following outcomes which projects applications should aim at achieving:

- fostering communication and coordination amongst participants of OAPs;
- sharing of experiences and best practices between EU Member States;
- improving intelligence gathering and analyses;
- expanding data sharing with Europol information systems and prioritising the use of SIENA (secure line) as an operational communication tool;
- establishing support frameworks to implement operational activities, including where relevant with third countries or the private sector;
- enhancing cross-border/transnational operational cooperation between EU Member States and, where relevant, with third countries or the private sector;
- establishing joint investigations, joint operations or joint action days.

To take account of the operational nature of the activities, Europol may allow use of contingency budget for unplanned actions ("red-envelope procedure") in addition to planned actions ("blue envelope"). This is justified based on the need for law enforcement to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges and is further specified in the Call documentation. Europol may award using simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

### **Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria**

*Eligibility criteria:*

## Europol Public Information

I. In order to be eligible the Applicant must be a public body established in an EU Member State participating in the OAP in question (i.e. the particular EMPACT crime priority) and in the law-enforcement cooperation under Europol Regulation.

No differentiation is made in Europol's constituent act between different Member States. However, the opt-in structure used for JHA under the TFEU creates a varying degree of participation of Member States. Europol pays due regard to the status of EU Member States with regard to the Europol Regulation and/or Justice and Home Affairs matters as regards eligibility to be a (lead) Applicant.

II. The Co-Applicants must be:

- An entity explicitly mentioned as a participant in the OAP;
- If the entity is not explicitly mentioned in the OAP, any of the following entities may be Co-Applicants, provided their participation is justified by the nature of the action:
  - A public body established in an EU Member State or in a third country OR
  - A profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in a third country, OR
  - An International Organisation.

As regards co-applicants, even non-opting-in Member States could be eligible as co-applicants on the same basis as third countries and third parties provided that their participation is justified by the nature of the action. Their meaningful participation has however to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States.

Law Enforcement applicants may involve non-LE entities for the purpose of managing a grant provided that the manner and degree of their involvement satisfies security and confidentiality concerns. Costs incurred by other types of bodies could be eligible, provided that these can be justified by the aims of the action and respect the principle of sound financial management.

IV. The proposed activities must be mentioned in the respective OAPs as approved by COSI Council decisions.

### *Selection criteria:*

In accordance with Article 198 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.

The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198(5) and (6) of the Financial Regulation.

### *Award criteria:*

In accordance with Article 199 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the quality and expected results and cost-effectiveness of the proposed action. Applications will also be assessed with regard to their impact on the implementation of the OAPs concerned, European added value and involvement of Europol. Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their publication in accordance with Article 189 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation, shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

**Indicative timetable and indicative amount of the call for proposals**

Date	Amount
Publication: Q4 2023 Award of grants: Q1 2024	EUR 4,500,000

**Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs**

95%

**2. Ad-hoc low-value grants in support of operational activities as laid down in the Operational Action Plans implementing the EMPACT Priorities.**

**Legal basis**

Article 4 and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

Council conclusions on setting the EU's Priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2022 and 2025, doc. 8665/21 COSI 90 of 12 May 2021.

**Budget line**

3920 EMPACT Grants

**Priorities of the years, objectives pursued and expected results**

Enhancing the fight against serious and organised international crime during the third and fourth year of the implementation of EMPACT activities 2022-2025. These grants are focussed on supporting Member States' cross-border operations and investigations as well as joint investigation teams as per Europol's tasks under Article 4(1)(h) of the Europol Regulation. Applications from eligible applicants can be submitted throughout the period indicated below rather than on any fixed deadline(s).

The objective of the low-value grants is to provide support tailored to operational activities within the fifteen Operational Action Plans (OAPs) adopted by the Council. They target activities that are developed on an ad-hoc basis rather than as a result of a long-term planning, due to their investigative nature or other quickly changing aspects of crime phenomena and crime-countermeasures. EMPACT 2022-2025 addresses the following crime areas: High-risk criminal networks; Cyber-attacks; Trafficking in Human Beings (THB); Child sexual exploitation; Migrant smuggling; Drugs trafficking: (i) the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin, (ii) the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS); Fraud, economic and financial crimes: (i) online fraud schemes, (ii) excise fraud; (iii) MTIC fraud, (iv) intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies, (v) Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery; Organised Property Crime; Environmental crime; and Firearms trafficking.

It is expected that the support will provide for effective cooperation between Member States law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies and relevant third parties while delivering coherent operational actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU. The funded measures should achieve concrete, quantifiable / measurable operational results. This scheme shall take due consideration of the existence of a separate grant scheme supporting actions against euro-counterfeiting.

**Description of the activities to be funded through low-value grants**

Transnational short-term operational and/or investigative activities within the EMPACT Priorities, with a budget not exceeding 60,000 EUR (in line with the threshold defined in the EU Financial Regulation), aiming to enhance operational cross-border cooperation, establish joint investigations, joint operations or joint action days.

## Europol Public Information

Grants awarded under this Article have a maximum duration of 9 months with possibility to extend at Europol's discretion, if justified operationally. Europol may use simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

### Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

#### *Eligibility criteria:*

I. In order to be eligible the Applicant must be a public body established in an EU Member state participating in the OAP in question (i.e. the particular EMPACT crime priority) and in the law-enforcement cooperation under the Europol Regulation.

No differentiation is made in Europol's constituent act between different Member States. However the opt-in structure used for JHA under the TFEU creates a varying degree of participation of Member States. Europol pays due regard to the status of EU Member States with regard to the Europol Regulation and/or Justice and Home Affairs matters as regards eligibility to be a (lead) Applicant.

II. The Co-Applicants must be:

- An entity explicitly mentioned as a participant in the OAP;
- If the entity is not explicitly mentioned in the OAP, any of the following entities may be Co-Applicants, provided their participation is justified by the nature of the action:
  - A public body established in an EU Member State or in a third country OR
  - A profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in a third country, OR
  - An International Organisation.

As regards co-applicants even non-opting-in Member States could be eligible as co-applicants on the same basis as third countries and third parties provided that their participation is justified by the nature of the action. Their meaningful participation has however to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States.

IV. The proposed activities must be mentioned in the respective OAPs as approved by COSI Council decisions.

V. The requested grant cannot be higher than 60,000 EUR, or in line with the current threshold for low-value grants established by the EU Financial Regulation.

#### *Selection criteria:*

In accordance with Article 198 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.
- The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198(5) & (6) of the Financial Regulation.

To ensure that the operational needs are met, a pool of evaluators shall be duly appointed by the responsible authorising officer. In each evaluation at least 2 evaluators from that list (with complementary expertise in law enforcement and finance) shall perform the evaluation (without a separate ad hoc appointment).

To allow for fast processing, applicants must use the templates to apply and reply within maximum 24 hours to any questions raised during evaluation.

#### *Award criteria:*

In accordance with Article 199 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the quality and expected results and cost-effectiveness of the

## Europol Public Information

proposed action. Applications will also be assessed with regard to their impact on the implementation of the OAPs concerned, European added value and involvement of Europol. Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their publication in accordance with Article 189 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation, shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

### Indicative timetable and indicative amount

Date	Amount
Publication: one in Q1 2024 and one in Q1 2025 Award of grants: Q1 2024-Q4 /2025	EUR 3,500,000 (2 x EUR 1,750,000) + internal assigned revenue <sup>94</sup>

### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

## 3. Support for combatting Euro-counterfeiting

### Legal basis

Article 4(4) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

### Budget line

3930 Support against Euro Counterfeiting Grants

### Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

Operational actions and support for coordination activities within the guidelines approved by the Europol Management Board with the objective of protecting the euro currency from counterfeiting activities.

### Description of the activities to be funded through low-value grants

Applications from eligible applicants can be submitted throughout the period indicated below rather than on any fixed deadline(s). Applications submitted must involve at least one of the following activities, all designed with the objective of protecting the integrity of the Euro currency:

- Investigations into or related to euro counterfeiting. This means inquiries related to counterfeit euro banknotes and counterfeit euro coins, as well as the production and the distribution of them;
- Technical investigations using forensic and/or scientific analysis to identify, sites, raw materials and technical equipment used for the production of counterfeit euro notes and coins as well as measures to locate technical equipment used;
- Investigative measures carried out in compliance with the applicable national law and in accordance with these guidelines;
- Operational or technical investigations into euro counterfeiting involving cooperation with third countries.

In addition, the applicant must commit to a degree of involvement of Europol:

- as a minimum to ensure the role of Europol as the Central Office, the law enforcement information, including samples of any counterfeit currency recovered, must be shared with Europol via the appropriate channels;
- on the spot support where an application involves a production site(s).

<sup>94</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

## Europol Public Information

### Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

This is not a general advertised call due to the restricted pool of potential beneficiaries. The possibility and funds available shall be made known to the entities foreseen under the Europol Management Board approved rules. Any ex post publicity will also take this into account excluding operational, strategic and classified information.

Eligible applicants:

- a) A law enforcement public body established in an EU Member State;
- b) A law enforcement public body in a third country, where foreseen by Europol legal framework.

To ensure that the operational needs are met, a pool of evaluators shall be duly appointed by the responsible authorising officer. Considering the low value of individual awards made, a single evaluator shall evaluate based on objective criteria established to assess the award criteria. These criteria include: anticipated Quality of the Counterfeits, impact of proposed operational measure, involvement of Europol, value for money and involvement of National Central Office. To allow for fast processing, applicants must use the templates to apply and reply within maximum 24 hours to any questions raised during evaluation.

### Indicative amount available

Date	Amount
Q1 2024-Q4 2025	EUR 300,000 + internal assigned revenue <sup>95</sup>

### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

100% maximum

## 4. ATLAS Network grant

### Legal basis

Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA. Terms of Reference signed between Europol, Atlas Chair and Austrian Ministry of Interior and entering into force on 10 October 2018.

### Budget line

3950 ATLAS Grants

### Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

The ATLAS Network is a cooperation structure between 38 Special Intervention Units (SIUs) that includes and supports different training platforms and sharing of best practices in terms of proficiency and tactics.

The main priority for the years 2024 and 2025 is the execution of cross border operations and the implementation of trainings, workshops and exercises. These priorities as well as the overall ATLAS strategy are influenced amongst others by the tailor-made strategic document of the European Counter Terrorism Centre - "ECTC Outlook for ATLAS Commanders". The identified challenges need special attention and preparation on all levels and areas of competence: intervention in urban, rural and maritime areas; transport means and buildings are focal points as well as drone handling/robotics, sniper, communication, negotiation skills and others. In addition, the capability to render medical first aid during field operations needs to be trained, developed and improved.

Joint trainings, workshops, courses and project groups are the systematic approach to increase the readiness of involved units to handle possible terrorist attacks and/or incidents.

<sup>95</sup> As mentioned in the guidelines EDOC #878276.

## Europol Public Information

Another priority is the development of Common Training Centres, acting as “Centres of Excellence” (CoE). These structures serve as dedicated facilities to provide standardised training and knowledge transfer to the ATLAS member units. Thus, the quality of the delivered training can be kept consistently on the highest level. At the same time, the amount of the target groups/participants can be increased. Along with this structure, a dedicated programme for “Pooling and Sharing” of special equipment will be further developed.

### Description of the activities to be funded

The allocation of funds will cover numerous activities which allow the different specialised groups to increase its operational proficiency and to aid in carrying out various training/tactical response building exercises and workshops.

The activities, dependent on budget availability, are:

- fostering communication and coordination amongst SIUs;
- delivery and/or design of training on:
  - o entry techniques
  - o silent techniques
  - o rural mountain operations
  - o buildings (assault tactics and knowledge)
  - o Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boats
  - o naval targets
  - o Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)
  - o sniper techniques
  - o urban rappelling
  - o first aid (intervening in cases of most serious crimes with a high risk of life threatening and/or mass injuries)
  - o specialised parachute use: „Silent Approach Tactics“
  - o K9 techniques: interventions with specialised dogs’ assistance
- sharing of experiences and best practices between EU MS and third countries;
- further development of the secure information exchange tools;
- maintenance of the mock-ups set up as part of the Common Training Centre “Centres of Excellence” Aircraft;
- establishing support frameworks to implement operational activities;
- enhancing cross-border/transnational operational cooperation between EU Member States in the areas of competence of SIUs;
- establishing joint training and preparation for challenges impacting on several activities focussed on evaluation of training and cooperation results;
- exploring further development of secure communication tools;
- fostering cooperation with third countries: Police Special Intervention Units Conference (POLSPEC).

Europol may award using simplified cost options, provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

### Justification Direct Grant

Under Article 61(3) of the Europol Regulation, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals where the grant action is supporting specific tasks referred to in points (h) and (i) of Article 4(1) of the Europol Regulation. This grant provides support to the Atlas network that represents the Member States’ special intervention units (via the legal entity of the country chairing Atlas on behalf of the network).

### Indicative timetable and indicative amount of the grant

Date	Amount
Q1 2024	EUR 3,000,000

### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%



## 5. HVT/OTF grants

### Legal basis

Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

Standard Operating Procedure - Standard Operating Procedure on the Selection of High Value Targets and Establishment of Operational Task Forces within O2-ESOCC, EDOC #901933v18A.

### Budget line

3940 OTF Grants

### Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

Priority: Europol will focus on the identification of High-Value Targets and the establishment of Operational Task Forces addressing the individuals and organised crime groups posing the highest serious and organised crime risk for the MS.

Objective: Creation and support of an environment for multi-disciplinary teams and transnational investigations aiming at having a stronger impact in destabilising activities of high risk organised crime groups and disrupting criminal markets.

Expected results: deliver qualitative operational support to OTFs, which are focusing on poly-criminal networks and their leaders posing the highest risk of serious and organised crime.

### Description of the activities to be funded

Operational and/or investigative activities (e.g. travel and accommodation for operational meetings outside Europol HQ, direct operational costs such as informant rewards, buying/renting operational technical and forensic equipment, interpretation or deployments, etc.) implemented by the Operational Task Forces, established in accordance with the SOP with a budget not exceeding 60,000 EUR (in line with the threshold defined in the EU Financial Regulation), aiming to support MS investigations against individuals and criminal organisations constituting highest serious and organised crime risks to more than one MS and to intensify asset tracing and increase the rate of confiscation of criminal proceeds.

Each application, within the limit of 60,000 EUR, could cover a particular stage of the ongoing investigation. The operational stages will be pre-defined within the Operational Plan of an established OTF in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure in place. If operationally justified, several subsequent applications could be submitted, enabling Member States to apply for funding throughout the lifetime of the operation.

Europol may use simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted. The duration of grants will be 9 months extendable, if operationally justified.

### Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

#### *Eligibility criteria:*

I. In order to be eligible the Applicant must be a public body established in an EU Member State and in the law-enforcement cooperation under Europol Regulation. In addition, the Applicant must be a member of established Operational Task Force applying Standard Operating Procedure on the Selection of High Value Targets and Establishment of Operational Task Forces.

No differentiation is made in Europol's constituent act between different Member States. However, the opt-in structure used for JHA under the TFEU creates a varying degree of participation of Member States. Europol pays due regard to the status of EU Member States with regard to the Europol Regulation and/or Justice and Home Affairs matters as regards eligibility to be a (lead) Applicant.

II. The Co-Applicants must be members of established Operational Task Force:

- a public body established in an EU Member State or in a third country OR
- an International Organisation.

## Europol Public Information

As regards co-applicants, even non-opting-in Member States could be eligible as co-applicants on the same basis as third countries and third parties provided that their participation is justified by the nature of the action. Their meaningful participation has, however, to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States.

IV. The proposed actions must be related to activities of established Operational Task Force, which carry out intelligence and investigative activities against selected HVT as defined within the Standard Operating Procedure<sup>96</sup> on Selection of High Value Targets and Establishment of Operational Task Forces.

V. The requested grant cannot be higher than 60,000 EUR, or in line with the current threshold for low-value grants established by the EU Financial Regulation.

### *Selection criteria:*

In accordance with Article 198 of the EU Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.
- The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198 of the EU Financial Regulation.

To ensure that the operational needs are met, a pool of evaluators shall be duly appointed by the responsible authorising officer. In each evaluation at least 2 evaluators from that list (with complementary expertise in law enforcement and finance) shall perform the evaluation (without a separate ad hoc appointment).

To allow for fast processing, applicants must use the templates to apply and reply within maximum 24 hours to any questions raised during evaluation.

### *Award criteria:*

In accordance with Article 199 of the EU Financial Regulation proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the relevance, quality, cost-effectiveness and European added value of the proposed action.

Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their annual publication in accordance with Article 189 of EU Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation, shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

## **Information for Applicants**

The Invitation to submit applications shall be restricted to OTF participants only. Once an OTF is established, the Invitation, accompanied by the application package, shall be circulated to the targeted audience only. All OTF participants shall receive the information simultaneously, in accordance with the principle of equal treatment.

## **Indicative timetable for the direct award and indicative amount of the grant**

Unlike the EMPACT and ATLAS grant schemes, Europol intends to introduce differentiated appropriations with a multi-annual invitation to apply for the OTF Grant scheme only from 2025 onwards.

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<sup>96</sup> EDOC #901933 v13 "Standard Operating Procedure - Selection of High Value Targets and establishment of Operational Task Forces within O2-ESOC".

## Europol Public Information

Date Publication Q1 2024 Award of Grants: Q1-Q4 2024	Amount EUR 2,000,000 <sup>97</sup>
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### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

## 6. Ad-hoc low-value grants in support of Innovation

### Legal basis

Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

### Budget line

3960 Innovation Grants

### Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

The objective of this scheme will be to support the cooperation in combating serious crime affecting two or more MS, by facilitating the delivery of innovative solutions addressing common security challenges.

### Description of the activities to be funded

Operational and/or innovative activities (e.g. direct operational costs pertaining to Innovation such as the acquisition of Software licenses, equipment and materials and hiring of consultants).

Each application, within the limit of 60,000 EUR, could cover a particular stage of an innovation project, as defined by the European Clearing Board (EuCB).

Europol may use simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted. The duration of grants will be 9 months extendable, if operationally justified.

### Essential Criteria

The new Scheme should not only acknowledge, but also strengthen the central role of the European Clearing Board (EuCB) for all matters related to research and innovation for law enforcement.

The EuCB is composed of at least one representative per EU MS and per Schengen-associated countries (larger countries have a larger delegation, the decision being taken at national level). These representatives are named "Single Points of Contact" (SPoCs) and are responsible, at national level, for disseminating and raising awareness about opportunities and benefits of cooperation with other European LEAs and with Europol in the field of research and innovation.

In principle, a grant application should be considered to be within scope if:

- The related project is taking place as part of an EuCB Core Group;
- It has a clear innovation focus and a well defined scope;
- The related result has a cross-border relevance, for example it addresses a need identified by more than one MS.

The new Scheme should deliver low-value grants only to Law Enforcement Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen-associated countries.

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<sup>97</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

## Europol Public Information

The grants should be presented by a partnership of LEAs, composed of at least two LEAs from two different MS.

### Indicative timetable and indicative amount

Date	Amount
Publication: Q1 2024 Award of grants: Q1 2024-Q4 2024	EUR 175,000 + internal assigned revenue <sup>98</sup>

### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

## 7. Low-value grants for cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries - End date for award under this grant scheme foreseen per 31/12/2023

### Legal basis

Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

Contribution Agreement between the European Commission and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation ENI/2020/416/376.

### Budget line

B-3600 EMP-EAP-Grants (EDOC#1111249)

### Priorities, objectives pursued and expected results

Supporting the cooperation of the six Eastern Partnership countries with EU Member States and Europol for the fight against serious and organised international crime, including through their participation in EMPACT.

The Invitation to submit applications is directed to EU Member States and the Eastern Partnership countries collaborating in the framework of a specific action. In accordance with Europol legal basis, the Europol National Unit (ENU) shall be the liaison body between Europol and the competent authorities of the Member States. Thus, the applications must always be submitted via the ENU of the Lead Applicant.

It is expected that the support will provide for improved cooperation between Member States' and Eastern Partnership countries' law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies while delivering coherent actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU.

### Description of the activities to be funded

Activities addressing at least one of the following objectives: (i) strengthening Eastern Partnership countries' institutional knowledge and capacity on EMPACT crime areas and increasing cooperation within EMPACT; (ii) enhancing criminal intelligence in the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood region as well as the exchange of intelligence and information between EaP countries, EU MS and Europol; (iii) enhancing operational cooperation with of the EaP countries with the EU Member States and Agencies, including through EMPACT.

The activities to be funded include operational and/or investigative activities (e.g. travel and accommodation for operational meetings, direct operational costs such as informant rewards, buying/renting operational technical and forensic equipment, interpretation or deployments, etc.) as well as activities related to strategic or operational intelligence exchange (e.g. meetings and workshops) implemented by the targeted law enforcement agencies.

<sup>98</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

## Europol Public Information

Furthermore, activities and equipment related to identification and setting of legal and technical requirements for the exchange of intelligence.

In case of larger investigations, if operationally justified, subsequently submitted applications, each within the limit of 60,000 EUR, could cover a particular stage of the ongoing investigation enabling the participating countries to apply for funding throughout the lifetime of the operation.

Grants may not be awarded for activities that are funded under another EU programme or from Europol's budget, including through EMPACT grants. In this respect, it is noted that Europol is active in an environment which has undergone a proliferation of EU funding sources. A statement to ensure respect for the principle of no double funding from EU sources must be made by applicant(s) in the Application form. Europol is entitled to perform checks in this respect, including by liaising with external partners (e.g. DG HOME, Eurojust).

Europol may award using simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

The maximum duration of grants will be 6 months extendable by 3 months, if justified.

### **Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria**

#### *Eligibility criteria:*

I. In order to be eligible the Lead Applicant must be a law enforcement or judiciary public body established in an EU Member State participating in EU law enforcement cooperation under Europol Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).

II. The Co-Applicants must be:

- a public body established in an EU Member State OR
- a public body established in one of the six Eastern Partnership countries<sup>99</sup> or, if relevant for the action, in a third country OR
- a profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in one of the six Eastern Partnership countries or, if relevant for the action, in a third country, OR
- an International Organisation.

The meaningful participation of co-applicants based in third countries, has to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States and at least one (1) public body of one of the six Eastern Partnership countries, which have a status of a law enforcement authority or judiciary.

IV. The requested grant cannot be higher than 60,000 EUR, or in line with the current threshold for low-value grants established by the EU Financial Regulation.

#### *Selection criteria:*

In accordance with Article 198 of the EU Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.
- The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198 of the EU Financial Regulation.

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<sup>99</sup> Following instructions provided by the EEAS, Belarus is at the moment not eligible to receive funding under this grant-scheme.

## Europol Public Information

To ensure that the operational needs are met, a pool of evaluators shall be duly appointed by the responsible authorising officer. In each evaluation at least 2 evaluators from that list (with complementary expertise in law enforcement and finance) shall perform the evaluation (without a separate ad hoc appointment).

### *Award criteria:*

In accordance with Article 199 of the EU Financial Regulation proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the relevance, quality, cost-effectiveness and European added value of the proposed action.

Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their publication in accordance with Article 189 of EU Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

### **Information for Applicants**

The Invitation to submit applications and the relevant application documents are published on Europol website.

### **Indicative timetable and indicative amount of the grant**

Date	Amount
Publication Q2 2021 Award of Grants: Q2 2021 – Q4 2023	EUR 1,420,000

### **Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs**

95%

## Annex XII: Strategy for cooperation with third countries and/or international organisations

### Europol External Strategy 2021-2024

#### 1. Framework of the Europol External Strategy 2021-2024

The External Strategy is part of Europol's multiannual programming, in accordance with Article 12 of the Europol Regulation (hereafter "Regulation"). The provisions for Europol's relations with partners are laid down in Chapter V of the Regulation.



The political framework of the Europol External Strategy 2021-2024 includes the European Council's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, the EU Global Strategy, the Political Guidelines of the current Commission and the steps leading to the European Security Union, to which Europol will continue to contribute.

The key analytical reports on crime in the EU, including Europol's assessments, provide the operational framework for Europol's external relations and an indication of the operational needs of the MS.

The Strategic priorities included in the Strategy 2020+ and, as of June 2023, in the renewed Europol Strategy represent the internal framework within which Europol's external relations are set; these strategic priorities represent the basis for defining the objectives for the External Strategy.

The objectives of the External Strategy 2021-2024 and the prioritised external partners reflect the findings of the report on the implementation of the External Strategy 2017-2020, in particular the chapter on Partners of this Strategy. Based on the experience gained during the implementation of the Europol External Strategy 2017-2020 and taking into account the guidance from the Management Board, Europol's leading goals when approaching external partners is to maximize the exchange of information between Law Enforcement Agencies and Europol and to foster international operational cooperation. As a general principle, Europol's engagement in the projects with external partners will not adversely influence the analytical and operational support provided to the Member States. Europol will address the Member States' interests and their need for support by making a clear prioritisation of its external relations.

The implementation of this External Strategy will strongly rely upon the availability of necessary resources.

#### 2. Goals

The External Strategy guides Europol's cooperation with external partners and fulfils the Agency's objectives set by its Regulation, namely to support the competent authorities of the Member States and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime, terrorism and other forms of crime affecting a common interest covered by a Union policy.

#### Europol performing as an integral part of the EU security architecture

The protection of citizens and freedoms is one of the priorities of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024<sup>100</sup>. Europol has well-established tools in the area of EU internal security, which address existing and emerging threats to the EU posed by an ever-changing security landscape.

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<sup>100</sup> The main priorities of the European Council in the area of protecting citizens and freedoms include amongst others, the effective control of external borders; fighting illegal immigration and human trafficking through better cooperation with countries of origin and transit; improving cooperation and information-sharing to fight terrorism

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Europol will further develop its relations with third countries, international organisations, regional groups and other external partners. The Agency will maintain existing and establish new strategic and operational cooperation with external partners, to enable the Member States' competent authorities to further strengthen the prevention and combat of all forms of serious crime. Europol will actively respond to current and emerging EU security challenges, thereby contributing to the European Security Union and the priorities stemming from the EU strategic framework. Europol will further strengthen its cooperation with the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in order to support the development of external relations in the area of security, in line with the operational needs of the Member States. In addition to existing priorities, the focus will be on developing further capabilities in the fight against cybercrime, financial and economic crime and environmental crime to support the implementation of the Commission's Political Guidelines for 2019-2024. As part of this endeavour, Europol will continue building effective partnerships with EU agencies, operations and missions and other bodies in line with European law enforcement's operational needs.

### Europol's external relations flexibly responding to the Member States operational needs

The goal of Europol's external relations is to enhance operational cooperation with external partners, mainly through the exchange of data.

Europol's activities in the area of external relations will be driven by the operational needs of Member States, as identified by key analytical reports on crime in the EU. While contributing to and ensuring the proper implementation of the priorities set by the EMPACT, Europol will pay particular attention to including third countries and other external partners in EMPACT activities, where relevant, and to the support of High Value Targets related investigations.

Europol's partnerships with external partners will continue to provide a secure and adaptive environment for flexible and timely support of the Member States' investigations, according to the Europol legal basis.

In order to reach these goals, Europol will pursue several objectives: the Agency will further enhance partnerships with external parties at both strategic and operational levels, with a view to opening new channels for data exchange and increase the data flow through existing ones. It will further develop its cooperation tools in the external relations domain to provide agile operational support to Member States law enforcement authorities and will promote EU policing solutions, innovation and research in its external relations.

### **3. Objectives**

Europol's goals in the area of external relations can be reached through objectives set by this External Strategy. These objectives strongly correlate with the strategic priorities set by the Europol Strategy 2020+ and, as of June 2023, by the renewed Strategy. The latter built further on the five strategic priorities of the Strategy 2020+, with an additional priority specifically aimed at addressing the increased complexity of law enforcement cooperation at EU level, and strengthening the role of Europol in bringing relevant partners together for international cooperation.

1. Be the EU criminal information hub, including for data acquisition.
2. Deliver agile real-time operational support.
3. Be the platform for European policing solutions.
4. Bring the relevant partners together for cross-border cooperation and joint action.
5. Be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research.
6. Be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation

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and cross-border crime and protecting our societies from malicious cyber activities, hybrid threats and disinformation.



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Bearing in mind these strategic priorities, Europol's objectives in the external relations are: Enhancing the partnerships with external parties at both strategic and operational levels.

This overarching objective is the major driver for the further development of effective partnerships with external partners. Europol will also support the Commission in the negotiations of new agreements allowing personal data exchange, which have achieved limited results during the first years of implementation of the Regulation.

The list of priority partners with which Europol may conclude working arrangements adopted by the Management Board, and the criteria for setting the priorities regarding the conclusion of Working Arrangements, discussed by the Corporate Matters Working Group in 2019, guide the implementation of the External Strategy.

Europol will use the tools provided by the European Union to enhance external partnerships, such as Union-funded projects, EU operations and missions when relevant.

### Using an extended network of partners to develop further the EU criminal information hub

Europol's external relations will focus on the further development of its role as the EU criminal information hub, in order to contribute to the preventive measures and to support the delivery of operational results to fulfil the priorities set by the EU strategic orientation. Europol will also contribute, within its legal mandate, to other Union endeavours, such as achieving a more effective control of its external borders, ensuring the proper functioning of Schengen and providing improved crisis management mechanisms. In addition, Europol will continue exploring its possible role in countering hybrid threats and in the European Union crisis management scheme.

Special attention will be paid to the further development of cooperation with private parties, non-governmental actors and international organisations that could contribute to the work of Europol, according to its legal basis.

### Further developing Europol's cooperation tools to provide agile operational support

Europol attracts external partners due to its unique and well-functioning environment for cooperation. Europol will continue to cultivate this environment, which represents a potential for further growth of new interested external partners.

The current security threats and ever-changing criminal environment require a complex multidisciplinary approach of law enforcement. This is reflected in the community of liaison officers hosted by Europol, which consists of police forces, customs representatives, members of the intelligence services and other law enforcement authorities. Europol will further invest to expand this multidisciplinary environment.

While Europol will continue to develop the community of liaison officers in order to ensure an effective connection with Member States and third parties, the future deployment of Europol liaison officers will take place as agreed by the Management Board.

Europol will further expand SIENA with all its functionalities and other platforms, such as the Europol Platform of Experts, in order to ensure the desired flow of operational information. Europol will develop its external relations with a focus on interoperability and interconnection of information (in line with and exploiting the ongoing implementation of the interoperability of EU information systems) to address EU security threats in all their complexity.

Interconnection and synergies will be of the utmost importance in the external relations of the Agency. Europol will explore possibilities to cooperate with EU bodies, such as agencies, CSDP missions and operations: the ultimate goal of this cooperation will be to secure the operational data needed to support the law enforcement authorities of Member States.

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However, any form of cooperation with civilian CSDP mission must be assessed case-by-case, taking into account the Europol's operational needs, its alignment with the legal basis and the availability of resources.

### Promoting EU policing solutions, innovation and research

Europol has completed the phase of promoting its business model to potential external partners: the business model has helped establish solid external cooperation relations in almost all the continents. The continued threats call for new law enforcement approaches, in particular in the areas of counterterrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime, as well as emerging threats from environmental crime. Due to a strong external element, tackling such criminality requires new forms and levels of external cooperation. Consequently, Europol has stepped up its efforts towards some external partners, for example via Union-funded projects.

Europol will continue to promote the model of the European Union law enforcement work with the goal to establish well-functioning external partnerships according to the operational needs. For example, the Innovation Lab will coordinate innovation and research activities for the benefit of the EU Member States' law enforcement agencies and other EU agencies and bodies. The Innovation Lab will focus on developing its external outreach with the established operational partners of Europol. Close cooperation with the Interpol Global Centre for Innovation (IGCI) is being established to monitor emerging technologies relevant to law enforcement work. In this context, cooperation with private parties will be further explored, keeping in mind current limitations in Europol's mandate.

In promoting EU policing solutions, Europol will focus on serving as a knowledge platform also for external partners, on promoting EU criminal analysis standards, on mediating and interconnecting expertise between the Member States, Europol and external partners.

#### **4. Partners**

Europol will continue to set priorities for engaging with external partners. The criteria for setting Europol's priorities regarding the conclusion of Working Arrangements, discussed by the Corporate Matters Working Group in 2019, will be applied to identify new external partners.

Europol will continue serving as a platform for EU Member States' competent authorities to interact with their counterparts from the partner countries in a coordinated way. Concerning the general focus of Europol's external relations led by the priority topics of organised crime, counterterrorism and cybercrime, the following areas will be further developed: cooperation on financial investigations, namely through the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre, Europol's travel intelligence function, innovation and forensics.

### Third countries and regions

Europol has established cooperation with a number of external partners. The Agency will maintain the relations stemming from the existing agreements and working arrangements.

The Europol Strategy states that Europol is the EU criminal information hub and it will continue to enhance the value of its network by providing Member States with access to a growing number of partners and sources of information.

From the geographical point of view, the **EU neighbourhood** has particular importance for Europol's external cooperation.

One of the main goals of Europol's external relations will be to establish an excellent operational partnership with the **United Kingdom** following its exit from the European Union. Cooperation with the United Kingdom is essential for all the crime areas falling under Europol's mandate.

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Maintaining excellent relations with the **Schengen Associated Countries**<sup>101</sup> is also important. Furthermore, Europol will continue filling the gaps in cooperation with other European countries, such as **Andorra** and **San Marino**.

While cooperation takes place on a daily basis at both strategic and operational levels, the **Western Balkan region** remains a top priority for Europol in view of persisting security threats, such as organised crime, terrorism and migrant smuggling. The Agency has established operational cooperation with all the partners in the region and hosts a community of liaison officers at its premises.

Europol's effort will be the further enhancement of operational cooperation with the Western Balkans, including involvement in EMPACT. The exchange of criminal information and intelligence at regional level should be improved in order to enhance the intelligence picture, also in the context of the EU accession process of the Western Balkans. Western Balkan partners will be encouraged to share proactively crime information. Europol will support building up analytical capacities in the region in line with its recognised standards and best practices, and it will continue supporting Western Balkan regional initiatives when relevant to operational cooperation.

Europol will also continue to engage with **Middle East and North African countries**. Persisting migration pressure accompanied by security threats require well-established cooperation within the region. In order to approach the partners, Europol will seek support of the Commission, the European External Action Service and EU agencies active in the region. Europol will focus on building mutual trust with the law enforcement agencies in the region that should pave the way to the future exchange of information, also by promoting EU policing solutions. Further support to develop Regional Threat Assessment will be provided through the Union-funded project. Particular attention should also be paid to cooperation with **Türkiye** since the finalisation of the draft operational agreement between the EU and Turkey on the exchange of personal data between Europol and Turkish law enforcement authorities would allow for a more structured cooperation.

The current level of security threats will keep the focus on the **Eastern Partnership countries**.<sup>102</sup> Similar to the Western Balkan and MENA regions, Europol will assist in the establishment of regional network of analysts and through the participation in EMPACT activities. Strengthening cooperation with **Ukraine** in the fight against cybercrime, financial and economic crime will be further pursued. Active information sharing with the countries that have established cooperation with Europol and promoting Europol's model of cooperation to potential partners will also be in the focus.

Maintaining and further developing cooperation with **the United States, Canada and Australia** will remain another top priority. Europol will also strive to develop excellent cooperation with **New Zealand**. Crime areas such as serious organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime will be in focus.

### Asia

The need for additional cooperation might arise after the Covid-19 crisis in relation to Asian countries. In particular, Europol recognises the importance of further engagement with **China**, within the framework of the strategic cooperation agreement, which should go hand in hand with growing Chinese investments and expanding relations with some Member States.

Countering cybercrime, child sexual exploitation and cooperation on innovation will be high on the agenda for future cooperation in the region.

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<sup>101</sup> Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

<sup>102</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine. Activities with Belarus are temporarily suspended.

### Latin America

Growing demand for drugs, enhanced drug trafficking routes into the EU and the euro counterfeiting justify the need for enhanced cooperation with **Latin American countries**. Europol will focus on further cooperation as well as new partnerships with the **Andean community**.

#### International organisations

**Interpol** remains Europol's key partner due to its global outreach, complimentary tools and developed strategic dialogue between the respective management, as both organisations support law enforcement cooperation. Cooperation with Interpol will continue and further develop in line with the Regulation and the planned EU-Interpol cooperation agreement.

Regional police organisations such as the Police Community of the Americas (**AMERIPOL**), Association of Southeast Asian Nations National Police (**ASEANAPOL**) and African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (**AFRIPOL**) and other viable African regional and pan-African partners will also remain partners for further engagement.

Europol will continue its efforts to enhance cooperation with other international organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (**NATO**), World Customs Organisation (**WCO**), **UN entities (UNODC, UNCTED, UNOCT, III-M and UNITAD)** and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (**OSCE**) with a focus on counter terrorism and hybrid threats.

As the external dimension of the fight against economic and financial crimes becomes increasingly prominent, Europol's cooperation with international organisations and networks, such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Egmont Group, will be a key component of the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre.

### 5. Oversight mechanism – the role of the Management Board

The Management Board receives regularly strategic reviews of cooperation with particular partners or regions in order to provide guidance for further actions. Information on the implementation of the External Strategy will be presented every year.

The list of priority partners with which Europol may conclude working arrangements based on **goals and objectives** as outlined in this external strategy are annually reviewed and submitted to the Management Board.

The Management Board regularly discusses the developments and achievements obtained through Europol's external relations to the benefit of the operational interests of the Member States in order to review the goals and objectives set out in this External Strategy. An interim review of this strategy was discussed by the Management Board in March 2023.

## Annex XIII: Procurement Plan 2024

### I. Introduction (Legal basis and financing decision)

Procurement initiatives are implemented in line with the Financial Regulations as follows:

- Article 89 of the Europol Financial Regulation<sup>103</sup> states that: *“as regards procurement, Title VII of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046<sup>104</sup> and Annex 1 thereof shall apply, subject to Article 90 (procurement procedures)”*
- Article 110(1) (financing decision) of the EU Financial Regulation states that: *“A budgetary commitment shall be preceded by a financing decision adopted by the Union institution or by the authority to which powers have been delegated by the Union institution. The financing decisions shall be annual or multiannual. The first subparagraph of this paragraph shall not apply in the case of appropriations for the operations of each Union institution under its administrative autonomy that can be implemented without a basic act in accordance with point (e) of Article 58(2), of administrative support expenditure and of contributions to the Union bodies referred to in Articles 70 and 71”*
- Article 110(2) and (3) of the EU Financial Regulation states that *“The financing decision shall indicate the total amount it covers and shall contain a description of the actions to be financed. It shall specify:  
(a) the basic act and the budget line;  
(b) the objectives pursued and the expected results;  
(c) the methods of implementation;  
(d) any additional information required by the basic act for the work programme.  
In addition, (...) the financing decision shall set out the following:  
(b) for procurement: the global budgetary envelope reserved for procurements”.*

### II. Rules for participation in Europol tender procedures:

#### *Eligibility and exclusion criteria*

- The tenderers must be established in an EU Member State. This implies that tenderers established in third countries (non-EU countries) do not have the right to participate in Europol tendering procedures, unless other bilateral or special international agreements in the field of public procurement grant them the right to do so. In case there is no such agreement, or the agreement does not apply to the kind of contracts put out to tender, tenderers of third countries are not entitled to participate, unless otherwise explicitly allowed in the given calls published by Europol;
- The tenderers shall not be, at the time of a contract award procedure, in one of the exclusion situations referred to in Article 136 (Exclusion criteria and decisions on exclusions) of the EU Financial Regulation.

#### *Selection and award criteria*

- The eligible proposals/tenders will be evaluated against the selection criteria indicated in each call. In general, there are three sets of selection criteria to be assessed which are specified on a case by case basis in each tender procedure:
  - Legal and regulatory capacity;

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<sup>103</sup> Decision of the Europol Management Board on the adoption of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol (EDOC#1032027v6 4 October 2019)

<sup>104</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (referred to as the “EU Financial Regulation”) - OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1–222.

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- Economic and financial capacity;
- Technical and professional capacity.
- The tenders which meet the selection criteria are evaluated against the award criteria indicated in each call. In general, the award criteria require the assessment of quality and price.

### III. Green procurement:

Europol recognizes its responsibility for making a positive contribution to sustainable development and commits itself to protect the environment by limiting the environmental impact of its activities and to continuously improve its environmental performance.

In November 2021, Europol was awarded the ISO 14001:2015 certificate for its own Environmental Management System (EMS) by the accredited certification body, followed by EMAS<sup>105</sup> registration on 23 February 2022. Europol has become the first Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agency to do so and joining a selective group of EU Institutions and bodies being EMAS registered. The Europol Environmental Policy and Europol annual Environmental Statement<sup>106</sup> are available for consultation online on the Europol's website.

In line with EMAS Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009, Annex I 2b, suppliers and contractors must comply with Europol's Environmental Policy within the remit of the activities carried out for the contract and should consider their environmental performance and practices. Contractors are encouraged to prefer electronic communication and take measures to reduce the overall carbon footprint through green procurement, waste management, energy efficiency and to promote to their staff climate neutrality sustainable environmental behaviours.

Europol takes into consideration suppliers and contractors' environmental performance and practices when awarding tenders. Europol has introduced, where applicable with the scope of the contract, green public procurement (GPP) or environmental considerations in its own procedures, either at the selection criteria stage, technical specifications, award criteria and/or as part of the contract performance clauses, where relevant.

### IV. Overview of the main procurement initiatives for year 2024:

Procurement initiatives are implemented either via existing (framework) contracts or via tender procedures on the basis of the following outsourcing financing scheme:

- 1) Implementation of existing framework contracts through order forms (including specific contracts) or of direct contracts;
- 2) Other Procurements (mainly through call for tenders under open/restricted and negotiated procedures).

A summary of the main procurement initiatives is outlined in Table 1 below. It includes generic information about the procurement initiatives performed in the previous year of the current work programme as well as the initiatives planned for the following year.

A detailed overview of the procurement initiatives for **YEAR 2024** is provided in Table 2 below. The table indicates the **number of the main contracts** (i.e. above EUR 15,000) in force in 2024 and divided into two parts:

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<sup>105</sup> Eco- Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), EMAS is a premium management instrument developed by the European Commission for companies and other organisations to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance.

<sup>106</sup> To consult the online version, follow this link: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/publications/europol-environmental-statement-2022>

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- Part A includes administration and general services-related procurement initiatives.
- Part B includes IT-related procurement initiatives.

The table also includes the **indicative list of tender procedures** to be initiated in 2024. The list of tender procedures will be further detailed once more details on calls timing will be available.

The table does not include the following data/information:

- tender procedures below EUR 15,000;
- exceptional negotiated procedures without prior publication of a contract notice under point 11, Annex I of the EU Financial Regulation;
- restricted procedures to be launched under existing (published) calls for expression of interest;
- inter-institutional procurement or procedures launched by the EU institutions, bodies and/or agencies;
- tender procedures under framework contracts with reopening of competitions (i.e. mini competitions).

In addition, Europol will place orders for supplies, services, including IT consultancy services either under Europol framework contracts or under framework contracts resulting from inter-institutional tender procedures. These orders and the inter-institutional framework contracts are not reflected in the table below.

Interested economic operators are invited to consult regularly the Europol website for low value and middle value procedures (between EUR 15,000 and below the EU thresholds) and the Official Journal of the European Union for all tender procedures from the applicable EU thresholds (since 1.01.2022 at EUR 140,000 for Europol. Value expected to be adjusted in January 2024).

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**Table 1: Summary of the main procurement initiatives**

Table Code	Other initiatives and services	Initial Budget	Review Budget	Initial Budget	Review Budget	Initial Budget <sup>107</sup>	Number of contracts / SLA / etc.	Expected number of procurements
		2022	2022	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024
<b>Part A</b>	<b>Total Procurement (non-ICT)</b>	29,163,075	31,030,825	35,286,400	35,363,275	36,873,458	81	19
<b>Part B</b>	<b>Total ICT Procurement</b>	39,850,000	47,914,000	48,859,300	45,419,300	48,987,569	75	2
<b>Total</b>							(156)	(21)
<b>Parts A &amp; B</b>	<b>Total all procured budget value</b>	69,013,075	78,944,825	84,145,700	80,782,575	85,861,027		
	<b>% of the Europol budget for procurement initiatives</b>	38%	41.0%	41%	39%	39%		

<sup>107</sup> Estimated value, subject to change. The total review value (procure) for 2024 will be only available by mid-January.



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**Table 2: Overview of the main procurement initiatives for 2024**

**TABLE PART A - Main procurement initiatives 2024 (Non ICT-related activities)**

<b>List of running contracts in 2024</b> (Framework Contracts (FWC), Direct Contracts or Other, such as Service Level Agreements (SLA), Memorandum of Understanding)					
<b>Category</b>	<b>Main procurement initiatives</b> (services, supplies/goods and other initiatives) (categorised per budget headings)	<b>Value</b> (in Euro)	<b>Contracts</b>		<b>Tenders</b>
			<b>Number of main contracts valid in 2024</b>	<b>Type of contracts</b>	<b>Number of tenders to be initiated by EUROPOL</b>
Category A1	Staff-related expenditure, excluding salaries or allowances (medical services, training, etc.)	6,959,500	25	FWC Direct Other	<b>5</b>
Category A2	Building-related expenditure (e.g. rent, energy, cleaning, maintenance, furniture, security, etc.)	14,863,548	23	FWC Direct Other SLA	<b>6</b>
Category A3	Administrative –related expenditure (e.g. postal services, stationary, open source, library, catering, insurance, publication, uniform, legal, PR items, etc.)	3,458,042	28	FWC Direct	<b>7</b>
Category A4	Meeting-related expenditure (e.g. travel, hotels, interpretations, hospitality)	11,592,368	5	FWC Other	<b>1</b>
<b>Sub-Total Category A</b>		<b>36,873,458</b>	<b>81</b>		<b>19</b>

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Tentative detailed overview of tender procedures (non-ICT sector) to be initiated in 2024						
No	Type of Procurement initiatives (as divided in accordance with table above)	Subject	Estimated budget in Euro <sup>108</sup>	Indicative timeframe		Comments
				Indicative time frame for tender initiation	Indicative time frame for tender completion	
1	Category A1	<b>Specialised Training courses for the Cyber Crime Centre (EC3)</b>	Each one-off course below EU threshold	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Direct Contract expiry date: October 2023  <i>Europol might launch an exceptional negotiated procedure</i>
2	Category A1	<b>Fit-tests for Security Guards</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Below EU threshold (around 130,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2023/ Q1.2024	Q2.2024	New needs
3	Category A1	<b>Learning and development services and certifications in IT and related fields</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Above EU threshold (around 1,800,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2023/ Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date 24.11.2024
4	Category A1	<b>Security Training Services</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Below EU threshold (around 130,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2023/ Q1.2024	Q2.2024	New needs

<sup>108</sup> Estimated amounts provided for information only where available. Below EU threshold = below EUR 140,000; Above EU threshold = above EUR 140,000.

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5	Category A1	<b>Psychological support services</b>	Below EU threshold (around 130,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date: 13.07.2024
6	Category A2	<b>Technical Surveillance Countermeasures services</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Above EU threshold (around 500,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2023/ Q1.2024	Q3.2024	New needs <i>(Services previously provided by the Host State)</i>
7	Category A2	<b>Gym equipment and (corrective and preventive maintenance)</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Above EU threshold (around 220,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2024 Q1.2025	Q3.2025	New needs
8	Category A2	<b>Signposting</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Above EU threshold (around 500,000 out of 4 years)	Q2.2024	Q4.2024	New needs
9	Category A2	<b>Provision of Security Guard Services</b>	Above EU threshold (around 4,000,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date: 31.08.2024
10	Category A2	<b>Consultancy building and facilities management</b>	Above EU threshold (around EUR 3,000,000 out of 4 years)	Q2.2024	Q2.2025	Contract value of existing Framework Contract will be reached in 2025.
11	Category A2	<b>Purchase of bicycles (inclusive maintenance)</b>	Below EU threshold (No estimation available yet)	Q2.2024/ Q3.2024	Q1.2025	New needs due to the distance between different satellite buildings and HQ.
12	Category A3	<b>Personalized promotional materials: COINS</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Below EU threshold (around 65,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q2.2024	New needs

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13	Category A3	<b>Design support services</b>	Above EU threshold (around 320,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	New needs
14	Category A3	<b>Communication services: Support for prevention and awareness campaigns</b>	Below EU threshold (around 45,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024/ Q2.2024	Q3.2024/ Q4.2024	New needs
15	Category A3	<b>Leasing of and/or acquisition of Europol's fleet (including trade-in option)</b>	Above EU threshold (around 580,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date: 10.05.2024
16	Category A3	<b>Imagery Satellite services</b>	Above EU threshold (around 800,000 out of 4 years)	Q4.2024	Q2.2025	New needs <i>(tentatively)</i>
17	Category A3	<b>Actuarial Services for Defined Benefit Obligation</b>	Below EU threshold (around 120,000 out of 4 years)	Q1.2024	Q3.2024	New needs
18	Category A3	<b>Bank services for Current Account (C/A) and Savings Accounts (S/As)</b>	Above EU threshold Likely lot for C/A and various lots for S/As (above 4,000,000 if interest is taking into account out of 4 years)	Q3.2024	Q2.2025	New needs
19	Category A4	<b>Business Travel Services for Europol Staff</b> <i>(from 2023 procurement plan)</i>	Above EU threshold (around 450,000 out of 4 years <sup>109</sup> )	Q4.2023	Q1.2024/ Q2.2024	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date: 01.04.2024

<sup>109</sup> Tentative amount, not including the volume of actual costs of travel (like tickets and accommodation expenditure). A separate procurement procedure for Travel Agency and Event Management Services (for meeting participants) will be launched in October 2023.

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**TABLE PART B - Main procurement initiatives 2024 (ICT-related activities)**

<b>Part B - Main procurement initiatives 2024 (ICT-related activities)</b>					
<b>Category</b>	<b>Main procurement initiatives</b> (services, supplies/goods and other initiatives) (categorised per budget headings)	<b>Value</b> (in Euro)	<b>Contracts<sup>110</sup></b>		<b>Tenders</b>
			<b>Nr of main contracts valid in 2024</b>	<b>Type of contracts</b>	<b>Nr of tenders to be initiated by EUROPOL</b>
Category B1	Administrative and operational purchase and maintenance of Hardware and Software	28,938,299	18 + 18	FWC	<b>1</b>
Category B2	Administrative and operational ICT External Service Provision including development and maintenance of solutions and strategic consultancy services	18,246,157	12 + 13 +6	FWC	<b>0</b>
Category B3	Administrative and operational Telecommunications costs	1,803,113	6 + 2	FWC	<b>1</b>
<b>Sub-Total Category B</b>		<b>48,987,569</b>	<b>75</b>		<b>2</b>

<b>Tentative detailed overview of ICT-related tender procedures to be initiated in 2024:</b>						
<b>No</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Estimated budget</b>	<b>Indicative timeframe</b>		<b>Comments</b>
				Indicative time frame for tender initiation	Indicative time frame for tender completion	
20	Category B3	<b>Internet services</b> (for Europol new Satellite buildings)	Above EU thresholds (200,000 EUR – Direct Contract)	Q4.2023/ Q1.2024	Q3.2024	Recurrent needs <i>(tentatively – use of an existing contract)</i>
21	Category B1	<b>Acquisition of miscellaneous IT Equipment</b> (including forensic equipment)	Above EU threshold (around 2,800,000 out of 4 years)	Q3.2024/ Q4.2024	Q1.2025/ Q2.2025	Recurrent needs: Existing Contract expiry date: 14.04.2025

<sup>110</sup> A contract may cover several categories and be counted more than once.

## Annex XIV: Corporate Risks 2024

Europol's corporate risk management process aggregates risks (including the related responses) at organisational level. In doing so, Europol expands risk management from a vertical (e.g. in departments or programmes/projects) to a horizontal perspective (corporate, organisational wide view), meeting the required elements on risk management set out in the Internal Control Framework (ICF) of Europol<sup>111</sup>, which takes into account the COSO ICF<sup>112</sup> and the European Commission's ICF<sup>113</sup>, international standards<sup>114</sup> and corresponding risk management guide<sup>115</sup>. In line with this, corporate risks are considered internally by Europol at regular intervals throughout the year and on an immediate ad hoc basis in the event of the identification of time-critical or high impact risks.

For Europol, a risk is an uncertain event or set of events that, should it occur, would have an effect on the achievement of objectives related to the annual business planning (i.e. Work Programme) and the Europol Strategy from an overall perspective. Risks are understood in two dimensions: **Threats** (expected negative effect on a business objective) or **opportunities** (expected positive effect on a business objective). Both types of risk – those identified as threats and opportunities – are listed below.

The overview shows the **most important corporate risks** with reference to 2024, in total **4 threats** and **1 opportunity**, reflecting the risk exposure at the second half of 2023 concerning the business planning, as well as the outlook for the 2024 planning<sup>116</sup>. The overview is synchronised with the outcome of the **Home Affairs Agencies peer review risk assessment exercise for 2024** (chaired by Europol in October 2023 for the Home Affairs Agencies<sup>117</sup>).

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<sup>111</sup> Internal Control Framework (ICF) of Europol, Europol file no. EDOC #951032v13

<sup>112</sup> Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) Internal Control Integrated Framework, May 2013

<sup>113</sup> Communication to the European Commission – Revision of the Internal Control Framework, C(2017) 2373, Europol file no. EDOC #911042v1

<sup>114</sup> ISO Standard on Risk Management: ISO-31000(2018)

<sup>115</sup> Risk Management in the European Commission – Implementation Guide, September 2022 Europol file no. EDOC #1032716v3

<sup>116</sup> It should be noted that the critical risks, in terms of threats and opportunities, represent an aggregate "snapshot" at a moment in time. The corporate risks are integrated into the risk register as part of the corporate risk management process at regular intervals for assessment and decision making within Europol and subsequent monitoring. This facilitates and ensures that the risks are regularly assessed and amended where required. The Europol MB is informed of any significant change to the risks presented on the following pages.

<sup>117</sup> For the peer risk review exercise in October 2023, the guidance developed by the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) – Performance Development Network (PDN) includes risks as threats only.

List of corporate risks for 2024

No	Short risk title	Risk description	Risk response
1	<p align="center"><b>Geo-political developments and/or security threats</b></p>	<p>Effects of geo-political developments and/or security threats impact Europol’s business continuity and performance, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fast evolving global developments, such as the war in Ukraine and other conflicts affecting the EU (with direct effect on migration, counter terrorism etc.);</li> <li>• targeted cyber-attacks &amp; other information security threats;</li> <li>• threats to the physical security &amp; critical infrastructure (such as energy supply, telecommunications);</li> <li>• hybrid threat scenarios (e.g. misinformation combined with attacks on critical infrastructure).</li> </ul>	<p>Threat – Share<sup>118</sup>, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performing 2024 Work Programme Activities;</li> <li>• implementing Europol’s External Strategy 2021-2024;</li> <li>• monitoring the political situation &amp; coordinate activities with EU stakeholders;</li> <li>• taking ad-hoc response measures based on emerging trends;</li> <li>• employing 24/7 ICT &amp; security monitoring (for early detection) &amp; response capabilities;</li> <li>• performing business continuity/contingency planning &amp; related response measures (including emergency protocols &amp; threat response);</li> <li>• implementing information security management;</li> <li>• decommissioning ICT legacy or obsolete systems &amp; related components;</li> <li>• implementing applications &amp; software upgrade lifecycle process;</li> <li>• provide security training for staff (incl. for mission deployments);</li> <li>• engage with cooperation partners and stakeholders for preparedness and resilience.</li> </ul>

<sup>118</sup> Threat risk type responses are: Reduce (pro-active actions are undertaken to minimise the probability or impact; the responsibility for the risk effect(s) and response measure(s) stay with Europol); Remove (changing the scope of the business objective concerned); Transfer (a third party takes responsibility for the risk); Retain (conscious and deliberate decision to accept the risk and, especially, the possible effect(s) on the business objective); Share (the responsibility for the risk effect(s) and risk response measure(s) are shared between the involved parties, i.e. Europol and Member States take responsibility for certain aspects of the risk).

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<b>No</b>	<b>Short risk title</b>	<b>Risk description</b>	<b>Risk response</b>
2	<b>Mandate, operational delivery demand and expectations not met</b>	<p>Inability to fully meet a) assigned mandate, b) operational delivery demand and c) expectations of Member States &amp; other stakeholders impacts Europol's performance &amp; compliance with obligations, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the expanded mandate &amp; tasks (resulting from the amended Europol Regulation, Europol's share for the Interoperability Programme);</li> <li>• impact of increased supply of value (resulting in heightened demand, e.g. through the Operational Task Forces (OTFs), Europol's analysis products);</li> <li>• amount of ad hoc tasks &amp; delivery requests;</li> <li>• speed &amp; complexity of regulatory change;</li> <li>• increase in regulatory &amp; supervisory requirements, reducing implementation pace while binding resources long-term;</li> <li>• volume &amp; impact of oversight (expanded mandate &amp; tasks being coupled with increased regulatory requirements on supervision);</li> <li>• annual cycle of audit activities performed by the ECA, IAS, EDPS etc.;</li> <li>• evolving timelines for deliverables, resource margins &amp; requirements ('scope creep');</li> <li>• organisational set-up &amp; business processes not sufficiently aligned;</li> <li>• necessary organisational development not yet implemented.</li> </ul>	<p>Threat – Share, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performing 2024 Work Programme Activities;</li> <li>• performing robust planning &amp; performance measurement processes, next to close monitoring of annual work planning &amp; audit follow-up;</li> <li>• de-prioritising relevant activities where feasible in order to perform emerging or additional tasks of new or evolving mandate;</li> <li>• performing demand management process, for achieving efficient &amp; effective use of available resources;</li> <li>• engaging with European Commission &amp; supervisory authorities to identify efficiency gains;</li> <li>• adjusting strategic programming, where needed, to reflect realistic ambitions &amp; plans;</li> <li>• continuously monitoring &amp; reporting any structural risk concerning the deficit of resources to Management Board (MB), the European Commission &amp; Budgetary Authority (including through the strategic programming);</li> <li>• identifying &amp; managing stakeholder expectations;</li> <li>• employing effective &amp; efficient change management.</li> </ul>



**Europol Public Information**

<b>No</b>	<b>Short risk title</b>	<b>Risk description</b>	<b>Risk response</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Insufficient resources, in particular staff and building related facilities</b>	<p>Europol may face insufficient human resources, due to challenges concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attracting, recruiting &amp; retaining staff (particularly ICT);</li> <li>• staff resource gaps;</li> <li>• static Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027);</li> <li>• expanded mandate not met with sufficient resources;</li> <li>• implementation scope exceeding resource estimates of the respective Legislative Financial Statement (LFS);</li> <li>• elevated ICT change requirements, next to dependencies on new ICT solutions;</li> <li>• changing labour market, in particular in the area of ICT;</li> <li>• insufficient office &amp; meeting space due to Europol's growth;</li> <li>• building related facilities including ICT data centre;</li> <li>• constraints in the applicable staff rules &amp; the impact of national rules for employing contractors.</li> </ul>	<p>Threat – Share, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performing 2024 Work Programme Activities, in particular implementing Europol's HR Strategy;</li> <li>• maintaining an attractive work environment &amp; social package;</li> <li>• offering flexible working arrangements (teleworking, flexitime);</li> <li>• providing personal development &amp; training, including on the basis of a competency framework, tutor &amp; develop talent;</li> <li>• ensuring appropriately skilled staff in specialist functions;</li> <li>• developing competency and skill base across Agencies;</li> <li>• conducting proactive recruitment using reserve lists &amp; internal mobility;</li> <li>• performing continuous evaluation of recruitment &amp; procurement processes;</li> <li>• tailoring staff implementing provisions &amp; procurement contracts based on Europol's needs where feasible;</li> <li>• carrying out staff (engagement) survey &amp; follow-up on results;</li> <li>• deploying in-/outsourcing strategy, based on Europol's needs;</li> <li>• ensuring follow-up of change to ensure continuity &amp; predictability;</li> <li>• negotiating with Host State authorities on housing &amp; office planning (Strategic Housing Roadmap)</li> <li>• performing resource related risk response actions from Risk 2 above;</li> </ul>

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No	Short risk title	Risk description	Risk response
4	<p align="center"><b>Dependency on stakeholders' capabilities</b></p>	<p>Dependency on stakeholders' capabilities impacts Europol's performance, due to Member States &amp; cooperation partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacking capabilities (such as Human Resources, testing competencies, appropriately skilled staff etc.);</li> <li>• applying diverging policies, systems &amp; practices at national level;</li> <li>• lacking ICT capabilities, e.g. monitoring of SIENA on a 24/7 basis;</li> <li>• inadequate commitment or contribution to Agency's objectives &amp; work;</li> <li>• important differences between IT infrastructures in Member States.</li> </ul>	<p>Threat – Share, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performing 2024 Work Programme Activities;</li> <li>• engaging into continuous dialogue with Member States &amp; cooperation partners;</li> <li>• monitoring the situation of Member States &amp; cooperation partners for providing support to national authorities where feasible;</li> <li>• making Member States &amp; cooperation partners regularly aware of corresponding legal &amp; contractual obligations;</li> <li>• enhancing engagement &amp; collaboration with relevant stakeholders (beyond Member States &amp; cooperation partners), in particular at EU level.</li> </ul>
5	<p align="center"><b>Enhanced public awareness on the added value of Europol in times of crises</b></p>	<p>Europol creates public awareness on the organisation's added value in times of crises, in view of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• security representing a connecting &amp; cohesion factor for citizens in Member States;</li> <li>• demonstrating joint work with Justice &amp; Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies;</li> <li>• Europol (and other JHA Agencies) directly contributing to the expectations of citizens.</li> </ul>	<p>Opportunity<sup>119</sup> - Enhance, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pro-active awareness building &amp; media outreach on successes;</li> <li>• promoting the work and outcome of Europol's work on social media platforms;</li> <li>• optimising public visibility via Europol's website and other platforms;</li> <li>• engaging with Member States, DG Home Agencies, the European Commission &amp; other partners.</li> </ul>

<sup>119</sup> Opportunity risk type responses are: Realise (identifying and seizing a chance to realise the concerned business objective with fewer resources or earlier than planned); Enhance (seizing and improving on an identified opportunity, thus achieving additional gains of relevance to more than one concerned business objective); Exploit (expanding the scope of business objectives by taking advantage of multiple benefits).