



The Hague, 31 January 2024  
MBS 014.2024

## MANAGEMENT BOARD

**Ms Roberta Metsola**

President of the European Parliament

A 000700 01.02.2024

### Europol's Draft Programming Document 2025-2027

Dear President Metsola,

In accordance with Article 32(1) of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol ('Europol Financial Regulation'), I am pleased to transmit Europol's draft Programming Document (PD) 2025-2027, as endorsed by the Management Board (MB).

The draft PD 2025-2027 contains Europol's multiannual and annual programming, the multiannual resource outlook, as well as the draft estimate of revenue and expenditure for 2025.

Pertaining to resource planning, while fully supporting Europol's need for additional resources in order to continuously and effectively support the national competent authorities in thwarting the current and emerging criminal threats, the MB also acknowledged the complex budgetary context and the concerns expressed by the Commission with regard to the feasibility of obtaining the requested additional resources. Thus, Europol has engaged in further dialogue with the Commission, with the aim to ascertain whether the resources requested by the Agency may be adjusted without jeopardizing the effective fulfilment of Europol's commitments and responsibilities, particularly in the priority areas outlined in the draft PD.

Therefore, a draft PD 2025-2027, updated to reflect any possible adjustment, may eventually be transmitted to the European Parliament following the forthcoming meeting of the MB, by 31 March 2024 at the latest.

I am pleased to confirm that the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group will be consulted on the Document's multiannual component.

I remain at your disposal for any additional information you may require concerning the draft PD 2025-2027.

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Yours sincerely,



Peter De Buysscher  
Chairperson

Attachment: *Europol's Programming Document 2025-2027 (EDOC #1340002v11B).*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this document bears the marking "Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level". As such, it is not meant for public dissemination.

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The Hague,

31 January 2024

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**Draft**

**Europol Programming Document**

**2025 – 2027**

Endorsed by the Management Board of Europol on 31 January 2024

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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
EFECC	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
		TFTF	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 2025-2027. 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 2025-2027 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 2025; the work is organised around the different areas of operation (Activities).

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 2025 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 2025. 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). In 2025, the agency will prepare the **Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2025**, which will lay the basis for the Council's decision on the EMPACT priorities for the following phase.
- **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,

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standardisation and training. In 2025, the case management system and the joint analysis platform will reach maturity and allow for closer and more effective collaboration with MS. In addition, the agency is planning to develop and launch a new Analysis Training and Coaching program to satisfy the need for state-of-the-art analytical competence at Europol and the MS competent authorities.

- The multiannual **Information management strategy** and **ICT Business Streams**, which encompass the bulk of agency's technology development work, will continue consolidating the most substantial transformation in Europol's **analysis capabilities**, with further enhancements in **joint analysis** and **case management** capabilities. Europol will also be further improving, as needed, capabilities used directly by Member States, such as SIENA and QUEST, and will pursue further analysis and implementation of the obligations stemming from the **Directive on Information Exchange**. Through the Business Streams, Europol will continue contributing to the EU Interoperability, in line with the European Commission planning and in close cooperation with eu-LISA; work on a **second Data Centre** (which will ensure, among others, the necessary availability of Europol's systems in line with interoperability requirements) should start in 2025, subject to availability of a location and resources. Finally, Europol will pursue achieving progress on governance and administration ICT tools.
- With **ETIAS** becoming operational in 2025, followed by **VIS** systematic checks in 2026, Europol's **Operational and Analysis Centre** (OAC) will have to ensure the provision of 24/7 swift follow-up on hits of travel authorisation and visa applications against Europol data. In 2025, the agency should also strengthen its capabilities for processing biometric data in view of its involvement in the approaching revised **Prüm II** framework. These new services will be possible to implement only to the extent that Europol's level of resources allows.
- 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 setting up of **Operational Task Forces** (OTF). In 2025, the **European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)** will further focus on the implementation of the HVT/OTF concept and will support the development and implementation of tools, including the related funding possibilities, enabling fast operational support (e.g. money drops).
- The combat against **drug trafficking** will target concrete crime hubs and hotspots (such as main harbours), for which specific measures, addressing the particular crime enabling factors or facilitating targeted regional coordination of interventions, can be set up in consultation with the main MS/TP concerned. Europol will also exploit opportunities for expanding the cooperation with the new European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) replacing EMCDDA following the new mandate of the organisation from 2024. In the area of **environmental crime**, the ESOCC will focus on boosting partnerships through dedicated alliances, including relevant private parties, to strengthen targeted operational cooperation, addressing intelligence gaps, sharing of expertise and innovation.
- The **European Migrant Smuggling Centre** (EMSC) within ESOCC will review the solutions and tactics deployed and the partnerships with relevant counterparts at national and international level, in view of optimising data collection and operational coordination. EMSC will aim at enhancing information sharing, incl. social media monitoring, especially on migrant smuggling routes and networks. Furthermore, the centre will intensify the financial investigation angle of the support provided to investigations, in close cooperation with the EFEC.
- The **European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)** will increase the focus on collection, processing and production of cyber threat intelligence, and the delivery of tactical analyses identifying and prioritising the most important cybercriminal data hubs and services and

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will provide support to follow-up operations by MS. EC3 will aim at obtaining and processing datasets such as lawfully intercepted and decrypted communications of criminal networks, as well as seized Darknet servers used for criminal trade and the dissemination of child abuse material.

- In 2025, EC3 will continue working on its expertise and capabilities to support **cryptocurrency**-related investigations to address the increasing demand by MS. The new CryptoPortal will be further upgraded to provide state-of-the-art technical functionalities. In parallel, the Digital Support Unit will keep identifying suitable tactics, performing agile research, developing **digital forensic tools** and sharing best practices to respond to emerging operational needs. The centre will also 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.
- In preparation for the new EU Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat **child sexual abuse**, Europol will continue undertaking the necessary technical and operational adjustments to ensure effective handling of the expected increase in data contributions and effective provision of support to MS. The agency will also have in place the European Union Child Abuse Referral Service (EU-CARES) and will utilise the benefits from this new automated referral system, facilitating the receiving, processing and disseminating of online child abuse material from pertinent non-law enforcement actors, and the automatic cross check of data against EAS and IVAS.
- In the area of **counter-terrorism**, efforts to enhance the targeting of HVT individuals who represent an immediate threat to EU security and aiming to dismantle terrorist/violent extremist organisations will continue. The **European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC)** will provide support to an increased number of Operational Task Forces following the adjusted concept for establishing OTFs in the CT area and will pursue fostering information exchange among the relevant partners at EU level. Given the rising trend of **right wing terrorism** and violent extremism, the centre will perform priority actions aiming at identifying targets in high profile cases and support MS through a new Analysis Project dedicated exclusively to this crime area (if established in 2024).
- In 2025, the **EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)** of the ECTC will further expand its focus towards violent left wing extremism and violent anarchism and gradually align its monitoring capabilities, referral processes and analytical procedures for this crime phenomenon with the other online terrorist and violent extremist areas. In parallel, Europol should ensure the efficient functioning of the **EU platform for referrals and removal orders (PERCI)** for handling online terrorist content and notifications of imminent threat to life according to the requirements of Terrorist Content Online (TCO) Regulation and (subject to developments in 2024) the Digital Services Act. Furthermore, the EU IRU is planning to foster Europol's crime centres competency in open source investigations and social media monitoring and to explore the possibilities for developing software solutions for countering fake news and trolls-driven communication.
- **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. In particular, the centre aims at enhancing its operational support against organised crime groups and professionals providing money laundering services to other criminal groups (crime as a service) and at strengthening its capabilities in providing swift feedback and expertise concerning tracing and analysis of virtual assets taking into account the high number of cases contributed by MS.
- In 2025, the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) should be operational. It will be essential for Europol to have a well-functioning working relation with the new agency and the Cooperation and Support Mechanism (CSM) for the FIUs, which AMLA will



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be in charge of. Europol and AMLA should have in place a secure communication channel, access to information and modalities for structured operational collaboration such as for participation in Joint Analysis Teams. The EFECC will utilise the new opportunities to further improve the cooperation with the FIUs and increase the number of countries contributing **financial intelligence** to Europol.

- The EFECC will continue promoting the cooperation with the **Customs** authorities and their participation in EMPACT and Europol's Analysis Projects. In 2025, the centre should benefit from the established connection between the Customs Information System and Europol's databases, enabling automated cross-checking. The agency will follow closely the developments related to the Customs Reform with respect to Europol's mandate and prepare for taking up any potential new tasks. In parallel, Europol will support operationally and strategically the implementation of the Commission's **Anti-Corruption** package and contribute to the work of the new EU Network against Corruption.
- 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. 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 2025, the Lab should be making use of the sandbox environment for Europol and MS to develop, train and validate models and tools using operational data. It will also aim at further developing an innovation pipeline and at establishing possibilities for hosting LEA and non-LEA researchers of key emerging technologies.
- In the realm of external relations, Europol will initiate the implementation of its new **External Strategy** and will pursue cooperation with selected high-priority third countries and organisations. In parallel, the agency will be looking into the effectiveness of already existing agreements, possibly by delivering a strategic review of its cooperation with the Schengen Associated Countries. Furthermore in 2025, the organisation will assess opportunities and reach out to the private sector following the established priorities through the new Strategy for the steering and coordination of **Private Party cooperation**. In line with its Regulation, Europol will focus on enhancing the intake of relevant information from the private sector for the purpose of enriching the criminal intelligence picture.
- In 2025, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the amended Europol Regulation and 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. In 2025, the Temporary Satellite Building 1 is planned to be returned to the Host State, while the Temporary Satellite Building 2 will become operational for use.

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<b>Work Programme Activity</b>	<b>Objective 2025</b>
A.1. Development of information technology and information management capabilities	<p>A.1.1 Continue with the implementation of the Information Management Strategy.</p> <p>A.1.2 Further develop ICT capabilities for Europol's operations.</p> <p>A.1.3 Implement improvements to core MS-facing operational capabilities.</p> <p>A.1.4 Advance interoperability and connectivity with information management systems at EU level to enhance information exchange.</p> <p>A.1.5 Further implement Europol's Innovation Strategy.</p> <p>A.1.6 Further improve corporate information management and related administrative ICT capabilities.</p> <p>A.1.7 Develop and maintain reliable and secure ICT capabilities.</p>
A.2. Operational Coordination	<p>A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing the intake of operational information.</p> <p>A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.</p> <p>A.2.3 Build-up Europol's operational services to comply with the legal obligations stemming from ETIAS, VIS and other EU information management systems.</p> <p>A.2.4 Ensure the provision of efficient services by Europol's SIRENE Office.</p> <p>A.2.5 Build-up Europol's biometric capabilities and services.</p> <p>A.2.6 Provide support to MS investigations with travel intelligence.</p> <p>A.2.7 Provide support to Member States in the area of special tactics.</p> <p>A.2.8 Manage and support deployments, incl. Europol's Guest Officers and Guest Experts capabilities.</p>
A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime	<p>A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU MS' investigations on SOC.</p> <p>A.3.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on drug production and trafficking.</p> <p>A.3.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on weapons and explosives.</p> <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.</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>

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<b>Work Programme Activity</b>	<b>Objective 2025</b>
	<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 the 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, 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 quality internet referral services.</p> <p>A.5.8 Ensure the efficient functioning of 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 support to EU Member States’ CT internet-based investigations.</p> <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>
A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime	<p>A.6.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the EFEC in providing 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>

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<b>Work Programme Activity</b>	<b>Objective 2025</b>
	<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 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 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 Advance with the implementation of the new 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 management.</p> <p>A.8.5 Ensure efficient financial and budget management.</p> <p>A.8.6 Ensure the necessary level of physical, personal and information security at Europol.</p> <p>A.8.7 Progress towards the rationalisation and expansion of Europol's facilities services and enhanced environmental management.</p> <p>A.8.8 Steer and coordinate the implementation of the Strategic Housing Roadmap.</p>

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## 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 2025, 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**<sup>9</sup>, 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>10</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/2023/641 final

<sup>10</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>11</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.

## 2.8. European Commission's legislative initiative to prevent and fight migrant smuggling

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<sup>11</sup> COM(2020)609 final



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On 28 November 2023, the European Commission announced a new legislative package to strengthen the EU legal framework to prevent and fight migrant smuggling, including a Regulation and a Directive. The proposal for a **Regulation on enhancing police cooperation in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and on enhancing Europol's support to preventing and combating such crimes and amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794** is particularly relevant for Europol as it: 1) establishes a European Centre Against Migrant Smuggling (EMSC) within Europol, reinforcing its role as a focal point to support MSs in the prevention and combating of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (THB); 2) Enhances the strategic and operational tasks of the EMSC, including the coordination and implementation of investigative and operational activities to support MS in the fight against migrant smuggling and THB; 3) Establishes an obligation for MS and relevant EU agencies to provide Europol, in a timely manner, with information relating to criminal offences on migrant smuggling and THB. Additional resources for Europol are included in the LFS of this proposal, subject to the outcome of the ongoing negotiations.

### **2.9. 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>12</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.

### **2.10. 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>13</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

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<sup>12</sup> COM/2023/274 final

<sup>13</sup> COM(2021) 591 final

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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.

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

The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>14</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 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.

### 2.12. 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.

### 2.13. 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.

### 2.14. 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>15</sup>, welcoming the Commission's action plan and encouraging further actions, several of which including direct references to Europol or EMPACT, such as

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<sup>14</sup> COM(2021)171 final

<sup>15</sup> Council 10249/23

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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.

### **2.15. 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 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.

### **2.16. 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>16</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.

### **2.17. 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.

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<sup>16</sup> Council 7152/23

### **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>17</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 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>18</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**

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<sup>17</sup> COM(2020) 607 final

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

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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 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>19</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.

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<sup>19</sup> COM(2022) 454 final

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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.

## **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>20</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>21</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>22</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

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<sup>20</sup> COM(2020)795 final

<sup>21</sup> Council 8868/20

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

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terrorism threat to the EU. The latest report<sup>23</sup> was presented to the TWP on 28 March 2023 and updated recommendations were endorsed by COSI on 16 May 2023<sup>24</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>25</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 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>26</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-

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

<sup>24</sup> Council 8876/23

<sup>25</sup> Council 5606/23

<sup>26</sup> COM(2020) 565 final

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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, 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



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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>27</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>28</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.

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<sup>27</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>28</sup> Council 10247/23

## **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;
- 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

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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 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>29</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. EMPACT 2022-2025**

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<sup>29</sup> Council 8720/22

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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.

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>30</sup>, as well as on the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022-2025<sup>31</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>30</sup> Council 7100/23

<sup>31</sup> Council 7101/23

## SECTION II - Multi-annual programming 2025 – 2027

### 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 2025-2027 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 2025-2027 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	
	2025	2026	2027
Number of Accepted Contributions by Europol <sup>32</sup>			
Number of Operations Supported by Europol			
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by Europol			
Number of Operational Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Number of Action Days organised/supported by Europol			
Satisfaction with Operational Support delivered by Europol			
Number of Cross Match Reports and SIENA hit notifications produced by Europol			
Number of searches through EIS and QUEST			
Number of SIENA messages exchanged			
Number of Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Satisfaction with Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Satisfaction with Operational Training delivered by Europol			
Implementation of Audit Recommendations <sup>33</sup>			
Vacancy Rate			
% Female staff			
Budget Commitment Rate			
Emissions (CO2) <sup>34</sup>			

<sup>32</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>33</sup> % of pending critical/very important audit recommendations implemented within the timeline committed to by Europol and agreed with the auditing body.

<sup>34</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 2025-2027

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

Since its establishment, Europol's role in the security landscape of the EU has been growing and, as a result, the agency has been 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 Innovation Lab and the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre. 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 were 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 were foreseen, as of 2024, in the Prüm II Regulation and, as of 2025, in the new legislative proposal for preventing and fighting migrant smuggling (subject to legislative process).

Consequently, for a few years now, Europol has been faced with an increased amount of responsibilities that have inevitably exacerbated the pressure on resources, both staff and financial.

### 2.2. Outlook for the years 2025 - 2027

As detailed in section I – General Context of Europol's Programming Document 2025-2027, a significant number of new and expanded tasks are foreseen for Europol, stemming from Union policies and legislation. However, additional resources to perform these new tasks have not been allocated to Europol in the Legislative Financial Statements (LFS) of these initiatives – only some resources were allocated to the Agency in the Interoperability Regulations<sup>35</sup>, the Prüm II Regulation and the legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling, the latter under negotiation. While a significant number of resources were provided to the Agency as part of and for the purpose of implementing the amended Europol Regulation, some priority projects are expected to have a significant multi-year impact on the resources of the agency. In addition, inflation pressures affecting mainly staff costs were estimated and communicated by the European Commission on 20 December 2023<sup>36</sup> and are expected to further compress the existing budget in 2025. As a consequence, Europol, will not be in a position to absorb fully its additional tasks without an adequate reinforcement to its resources.

The Management Board of Europol and its Working Groups were informed on various occasions about this issue and the Agency is requesting resources – as part of the EU Budget 2025 process – that go beyond the ones currently provided in the multi-annual financial framework.

While resource pressures are evident in various areas, Europol has focused its estimates only on the following high-priority, high-impact initiatives, for which no dedicated or insufficient resources were foreseen in the relevant legislative financial statements (where applicable):

- Digital Services Act (DSA);
- Interoperability (I/O);
- Second Data Centre;

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<sup>35</sup> Europol received 14 TAs in the period 2019-2020.

<sup>36</sup> Budget Circular for 2025 – Agency Instructions Ref. Ares(2023)8743970 -20/12/2023.

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- Information Exchange Directive (IED);
- Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR).

In addition, the agency is requesting funding to offset the impact of inflation on staff costs, as estimated in the Budget Circular 2025. The additional funds currently proposed by the European Commission for Europol in the LFS of the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling have been provisionally included in the PD 2025-2027, in line with the Budget Circular for the preparation of the draft budget 2025. In this respect, it is worth highlighting that the additional resources proposed by the Commission in the LFS are significantly lower than the resources estimated by Europol for the full implementation of the proposed new Regulation, especially with regard to the final number of TA posts. Therefore, subject to the outcome of the ongoing negotiations, Europol will be able to support the implementation of this new initiative to the extent covered by the final amount of additional resources, or by de-prioritising and delaying other activities. Nonetheless, Europol acknowledges that part of the funds foreseen is intended to support the Agency's work on biometrics and SIENA integrations, which can also partially serve the objectives of Interoperability and the Information Exchange Directive - as such; those funds have been deducted from the final total additional budget requested.

A summary of the Agency's outlook for 2025-2027 is presented in the tables below:

<b>Human Resources (TA, CA, SNE)<sup>37</sup></b>	<b>Yearly increase</b>		
	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>Establishment plan (TA) - TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Amended Europol Regulation</i>	19	9	5
<i>Prüm II Regulation</i>	-	(2)	-
<i>Proposal on a Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling</i>	3	4	3
<i>Additional Agency Request</i>	55	66	40
<b>Contract Agents - TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Proposal on a Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling</i>	5	9	6
<i>Additional Agency Request</i>	20	-	-
<b>SNE - TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Proposal on a Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling</i>	11	6	3
<i>Additional Agency Request</i>	2	2	2

<b>Financial Resources (€)</b>	<b>Yearly increase</b>		
	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,713,377</b>	<b>54,309,064</b>	<b>61,415,221</b>
<i>Proposal on a Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling</i>	15,758,000	19,679,000	13,456,000
<i>Additional Agency Request<sup>38</sup></i>	29,955,377	34,630,064	47,959,221

<sup>37</sup> Temporary agent numbers are approved by the Budgetary Authority (establishment plan). Contract Agent and SNE numbers: approved by the MB within budget availability - numbers are included in the agency's request and COM provides recommendation. If additional budget is necessary, this is approved by the Budgetary Authority.

<sup>38</sup> For 2025, including EUR 13.1 to cover the inflation effects affecting mainly staff costs, as estimated in the COM's Budget Circular 2025.

### **Additional information per initiative for the period 2025-2027**

Relevant justifications for the additional resources needed for each of the five initiatives for the period 2025-2027 are presented.

#### **Digital Services Act (DSA)**

The Digital Services Act entered into force on 16 November 2022 and its rules will become applicable in full by Q1 2024. The regulation introduces, among others, 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.

Since August 2023, the DSA implementation by just 19 Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs)/ Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs) has resulted in an average of two notifications received per day. It is estimated that the implementation of the DSA by all OSPs will at least double the number of incoming notifications, raising the amount to **1,400 notifications per year** (four per day). Europol has put forward the minimum number of additional operational resources to handle this number of notifications, stemming from the handling of Article 18 notifications. However, the situation may evolve in February 2024 after the DSA enters into force for all OSPs with consequences on the 24/7 intake process (with potential delays in managing notifications and an increase of the regular backlog) and on the OSINT/IRU capabilities.

In terms of ICT development, resources are estimated for assessing the suitability of the current PERCI solution (or similar alternative channel) as the foundation to adapt and/or add DSA-related functionality. This could include the potential expansion of features supporting referrals and removal orders, expanding the functionality of PERCI to account for HSPs access and their workflow on the platform; adjusting reporting functionality and working on access requirements and infrastructure (incl. storage and processing power, interconnections, network, security, auditing, scalability and availability requirements).

#### **Interoperability (I/O)**

The *EU Interoperability@Europol* Programme includes the necessary activities for Europol to implement and operate the tasks related to six EU large-scale IT systems (SIS, VIS, Eurodac, EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN) and the interoperability components (European Search Portal (ESP), shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS), Common Identity Repository (CIR), Common Repository for Reporting and Statistics (CRRS)). Additionally, the Screening Regulation and the Prüm II Regulation will bring new tasks to Europol.

Europol's role is particularly relevant as automated checks against Europol data and, in case of hits, the provision of reasoned opinions (ETIAS, VIS Recast) will allow the identification of potential and actual security risks posed by third country nationals prior to their arrival to the EU. Access to millions of records in EU IT systems will allow for a more comprehensive and complete criminal analysis to support the Member States. New possibilities for (biometric) identification will enhance the identification of criminals and the detection of identity fraud. At the same time, short deadlines, the scale of changes and the need for resources both in development phase and after the entry into operation of the EU IT systems make the EU Interoperability Programme a challenge for the organisation.

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The Management Board discussed in 2022 the resource needs of Europol related to interoperability. The current request for operational staff is based on the estimation made in 2022, adjusted taking into account:

- The resources already allocated to the new Integrated Operational Services Unit in 2023 (17 posts) and those foreseen to be allocated in 2024, as a result of the agreement with Frontex (+25 to a total of 42 posts).
- The current EU Interoperability timeline.
- The experience gained from SIRENE.

Europol will work on the establishment of a consistent, coherent set of capabilities related to biometrics, in sync with the Interoperability Programme milestones. Currently, Europol's processing of biometric data is rather limited. However, in light of EU Interoperability (especially revised VIS and Prüm II), discussions with Member States and the future Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling, a significant upgrade of the biometric capabilities and the services offered to the EU large scale IT systems and Member States will be required. To this end, the Europol Strategy and Roadmap for biometrics will detail all necessary activities.

Implementation will also require additional ICT resources for managing and developing the necessary systems, including update of the current AFIS, FACE and EIS solutions for scalability, functionality (i.e. access, search and processing functionalities for fingerprint, DNA and facial images) and data review and retention requirements across solutions.

### **Second Data Centre**

A new (hot) data centre is considered mandatory as part of the interoperability tasks of Europol and is envisaged and expected to:

- Increase resilience – the power issues in August 2020 that led to unavailability of both data centres at Europol HQ emphasised the need to position the data centres in two separate areas (geo-redundancy). This minimises unavailability due to local power grid issues / shared power infrastructure.
- Ensure compliance – in line with the Interoperability programme, Europol is requested to implement the recommendations for geo-redundancy for ETIAS and the communication equipment for SIS/VIS. Furthermore, it is expected to provide uninterrupted service (availability of 99.9% or more) for ETIAS searches via Quest. Europol's current infrastructure - that incorporates the location of the data centres - is designed for an availability of 98%.
- Increase availability – enable the implementation of near-zero downtime for solutions with this strict requirement. It should be noted that the geo-redundant data centre principle does not guarantee such requirement on its own; the entire solution should be designed and built accordingly, for instance using on-premise cloud native services. For this to work, the data centres should be close enough to minimise any communication delays, but far enough to meet the geo-redundancy requirement.
- Efficient use of equipment – At this moment, due to the design and distance, the Austria site is used as a backup location. It however contains equipment that potentially can be used in case of disaster (under normal conditions, this equipment is not used). Implementing the new data centre at closer vicinity gives the opportunity to implement the so-called hot/hot data centre principle where all equipment is used continuously at both sites to host Europol's ICT services. In this case, the Austria site will be further scaled down for backup purposes only, reducing the need for equipment which is not actively used.

The project is a multi-year one with several phases and costs related to buildings, hardware and software, services and training. Discussions on the identification of an appropriate location are ongoing with the Host State and the project is foreseen to start in 2026, with a minimal investment in 2025 (design phase).

### **Information Exchange Directive**

The Directive on information exchange entered into force on 12 June 2023. As explained in detail in Section I – General Context, this 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.

It is estimated that **the number of SIENA messages received by Europol will increase to reach up to 1 million messages in 2027** (by comparison, Europol received 160,000 messages in 2022). The increase in the volume of data will have an impact on both the Operational & Analysis Centre and the crime Centres at Europol, with needs for additional duty officers, analysts and specialists for data review and data quality. Taking into account the current and future rate of implementation in the Member States and potential efforts by Europol to optimise further the intake and processing processes, the level of additional operational resources estimated in this area has been kept to the minimum level for the next three years. It should be noted, however, that for subsequent years, Europol is expected to face resource needs of up to 100 additional operational staff.

Moreover, before the impact of the IED is seen on operations, Europol needs to assist Member States by supporting the design and further development of SIENA and the relevant integrations with Member States systems. Additional funds will be required as of 2025 in terms of ICT investments, to cover scalability, availability and functionality requirements, but also to cover the expected impact on other Europol systems due to the increased volume of data intake (e.g. Data Analysis Portal, Case Management, Unified Search Engine, Large File Exchange tool, IAM), security and compliance requirements and support services, such as providing a helpdesk for users and training.

### **Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR)**

A number of projects comprise the Strategic Housing Roadmap. In 2025, the following work is envisaged:

- 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: decommission the building and return it to the Host State.
- 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 in 2029 - 2030. The first stage of the building completed and operational for use.
- Long-Term Housing Measures (LTHM) project: prepare for the delivery of a second permanent headquarters (HQ2) forecasted in 2029 - 2030.
- Low-rise Toren van Oud project: continue with the development of the Medical Centre and Gym & Fitness facilities, in order to create space in the HQ for the implementation of the MTHS.
- Alternative Temporary Housing: progress on establishing alternative temporary workplaces and meeting spaces to support organisational growth and new business demands until the delivery of HQ2.

Costs include consultancy fees, both for facilities and ICT, one-time investment costs, security personnel and network connectivity for workspaces and meeting rooms.

### **2.3. Risk considerations**

As outlined in the Europol Programming Document 2024-2026<sup>39</sup>, the identified corporate risks in terms of threats to Europol's objectives<sup>40</sup> are expected to impinge on the organisation's development and performance in 2025<sup>41</sup>. All five high priority development initiatives listed in this section are therefore assessed to be affected by Europol's identified corporate risks. While the estimates presented for 2025 onwards have been developed in a prudent manner, these hold several elements of uncertainty<sup>42</sup>, influenced by:

- external developments, including with regard to emerging technical evolution and innovation (Artificial Intelligence (AI) data science etc.); the
- ability to acquire and availability of the needed competencies and skills, in particular with respect to externally contracted services; the
- delivery of the 2024 ICT Work Plan, which itself carries a significant resource gap<sup>43</sup> risk to achieve the full scope of envisaged activities, implying potential further delivery knock-on effects into 2025;
- dependencies with regard to Member States and (operational) cooperation partners, the Host State as well as collaboration with private parties; the
- development of ongoing legislative and regulatory initiatives, as well as the related scope, complexity and modalities of their translation into technical requirements for the corresponding solution design (to inform detailed project planning prior to implementation and deployment).

From an overall perspective, the five high priority development initiatives outlined in this section will be subject to continuous re-assessment and are expected to extend (beyond the planning cycle of the current PD 2025-2027) well into 2028, therefore resulting in further anticipated investment need for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

### **2.4. Resource programming for the years 2025 - 2027**

The text in this section focuses on the resource programming for 2025, which forms the Agency's input to the budgetary procedure for the EU Budget 2025. Indicative programming figures are also provided for the years 2026 and 2027.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Temporary agents**

Starting from the 2024 Establishment Plan of 754 posts, the net number of posts in 2025 is envisaged to increase by 77 Temporary Agent (TA) posts, including: 19 posts stemming from the amended Europol Regulation, 3 posts from the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and an additional 55 posts to adequately perform new tasks as presented in section 2.2.

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

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<sup>39</sup> EDOC-#1258316-Europol Programming Document 2024-2026, Annex XIV Corporate Risks 2024 (pages 182-186), adopted by the Management Board (MB) on 28 November 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Europol's corporate risks were informed by the annual peer risk review conducted in Q4 2023 with all EU Agencies related to the Directorate General (DG) Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission.

<sup>41</sup> The PD 2024-2026 comprises 5 corporate risks, i.e. 4 threats: 1. Geo-political developments and/or security threats; 2. Mandate, operational delivery demand and expectations not met; 3. Insufficient resources, in particular staff and building related facilities; 4. Dependency on stakeholders' capabilities; next to 1 opportunity (enhanced public awareness on the added value of Europol in times of crises).

<sup>42</sup> Europol is satisfied that the resource estimates are the result of a conservative and robust assessment process across the organisation; however, a fairly high degree of uncertainty is inherent to the process.

<sup>43</sup> Estimated at 8.5 Million Euros (5.6 Million Euros for externally contracted services, next to 2.9 Million Euros for ICT activities concerning the Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR)) in 2024.

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	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>AD7</b>	14	5	1
<b>AD6</b>	63	72	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>48</b>

**Contract Agents**

In line with the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and the Agency’s request, the number of CAs in 2025 is envisaged to rise by 25<sup>44</sup> posts, to a total number of 280.

**Seconded National Experts**

The number of Seconded National Experts (SNEs) in 2025 is foreseen to increase to 134, with additional 11 from the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and two for the Interoperability programme.

For detailed data and numbers per staff category, see Annex IV.

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

For 2025 Europol will continue having a number of Contract Agents (CAs) and SNEs directly funded via grants, contributions 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 2025 is € 269.3M, including the resources foreseen in the LFS of the legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and the Agency’s request, as detailed in section 2.2.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Heading</b>	<b>Revenue 2023</b>	<b>Revenue 2024</b>	<b>Draft estimate 2025</b>	<b>Envisaged 2026</b>	<b>Envisaged 2027</b>
9000	Regular subsidy from the Community	207,176,212	218,227,705	269,328,074	289,957,763	298,341,531
9010	Other subsidies and grants	1,030,000		P.M	P.M	P.M
9101	Denmark contribution	4,719,597		P.M	P.M	P.M
9200	Other revenue			P.M	P.M	P.M
	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>212,925,809</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>	<b>289,957,763</b>	<b>298,341,531</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

<sup>44</sup> 5 CAs from the LFS of COM(2023)754 and 20CAs as detailed in section 2.2.



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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 2023	Budget 2024	Draft estimate 2025 (CA)	Diff 2025/2024	% of the budget
1	Staff	114,234,450	117,817,323	146,564,978	28,747,655	54.4%
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	15,310,202	15,105,338	17,198,399	2,093,061	6.4%
3	Operational Activities	77,176,709	85,305,044	105,564,697	20,259,653	39.2%
	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>206,721,361</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>	<b>51,100,369</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Payment Appropriations (PA)

Title	Heading	Outturn 2023	Budget 2024	Draft estimate 2025 (PA)
1	Staff	114,234,450	117,817,323	146,564,978
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	15,310,202	15,105,338	17,198,399
3	Operational Activities	75,085,605	82,796,844	101,082,197
	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>204,630,257</b>	<b>215,719,505</b>	<b>264,845,574</b>

#### **Title 1 – Staff expenditure:**

Staff related expenditure in 2025 amounts to € 146.6M and represents 54.4% of the total draft estimate 2025. It reflects an increase of € 28.7M or 24.4% compared to the 2024 budget.

The budget for Staff in active employment (Chapter 11) comes to € 131.3M, which is € 24.9M or 23.3% above 2024 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 draft estimate 2025 foresees an expenditure related to an overall 831 TAs and 280 CAs, including the Agency’s additional resource request of 55 TAs and 20 CAs<sup>45</sup>. The 2025 draft estimate also considers the full year financial effect of new staff in 2024 (+38 TAs and +20 CAs), as well as the indexation and weighting coefficient for The Netherlands related to the 2024 adjustments as well as the assumptions for salary adjustments included in the Budget Circular 2025<sup>46</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 € 1.8M, which is € 0.4M or 22.3% above 2024, mainly due to increased catering costs. The budget for other staff related expenditure (Chapter 15) is envisaged to reach € 13.4M, which is an

<sup>45</sup> The two additional SNEs foreseen to adequately perform new tasks related to Interoperability are not included under this budget title and therefore not included in this section.

<sup>46</sup> Salary adjustments consider a 2% salary increase plus the weighting coefficient for The Netherlands at the same level as 2023 (111.8). With regards to salary expenditure, the latest estimate reported by the Budget Circular received on 20 December 2023, indicated a salary update of +5.3% to be applied as from 1 July 2024, an increase of +0.6% to be applied as from 1 April 2025 and an additional increase of +3.7% to be applied as from 1 July 2025.

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increase of € 3.5M or 35.5% compared to budget 2024. The increase is foreseen for additional external security officers and consultancy services, required for the new developments of the Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR) (€ 2.6M), as well as for Temporary interim workers (€ 0.6M) and the European School (€ 0.3M). The estimations related to Entertainment and representation expenses (Chapter 16) remains at the same level as 2024 (€ 0.1M), which was in turn slightly lower than the 2023 expenditure.

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

### **Title 2 – Other Administrative Expenditure:**

The budget for other administrative activities comes to a total of € 17.2M and represents 6.4% of the total draft estimate 2025. This is € 2.1M or 13.9% above the 2024 budget.

The total draft estimate for 2025 for the rental of buildings and associated costs (Chapter 20) comes to € 13.1M, which is an increase of € 2M or 18.1% compared to the 2024 budget. Beside the regular running costs<sup>47</sup> for the Headquarters (HQ), the first and the second Temporary Satellite Building (TSB1 and TSB2), 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 draft estimate 2025 for administrative ICT expenses (Chapter 21) remains at € 1.3M, the same level as 2024, 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 draft estimate 2025 for other governance and, administrative expenditure (Chapters 22 – 24) comes to € 1.8M, which is an increase of € 0.1M or 5.1% versus the budget 2024. 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.

For the activities of the Management Board (MB) and its Working Groups (WGs)<sup>48</sup>, the draft estimate 2025 included under Chapter 25 reaches a total of € 1M, which is at the same level of the 2024 budget. This budget is foreseen to cover four physical and two virtual (topical) MB meetings, as well as four physical meetings per year of the two MBWGs.

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

### **Title 3 – Operational activities:**

The draft estimate 2025 for operational activities under Title 3 comes to € 105.6M and represents 39.2% of the total draft estimate 2025. Compared to the budget 2024, the expenditure in this area increases by € 20.3M or 23.7%, mainly due to the increased resources needed in the ICT area to adequately support the new tasks referred to in section 2.2.

The draft estimate 2025 for Operations (Chapter 30) comes to € 16.2M, which is € 1.2M or 7.8% higher than the budget 2024. 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. € 0.8M are foreseen for the additional operational support related to the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight

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<sup>47</sup> Preventive and corrective maintenance, electricity, water, cleaning, rents, insurance and other building related investments.

<sup>48</sup> Corporate Matters Working Group (CMWG) and Information Management Working Group (IMWG).

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migrant smuggling. Moreover, also included in this area, are the costs for operational WEB campaigns, audio-visuals services, operational equipment and operational training. The increase compared to the 2024 budget is mainly related to the missions area, to take into consideration the higher market prices as well as for the additional support to the Operational Task Force (Guest Experts) activities.

The draft estimate 2025 for operational ICT services and programmes (Chapters 31 and 32 together) comes to a total of € 63.3M, which is an increase of € 17.5M or 26.8% compared to the budget 2024. The increase is mainly due to the additional ICT resources needed to adequately perform the new tasks related to the Digital Services Act (DSA), the new Data Centre, the Interoperability project and the Information Exchange Directive (IED), as well as in order to further support the continuation of the SHR program.

With respect to the Seconded National Experts (Chapter 33), the draft estimate 2025 foresees an expenditure of € 8.5M, which is € 0.8M or 9.7% above the budget 2024. This budget is foreseen to cover allowances for 71 Seconded National Experts (€ 4.5M) and 50 Guest Experts for the dedicated support to MS investigations for the Operational Task Forces (OTF) (€ 3.3M). Moreover, also included in this area is a € 0.6M increase related to the additional 11 SNEs from the new legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling and 2 requested for the Interoperability programme.

The draft estimate 2025 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 2024.

The draft estimate 2025 for the Decryption platform (Chapter 38) is € 1M and is envisaged to cover operational running costs of the platform, mainly electricity as well as other maintenance and security services and it is in line with previous years.

The draft estimate 2025 included in the new Grants Chapter (Chapter 39) added in 2023 to centralise all grants budget activities in view of the implementation of a different accounting methodology (Differentiated Appropriations - DAs), foresees commitment appropriations for a total of € 14.4M necessary to cover the total legal obligations related to operations to be carried out over more than one financial year. This budget includes € 6M for ATLAS grants, € 6M for Operational task forces grants, € 2M for EMPACT and € 0.4M for the Innovation grants. The activities related to the other grants are supported, during 2025, by the expenditure set aside during 2024 under the DAs scheme.

Payment appropriations related to Grants amount to € 9.9M<sup>49</sup>, which represent the actual payments to beneficiaries planned during the 2025 financial year and refers to € 3.6M for ATLAS, € 3.1M for OTF Grants, 2.9M for EMPACT, € 0.19 for Innovation Grants and € 0.12M for support against EURO counterfeiting grants.

		Estimate 2025 (CA)	Estimate 2025 (PA)
B3-920	EMPACT grants	2,000,000	2,862,500
B3-930	SA Euro CF Grants	0	120,000
B3-940	OTF Grants	6,000,000	3,100,000
B3-950	ATLAS Grants	6,000,000	3,600,000
B3-960	Innovation Grants	350,000	185,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,350,000</b>	<b>9,867,500</b>

### 2.5. Efficiency gains

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

<sup>49</sup> This includes EUR 4 000 000 preliminarily allocated in the LFS of COM(2023)754 for grants, i.e. EUR 2 000 000 for EMPACT, and EUR 2 000 000 for OTF.

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- Proactive budget management, 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;
- Establishment of an “Initiative Reserve List”, including purchases which can be compliantly brought forward from the year N+1 as to ensure highest implementation of the yearly budget at year end;
- A dedicated ICT Business stream, encompassing a set of administrative ICT solutions such as e-procurement, e-signature, etc.;
- 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;
- Close monitoring of the vacancy rate in an effort to maximise the use of resources made available to the Agency;
- Implementation of the HR Strategy 2020+, 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;
- Green energy and long-term replacement plan reducing cost for maintenance and risk of equipment failure.

### **2.6. Negative priorities/decrease of existing tasks**

No substantial negative priorities or decrease of existing tasks is foreseen. On the contrary, the Agency’s tasks are expected to increase beyond the level of the resources currently available. Consequently, the Agency is requesting additional resources to fund adequately a number of initiatives and tasks, as detailed above.

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## SECTION III - Work Programme 2025

Actions on a white background are recurrent actions i.e. the business-as-usual tasks of Europol.

Actions on a grey background are non-recurrent actions i.e. new or specific actions which indicate a change, a new initiative or a specific undertaking in 2025, or a project of limited duration.

### 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 2020+.

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

In 2025, the ICT 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 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, Europol will pursue further analysis and implementation of the provisions of the Directive on Information Exchange, which are foreseen to bring changes to SIENA and potentially other ICT capabilities, and Europol's business processes.

In line with the renewed Europol Strategy 2020+, 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, and in cooperation with the Operations Directorate, 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 a sandbox environment for Europol and

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MS to develop, train and validate models and tools using operational data. The Lab will further develop an innovation pipeline so that proofs of concept and prototypes can be developed into fully-fledged solutions to support Europol and MS investigations. The Innovation Lab will continue to act as the secretariat for the EU Innovation 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 and following the Hub’s multi-annual planning.

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

Other innovation priorities include the further establishment of Europol’s role in Horizon Europe to help ensure that investments result in benefits for frontline law enforcement work; the proactive alignment of Europol processes with the future requirements of the EU AI Act; developing capabilities to facilitate technology scanning, monitoring, and foresight activities; and to continue strengthening cooperation with academia.

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 (subject to availability of resources) explore the possibilities of 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.).

Milestones for all Business Streams will be further refined before the final adoption of Europol’s programming Document 2025-2027, taking into account the work done in 2024.

## 2025 Objectives

<b>Information Management Strategy</b>
Objectives and actions
<b>A.1.1 Continue with the implementation of the Information Management Strategy<sup>50</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></ul>

<sup>50</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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- 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.
- Continue monitoring the roles and interactions of stakeholder bodies & streamlining reporting and consultations, in agreement with Member States.
- 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.
- Further develop benefits management within IM/ICT planning and prioritisation, in order to support strategic alignment of initiatives.
- 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 2025, Europol will:

- Develop further the Visualisation Analysis Toolbox based on analysis and developments from 2024.
- 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**

- Further consolidate the implementation of a Data Quality Framework, following the outcomes from 2024.
- Further enhance the Data Analysis Portal, following the outcomes from 2024.
- Transit to a next phase of the Case Management and Joint Analysis capabilities based on the outcome from 2024; further develop the Search module, in line with business needs.
- Develop additional functionalities in line with the needs of the investigations supported at that time.

##### **SMART Capabilities**

- Enhance existing and develop new smart capabilities, in line with business needs.

##### **Specialised Capabilities**

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- Support the required technical developments for the implementation of relevant provisions of the DSA Regulation, taking into account the recommendations of the DSA Focus Group and the final decision on the matter (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).
- Continue working on the Cryptoportal in line with the business needs and outcomes from 2024.
- Continue with the integration of the Internet Facing Operations Environment (IFOE) capabilities within the ICT landscape, in line with the business needs and the outcomes from 2024.
- Continue working on the development of the EU Firearms Intelligence Hub in line with the outcomes from 2024.

### **New Forensics Environment and capabilities**

- Further enhance the NFE capabilities, aiming at a full accreditation to operate and delivering better forensic extraction and reconstruction capabilities.

### **Operations support capabilities**

- Provide ad-hoc support 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.).
- Continue enabling and promoting cloud experimentation to enhance operational capabilities by resource provisioning.

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.
- Ensure support to Member States for implementing relevant provisions of the Directive on Information Exchange, and assess and implement potential changes to Europol's data processing workflows (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).
- Maintain SIENA's high level of performance and support to the data intake and data processing operations of Europol.
- Continue improving the SIENA user experience, for example by user interface changes, or better use of structured information.
- Maintain alignment of the SIENA training and production environments.
- Finalise the development effort to establish Large File Exchange (LFE) interoperability with SIENA and continue establishing the interoperability of SIENA with other Europol capabilities.



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- 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.
- Further mature the VCP-Connect solution in line with business needs.
- Continue enhancing Video Conferencing for Operational Purposes (VCOP) in line with business demand and 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 the interoperability between EIS and QUEST.
- Continue working on the integration of biometric searching capability with the (new) EIS.
- Revise and expand automated data loading services. Further proceed with the development of a new generation dataloader, and continue the support to MS/TP with implementation of data loader solutions.
- Dependent on the outcome of the analysis carried out in 2024, implement the in-take of data into the EIS from SIENA contributions or other channels.
- Continue improving data quality in the EIS including by implementing automated data compliance checks.
- Analyse and – depending on the outcome - initiate the development of a new service extending the capacity for the direct loading of EIS data by third parties.
- Continue supporting rollout of QUEST (BPL and EU-RESTRICTED) in all MS, including the rollout of access to Europol’s Analysis Projects on a hit/no hit basis.
- Maintain alignment of the EIS training and production environments.
- Continue improving the search mechanism of QUEST/QUEST+ according to MS and Europol business needs, including extending QUEST with searches on additional objects as required.
- Subject to the outcome of the feasibility study from 2023, enable biometric searching capability with QUEST (QUEST BIO), in particular in order to fulfil the requirements of PRÜM II Regulation.
- Enhance the business intelligence capability for QUEST.
- Subject to relevant developments in 2024, support the implementation of hit/no-hit access to Europol data for EPPO, Eurojust<sup>51</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**

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<sup>51</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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- Harmonise further the IAM landscape of Europol by integrating more systems with IAM and taking further steps towards establishing single enterprise identity.
- 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.**

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 2025 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 and launch into operation 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: participate in formal testing, conduct business testing and end user training. Launch into operation 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.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Further enhance Europol’s capabilities related to biometrics, in particular fingerprints, facial recognition and DNA to meet the business needs and technical requirements in the context of the EU Interoperability framework and Europol’s core tasks.</li> <li>○ Launch the work on Europol’s connection to and use of the European Search Portal to access SIS, VIS, and EES data.</li> <li>○ Finalise the work and launch into operation Europol access to ECRIS-TCN.</li> <li>○ Finalise the work and launch into operation Europol access to Common Identity Repository for the purpose of 2-step law enforcement access.</li> <li>○ Finalise the implementation and launch into operation QUEST allowing MS and Eurojust to query Europol data via the ESP for law enforcement purposes.</li> <li>○ In line with the outcome of negotiations of Eurodac Recast, initiate the implementation of Europol’s access to Eurodac to replace current access via Member State’s Access Point.</li> <li>○ In line with the outcome of negotiations of Screening Regulation, initiate the implementation of security checks of the applicants for international protection and irregular migrants via ESP against Europol data and the provision of appropriate follow up action.</li> <li>○ In line with the outcome of the negotiations on the legislative proposal on the revision of the Prüm Regulation, proceed with 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 and 3) develop and implement EPRIS to support the search of police records.</li> <li>○ Ensure support to and implement relevant improvements in business processes and technical solutions supporting Europol’s tasks in relation to SIS, ETIAS, EES, and VIS.</li> <li>○ Upon delivery of the building by the Host State, finalise the implementation of the new Europol Data Centre in support of the ETIAS and VIS solutions (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).</li> <li>○ Support CEPOL in the work of CEPOL 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.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results:    Europol is a fully integrated part of the European security architecture in accordance with respective EU legislation.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Member States’ needs in terms of efficient access to information are better met.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Interoperability and complementarity of Europol systems and tools with other EU information management systems leads to increased and more efficient exchange of information.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Enhanced Europol contribution to relevant EU policies.</p>

### **Innovation Lab**

#### Objectives and actions

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

- Further develop the functionalities 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), especially to secure remote connectivity for designated Member State authorities. Identify and receive datasets for the explicit purpose of pursuing research and innovation projects.

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- Develop further the Research and Innovation Pipeline so that proofs of concept and prototypes can be developed into fully-fledged solutions to support Europol and MS investigations.
- 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.
- Continue experimenting with virtual online meeting environments for the hosting of non-operational Europol events, with a view to establishing a clear business case.
- Act as the secretariat for the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security and lead the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies, and implement the tasks and functions adopted by COSI on 15 May 2020<sup>52</sup> and in the Multi-Annual Plan endorsed by COSI in February 2023<sup>53</sup>.
- Ensure that the AP4AI online tool for AI compliance with the AI Act is migrated from the host organisation (CENTRIC) to a Europol environment.
- 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 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 the 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 and ensure synergies with the Europol analysis toolbox.
- 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.
- Subject to the developments from 2024, establish an administrative framework for the temporary embedment of academic experts within innovation projects to swiftly enable their participation. Continue to explore new resourcing models, for example, the temporary insourcing of skillsets and the clarification of intellectual property rights (IPR) when co-creating new solutions.
- 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.

<sup>52</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>53</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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- Act as a liaison between EU-funded research projects, DG Home and 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.

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 further with the Records Management Programme, including by developing a File Plan and reviewing the Retention schedule for prioritised areas).
- 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).

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- 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, enterprise architecture and business process management tool.
- Progress with the development and implementation of a corporate analytics and reporting capability.
- Implement improvements to the tools for business continuity management; initiate the implementation of a security incident management tool.
- Subject to European Commission’s project team confirmation, implement new modules in SYSPER.
- Progress with planning, design and procurement activities for ICT components in line with the strategic housing roadmap.

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.  
                               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.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Continue optimisation of ICT costs, including license spending, right-size security measures, capacity and availability of Systems and Services.</li> <li>○ Assure uptime and availability according to the set SLA’s with the stakeholders.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Member States, Partners and Europol staff receive reliable and secure systems and services that enable the achievement of Europol’s renewed strategy.</p>

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025 <sup>54</sup>
Core Business Project Delivery		
Operational Stability - Uptime of Core systems		
Number of Searches through EIS and QUEST		
Number of SIENA Messages exchanged		
Number of SIENA Cases initiated		
% of Active Users on the EPE		
Core Business Project Delivery		

<sup>54</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 new Integrated Operational Services Unit of the Operational Centre 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 the 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.



2025 Objectives

<u>Operational Centre</u>	
Objectives and actions	
<b>A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing the intake of operational information.</b>	
<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 style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ 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 style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Contribute to the preparations for data intake and related operational procedures, required for the implementation of the Directive on information exchange (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).</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.

<u>Operational Centre</u>	
Objectives and actions	
<b>A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.</b>	
<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>	

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- 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.
- 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 ETIAS, VIS and other EU information management systems.**

- Following the initiation of ETIAS operations, ensure the implementation of Europol's tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources)<sup>55</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.
- Prepare for the initiation of VIS Recast operations, ensuring readiness for the execution of Europol's 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.
- Continue preparations for Prüm II, the Screening Regulation and the Directive on Information Exchange and any other relevant information management legislative frameworks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).

Expected results: Full operational implementation of Europol's ETIAS and VIS capabilities.  
Europol's compliance with its new tasks in the framework of the implementation of EU large-scale systems.  
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.

<sup>55</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.

<b><u>Integrated Operational Services</u></b>	
Objectives and actions	
<p><b>A.2.4 Ensure the provision of efficient services by Europol’s SIRENE Office.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Act as the single point of contact for MS’ SIRENE Bureaux and carry out the activities stemming from the SIS regulations.</li> <li>○ Process, store and crosscheck the communicated hits on alerts related to terrorism sent to Europol by SIRENE Bureaux.</li> <li>○ Conduct the data review of information sent by SIRENE Bureaux in full respect of the Europol regulation and the specific SIS data review requirements.</li> <li>○ Report through the SIRENE communications infrastructure matches triggered in SIS.</li> <li>○ Exchange supplementary information and other relevant messages with SIRENE Bureaux through the SIRENE communications infrastructure.</li> <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ 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 Recast.</li> <li>○ Deliver training and awareness sessions on SIS/SIRENE related matters; provide advice and support to Europol’s Analysis Projects.</li> <li>○ Maintain and further enhanced the Europol SIRENE operator manual.</li> <li>○ Maintain fruitful, effective and efficient cooperation with SIRENE Bureaux and other external stakeholders.</li> </ul>	
Expected results:	<p>Full operational implementation of the capabilities of Europol’s SIRENE Office.</p> <p>Increased quality and completeness of Europol’s criminal intelligence picture with regards to SIS alerts related to terrorism.</p>

<b><u>Integrated Operational Services</u></b>	
Objectives and actions	
<p><b>A.2.5 Build-up Europol’s biometric capabilities and services.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Process, compare and analyse biometric data received at Europol including dactyloscopic data, facial images and DNA profiles, maintaining quality and procedural standards throughout the process.</li> <li>○ Perform biometric data searches against EU information management systems, such as SIS, VIS, EES and ECRIS-TCN, in full respect of the respective legal framework.</li> <li>○ Compare and analyse matches triggered with biometric data in the context of automated searches launched from VIS or depending on the outcome of legislative negotiations, in the context of the future Prüm II or Screening regulation frameworks.</li> <li>○ Maintain and review the data stored in Europol biometric databases, ensuring that it complies with Europol data processing rules and data retention policies.</li> <li>○ Provide expertise, training and support on the use of biometric technologies and their application to investigations.</li> <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Provide operational input and feedback to the ICT business and technical requirements on the performance and further development of biometric identification systems.</li> <li>○ Collaborate with MS, EU agencies and other relevant cooperation partners in the area of biometric data exchange and standardisation.</li> </ul>	

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Expected results: Increased quality and completeness of Europol’s criminal intelligence picture with biometric data.  
Member States’ investigations receive the required support for the processing of biometric data and the results of such processing through Europol’s operational products.

### Integrated Operational Services

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.2.6 Provide support to MS investigations with travel intelligence.**

- Act as the single point of contact for MSs’ Passenger Information Units (PIUs) and carry out the activities stemming from the EU PNR directive and the Advance Passenger Information (API) Regulation.
- Handle PNR data submitted to Europol by PIUs.
- Enrich the analytical activities of Europol’s Analysis Projects with relevant PNR data and data obtained from EU information management systems; develop a granular data access model to regulate the access to the different systems.
- Exploit opportunities in the use of PNR and ETIAS watchlists to collect specific travel information and to flag threats and possible risks.
- Contribute, as required, to the creation of PNR Rule Based Targeting (RBT), as well as ETIAS screening rules.
- Search against Europol data information sent by MSs in the framework of travel monitoring activities or in operations to detect high risk passengers.
- Search operational data provided by third partners in the EU information management systems and include the relevant information retrieved in the operational outputs.
- Prepare to utilise the additional API data on intra-EU flights for countering serious crime and terrorism following the adoption and operationalisation of the new API Directive.
- Contribute to the coordination and delivery of dedicated training for the analysis of travel related information in partnership with CEPOL.
- Exercise the functions of secretariat of the Informal Working Group on PNR and support the organisation of IWG-PNR events.

Expected results: Increased quality and completeness of Europol’s criminal intelligence picture with regards to the identification and movement of persons.  
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.2.7 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.

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- 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.
- Facilitate the availability of geospatial images and other space assets for law enforcement by:
  - Sharing with MS the use of Europol’s access to Integrated Maritime Services Portal at the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA);
  - Providing a central point of access for LEA to use the European Commission’s Copernicus services; and for obtaining services from EUSATCEN; 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>56</sup> umbrella and give guidance to the related networks.
- 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.2.8 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.

<sup>56</sup> Specialist Operational Support Exchange Network

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- 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.
- Maintain and maximise the use of the Guest Expert (GE) pool with 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 in line with the Member States’ operational needs and Europol’s priorities.
- 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.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025
Speed of first-line response to MS requests		
Number of Accepted SIENA contributions by OAC <sup>57</sup>		
Number of deployments of Guest Officers		

<sup>57</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.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 2025.

In 2025, 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 2025 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.

#### 2025 Objectives

<b>European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)</b>
Objectives and actions
<b>A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU MS' investigations on SOC.</b>

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- Handle ESOCC information; monitor information flows; coordinate ESOCC operations.
- 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.
- 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.
- Use data from real-time investigations supported by the ESOCC to maintain an intelligence picture on SOC.
- Support the implementation of Operational Action Plans (OAP) under EMPACT priority threats.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Provide Member States with regular structured updates on established/intended OTFs.
- Manage 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- 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 EFECF.
- 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.



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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 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.
- 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.
- Target concrete crime hubs, hotspots (such as main harbours) or key enablers, for which specific measures, addressing the specific crime-enabling factors or facilitating

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

<p>targeted regional coordination of interventions, can be set up in consultation with the main MS/TP concerned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Participate in the European Ports Alliance to be launched in 2024 by the European Commission with that aim to bring together all relevant public and private actors into a public-private partnership.</li><li>○ Utilise new opportunities stemming from the 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.</li><li>○ Prioritise cooperation with high-risk countries<sup>58</sup> from a drug production and smuggling perspective in order to support MS investigations, and trace and identify drugs-related criminal proceeds. Contribute to potential EU regional intervention tackling trafficking corridors and hubs in West Africa<sup>59</sup>.</li><li>○ Support EU dialogues on drugs that focus on specific drug trafficking routes, involving producer, transit and consumer markets<sup>60</sup>.</li><li>○ Support MS investigations against environmental crime related to illicit drug production and trafficking.</li><li>○ Organise and fund the annual Drug Conference.</li></ul>
<p>Expected results: Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p> <p>Reduction of the drug supply by facilitating arrest and prosecution of its main criminal actors.</p> <p>Enhanced law enforcement coordination and efficiency of action in the EU in the area of drug supply reduction.</p>

### **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.**

- 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.
- 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.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Further develop a Firearms Intelligence Hub at ESOCC to facilitate the cross-border exchange and processing of ballistics and weapons identification information by:
  - setting up a Ballistic Intelligence Network integrating at Europol the two main Ballistic Identification Systems in the EU and providing an interoperability solution, and

<sup>58</sup> Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, UAE, Morocco and China.

<sup>59</sup> As put forward in the EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime.

<sup>60</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.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- establishing a common weapons identification system and database at Europol to support the storage and comparison of such data at EU level.</li><li>o Support MS investigations countering the diversion of firearms and explosives and illicit trafficking of precursors, weapon parts and pyrotechnic products.</li><li>o Conduct proactive criminal intelligence gathering on (dark web) online weapons and explosives trade, with the support of EC3's DarkWeb team.</li><li>o 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).</li><li>o 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>61</sup> in view of establishing access.</li><li>o Focus on trafficking of weapons through postal and fast parcels.</li><li>o 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.</li><li>o 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.</li><li>o Contribute to the Frontex Firearms Handbook for Border Guard and Customs updates and regional versions.</li></ul>
<p>Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to illicit trafficking weapons and explosives.</p> <p>Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p>

### **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.**

- o 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.
- o Support umbrella investigations against organised criminal groups offering facilitation services to other OCGs, criminal networks or individual criminals.
- o 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).

<sup>61</sup> CAR - Conflict and Armament Research; iARMS - Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System; US ATF - US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.</li> <li>○ 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).</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of the EU Strategy on Organised Crime 2021-2025.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the illicit activities of the members of high risk OCGs, including their money laundering operations.</li> <li>○ Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meeting and other dedicated meetings, as needed.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>

**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.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting to present developments in the property crime domain and Europol’s tools and services.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Member States’ investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to organised property crime.</p> <p>Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p>

<p><b>Operations on Environmental crime</b> Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in environmental crime.</p>
<p>Objectives and actions</p>
<p><b>A.3.6 Provide support to EU Member States’ investigations on environmental crime.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Environmental crime.</li> <li>○ Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.</li> <li>○ Support MS investigations in cross border waste and pollution crime and cases of infiltration of criminal networks in the respective legal business structures.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Focus on the illicit management of Electronic and Electric Equipment Waste, especially the export to third countries.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Respond to the impact of the revised Environmental Crime Directive, once it becomes applicable.</li> <li>○ Provide support to the EnviCrimeNet Secretariat and the activities of the network.</li> <li>○ Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Member States’ investigations receive quality technical, analytical and operational support related to environmental crimes.</p> <p>Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.</p>

**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.
- Contribute to the implementation of the European Commission's 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa.
- Contribute to the implementation of the new EU legislation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling (subject to adoption and to the extent possible given the availability of resources).
- 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 analytical situational overviews, timely identification and comprehensive understanding of emerging migratory trends.
- 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.
- Maintain the Information Clearing House (ICH) with the participation of EUNAVFOR MED, Frontex and Interpol representatives.
- 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).
- Promote, with the support of the EU 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.
- Review the solutions and tactics deployed and the partnerships with relevant counterparts at national and international level, including Frontex, Member States' LOs deployed in the regions concerned and relevant EEAS networks.



### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.
- Enhance information sharing, incl. by coordinating social media monitoring, especially on migrant smuggling routes and networks.
- 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.
- Intensify the financial investigation angle of the support provided to investigations of migrant smuggling criminal networks, in close cooperation with the EFEC.
- 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.

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.

Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support in relation to dismantling of organised crime groups active in migrant smuggling.

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

### **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.).
- 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.
- 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 Trafficking in human beings.
- 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.
- Develop knowledge on key organised criminal groups involved in THB in the EU.
- Support the implementation of the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025.

**Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level**

- 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.

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

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025
Number of Accepted contributions by ESOCC <sup>62</sup>		
Number of Operations supported by ESOCC		
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by ESOCC (where ESOCC is in the lead)		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ESOCC		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by ESOCC		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by ESOCC		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EMSC		
Number of Operations supported by EMSC		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EMSC		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EMSC		

<sup>62</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.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 sciences approaches from legal, technical and organisational perspectives, to ensure that data is available, enriched and actionable through the data and intelligence full cycles.

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

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.

## 2025 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.</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>○ Focus on obtaining and processing datasets such as lawfully intercepted and decrypted communications of criminal networks, as well as seized Darknet servers used for criminal trade and the dissemination of child abuse material.</li><li>○ Increase the focus on collection, processing and production of cyber threat intelligence, and the delivery of tactical analyses identifying and prioritising the most important cybercriminal data hubs and services (such as crime facilitating VPNs, Hosting Services, Communication Platforms, Dark Markets and Sharing forums and Counter Antivirus Services).</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></ul>

### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.
- Develop new thematic cooperation in the EC3 Advisory groups and working-subgroups, to foster information exchange on trends and criminal new modus operandi.
- Coordinate and support efforts to strengthen operational cooperation of law enforcement with 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 2025. Facilitate the interaction and cooperation with partners such as the Cybercrime Prevention Network.
- Increase the focus on promoting and scaling up successful national prevention initiatives or other types of projects/approaches among the rest of the Member States through Europol channels.
- 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.

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

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, and 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.
- Develop and implement a Rapid Response model for Digital Evidence collection for prioritised investigations.
- 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.

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.  
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.

### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- Improve the criminal intelligence position of EC3 and the Member States by proactively identifying significant cybercriminal facilitators and other HVT 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 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.
- Further develop the 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). Enhance EMAS technical and analysis capabilities.
- Utilise the MISP Threat Sharing platform (MISP)<sup>63</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.

<sup>63</sup> The original Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) was extended to cover threat intelligence, financial fraud information, vulnerability information and counter-terrorism information.

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.
- Contribute to the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Cyber Attacks.
- 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 response to ransomware.
- 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. Cygnus development and Tools4LEAs).

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 a 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.



### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.
- 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>64</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 EFECC 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 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.**

<sup>64</sup> This initiative has not been yet adopted at the time of the writing of this document.



## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.
- 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 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.
- Execute joint operational actions against telecom fraud, including International Revenue Share Fraud, vishing, spoofing caller ID, SIM swapping or smishing<sup>65</sup>, in collaboration with law enforcement, judiciary and relevant private partners.
- Coordinate the detection, identification, dismantling, prosecution and prevention of money mules networks, 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.).
- 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>65</sup> Smishing is a phishing cybersecurity attack carried out over mobile text messaging, also known as SMS phishing.

### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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 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.

### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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.

Expected results: Coordinated efforts in research and development lead to greater realisation of common projects and technical solutions in the cybercrime area.

### Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

Member States' investigations receive up-to-date technical support in the cyber domain.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025
Number of Accepted contributions by EC3 <sup>66</sup>		
Number of Operations supported by EC3		
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by EC3 (where EC3 is in the lead)		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EC3		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EC3		
Number of Decryption platform successes		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EC3		

<sup>66</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.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

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Europol's counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime communities by facilitating the exchange of strategic and operational expertise and practices.

### 2025 Objectives

#### The European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC)

##### Objectives and actions

##### **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.**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Enhance the establishment of OTFs targeting HVT individuals who represent an immediate threat to EU security and aiming to dismantle terrorist/violent extremist organisations.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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 provisions of the amended Europol Regulation.
- Increase the exploitation of SIS information on terrorist alerts obtained through the Europol SIRENE Office.
- Scope out opportunities and establish direct interaction with priority non-EU competent CT services to obtain dynamically updated FTF lists.
- 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.

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- 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.
- 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>67</sup> or CEPOL INFLOW<sup>68</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>67</sup> CT JUST Project: Counter Terrorism in the MENA region, West Africa & the Horn of Africa

<sup>68</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 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.
- 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. Assess the results of operations and present the assessment to Member States via all appropriate channels.
- Provide support to an increased number of Operational Task Forces (OTFs) following the adjusted concept for establishing OTFs in the CT area.
- 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.
- 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



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### **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 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).
- 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.

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Support the exchange of information and best practices on explosives and/or CBRN cases among Member States.
- Organise a conference/seminar for the EEODN and deliver a training for EEODN experts.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- Gradually align monitoring capabilities, referral processes and analytical procedures in the area of violent left wing extremism and violent anarchism with the other online terrorist and violent extremist areas.

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- 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 Ensure the efficient functioning of 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;

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- de-confliction and coordination of action among EU MS;</li><li>- the status check of content one hour after the transmission of the removal order;</li><li>- the possibility for HSPs to update the status of referrals and removal orders;</li><li>- the possibility for HSPs to report content that presents an imminent threat to life;</li><li>- the possibility for MS to work on the scrutiny process of cross-border removal orders; and</li><li>- transparency reporting.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Subject to a final decision on the way ahead and the following technical developments, ensure effective handling, through PERCI or an alternative channel, of notifications of imminent threat to life stemming from illegal online content involving all crime areas covered by the Digital Services Act (to the extent possible given the availability of resources).</li><li>o Manage the PERCI Focus Group enrolling MS in support of the technical and operational development of the platform, and afterwards annual PERCI-meetings.</li><li>o Organise tailored trainings for MS competent authorities' use of PERCI.</li><li>o 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.</li><li>o 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.</li><li>o 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.</li><li>o Advance with the automation of data extraction, ingestion and real time crosschecks with Europol Databases.</li><li>o Enhance the search experience in the existing dataset as well as the provision of detailed statistics.</li><li>o Support the monitoring and evaluation of the TCO Regulation to enable the Commission to report on the application and the evaluation of the regulation.</li><li>o Utilise new opportunities stemming from the 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.</li></ul>
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.**

- o Provide operational support and facilitate coordination of CT internet-based investigations.

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- Act as a knowledge hub within Europol in regards to internet-based investigations and provide support to other crime areas. In particular, contribute to the ESOC'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 Europol's operational centres 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.
- Assess, select and initiate the purchase of technical solutions that can support EU IRU's mandate.
- Provide advanced technical support to the EU IRU.
- 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 (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) 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 Artificial Intelligence 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.

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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.**

- Support Member States in connecting with service providers (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 geographical scope of SIRIUS, 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.
- Lay the basis for setting up SIRIUS as a permanent team in the EU IRU to ensure the continuation of its services to MS.

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.

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Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025
Number of Accepted contributions by ECTC <sup>69</sup>		
Number of Operations supported by ECTC		
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by ECTC (where ECTC is in the lead)		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ECTC		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by ECTC		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by ECTC		
Volume of content assessed by EU IRU related to terrorism and violent extremism		

<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.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 its 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 act 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's centres based on the relevance of the financial related aspects of 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 2025, Europol will 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

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Russian and Belarusian individuals and companies in the context of the war of aggression against Ukraine, in coordination with other EU agencies and bodies.

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.

Finally, in the area of counterfeiting, the EFECF 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.

## 2025 Objectives

<b>European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECF)</b>
Objectives and actions
<b>A.6.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the EFECF in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on financial and economic crime.</b>
<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 EFECF competence. Contribute to the drafting of a biannual flagship report on economic and financial crime.</li><li>○ Further extend and manage the Joint Financial Intelligence Group (JFIG) at Europol to improve communication and cooperation between Europol Liaison Bureaux and EFECF</li></ul>

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<p>Analysis Projects in order to better align investigative priorities and effectiveness of pursued cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <li>○ Encourage the active participation of MS customs authorities in the relevant EMPACT OAPs and the Europol Analysis Projects.</li> <li>○ Utilise the established connection between the Customs Information System (CIS) and Europol’s databases, enabling automated cross-checking.</li> <li>○ Follow closely the developments related to the Customs Reform with respect to Europol’s mandate.</li> <li>○ Prepare for taking up any potential new task arising from the establishment of the new Customs Authority, in particular concerning the role of a central customs interlocutor for non-customs authorities (e.g. law enforcement authorities, including Europol).</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Develop strategic cooperation with the European Banking Authority and the European Investment Bank as key partners of the EFECC.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Enhance the quantity and quality of EFECC external communication and visibility.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Contribute to policy development such as drafting of guidelines or revision of standards when requested by the Commission.</li> </ul>	
Expected results:	<p>Member States’ investigations receive better and extended analytical and operational support related to financial and economic crime.</p> <p>Improved cooperation and joint undertakings with stakeholders and financial institutions leading to an increased operational impact.</p> <p>Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.</p>

<p><b><u>Operations on Fraud</u></b></p> <p>Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in serious and complex fraud.</p> <p>Disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in excise fraud.</p> <p>Disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud.</p>	
<p>Objectives and actions</p>	
<p><b>A.6.2 Provide support to EU Member States’ investigations on fraud.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perform criminal intelligence analysis, support MS and EPPO with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.</li> </ul>	

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- 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 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.
- Organise a workshop on VAT fraud with the participation of relevant stakeholders such as Eurofisc, OLAF, EPPO and the European Commission.
- 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 serious and complex 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 ESOC, 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 cooperation in the EU against organised crime groups and professionals providing money laundering services to other criminal groups (crime as a service).

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve operational support by enhancing virtual assets expertise and provide tracing and analysis support to financial investigations involving virtual assets.</li> <li>○ Support the strategic and operational information exchange between the Member States’ Financial Investigators.</li> <li>○ Detect novel money laundering methods, vulnerabilities, and risks that aid and support organised crime.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support and host the secretariats for the Anti-Money Laundering Operational Network (AMON) and the Association of Law Enforcement Forensic Accountants (ALEFA).</li> <li>○ Support the Joint Working Group on criminal finances and cryptocurrencies (co-host the secretariat jointly with the Basel Institute on Governance).</li> <li>○ Promote and support the Europol Financial Intelligence Public Private Partnership (EFIPPP).</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Take up any potential new task arising from the anti-money laundering legislation for a comprehensive Union policy on preventing money laundering and terrorism financing<sup>70</sup>.</li> <li>○ Foster a well-functioning working relation with the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA), if operational in 2025. 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).</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support the Counter Terrorism Financial Investigators Network, which facilitates the exchange of investigation techniques and experiences on CT financial investigations.</li> <li>○ Organise the Annual Plenary Meeting on money laundering.</li> </ul>
<p>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).</p> <p>Investigations on organised crime and terrorism benefit better from synergies between financial and criminal intelligence.</p>

<b>Operations on Money Laundering</b>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.6.4 Increase cooperation with FIUs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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).</li> </ul>

<sup>70</sup> C(2020) 2800 final, published by the European Commission on 7 May 2020.

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- 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.
- 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>71</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, 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 centers 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 secretariat of the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN).

<sup>71</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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- Connect to Siena EU Asset Recovery Offices that are not directly connected yet (if not finalised in 2024) and strengthen MS AROs partnership with the EFEC resulting in an increase of their contribution level.
- Contribute to the work of the Task Force 'Freeze and Seize'<sup>72</sup> 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, such as Eurojust.
- 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 and implementation 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>73</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>74</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> If still existing in 2025.

<sup>73</sup> Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors dedicated to corruption in sport

<sup>74</sup> Envisaged in the Communication on the fight against corruption in the EU from 3 May 2023.



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- 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 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 foods 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) being an increasing concern for intellectual property rights holders.
- Contribute to the development of the EU Toolbox against counterfeiting under the lead of the European Commission.



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- 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.
- 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.
- Promote the establishment a connection to SIENA for the European Central Bank through which Europol can receive information with respect to (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 2024)	Target 2025
Number of Accepted contributions by EFECC <sup>75</sup>		
Number of Operations supported by EFECC		
Number of Operational Task Forces supported by EFECC (where EFECC is in the lead)		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EFECC		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EFECC		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EFECC		

<sup>75</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 Europol's work and mandate. The agency supports the Liaison Bureaux of Member States and

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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 new External Strategy.

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 implementation of the new strategy for cooperation with private parties will also remain among Europol's priorities in 2025.

## 2025 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>○ Continue the development and improvement of the case management system and 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><li>○ Further foster the efficient functioning of the Data Quality Control Office under the lead of the Data Quality Control Coordinator.</li><li>○ Ensure the implementation of the current data review mechanism and that data processing is performed in line with Europol's legal framework.</li><li>○ Further implement a systematic review of all APs, including data quality reviews on biometric and travel related data.</li></ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work in close cooperation with the DPF and ensure compliance with the data protection rules.</li> <li>○ Report internally on regular basis on the enhanced data review activities; Provide progress reports to DPF.</li> <li>○ Provide guidance and training to improve the quality of analytical reporting.</li> </ul>
<p>Expected results: Compliance with the legal requirements for data processing.</p> <p>Increased efficiency of handling, processing, analysing and monitoring of data.</p> <p>Increased standardisation and quality of products.</p> <p>Enhanced quality of Europol’s operational analysis support to Member States.</p>

<b><u>Analysis coordination</u></b>
Objectives and actions
<p><b>A.7.3 Reinforce analysis training capabilities at Europol.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain a centralised overview of in-house analytical competencies and knowledge.</li> <li>○ Provide regularly 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.</li> <li>○ Further develop the analysis training environment and a learning management solution for assessing the impact of training on quality.</li> <li>○ 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.).</li> <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Provide regular trainings to MS on specific topics such as Data Subject Categorisation (DSC) and the Joint Analysis Platform.</li> <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Roll out a new Analysis Training and Coaching program to satisfy the need for state-of-the-art analytical competence at Europol and the national competent authorities.</li> <li>○ Manage the online Intelligence Analysis Platform CONAN.</li> <li>○ Organise the annual EU Crime Analysis Conference.</li> <li>○ Organise the Europol Summer School.</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p> <p>Fully trained criminal intelligence analysts at Europol.</p> <p>More efficient and faster processing and analysing of data.</p> <p>Increased standardisation and quality of products.</p>

<b><u>Strategic analysis</u></b>	
Objectives and actions	
<b>A.7.4 Deliver quality strategic reports.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deliver Flagship reports on serious and organised crime, cybercrime or terrorism that have a key importance for Europol, such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SOCTA 2025</li> <li>- EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)</li> <li>- Threat assessment on financial and economic crimes</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Deliver Early warning notifications giving rapid alert on new and emerging threats and modi operandi.</li> <li>○ Deliver Intelligence notifications identifying intelligence gaps, recommendations or key areas to target, and present a basis for decision making.</li> <li>○ Deliver Joint reports with EU agencies/national authorities, such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Deliver Crisis response reports on crisis situations (geo-political crises or crisis events).</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Maintain a common, consistent and holistic approach towards strategic analysis across the Operations Directorate.</li> <li>○ Enhance networking with experts (e.g. SOCTA, TE-SAT Advisory Group) to advance methodologies, increase access to information and improve the quality of reports.</li> <li>○ Support as a coordinator the implementation of the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal on Criminal intelligence picture.</li> <li>○ Support strategic analysis in the MENA region by contributing to the EU funded project Euromed Police V.</li> <li>○ Support strategic analysis in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region by contributing to the relevant EU-funded projects.</li> </ul>	
Expected results:	Provision of timely and quality strategic reports. 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.

<b><u>EMPACT support</u></b>	
Objectives and actions	
<b>A.7.5 Provide support and funding opportunities to EMPACT priorities and actions.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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).</li> </ul>	

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- 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 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 utilisation and the further improvement 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>76</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 and strategic 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.

## 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).

<sup>76</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.

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- 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>77</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.
- Initiate the implementation of the new Europol External Strategy and establish or reinforce cooperation with selected third countries in line with the updated external relations priorities.
- 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.
- Further develop Europol's relations with relevant countries from the Eastern Neighbourhood region and contribute to relevant EU-funded projects.
- Further develop Europol's relations with the countries from the MENA region building on the progress made in 2024. Continue contributing to the EU funded project Euromed V.
- Depending on a needs assessment, prepare a strategic review of the cooperation with the Schengen Associated Countries.

<sup>77</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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- 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.
- 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 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 INTCENT), 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 relevant EU policies and initiatives<sup>78</sup> for emerging tasks falling within Europol's mandate. In particular, monitor and contribute, where requested, to the upcoming evaluation and revision of key EU strategies, such as the Strategy to tackle Organised Crime (2021-2025), the EU Cybersecurity Strategy, the Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU (2020-2025), the EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking (2020-2025), the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) and the EU Drug strategy (2021-2025).
- 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.

<sup>78</sup> The strategies, policies and legislative initiatives mentioned in Section I – General Context.

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- Support the Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) of the Member States in cooperation with Eurojust and OLAF including the provision of complementary funding and training.
- Enhance the cooperation with Frontex based on the new working arrangement, including exchange of personal data.
- Enhance the cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) based on the new working arrangement.
- Develop cooperation with new bodies established by the EU involved in crime areas covered by Europol's mandate, i.e. the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority and the European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse.
- 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 or any other Administrative or Working Arrangement concluded as a follow-up to the new EU-Interpol agreement. Manage Europol's Liaison Office at Interpol.
- 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.
- Support the implementation of the working arrangement with the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Continue to enhance cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 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.
- Provide legal advice related to Europol's negotiation and conclusion of working arrangements with international organisations.

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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 Advance with the implementation of the new strategy for managing and enhancing cooperation with private parties.**

- Assess opportunities and reach out to the private sector following the established priorities through the new Strategy for the steering and coordination of Private Party cooperation.
- 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.
- Enhance the intake of 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 2024)	Target 2025
Number of Strategic Analysis Reports		
Satisfaction with Strategic Analysis Reports		
Satisfaction with Operational Analysis		
Satisfaction with Operational Training delivered to MS/TP		
Number of SIENA messages exchanged by Third Parties <sup>79</sup>		

<sup>79</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 6 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 also applies robust document and records management procedures, and adheres to a systematic performance monitoring and reporting practice.

In 2024, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the renewed Europol Strategy and the new External 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. Work on a second Data Centre should also start to ensure Europol's business continuity. 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 2025

<u>Corporate affairs and services</u>	
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 the new 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>○ Consolidate further the implementation of the 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 style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Support the implementation of a new internal control and compliance management tool.</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>○ 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. Advise 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 style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">○ Develop and maintain Europol’s legal framework for finance, procurement, grants and facilities. Review the financial model decisions, based on the expected implementation of the new accounting system.</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.**

- Continue monitoring Europol internal and external operational processes, including deployments, and ensure their compliance with fundamental rights.
- Advise on fundamental rights compliance in the innovation domain, including on AI.
- 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.
- Continue the assessment of cooperation agreements with Third Parties and on the strategy for cooperation with private parties, with a view to ensure fundamental rights compliance.
- Network and ensure coordination with the fundamental rights officers of FRA and CEPOL, including via the network of FROs.

Expected results: Fundamental rights compliance in all Europol’s operational and administrative processes.

**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. 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 preventions 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. Optimise internal AV production capacity, including by setting up an AV production studio.
- 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.
- Maintain and develop Europol’s intranet as the main internal communication tool. Continue work towards the implementation of an upgraded internal communication platform.

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Expected results: Europol maintains effective communication to external partners and stakeholders. Europol and its brand identity are well positioned among media.

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.

Effective media monitoring and open sources tools are in place and broadly used.

Europol maintains effective internal communication.

### Administration of Human resources

Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.4 Ensure efficient human resource management.**

- 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.
- Plan and monitor the implementation of the establishment plan.
- Ensure the coordination of talent acquisition, learning and development, appraisal, probation and reclassification, on boarding and personnel administration for staff (TA/CAs), SNEs, interns, law enforcement trainees and interim workers.
- Develop and update HR related policies, implementing rules and processes.
- 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.
- Ensure the 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.
- Coordinate training of Europol staff. Further implement the Leadership and Management Development Program.
- Deliver health and wellbeing-related services.
- Ensure the quality of the services after the insourcing of the medical service covering both Europol and Eurojust (if progress achieved in 2024).

Expected results: Increased HR efficiency, effectiveness and customer service delivery.

### Financial and budget management

Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.5 Ensure efficient financial and budget management.**

- Plan and monitor the implementation of the budget.
- Develop and update finance related policies, implementing rules and processes.



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- Monitor and further develop activity based budgeting and costing.
- 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.
- Further improve sustainable procurement by integrating social consideration elements, stemming from the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.
- Expand financial reporting via the new automated reporting solution.
- Maintain the Travel Management System.
- Finalise preparations for the replacement of the current accounting system ABAC at Europol and explore interoperability possibilities with other systems.
- 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.

Expected results: Ensured reliability and accuracy of Europol’s budget management.  
Increased efficiency and effectiveness of financial processes and client satisfaction.

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

#### Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.6 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).
- Upgrade the security infrastructure of the Agency.
- Identify innovative ways to communicate security awareness to Europol users.
- Continue providing awareness and risk assessment for Europol staff deployed in mission.
- Ensure timely accreditation of information systems to ensure Information Security; assess information security risks and provide risk treatment options.



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- Perform technical security assessments of Europol’s ICT systems and propose appropriate actions.
- Implement necessary changes to Europol’s information security rules and procedures in line with the requirements of the new Regulation laying down measures for a high common level of cybersecurity, and the new Regulation on information security in the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union.
- 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.
- Implement the revised 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.

### Facilities services and environmental management

Objectives and actions

#### **A.8.7 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).
- Manage and improve Europol’s environmental management system and maintain the registration of the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).
- 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.

Expected results: Effective processes and tooling are in place to ensure optimal facilities services and proper corporate environmental management.

**Strategic Housing Roadmap**

Objectives and actions

**A.8.8 Steer and coordinate 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: decommission the building and return it to the Host State.
- 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. Building delivered and operational for use.
- Temporary Satellite Building 3 (TSB 3) project: create additional workplaces additional workplaces, meeting rooms and other related facilities to support organisational growth and new business demands, until the delivery of HQ2 in 2029 - 2030. The first stage of the building completed and operational for use.
- Long-Term Housing Measures (LTHM) project: deliver a second permanent headquarters (HQ2) forecasted in 2029 - 2030.
- Hot Data Centre (HDC) project: develop the HDC for the establishment of a second Data Centre in the Netherlands in order to ensure Europol’s business continuity, in accordance with business requirements.
- Low-rise Toren van Oud project: continue with the development of the Medical Centre and Gym & Fitness facilities, in order to create space in the HQ for the implementation of the MTHS.
- Alternative Temporary Housing: progress on establishing alternative temporary workplaces and meeting spaces to support organisational growth and new business demands until the delivery of HQ2, forecasted 2029 - 2030.

Expected results: The existing and new workplaces, 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.

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Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2024)	Target 2025
% of pending critical/very important audit recommendations implemented within the timeline committed to by Europol and agreed with the auditing body		
Total number of News Articles mentioning Europol (high-impact web-based media)		
User Satisfaction		
Vacancy rate		
% of Female Staff		
Budget Outturn Rate		
Budget Commitment Rate		
Budget Payment Rate		
% of Late Payments (in value)		
Emissions (tonnes CO2)		

## 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;

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- 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**

**Annex I:** Organisational chart

**Annex II:** Resource allocation per Activity 2025-2027

**Annex III:** Financial Resources 2025-2027

Table 1 – Revenue

Table 2 – Expenditure

Table 3 – Budget outturn and cancellation of appropriations

**Annex IV:** Human resources - quantitative

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

Table 2 – Multi-annual staff policy plan year 2025-2027

Table 3 – Recruitment forecasts 2025

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B. Appraisal of performance and reclassification/promotions

C. Gender representation

D. Geographical balance

E. Schooling

**Annex VI:** Environment management

**Annex VII:** Building policy

**Annex VIII:** Privileges and immunities

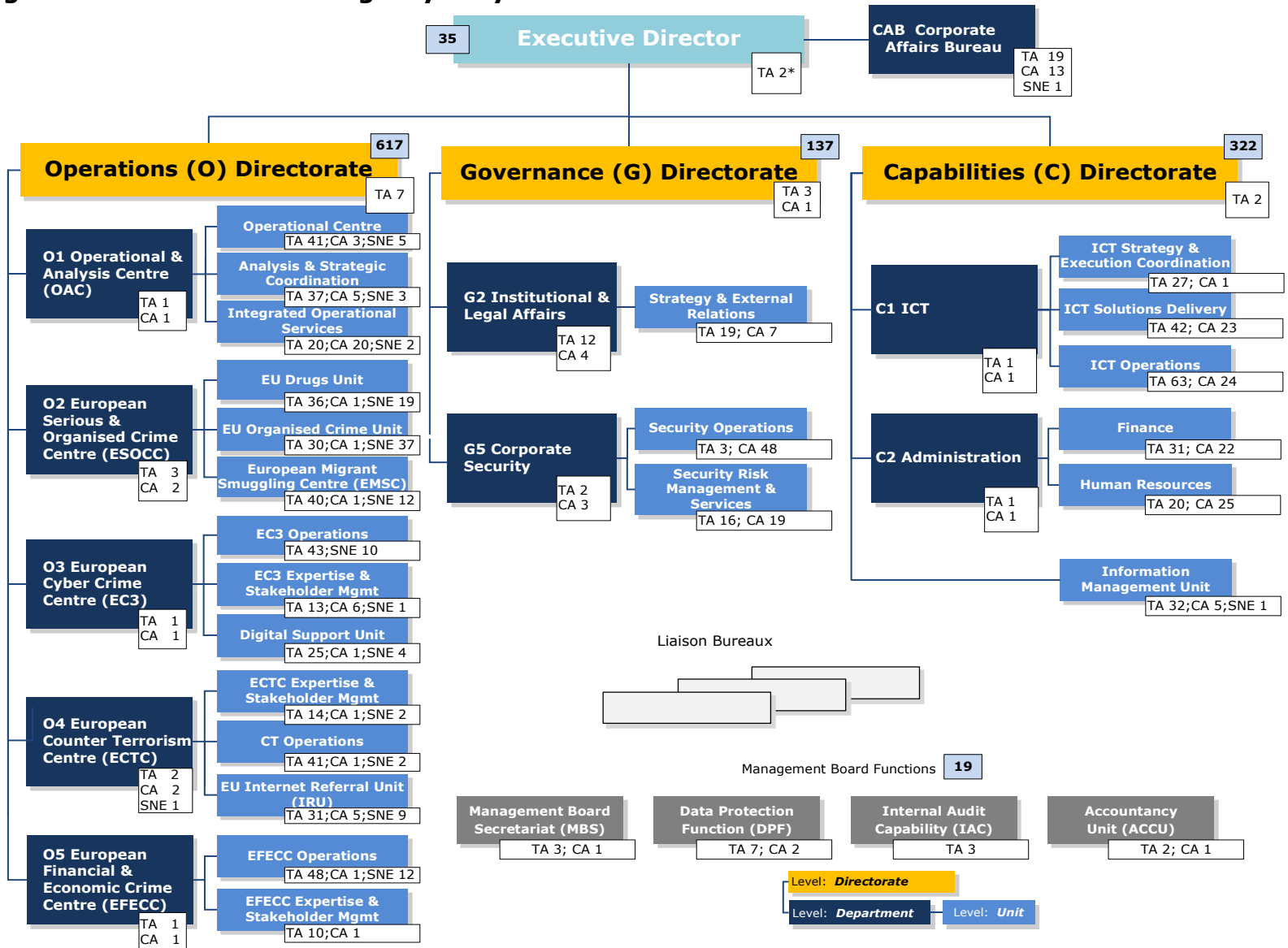
**Annex IX:** Evaluations

**Annex X:** Strategy for the organisational management and internal control systems

**Annex XI:** Grants

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

Annex I: Organisational chart of the Agency for year 2025<sup>80</sup>



\* Including the Fundamental Rights Officer

<sup>80</sup> In line with the most updated allocation of posts for 2024.

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**Annex II: Resources allocation per activity 2025 – 2027**

	Year 2024			Year 2025 Resource estimates			Year 2026 <sup>81</sup> Resource estimates			Year 2027 <sup>2</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>	165	55	77,966,300	168	55	82,074,000	167	55	83,980,900	168	55	83,183,500
<b>A.2. Operational Coordination</b>	73	34	16,802,300	75	34	20,183,900	76	34	20,214,700	76	34	20,164,300
<b>A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime</b>	109	78	30,457,700	111	78	29,241,200	113	78	30,646,300	114	78	29,765,000
<b>A.4. Combating Cyber Crime</b>	83	23	16,955,800	84	23	17,893,500	85	23	18,816,900	86	23	17,628,700
<b>A.5. Counter-Terrorism</b>	88	23	18,333,200	90	23	23,571,000	91	23	17,610,700	92	23	23,391,700
<b>A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime</b>	59	10	11,643,400	61	10	11,526,200	62	10	13,084,700	63	10	11,500,600
<b>A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination</b>	50	10	8,979,300	52	9	10,130,700	53	9	10,215,000	53	9	10,079,300
<b>Total Operational Activities</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>181,138,000</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>194,620,500<sup>82</sup></b>	<b>647</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>194,569,200</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>195,713,100</b>
<b>A.8. Governance, support and administration (incl. MBF)</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>37,089,705</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>42,094,197<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>133</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>41,079,499</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>41,213,211</b>
<b>INITIATIVES 2025-2027</b>												
Anti-migrant smuggling (LFS)				3	16	15,758,000	7	31	19,679,000	10	40	13,456,000
Digital Services Act (DSA)				8		3,424,000	13		5,055,840	15		5,245,318
Interoperability (I/O)				23	2	3,570,000	60	4	11,226,440	74	6	13,591,407
Second Data Centre				1		72,000	3		7,736,000	3		8,072,112
Information Exchange Directive				12		9,460,000	26		6,632,960	47		9,767,491
Strategic Housing Roadmap				4	20	9,727,377	6	20	13,381,024	6	20	13,358,537
Governance and Administration				7		504,000	13		1,468,800	16		2,172,355
Correction for synergies Anti-migrant smuggling <sup>83</sup> (LFS)						- 9,902,000			- 10,871,000			- 4,248,000
<b>Total Additional Resources</b>				<b>58</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>32,613,377</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>54,309,064</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>61,415,220</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>289,957,763</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>298,341,531</b>

<sup>81</sup> Figures for 2026 and 2027 are indicative.

<sup>82</sup> The estimates for 2025 include an additional request of EUR 13.1 to cover the inflation effects affecting mainly staff costs, as estimated in the COM's Budget Circular 2025.

<sup>83</sup> The total budget allocated in the LFS of COM(2023)754 is: 2025: 15,758,000; 2026:19,679,000; 2027:13,456,000. The correction in the table indicate the synergies identified between the funds allocated in COM(2023)754 with other initiatives, in particular Interoperability (Biometrics) and the Information Exchange Directive.



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**Annex III: Financial Resources 2025 – 2027**

**Table 1 - Revenue  
General revenues**

REVENUES	2024	2025
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
EU contribution	218,227,705	269,328,074
Other revenue		
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>

REVENUES	General revenues						
	Executed 2023	Estimated by the agency 2024	2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>1 REVENUE FROM FEES AND CHARGES</b>	207,176,212	218,227,705	269,328,074		1.23	289,957,763	298,341,531
<b>2 EU CONTRIBUTION</b>							
- Of which assigned revenues deriving from previous years' surpluses	5,098,619	10,314,092	4,206,597				
<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>	207,176,212	218,227,705	269,328,074		1.23	289,957,763	298,341,531

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

REVENUES	2024	2025
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	2,009,712	

REVENUES	Additional EU funding: grant, contribution and service-level agreements						
	Executed 2023	Estimated by the agency 2024	2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM GRANTS (FFR Art.7)</b>	787,881	222,800	167,100		0.75	-	-
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENTS (FFR Art.7)</b>	1,688,942	656,912	-		-	-	-
<b>ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (FFR Art. 43.2)</b>	1,062,144	1,130,000	1,030,000		0.91	1,030,000	1,030,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,538,967</b>	<b>2,009,712</b>	<b>1,197,100</b>		<b>0.60</b>	<b>1,030,000</b>	<b>1,030,000</b>

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**Table 2 - Expenditure**

Expenditure	2024		2025	
	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations
<b>Title 1 - Staff expenditure</b>	117,817,323	117,817,323	146,564,978	146,564,978
<b>Title 2 - Infrastructure and operating expenditure</b>	15,105,338	15,105,338	17,198,399	17,198,399
<b>Title 3 - Operational expenditure</b>	85,305,044	82,796,844	105,564,697	101,082,197
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>215,719,505</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>	<b>264,845,574</b>

EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2023	Budget 2024	Draft Budget 2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>Title 1 Staff Expenditure</b>	<b>114,234,450</b>	<b>117,817,323</b>	<b>146,564,978</b>		<b>1.24</b>	<b>151,864,565</b>	<b>163,230,527</b>
11 Salaries & allowances	105,395,153	106,471,800	131,324,000		1.23	136,554,768	147,621,034
- of which establishment plan posts	87,964,759	88,718,800	108,484,000		1.22	114,291,980	124,832,833
- of which external personnel	17,430,394	17,753,000	22,840,000		1.29	22,262,788	22,788,201
13 Socio-medical infrastructure	878,665	1,074,318	1,460,197		1.36	1,489,401	1,519,189
14 Training	135,000	292,500	298,000		1.02	303,960	310,039
15 Other staff-related expenditure	7,704,910	9,867,205	13,371,581		1.36	13,403,012	13,664,572
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	120,722	111,500	111,200		1.00	113,424	115,692
<b>Title 2 Other administrative expenditure</b>	<b>15,310,202</b>	<b>15,105,338</b>	<b>17,198,399</b>		<b>1.14</b>	<b>23,039,067</b>	<b>22,102,848</b>
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	10,487,653	11,061,114	13,060,616		1.18	18,818,528	17,797,899
21 Administrative information technology	1,919,781	1,339,000	1,339,000		1.00	1,365,780	1,393,096
22 Movable property and associated costs	643,909	1,082,888	1,146,230		1.06	1,169,155	1,192,538
23 Current administrative expenditure	391,968	540,036	568,847		1.05	580,224	591,828
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,009,196	70,300	71,706		1.02	73,140	74,603
25 Statutory expenditure	857,695	1,012,000	1,012,000		1.00	1,032,240	1,052,885
<b>Title 3 Operational activities</b>	<b>77,176,709</b>	<b>85,305,044</b>	<b>105,564,697</b>		<b>1.24</b>	<b>115,054,131</b>	<b>113,008,156</b>

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EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2023	Budget 2024	Draft Budget 2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
30 Operations	16,090,786	15,012,475	16,180,562		1.08	17,841,859	15,849,939
31 Operational information technology	40,692,851	45,845,456	63,312,022		1.38	71,465,496	67,845,963
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	606,210	1,803,113	1,803,113		1.00	1,839,175	1,875,959
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) <sup>84</sup>	6,508,092	7,739,000	8,489,000		1.10	9,149,000	9,662,522
34 EPCC	251,499	270,000	270,000		1.00	275,400	280,908
35 Heads of Europol National Units	127,016	160,000	160,000		1.00	163,200	166,464
38 Decryption Platform	1,128,308	1,000,000	1,000,000		1.00	1,020,000	1,040,400
39 Grants <sup>85</sup>	11,771,947	13,475,000	14,350,000		1.06	13,300,000	16,286,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>206,721,361</b>	<b>218,227,705</b>	<b>269,328,074</b>		<b>1.23</b>	<b>289,957,763</b>	<b>298,341,531</b>

EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2023	Budget 2024	Draft Budget 2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>Title 1 Staff Expenditure</b>	<b>114,234,450</b>	<b>117,817,323</b>	<b>146,564,978</b>		1.24	<b>151,864,565</b>	<b>163,230,527</b>
11 Salaries & allowances	105,395,153	106,471,800	131,324,000		1.23	136,554,768	147,621,034
- of which establishment plan posts	87,964,759	88,718,800	108,484,000		1.22	114,291,980	124,832,833
- of which external personnel	17,430,394	17,753,000	22,840,000		1.29	22,262,788	22,788,201
13 Sociomedical infrastructure	878,665	1,074,318	1,460,197		1.36	1,489,401	1,519,189
14 Training	135,000	292,500	298,000		1.02	303,960	310,039
15 Other staff-related expenditure	7,704,910	9,867,205	13,371,581		1.36	13,403,012	13,664,572
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	120,722	111,500	111,200		1.00	113,424	115,692

<sup>84</sup> Including for 2025 EUR 3.3M for Short-term SNEs.

<sup>85</sup> Including for 2025 differentiated appropriations amounting to EUR 14,350,000 (EUR 2 000 000 for EMPACT, EUR 6 000 000 for OTF, EUR 6 000 000 for ATLAS and EUR 350 000 for Innovation grants). This includes EUR 4 000 000 preliminarily allocated in the LFS of COM(2023)754 for grants, i.e. EUR 2 000 000 for EMPACT, and EUR 2 000 000 for OTF.

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EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2023	Budget 2024	Draft Budget 2025		VAR 2025/2024 (%)	Envisaged 2026	Envisaged 2027
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
<b>Title 2 Other administrative expenditure</b>	<b>15,310,202</b>	<b>15,105,338</b>	<b>17,198,399</b>		1.14	<b>23,039,067</b>	<b>22,102,848</b>
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	10,487,653	11,061,114	13,060,616		1.18	18,818,528	17,797,899
21 Administrative information technology	1,919,781	1,339,000	1,339,000		1.00	1,365,780	1,393,096
22 Movable property and associated costs	643,909	1,082,888	1,146,230		1.06	1,169,155	1,192,538
23 Current administrative expenditure	391,968	540,036	568,847		1.05	580,224	591,828
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,009,196	70,300	71,706		1.02	73,140	74,603
25 Statutory expenditure	857,695	1,012,000	1,012,000		1.00	1,032,240	1,052,885
<b>Title 3 Operational activities</b>	<b>75,085,605</b>	<b>82,796,844</b>	<b>101,082,197</b>		1.22	<b>115,321,631</b>	<b>111,742,156</b>
30 Operations	16,090,786	15,012,475	16,180,562		1.08	17,841,859	15,849,939
31 Operational information technology	40,692,851	45,845,456	63,312,022		1.38	71,465,496	67,845,963
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	606,210	1,803,113	1,803,113		1.00	1,839,175	1,875,959
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) <sup>86</sup>	6,508,092	7,739,000	8,489,000		1.10	9,149,000	9,662,522
34 EPCC	251,499	270,000	270,000		1.00	275,400	280,908
35 Heads of Europol National Units	127,016	160,000	160,000		1.00	163,200	166,464
38 Decryption Platform	1,128,308	1,000,000	1,000,000		1.00	1,020,000	1,040,400
39 Grants <sup>87</sup>	9,680,843	10,966,800	9,867,500		0.90	13,567,500	15,020,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>204,630,257</b>	<b>215,719,505</b>	<b>264,845,574</b>		1.23	<b>290,225,263</b>	<b>297,075,531</b>

**Table 3 Budget outturn and cancellation of appropriations 2020-2023 (N-4 – N-2)**

Budget outturn	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue actually received (+)	160,660,117	177,370,336	201,325,849	217,166,022
Payments made (-)	(132,636,293)	(148,871,757)	(165,414,326)	(191,340,681)

<sup>86</sup> Including for 2025 EUR 3.3M for Short-term SNEs.

<sup>87</sup> Including for 2025, among others, differentiated payments appropriations amounting to EUR 9 867 500 (EUR 2 862 500 for EMPACT, EUR 120 000 for fighting EURO counterfeiting, EUR 3 100 000 for OTF, EUR 3 600 000 for ATLAS and EUR 185 000 for Innovation grants).

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Carry-over of appropriations (-)	(32,201,626)	(37,028,367)	(40,478,220)	(30,754,730)
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	2,471,557	2,926,585	3,802,497	3,737,470
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriations from previous year (+)	5,056,138	10,702,251	11,078,105	7,475,344
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	(424)	(428)	186	(28)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,349,469</b>	<b>5,098,619</b>	<b>10,314,092</b>	<b>6,283,397</b>

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

The overall budget result for the financial year 2023 comes to EUR 6 283 397. This includes the following:

- An amount of EUR 454 662 of not committed and lapsed commitment appropriations for non differentiated appropriations;
- An amount of EUR 14 493 of not paid payment appropriations for differentiated appropriations;
- An amount of EUR 3 737 470 of not used payment appropriations carried forward from 2022 to 2023;
- An amount of EUR 2 076 800 cashed for the differentiated appropriations which was not used for the payment appropriations;
- The exchange rate difference in 2023 was EUR 28 (loss).

#### Cancellation of payment appropriations carried forward

The carry forward to 2023 came to a total of EUR 33 002 876 to cover existing commitments. The final implementation rate of the carry forward was 88.7% at the end of the year. A total of EUR 3 737 470 was not used and is thus incorporated in the final budget outturn.

- EUR 202 640 relates to Title 1, which is 19.1% of the carried forward amount under Title 1 (EUR 1 059 629);
- EUR 534 966 relates to Title 2, which is 13.1% of the carried forward amount under Title 2 (EUR 4 078 648); and
- EUR 2 999 864 relates to Title 3, which is 10.8% of the carried forward amount under Title 3 (EUR 27 864 599).

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**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 2023			Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026	Year 2027
ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS	Authorised Budget	Actually filled as of 31/12/2023	Occupancy rate %	Authorised staff	Envisaged staff	Envisaged staff	Envisaged staff
<b>Administrators (AD)</b>	693	682	98.4%	731	808	885	933
<b>Assistants (AST)</b>	23	22	95.7%	23	23	23	23
<b>Assistants/Secretaries (AST/SC)</b>							
<b>TOTAL ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>98.3%</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>956</b>
EXTERNAL STAFF	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2023 <sup>88</sup>	Execution rate %	Headcount as of 31/12/2023	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE
<b>Contract Agents (CA)</b>	235	218.4	92.9%	223	280	289	295
<b>Seconded National Experts (SNE)</b>	121	94.3	77.9%	89	134	142	147
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL STAFF</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>312.7</b>	<b>87.8%</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>442</b>
<b>TOTAL STAFF</b>	<b>1072</b>	<b>1016.7</b>	<b>94.8%</b>				

<sup>88</sup> CA financed from the EU contribution: 223 Headcount (218.4 Annual average FTE); CA financed from other sources: 17 Headcount (18.7 Annual average FTE). SNE financed from the EU contribution at 31/12/2023: 55 Headcount (55.7 Annual average FTE) and Short-term costed SNE: 34 Headcount (38.5 Annual average FTE). SNE financed from other sources: 7 Headcount (5.8 Annual average FTE). Cost free SNE: 26 Headcount (26.3 Annual average FTE); SNE Guest Officers: 63 Headcount (75.6 Annual average FTE).

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

Human Resources	Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026	Year 2027
	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE
<b>Contract Agents (CA)</b>	16	5	2	2
<b>Seconded National Experts (SNE)</b>	8	8	8	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

### C. Other Human Resources

Structural service providers<sup>89</sup>

	Actually in place as at 31/12/2023
IT	197
Facilities	48
Security	22
Other	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>271</b>

Interim workers

	Total FTEs in year 2023
<b>Number</b>	N/A

<sup>89</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.



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**Table 2 – Multi-annual staff policy plan 2025 - 2027**

Function group and grade	Year 2023				Year 2024 <sup>90</sup>		Year 2025		Year 2026		Year 2027	
	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
<b>AD 16</b>		1		1		1		1		1		1
<b>AD 15</b>				1		1		1		1		1
<b>AD 14</b>		3		2		2		2		2		2
<b>AD 13</b>		2				3		4		5		8
<b>AD 12</b>		11		14		11		11		13		14
<b>AD 11</b>		10		4		11		15		18		21
<b>AD 10</b>		21		20		24		29		35		43
<b>AD 9</b>		47		46		51		62		77		78
<b>AD 8</b>		92		79		105		133		157		194
<b>AD 7</b>		216		225		239		255		267		276
<b>AD 6</b>		282		281		276		288		303		290
<b>AD 5</b>		8		9		7		7		6		5
<b>AD TOTAL</b>		<b>693</b>		<b>682</b>		<b>731</b>		<b>808</b>		<b>885</b>		<b>933</b>
<b>AST 11</b>												
<b>AST 10</b>												
<b>AST 9</b>												
<b>AST 8</b>		1		1		1		1		1		2
<b>AST 7</b>		2		1		3		3		3		3
<b>AST 6</b>		5		5		5		6		6		5
<b>AST 5</b>		4		4		3		2		2		3
<b>AST 4</b>		3		3		3		3		3		3
<b>AST 3</b>		2		3		3		4		4		4
<b>AST 2</b>		6		5		5		4		4		3

<sup>90</sup> In accordance with Article 38, paragraph 1, of the Decision of the Europol Management Board on the adoption of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol (EDOC#1032027v6), the Management Board hereby agrees with a modification of the establishment plan, should the interest of the service so require (e.g. in the context of the reclassification exercise), by up to 10% of posts authorised subject to the following conditions:

- a) the volume of staff appropriations corresponding to a full financial year is not affected;
- b) the limit of the total number of posts authorised by the establishment plan is not exceeded;
- c) Europol has taken part in a benchmarking exercise with other Union bodies as initiated by the Commission’s staff screening exercise.

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Function group and grade	Year 2023				Year 2024 <sup>90</sup>		Year 2025		Year 2026		Year 2027	
	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 1												
AST TOTAL		23		22		23		23		23		23
AST/SC 6												
AST/SC 5												
AST/SC 4												
AST/SC 3												
AST/SC 2												
AST/SC 1												
AST/SC TOTAL												
TOTAL		716		704		754		831		908		956
GRAND TOTAL		716		704		754		831		908		956

**External personnel**

*Contract Agents*

Contract agents	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2023	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2023	Headcount as of 31/12/2023	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2024	FTE envisaged 2025	FTE envisaged 2026	FTE envisaged 2027
Function Group IV	59	57.3	62	79	89	98	104
Function Group III	118	106.8	109	118	122	122	122
Function Group II	58	54.3	52	58	69	69	69
Function Group I							
TOTAL	235	218.4	223	255	280	289	295

*Seconded National Experts*

Seconded National Experts	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2023	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2023	Headcount as of 31/12/2023	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2024	FTE envisaged 2025	FTE envisaged 2026	FTE envisaged 2027
TOTAL	121	94.3	89	121	134	142	147

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**Table 3 - Recruitment forecasts 2025 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.	<p>Number of anticipated compulsory retirements: 5 (2 TAs and 3 CAs)</p> <p>End of 2<sup>nd</sup> contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TA contracts: 16 (restricted) + 21 potentially (non-restricted – pending outcome of different indefinite contract procedures)</li> <li>- CA contracts: 15 (5 FGII, 7 FGIII and 3 FGIV)</li> </ul>	<p>77 TA posts (including 19 stemming from amended Europol Regulation, 3 from legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling COM(2023) 754 final and 61 as agency request to fulfil tasks for Interoperability (incl. establishing a second data centre), Digital Services Act, Information Exchange Directive and to implement the Strategic Housing Roadmap).</p> <p>25 CA posts (including 5 stemming from the legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling COM(2023) 754 final and 20 as agency request to implement the Strategic Housing Roadmap).</p>	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 2024 from and to the Agency:

*To be filled in in final PD 2025-2027*

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**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 Bard 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		

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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 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024	Actual average over 5 years	Average over 5 years (According to Decision C(2015)9563)
AD05	4.0			5.3			2.8
AD06	5.0	4.8	5.3	5.0			2.8
AD07	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.0			2.8
AD08	5.8	7.1	5.8	7.3			3
AD09	7.2	8.2	3.9	3.9			4
AD10		6.8	7	10			4
AD11			5.5	6.8			4
AD12							6.7
AD13							6.7
AST1							3
AST2				6.8			3
AST3				4.4			3
AST4	2.3	3.4		9.0			3
AST5			5.71	3.25			4
AST6							4
AST7		8.0					4
AST8							4
AST9							N/A
AST10 (Senior assistant)							5
AST/SC1							4
AST/SC2							5
AST/SC3							5.9
AST/SC4							6.7
AST/SC5							8.3

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**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

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**C. Gender representation**

**Table 1 - Data on 31/12/2023 - statutory staff (only officials, TA and CA)**

		Official		Temporary		Contract Agents		Grand Total	
		Staff	%	Staff	%	Staff	%	Staff	%
<b>Female</b>	Administrator level			184	92%				
	Assistant level (AST & AST/SC)			17	8%				
	<b>Total</b>			<b>201</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Male</b>	Administrator level			465	99%				
	Assistant level (AST & AST/SC)			5	1%				
	<b>Total</b>			<b>470</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>671</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 2 - Data regarding gender evolution over 5 years of Middle and Senior management<sup>91</sup>**

	2019		2023	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Female Managers</b>	5	16%	8	22%
<b>Male Managers</b>	27	84%	28	78%

<sup>91</sup> Staff defined as middle manager by the applicable General Implementing provisions on middle management.

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**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 31/12/2023 - 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%	0	0%	8	0.9%
Belgium	39	5%	4	2%	43	4.7%
Bulgaria	21	3%	8	4%	29	3.2%
Croatia	16	2%	2	1%	18	2.0%
Cyprus	7	1%	0	0%	7	0.8%
Czech Republic	6	1%	2	1%	8	0.9%
Denmark	0	0%	0	0%	0	0.0%
Estonia	5	1%	0	0%	5	0.5%
Finland	13	2%	2	1%	15	1.6%
France	47	7%	3	2%	50	5.5%
Germany	48	7%	4	2%	52	5.7%
Greece	71	10%	12	6%	83	9.1%
Hungary	17	2%	9	5%	26	2.9%
Ireland	11	2%	3	2%	14	1.5%
Italy	69	10%	13	7%	82	9.0%
Latvia	3	0%	2	1%	5	0.5%
Lithuania	13	2%	7	4%	20	2.2%
Luxembourg	0	0%	1	1%	1	0.1%
Malta	2	0%	0	0%	2	0.2%
Netherlands	65	9%	57	30%	122	13.4%
Poland	29	4%	4	2%	33	3.6%
Portugal	32	4%	8	4%	40	4.4%
Romania	84	12%	27	14%	111	12.2%
Slovakia	6	1%	1	1%	7	0.8%
Slovenia	10	1%	2	1%	12	1.3%
Spain	86	12%	16	9%	102	11.2%
Sweden	12	2%	1	1%	13	1.4%
<i>United Kingdom</i>	3	0%	0	0%	3	0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

Most represented nationality	2019		2023	
	Number	%	Number	%
The Netherlands	99	13%	122	13%

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



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**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>92</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>92</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 95%) are related to business travel, in particular flights, rationalising the carbon emissions management 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.

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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*; relates to the periodic activities pertaining to environmental management, including communication, which are necessary for the EMS maintenance;
- *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 CO2 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 carbon emissions management policy ensuring that the annual emission target for business travels and missions is being achieved. The policy will introduce a carbon emissions budget as a means to monitor the organisation business travel and therefore our carbon emissions.
- 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:

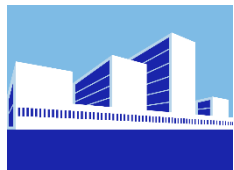
- Maintaining of EMAS certification:
  - Implement the annual Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (PDCA);
  - Conduct annual internal and external audits (surveillance and re-certification);
  - Conduct a legal compliance audit and update of the legal register;
  - Prepare and publish annually the Environmental 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 2025**

#	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. The preparation of the lease extension from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2025 is in progress.
<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>93</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.

<sup>93</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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The provision of 500 temporary workplaces, additional meeting rooms and other related facilities is of high importance until the implementation of the Long-Term Housing Measures, which is the delivery of a second headquarters forecasted in 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.

An overall minimum capacity of 2,100 permanent workplaces (WP) is essential, for up to 2,500 users 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 - MTHS (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. In 2023, the Host State implemented a new risk control instrument to monitor more closely the actual live load in the building to guarantee a safe usage of the building. Beyond these mitigating measures, precautionary remedial measures will be carried out in the building, by strengthening the floors, as part of the Mid-Term Housing Solution.

### **Temporary Satellite Building 1**

The Host State established a Temporary Satellite Building 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 a HQ2 in the close vicinity of HQ1.

The Host State is negotiating the extension of the lease of Temporary Satellite Building 1, which expires on 31 December 2023 and should be prolonged until 31 December 2025. The establishment of an alternative Temporary Satellite Building 3 by the Host State is in preparation.

### **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.

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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+.

The final 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. The building is forecasted to be operational for use in Q1/2025.

### **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 and meeting facilities. It is in very good condition and certified with energy label A+.

The building should be developed in a short timeframe by following an agile development process, via a two stage project approach. The first stage, one part of the building, to be ready for operational usage in Q1/2025 and the second part of the building in Q1/2026. The design process of stage 1 is in progress.

### **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 spatial needs (m<sup>2</sup>) in the current Headquarters (HQ1) is limited, this permanent expansion is therefore necessary to accommodate Europol's growth and its supporting 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 (LTHM).

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. Both studies are still in progress due to the complexity of the building and surrounding area. Another study has been launched by the Host State on how the cultural heritage of the current user can be conserved. The outcome of these studies are important elements for the establishment of the overall development scope of the project.

### **Toren van Oud, Low-rise building**

The low-rise building of the Toren van Oud (TVO) is an adjacent building to HQ1 and rented by the Host State in 2023. The building will be used to relocate spatial supporting functions from HQ1, in order to make space available for new operational supporting functions, which will be implemented via the MTHS. The importance of acquiring the low-rise building was two-fold: from a security perspective, to have control of the building and its surroundings, and from a spatial perspective, in regard to the implementation of the MTHS (HQ1) and LTHM (HQ2) projects. The relocation of these spatial supporting functions from HQ1, were originally foreseen to be implemented in HQ2. By relocating these spatial functions, more space will become available in HQ2 to create additional workplaces. The feasibility study

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and completion of Europol's Programme of Requirements in the low-rise building and its public surroundings by the Host State and Europol is finalised in 2023.

### **Hot Data Centre (HDC)**

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.

In 2023, two proposed locations offered by the Host State were assessed against Europol's Programme of Requirements. The interim findings on both locations were shared and the list with possible HDC locations was extended from two into three, as a new location became available in July 2023. The completion of the assessment to determine the best possible HDC location, followed by the selection process on the preferred location will take place in Q1/2024.

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 lease agreement has been renewed in 2021 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 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.

**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>94</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 (see Art. 70 <i>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 (see Art. 70 <i>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>94</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>95</sup>.

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<sup>95</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.

## **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 (initiated in 2023), and (3) Innovation lab. The next risk assessment and SIAP is envisaged in 2025.

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 materials 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 by independent external review with the aim to improve efficiency, effectiveness and to adjust financial management related roles and responsibilities at 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 is designed in line with the applicable regulatory framework and 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).

### 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>96</sup> and seventeen principles - underpinned by fifty-eight so-called 'Points of Focus'<sup>97</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

<sup>96</sup> (1) Control environment, (2) Risk assessment, (3) Control activities, (4) Information and communication, (5) Monitoring activities

<sup>97</sup> Important characteristics of the internal control principles

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also assesses the costs and benefits of control. Improvements identified in the annual assessment of the ICS set the strategy for the further development of the existing internal controls on an annual basis. Dedicated tooling for the management of internal controls, risks, compliance and internal audits will be further developed and deployed in 2025.

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.

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 (2024)		N (2025)		N+1 (2026)		N+2 (2027)		
<b>Grant agreements</b>														
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 222,800	PA 222,800	CA 167,100	PA 167,100	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	3		3		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
<b>Total grant agreements</b>						Amount	CA 222,800	PA 222,800	CA 167,100	PA 167,100	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	3		3		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
<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 312,500	PA 312,500	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	2		0		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 344,412	PA 344,412	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	7		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
<b>Total contribution agreements</b>						Amount	CA 656,912	PA 656,912	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	9		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
<b>Service-level agreements</b>														
1. 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 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000
						Number of CAs	2		2		2		2	
						Number of SNEs	8		8		8		8	
2. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (funded via Contribution Agreement with DG Near)	05/08/2020	850,000	Maximum duration until 30/9/2024	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 100,000	PA 100,000	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -	CA -	PA -
						Number of CAs	2		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
<b>Total service-level agreements</b>						Amount	CA 1,130,000	PA 1,130,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000
						Number of CAs	4		2		2		2	
						Number of SNEs	8		8		8		8	
<b>TOTAL AGREEMENTS</b>						Amount	CA 2,009,712	PA 2,009,712	CA 1,197,100	PA 1,197,100	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000	CA 1,030,000	PA 1,030,000
						Number of CAs	16		5		2		2	
						Number of SNEs	8		8		8		8	

**B. Grants to be awarded**

In 2023, Europol modified its financial management system in order to create differentiated appropriations which allow Europol to award grants on multi-annual basis.

The reasoning behind this change was threefold:

- From an internal perspective, 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.
- Publishing invitations for two years will enable the organisation to re-use the unspent funds in a more systematic way and will consequently decrease the lapsed budget in the grant area.
- From an external perspective, Europol’s beneficiaries, mainly the EU 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.

From 2024 onwards, Europol uses the opportunity created by the differentiated appropriations to incrementally publish multi annual calls and invitations. It is expected that from 2025 all Europol grant schemes will be published on a multi-annual basis.

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### 1. Second year of Restricted call for proposals to support the implementation of activities identified by the Council – EMPACT High Value Grants 2024/2025

#### 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

Enhancing the fight against serious and organised international crime during the last 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;

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- 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 into account the specificities of the law enforcement operations, 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:*

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.



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- 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 Implementing period : April 2024 – March 2026	EUR 4,500,000 (as integrated in the 2024 budget)

### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

## **2. Second year of Ad-hoc low-value grants invitation 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 last 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;

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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.

Grants awarded under this Article have a maximum duration of 9 months with possibility to extend at Europol's discretion for an additional period of 3 months, 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.

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### *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 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: Q1 2024 Award of grants: Q1 2024-Q4 /2025	EUR 3,500,000 (as integrated in the 2024 budget), divided as follows : 1 <sup>st</sup> instalment of EUR 1,750,000 available in 2024 and 2 <sup>nd</sup> instalment of EUR 1,750,000 available in 2025) + internal assigned revenue <sup>98</sup> + 2,000,000 in 2025 from the legislative proposal to prevent and fight migrant smuggling <sup>99</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

<sup>98</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

<sup>99</sup> COM(2023) 754 final. Subject to adoption of the proposal and to the relevant funds becoming available.

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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).

**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 (as integrated in the 2024 budget divided as follows : 1 <sup>st</sup> instalment of EUR 150,000 available in 2024 and 2 <sup>nd</sup> instalment of EUR 150,000

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	available in 2025 ) + internal assigned revenue <sup>100</sup>
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### 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 year 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.

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)

<sup>100</sup> As mentioned in the guidelines EDOC #878276.

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- Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boats
- naval targets
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)
- sniper techniques
- urban rappelling
- first aid (intervening in cases of most serious crimes with a high risk of life threatening and/or mass injuries)
- specialised parachute use: „Silent Approach Tactics“
- 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

If the overall budget allows for it Europol intends to introduce differentiated appropriations with a multi-annual direct invitation to apply for the ATLAS grant from 2025 onwards.

Date	Amount
Q1 2025 Expected implementing period : 2025-2026	EUR TBC

#### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

## 5. 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-ESOC, 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 for a period of 3 months, 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.

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.

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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>101</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**

If the overall budget allows for it Europol intends to introduce differentiated appropriations with a multi-annual invitation to apply for the OTF Grant scheme from 2025 onwards.

Date	Amount
Publication Q1 2025 Award of Grants: Q1 2025-Q4 2026	EUR TBC <sup>102</sup> + 2,000,000 in 2025 from the legislative proposal for a Regulation to prevent and fight migrant smuggling <sup>103</sup> .

<sup>101</sup> EDOC #901933 v13 "Standard Operating Procedure - Selection of High Value Targets and establishment of Operational Task Forces within O2-ESOC".

<sup>102</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

<sup>103</sup> COM(2023) 754 final. Subject to adoption of the proposal and to the relevant funds becoming available.



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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.

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**

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If the overall budget allows for it Europol intends to introduce differentiated appropriations with a multi-annual invitation to apply for the Innovation Grant scheme from 2025 onwards.

Date	Amount
Publication: Q1 2025 Award of grants: Q1 2025-Q4 2026	EUR TBC <sup>104</sup>

#### Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs

95%

### 7. Low-value grants for cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries

This is a P.M. section, conditional to a future contribution agreement with DG Near.

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<sup>104</sup> If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

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

2024 is the last year covered by the current Europol External Strategy, as detailed below. A new External Strategy will be prepared and presented to the Management Board in the course of 2024. More information will be included in the final Programming Document 2025-2027.

### 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](#)

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The protection of citizens and freedoms is one of the priorities of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024<sup>105</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. 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.

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<sup>105</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 and cross-border crime and protecting our societies from malicious cyber activities, hybrid threats and disinformation.

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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

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

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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. 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.

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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.

Maintaining excellent relations with the **Schengen Associated Countries**<sup>106</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>107</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

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<sup>106</sup> Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

<sup>107</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine. Activities with Belarus are temporarily suspended.

## Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

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.

### 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.



**From:** [MB Secretariat](#)  
**To:** [METSOLA Roberta, President](#)  
**Cc:** [LIBE Secretariat](#); [MB Secretariat](#)  
**Subject:** @EXT: Letter from the MB Chairperson transmitting the draft Programming Document 2025-2027  
**Date:** 31 January 2024 18:50:53  
**Attachments:** [EDOC-#1340002-v11B-Draft Europol Programming Document 2025-2027.PDF](#)  
[EDOC-#1367345-v1- PD - DRAFT 2025-](#)  
[2027 Letter from the MB Chairperson transmitting the draft PD 2025 -](#)  
[2027 to the European Parliament.pdf](#)

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Dear President Metsola,

Please find enclosed a letter from Mr Peter De Buyscher, Chairperson of the Management Board of Europol, transmitting the Agency's draft Programming Document 2025-2027:

- Letter from the MB Chairperson
- Europol draft Programming Document 2025-2027

Please be informed that the draft Programming Document has also been sent to the Council of the European Union and the Commission.

With kind regards,

Monica Bogdan

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