EUROPOL

The Hague, 31 January 2023
MBS 009.2023

MANAGEMENT BOARD

Ms Roberta Metsola
President of the European Parliament

Europol's Draft Programming Document 2024-2026

Dear President Metsola,

Pursuant to Article 32(1) of the Financial Regulation applicable to Europol, I am pleased to transmit the draft Europol Programming Document 2024-2026.

The Management Board endorsed this draft Programming Document on 30 January 2023, including Europol's multiannual programming and the provisional draft estimate of Europol's revenue and expenditure for 2023.

I am pleased to inform you that the draft Europol multiannual programming 2024-2026 is being transmitted to the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for consultation.

I remain available for any further information or clarification concerning Europol's draft Programming Document 2024-2026.

Yours sincerely,

Jérôme Bonet
Chairperson

Enclosure: Europol's draft Programming Document 2024-2026 (EDOC #1258316v10B)

Management Board Secretariat
Eisenhowerlaan 73
2517 KK The Hague
The Netherlands

Postal address
P.O. Box 908 50
2509 LW The Hague
The Netherlands

Phone: +31(0)70 302 51 15
Email: mbs@europol.europa.eu
www.europol.europa.eu

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Draft

Europol Programming Document

2024 – 2026

Endorsed by the Management Board of Europol on 30 January 2023

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List of Acronyms

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

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.

Executive summary

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

The strategic programming of Europol, including resources programming, is provided in Section II - Multi-annual programming 2024-2026. Special focus is placed on five main strategic priorities which have been identified as part of the Europol Strategy 2020+. These priorities will guide the work of the Agency in the years 2024-2026 to:

- be the EU criminal information hub making full use of data from an extensive network of partners;
- deliver agile operational support;
- be a platform for European policing solutions;
- be at the forefront of innovation and research for law enforcement;
- be the model EU law enforcement organisation with robust performance, good governance and accountability, promoting diversity and staff engagement.

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

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

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

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

New or updated priorities are expected to emerge also from the **review of the Europol Strategy 2020+**, which should be completed in 2023.

In 2024, Europol will continue providing the Member States with high quality operational support to investigations in the priority areas aligned with the EU Security Union Strategy and following the objectives of the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime, the EU Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade, the Anti-Money Laundering package 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 evolvement of capabilities, expertise and tools, in order to offer the necessary support to MS' operations. In addition to regular tasks and responsibilities, the key highlights in Europol's planning for 2024 are summarised below:

- The priorities of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats **(EMPACT) 2022-2025** will remain the key driver for the operational support provided to the MS' competent authorities in 2024. Apart from contributing to the implementation of all Operational Action Plans, Europol performs the coordinator role in four Common Horizontal Strategic Goals (Intelligence Picture, High-risk criminal networks, Online and offline trade in illicit goods & services and Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery).

- **Criminal analysis** remains at the core of Europol's business and the agency will be further reinforcing analysis coordination through enhanced attention to quality output and control, standardisation and training. In 2024, the agency's analytical work is expected to greatly benefit from the implementation and operationalisation of the case management system and the joint analysis environment, which will also allow for closer and more effective collaboration with MS. The technical features of the Data Analysis Portal should be further enhanced and new ways of handling complex data should be explored, while ensuring **data protection** by design and by default throughout all data management tools and processes.

- The **Information Management Strategy** developed in 2020 will guide the streamlining and development of information management at Europol in the coming years. The multiannual Business Streams, which encompass the bulk of agency's technology development work, will continue consolidating the most substantial transformation in Europol's analysis capabilities. Europol will also be further improving, as needed, capabilities used directly by Member States such as SIENA and QUEST. 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. Finally, Europol will pursue achieving progress on governance and administration ICT tools with the aim to make these processes more efficient. The pace of this work will be determined by the level of investment necessary to deliver - as a top priority - the capabilities necessary for the operational work of Europol.

- With the ongoing **ETIAS** operations and the initiation of **VIS** systematic checks against Europol data in 2024, Europol's **Operational and Analysis Centre** will have to deal with the huge challenge of providing 24/7 swift follow-up on hits of travel authorisation and visa applications. While the agency will be striving to strengthen its capabilities for processing biometric data and will be making the necessary internal adjustments, these new services will be possible to implement only to the extent that Europol's level of resources allows. Furthermore, in 2024 the agency should ensure readiness to operate direct search access to EURODAC and initiate preparations for the upcoming Prüm II

Regulation, the Screening Regulation and the Directive on Information Exchange, which are foreseen or have the potential to impact considerably agency's workload too.

- Europol will aim at providing quality support to Member States in identifying **High Value Targets** (HVT) representing the highest risk of organised and serious crime, and in facilitating increasingly complex investigations against HVTs through the implementation of the standard HVT/OTF concept and the setting up of **Operational Task Forces** (OTF). The **European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)** will promote the recruitment of short-term SNEs to reinforce OTFs in view of improving operational support for HVT cases and achieving closer cooperation with involved MS.

- The combat against **organised property crime** will entail prioritisation of operations countering crimes involving extreme violence and crimes of high frequency and extensive illicit proceeds. The ESOCC intends to extend the scope of its work towards the trafficking of cultural goods and contribute to the implementation of the EU Action Plan tackling this crime phenomenon once adopted. The priorities concerning **environmental crime** will remain on supporting cross border waste and pollution investigations.

- In the area of **firearms trafficking**, the ESOCC foresees the further development of a Firearms Intelligence Hub, which should consolidate and advance the collection of intelligence, analysis, forensic examination results and reporting on used/seized weapons. In parallel, the **European Migrant Smuggling Centre** (EMSC) will be contributing to the objectives of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and will exploit the operational benefits from the new cooperation agreement with Frontex setting up the modalities for the exchange of personal data and its processing.

- Looking ahead towards the evolution of the threat landscape, it is anticipated that the demand for services of the **European Cybercrime Centre** (EC3) will continue to grow across all crime areas. The new Digital Support Unit at EC3 will streamline and enhance the delivery of crosscutting digital operational support services to Europol's crime centres and to the Member States, while the advanced state of the New Forensic Environment (NFE) should allow for better and faster forensic extraction and reconstruction services.

- In 2024, EC3 is planning to deliver tangible improvements in the operational and technical support to **cryptocurrency**-related investigations, upon the implementation of the CryptoPortal. The Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) at Europol should also be established to further strengthen the operational collaboration between cyber law enforcement- and cyber security network, and information security community. The Forensic lab in cooperation with JRC foresees further progress on the development of forensic tools for data acquisition from vehicle and the new International Law Enforcement Ransomware Response Model (IRRM) will expand the operational and tactical response to ransomware.

- In 2024, Europol will start preparing for the implementation of the new EU Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat **child sexual abuse**. The agency will undertake the necessary technical and operational adjustments to ensure effective handling of the expected increase in data contributions and effective provision of support to the Member States in case coordination and prioritisation for the anticipated growing number of investigations. Europol will also contribute to the setting up of the future EU Centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse (once adopted).

- In the area of **counter-terrorism,** efforts to achieve greater information exchange among the relevant partners at EU level will continue. The **European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC)** will aim at embedding guest experts from the MS CT units and similarly deploying ECTC members to MS CT units for short-term projects. The centre will work towards establishing closer interaction with priority non-EU competent CT services to obtain dynamically updated foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) lists. Increasing exploitation of SIS II

information on terrorist alerts obtained through the Europol SIRENE Office will be also one of the priority actions.

- In 2024, Europol will further enhance and expand the technical aspects of the **EU platform for referrals and removal orders (PERCI)** turning it to a mature communication and coordination tool for handling online terrorist content and any other type of illegal content related to crime areas covered by the Digital Services Act. In addition, the **EU IRU** will continue reinforcing its expertise on the abuse of the Internet by right wing violent extremist and terrorist networks and will be developing the new Check-the-Web Portal as an e-Library to store and analyse online terrorist content.

- **The European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC)** is striving to increase Europol's responsiveness and operational performance in the areas of fraud, money laundering, asset recovery, corruption and counterfeiting. The centre provides horizontal operational support to HVTs and OTFs in all crime areas, contributes to the implementation of the EMPACT priorities falling within its mandate and will continue countering attempts of serious and organised crime to target the NextGeneration EU recovery fund.

- One important task for the EFFEC in 2024 is to establish a well-functioning working relation with the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) and the Cooperation and Support Mechanism (CSM) for the FIUs. The setting up of secure communication channels, access to information and structured operational collaboration will be a prerequisite for the effective utilisation of **financial intelligence** in crime investigations. The new anti-money laundering legislation as well as the Directive on asset recovery and confiscation might, in addition, bring new tasks to the agency.

- The EFFEC maintains the **Customs cooperation** function within Europol and pursues the objective of increasing the information exchange between Customs risk profiling and the agency's criminal analysis. In 2024, the centre should benefit from the established interoperability between the Customs Information System and Europol's databases, enabling automated cross-checking. At the same time, the EFFEC will initiate the implementation of the new agreement with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and will reinforce its involvement in illegal Internet Protocol Television following an updated MoU with UEFA.

- Europol seeks to be at the forefront of **law enforcement innovation and research** and through its **Innovation Lab**, it facilitates innovation in the law enforcement community and addresses the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies. The Lab acts as the secretariat for the **EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security** and leads the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies to implement the tasks adopted by COSI in 2020. As part of the implementation of the Europol Regulation Recast, the Lab will provide the environment for Europol and MS to develop, train and validate models and tools using operational data. It will also aim at establishing possibilities for hosting LEA researchers of key emerging technologies.

- In the realm of external relations, Europol will begin the preparatory work for the final report on **External Strategy 2021-2024** and will initiate the elaboration of the strategic priorities for the phase beyond 2024. In parallel to pursuing cooperation with selected high-priority third countries and organisations, the agency will be looking into the effectiveness of already existing agreements and will prepare a strategic review of its cooperation with Colombia. Furthermore, in line with the Europol Regulation Recast, the organisation will reinforce the outreach to the private sector following a structured approach and established priorities.

- In 2024, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the new Europol Strategy while the Agency will continue making progress in promoting workforce diversity and inclusion, in line with Europol's **Diversity and**

Inclusion Strategy. The HR and Finance Strategies will guide and ensure the efficient and effective management of budget and resources, while the **Strategic Housing Roadmap** will advance further to allow for the agency's growth.

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

Work Programme Activity	Objective 2024
A.1. Development of information technology and information management capabilities	A.1.1 Continue the implementation of the Information Management Strategy.
	A.1.2 Further develop ICT capabilities for Europol's operations.
	A.1.3 Implement improvements to core MS-facing operational capabilities.
	A.1.4 Advance interoperability and connectivity with information management systems at EU level to enhance information exchange.
	A.1.5 Further implement Europol's Innovation Strategy and consolidate the structures and processes of Europol's Innovation Lab.
	A.1.6 Further improve corporate information management and related administrative ICT capabilities.
	A.1.7 Develop and maintain reliable and secure ICT and IM capabilities.
A.2. Operational Coordination	A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing operational information.
	A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.
	A.2.3 Build-up Europol's operational services to comply with the legal obligations stemming from the EU large-scale information systems.
	A.2.4 Utilise Europol's access to EU information management systems to enrich the provision of support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.2.5 Provide support to EU Member States in the area of special tactics.
	A.2.6 Provide support and funding opportunities to EMPACT priorities and actions.
	A.2.7 Manage and support deployments, incl. Europol's Guest Officers and Guest Experts capabilities.
A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime	A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on SOC and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.
	A.3.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on drug production and trafficking.
	A.3.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on weapons and explosives.
	A.3.4 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on high risk OCGs and criminal networks.
	A.3.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised property crime.
	A.3.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on environmental crime.
	A.3.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on organised crime related to migrant smuggling.

Work Programme Activity	Objective 2024
	A.3.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on trafficking in human beings.
A.4. Combating cybercrime	A.4.1 Ensure the effective functioning of EC3 in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on cybercrime and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.
	A.4.2 Provide digital forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.4.3 Provide document forensics support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.4.4 Provide cyber intelligence support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.4.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on cyber-dependent crimes.
	A.4.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on child sexual exploitation.
	A.4.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on payment fraud and online fraud schemes.
	A.4.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on criminal online trade and use of online environments for criminal purposes.
	A.4.9 Provide support and operational coordination to the J-CAT operations and activities.
	A.4.10 Proactively develop expertise and solutions related to challenges in cybercriminal investigations.
A.5. Counter-terrorism	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.
	A.5.2 Provide support to EU Member States' counter-terrorism investigations.
	A.5.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
	A.5.4 Provide support to EU Member States' CT investigations with terrorism-related financial information.
	A.5.5 Provide CBRN/E support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.5.6 Provide support to the ATLAS Network.
	A.5.7 Provide internet referral services.
	A.5.8 Further develop the EU platform to tackle illegal content online (PERCI) as a communication and coordination tool for referrals and removal orders within the EU.
	A.5.9 Provide operational support to EU Member States' CT internet-based investigations.
	A.5.10 Provide technical support to CT internet-based investigations and referrals.
	A.5.11 Provide support to Member States on acquiring cross-border access to electronic evidence.
	A.6.1 Reinforce the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) to extend the provision of strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on financial and economic crime.

Work Programme Activity	Objective 2024
A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime	A.6.2 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on fraud.
	A.6.3 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on money laundering.
	A.6.4 Increase cooperation with FIUs.
	A.6.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations in identifying and tracing proceeds of crime.
	A.6.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on corruption.
	A.6.7 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on the production and distribution of counterfeit goods.
	A.6.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on Euro counterfeiting.
A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination	A.7.1 Reinforce criminal analysis coordination and expertise at Europol to ensure provision of quality analysis support to EU Member States' investigations.
	A.7.2 Ensure data and analysis quality control at Europol.
	A.7.3 Reinforce analysis training capabilities and coordination at Europol.
	A.7.4 Deliver quality strategic reports.
	A.7.5 Manage cooperation with EU Member States.
	A.7.6 Manage cooperation with third countries.
	A.7.7 Manage cooperation with EU institutions, agencies or bodies.
	A.7.8 Manage cooperation with international and regional organisations, and private parties.
A.8. Governance, support and administration	A.8.1 Continue optimising Europol's corporate functions.
	A.8.2 Ensure efficient internal and external communication.
	A.8.3 Ensure efficient human resources and budget management.
	A.8.4 Ensure the necessary level of physical, personal and information security at Europol.
	A.8.5 Progress towards the rationalisation and expansion of Europol's facilities services and capabilities.

SECTION I – General Context

This section presents policy factors that are expected to influence Europol's work in the coming years.

1. Security Union

1.1. The new EU Security Union Strategy

The new EU Security Union Strategy[1] 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 as a platform for structured and coordinated cooperation. 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 European Commission put forward on 24th 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 under way to strengthen border security legislation and cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations. The EU Agenda on Counter-Terrorism, EU Agenda on Drugs and a new EU Action Plan against firearms trafficking were issued in 2020, while the EU Agenda for tackling organised crime, including trafficking in human beings and a new EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling, 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. EU Police Cooperation Package

The EU Police Cooperation Package was adopted by the European Commission on 8 December 2021 and consists of three different proposals which aim to streamline, enhance, and facilitate law enforcement cooperation among and across EU Member States. The package includes:

- Proposal for a Directive on information exchange between law enforcement authorities of Member States (see section 6)
- Proposal for a Regulation on automated data exchange for police cooperation (Prüm II – see section 6)
- Proposal for a Council Recommendation on operational police cooperation

The proposal for a Council Recommendation on law enforcement cooperation was adopted on 10 June 2022 and aims at creating shared standards for operational cross border cooperation between EU 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 making use of different possibilities Europol offers to support operational cooperation between

[1] COM/2020/605 final

Member States, especially with regard to secure communication tools such as the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) or the Virtual Command Post (VCP).

1.3. 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"[2], 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.

1.4. 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[3] was published on 18 March 2020 and comprises a new policy framework aiming at strengthening 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 as a long-term objective in the Eastern Partnership countries. In particular, the EU shall work towards reinvigorating its support for fighting corruption and economic crime and improving cross-border cooperation to better protect people against organised crime as well as stepping up support for security dialogues and cooperation.

1.5. Strengthening cooperation with CSDP missions and operations

Council Conclusions on the implementation of Civilian Compact[4] were adopted by Council on 9 December 2019 and also endorsed by the European Council in the same month. Among others, the Conclusions highlighted that the closer cooperation and synergies between relevant civilian CSDP structures, European Commission services and JHA actors in line with the Compact and their respective legal mandates, should be intensified at multiple levels and through the competent working groups. In mid-2023 a revised Compact for civilian CSDP will be put forward.

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[5] that sets out the strategic framework goals of the Commission to enhance the fight against organised crime in the EU. The Strategy builds on four main thematic blocks: (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 are recognised as major pieces of legislation. 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

[2] COM/2020/57 final
[3] JOIN/2020/7 final
[4] 13571/20
[5] COM(2021)170 final

The new EU Drugs Strategy[6] 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[7], 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 priority areas: targeting high-risk organised crime groups and disrupting criminal business models especially those that foster collaboration between different groups; proceeds and instrumentalities of organised crime groups 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 requires measures for more effective monitoring of logistical and digital channels exploited for drug distribution in close cooperation with the private sector (digitally enabled drug markets; postal and express services, cross-EU rail and fluvial channels and the general aviation space). Dismantling of drug production and processing, preventing the diversion and trafficking of drug precursors for illicit drug production, and eradicating illegal cultivation are also among the objectives.

2.3. EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking 2020-2025

In its EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking 2020-2025[8] the European Commission invites Member States and south-east Europe partners to improve cooperation among law enforcement authorities (customs, police and border guards), but also with prosecutors and forensics specialists, to tackle the principal sources and routes of illicit firearms. The European Commission will also improve cooperation between law enforcement and parcel and postal operators, to ensure stricter oversight of shipments containing firearms. Cooperation between the EU and non-EU partners need to be stepped up in particular with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The Commission will take action 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 at EU-level a tool to track in real time firearms-related incidents and develop a permanently up-to-date picture. The Commission invites Europol and Member States to keep a focus on firearms cases in the framework of cyber patrolling operations and actions against dark web marketplaces.

2.4. New Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 23 September 2020, the European Commission presented the New Pact on Migration and Asylum[9]. 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 mechanism for Preparedness and Management of Crises related to Migration, which was also a novelty introduced by the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

2.5. Schengen Strategy and European Integrated Border Management

As part of the Schengen Strategy, put forward by the European Commission in 2021, the conclusion of Europol's renewed mandate was recalled as an element for a reinforced Schengen area internally. Europol also features in the new Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism (Council Regulation (EU) 2022/922). Europol shall provide expertise, analysis, reports and other relevant information to support the implementation of the Regulation. The Commission may also invite Agencies to contribute to the annual pool of experts who will be made available to carry out evaluations (as observers).

In parallel, the Commission also published a Policy document on developing a multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management (EIBM). Amongst the 15

[6] Council 14178/20
[7] Council 9819/21
[8] COM(2020) 608 final
[9] COM(2020)609 final

components of the policy priorities and strategic guidelines for the next five years, Europol and law enforcement authorities are stipulated as relevant partners under border control, analysis of risks for internal security, countering cross-border crime at the external borders and finally research and innovation activities. The Commission will adopt a Communication establishing the multiannual strategic policy for European Integrated Border Management, while Frontex will put forward the technical and operational strategy for EIBM, in the context of which Europol may be called upon when relevant to implement the Strategy.

2.6. 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[10], as was the case during the first Action Plan. 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, where Europol plays an active role. The judiciary (e.g. Eurojust) should be closer involved with the Joint Liaison Task Force on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, while the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities to target the online presence of smugglers, with the support of EU IRU, should be stepped up. The support of the European Economic and Financial Crime Centre should be used to include a financial investigation element into migrant smuggling cases. Finally, joint reports on migrant smuggling with Frontex are encouraged, as well as the establishment of cooperation with the private sector.

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

The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings[11] 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 Member States' intelligence-lead and financial investigations and supports effective cross-border operational cooperation. This would also be the case for the Western Balkans countries and where possible with the countries in the EU's neighbourhood. Europol's role is also mentioned when it comes to detection of internet content used by traffickers.

3. Cybercrime

3.1. EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade

The EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade[12] 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 - civilian, law enforcement, judicial, diplomacy and defence. The Strategy foresees also 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, Member States and the private sector, develop awareness tools and guidance to increase the resilience of EU businesses against cyber-enabled intellectual property theft.

[10] COM(2021) 591 final
[11] COM(2021)171 final
[12] JOIN(2020) 18 final

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. Cooperation with third countries and multilateral fora is also foreseen.

3.2. European Commission's e-evidence package

In April 2018, the European Commission proposed a legislative package aiming at accelerating law enforcement and judicial cross-border access to electronic evidence (data stored in an electronic format that is relevant in criminal proceedings). The objective of the package 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 in the Draft Regulation as a possible platform to transmit and facilitate the authentication of orders and as a de-confliction tool. The final text is expected be adopted by the Parliament and the Council by the end of 2022.

3.3. 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[13] to respond to the increasing threat of child sexual abuse both online and offline. The key initiatives foreseen were:

- In a first stage, to ensure that providers of electronic communications services could continue their voluntary practices to detect in their systems child sexual abuse after December 2020.
- In a second stage, to propose legislation requiring relevant online services providers to detect known child sexual abuse material and report it to public authorities.
- To launch a study on the creation of a European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse.
- To establish a prevention network of practitioners and researchers.

3.4. 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)[14] in order to replace the interim regulation[15] which expires in August 2024. The proposal introduces inter-alia, 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)".

3.5. Digital Services Act

On 15 December 2020 the European Commission adopted the Digital Services Act (DSA)[16], 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 the provisional agreement of the DSA introduces inter-alia, obligations for hosting service providers (HSP) to report suspicions of criminal offences to law enforcement or judicial authorities of the Member State(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. The DSA is expected to become applicable in Q4 of 2023.

[13] COM(2020) 607 final
[14] COM(2022) 209 final
[15] Regulation (EU) 2021/1232
[16] COM(2020) 825 final

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

In March 2022, the European Commission adopted the proposal for a regulation that introduces common binding rules on cybersecurity for all EU Institutions, Bodies and Agencies (EUIBAs). The new mandatory measures include inter alia, 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 excluded from the regulation, however, the regulation will likely imply adjustments to Europol's internal cybersecurity procedures, create new reporting channels and potentially have some impact on resources.

3.7. Cyber Crisis Task Force

In March 2022, the European Commission formally established the Cyber Crisis Task Force, with a view to ensuring coordination at operational and executive levels regarding cybersecurity crisis management. The Task Force is chaired by DG CNECT and comprised by relevant Commission services and EU bodies and agencies, including Europol. The mandate of the Task Force is inter alia, to support operational coordination and informed political decision-making, improve crisis management communication flows between the civilian, law enforcement, diplomatic and defence cybersecurity communities, and coordinate the implementation of the Joint Cyber Unit.

3.8. Cyber Resilience Act

The European Commission adopted the Cyber Resilience Act[17] on 15 September 2022, which introduces mandatory cybersecurity requirements for hardware and software products, throughout their lifecycle. The proposed regulation will apply to all products – devices and software - that are connected either directly or indirectly to another device or network. One of the objectives of the proposal is to address the impact of cybercrime, in particular ransomware. Once the new legislation 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.

3.9. AI package

The Commission presented on 21 April 2021 the so-called 'AI package', setting out the first EU legal framework intended to regulate artificial intelligence 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 (e.g. immediate threat to life, research of suspects, missing children, etc.). The broad classification of "high risk" processing operation and the related foreseeable European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) prior consultation constitute several challenges in practice.

4. Terrorism and radicalisation

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

On 9 December 2020, the European Commission presented a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda[18] 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, will support the development of further guidance for the implementation of the EU Crisis Response Protocol. There will be also a specific proposal for the establishment of a mechanism of

[17] COM(2022) 454 final
[18] COM(2020)795 final

information exchange in CT cases among JHA agencies, and for a network of CT financial investigators involving Europol, to help follow the money trail and identify those involved.

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. 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 Member States, INTCEN, Europol, Eurojust and Interpol.

4.3. Council Conclusions on protecting Europeans from terrorism: achievements and next steps

On 10 June 2022, the Council adopted Conclusions on protecting Europeans from terrorism. The conclusions focus on the persistent high level of terrorist threat (also due to instability in several regions), the need to improve the use of the SIS to monitor and detect those posing a terrorist threat, better coordination of national entry bans and expulsion measures (through SIS), strengthening the exchange of information following hits on individuals posing a terrorist threat, combating the threat stemming from actors contributing to radicalisation leading to terrorism and access to essential data to fight against terrorism.

4.4. Policy recommendations in counter-terrorism

On 21 June 2021 COSI approved a set of conclusions and updated policy recommendations for counter-terrorism, on the basis of the six monthly reports from Europol and INTCEN regarding the terrorism threat to the EU. The recommendation include, inter alia:

- Further development of EU IRU capabilities to support Member States' actions to prevent the dissemination of all types of terrorist content;
- Further development of the cooperation with key third countries and international partners on access to battlefield information.
- Continued work of the EU JHA Innovation Hub.

In 2020, COSI also endorsed the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) protocol[19] setting out a process for evaluating and possibly entering information from third countries on suspected Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Schengen Information System.

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). Such a platform would facilitate and coordinate the referral of terrorist content online to HSP while ensuring that duplication is avoided and enhancing the standardisation and auditing of the referral process.

[19] Defining a process for evaluating and possibly entering information from third countries on suspected Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Schengen Information System, EU Council 13037/20.

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

The Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online[20] 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 Member States to inform and cooperate with each other and make use of structures set up by Europol. The aim is to ensure coordination and de-confliction with regards to removal orders and referrals.

4.7. EU anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025

On 18 September 2020, the European Commission presented a new EU anti-racism Action Plan[21] promoting fair policing and protection against discrimination. Member States 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 towards a better addressing violent extremist groups, incl. a mapping of national responses to violent extremism. The Commission is also working with IT companies to counter online hate speech; a next step will come with the Digital Services Act, which will increase the responsibilities of online platforms and information service providers.

5. Financial crime

5.1. Revision of the Directive on the 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 - from tracing and identification, through freezing and management, to confiscation and final disposal of assets. 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.
- Specifically, concerning Europol, the use of SIENA should be mandatory for all communications among asset recovery offices under this Directive.

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

The directive had to be implemented in national regulation by 1 August 2021 and aims at improving the cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and law enforcement authorities, including Europol. The directive provides two possibilities to Europol:

- Europol has the right to request bank account information through Europol National Units or by direct contact with competent authorities (such as Asset Recovery Offices, if allowed by the MS) and the latter will be entitled to reply.
- Europol has the right to request financial information and financial analysis from FIUs through the Europol National Unit or by direct contact (if allowed by the MS) and FIUs will be entitled to reply, i.e. no legal barrier will be preventing this cooperation.

[20] (EU) 2021/784
[21] COM(2020) 565 final

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[22] 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, including a Coordination and Support Mechanism for FIUs. Strong operational cooperation is needed between Europol and the new Authority, in order to mitigate the potential risk of duplication of activities and still enhance the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing.

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. The Commission will propose a legislative initiative (2022-2023) amending the Regulation 904/2010 to establish in Eurofisc an EU capability against VAT fraud in cross-border transactions serving not only VAT purposes, but also financial market authorities, customs, OLAF and Europol.

5.5. The Customs Action Plan

On 28 September 2020, the European Commission launched a new Customs Union Action Plan, setting out a series of measures such as improved use of data, better tools and equipment, the promotion of compliance, and more cooperation within the EU and with customs authorities of partner countries. The Commission aims to ensure that customs will be able to leverage the new payment data reporting obligations to be imposed as of 1 January 2024 on payment service providers for VAT purposes. Access to these data would help customs to trace goods back to their source and thus to detect undervaluation of imported goods. Commission will also launch an impact assessment (with an outcome by 2023), on the pros and cons of establishing an EU customs agency.

5.6. Council conclusions on enhancing financial investigations to fight serious and organised crime

On 17 June 2020, the Council approved conclusions on enhancing financial investigations to fight serious and organised crime, where the European Commission is called to strengthen the legal framework for virtual assets; on the management of property frozen with a view of subsequent confiscation; and on the interconnectivity of national centralised bank account registries. Furthermore, the Commission is invited to re-engage in a discussion with MS regarding the need for a legislative limitation on cash payments. The Council also calls on MS to ensure that financial investigations, as a horizontal priority in the EU policy cycle for organised crime - EMPACT, form part of all kinds of criminal investigations. It calls on Europol to fully use the potential of the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre.

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.

[22] https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/210720-anti-money-laundering-countering-financing-terrorism_en

- 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. Schengen Information System (SIS) Regulation

The new SIS Regulation (so-called SIS Recast) was adopted on 28 November 2018 and the new SIS information system is envisaged to enter into operation in the first months of 2023. The SIS Recast introduced, among others, the following changes:

- Create new alert categories;
- Extend Europol's access rights in SIS to all alert categories, including alerts on missing persons and on persons who are refused entry or stay within the territory of a MS either on criminal grounds or because of non-compliance with visa and stay conditions;
- Introduce the obligation for MSs to report to Europol hits on alerts related to terrorist offences;
- Allow Europol to exchange supplementary information with SIRENE Bureaux through the SIRENE Communication Infrastructure and in accordance with the SIRENE Manual.

6.3. 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 who are admitted for a short stay into the Schengen area. Expected to be operational in May 2023, the system's objective is to improve the management of external borders; prevent irregular immigration and facilitate the management of migration flows; detect over-stayers and support the identification of undocumented persons in the Schengen area. Europol will be able to request access to the EES under specific conditions and process.

6.4. 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 Europol 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 November 2023, while its functioning will start with a grace period during which the travel authorisation will not be mandatory yet. Despite not being mentioned explicitly in ETIAS Regulation of 2018, Europol should be entitled to profit from ETIAS revenues "for activities related to ETIAS operations and maintenance".

6.5. 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 TCN was adopted to supplement the ECRIS. Europol is granted direct access to the ECRIS-TCN data in order to identify the MS holding information on previous convictions of third-country nationals. The ECRIS-TCN is envisaged to enter into operation in November 2023.

6.6. 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 also include data on long-stay visas and residence permits. Similarly to ETIAS, the data provided by visa applicants will be automatically cross-checked, among

others, 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 VIS Recast Regulation is planned to enter into operation by the end of 2024.

6.7. 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. Amongst others, it will better assist the control of irregular migration and the detection of unauthorised movements by counting individual applicants in addition to applications. The Eurodac Regulation 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.

6.8. The 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 Europol 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. The negotiations are ongoing.

6.9. Revision of the Advance Passenger Information Directive

The revision of the Advance Passenger Information (API) Directive could allow for more effective use of the information (notably with EES and ETIAS), while facilitating the use of API data for law enforcement purposes and streamlining the use of API data and PNR data. A new legislative proposal is expected in December 2022.

6.10. Prüm Revision

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) Member States to automatically search and cross-check the third country biometric data held by Europol and (2) Europol to cross-check data received from third countries with the Member States' databases. Additionally, Europol is tasked to develop (in cooperation with Member States) and to maintain EPRIS (European Police Record Index System), which forms the technical basis for the exchange of police records. In the LFS accompanying the proposal, certain resources are envisaged for Europol to implement the Regulation. Negotiations are still ongoing.

6.11. Directive on information exchange

The proposal for a Directive on information exchange aims to consolidate the EU legal framework on information exchange between law enforcement authorities in a single legal instrument and to simplify the modalities. The proposal is of high relevance for Europol since it intends to establish SIENA, "without prejudice to a few exceptions, as the default channel for the exchange of criminal information" and by introducing a provision to put Europol in copy for every information exchange concerning crimes falling under its mandate. Negotiations are ongoing and the draft legal text is still subject to changes but in the context of current working processes and legal requirements, Europol foresees an impact on Europol resources.

7. EMPACT 2022-2025

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

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

As well as Document Fraud as a cross-cutting threat.

SECTION II - Multi-annual programming 2024 – 2026

1. Multi-annual programme

This section references the Europol Strategy 2020+ which, at the time of writing, is being reviewed. The updated Strategy, expected to be finalised in the first half of 2023, will be reflected in the final version of the Programming Document 2024-2026, planned to be adopted by Europol's Management Board by 30 November 2023. The key performance indicators will also be reviewed.

The priorities of the Europol Strategy 2020+ will guide the work of the Agency in the years 2024-2026 to:

- be the EU criminal information hub making full use of data from an extensive network of partners;
- deliver agile operational support;
- be a platform for European policing solutions;
- be at the forefront of innovation and research for law enforcement;
- be the model EU law enforcement organisation with robust performance, good governance and accountability, promoting diversity and staff engagement.

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

Strategic Priority 1: Be the EU criminal information hub

Europol has established itself as the EU criminal information hub and 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. Europol will further evolve from collecting to connecting information; in the coming years, the focus will be on reinforcing this position by advancing Europol's information management architecture and rapidly embracing new methods and technologies as they become available. Europol will also work with the relevant EU agencies, the European Commission and the Member States to implement its roadmaps related to travel intelligence and to EU systems interoperability.

Highlights:

- A prominent information position through an improved information management architecture with fully integrated data management and advanced capabilities.
- Efficient intake of information, freeing up resources for analysis and operational support.
- Exploit the opportunities made available by the interoperability of EU systems such as increased use of biometrics.
- Implementation of Europol's External Strategy.

Strategic priority 2: Deliver agile operational support

To increase operational impact by dismantling terrorist networks and increasingly poly-criminal organised crime groups, Europol will develop an agile operational support model, building on its existing experience of the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT), Joint Operational Team (JOT) Mare, Counter Terrorism Joint Liaison Team (CT-JLT), High-Value Targets (HVTs), Operational Taskforces (OTFs) and guest officer deployments.

Enhanced analytical capabilities will be at the core of Europol's operational support. In addition, Europol will develop a complete operational support model to identify, organise, coordinate and deploy multi-disciplinary teams to work with Member States and support

priority investigations against high-value targets. Europol will also further enhance its rapid response to terrorist attacks and other major crime incidents.

The most dangerous organised crime groups corrupt and infiltrate the public sector and carry out complex money laundering schemes to conceal their illegal profits. To tackle these top criminals successfully, Europol will put more focus on investigating high-value targets, financial investigations and asset recovery.

Highlights:

- Identification and increased support to priority investigations.
- Development of standard operating procedures for rapid response and operational deployments.
- Expanding the EU law enforcement toolbox especially in niche technical and forensic capabilities.
- Creation and support of an environment for multi-disciplinary teams and transnational investigations.

Strategic Priority 3: Be a platform for European policing solutions

Europol will act as the broker of law enforcement knowledge, providing a hub through which Member States can connect and benefit from each other's and Europol's expertise and training capabilities. Europol's evolution from a systems-based organisation to a specialised law enforcement service provider by progressively advancing from processing to producing knowledge will be pursued.

Europol will bring together Member States to drive the development of EU analysis standards and strengthen analysis for law enforcement in the EU. The aim will be to deliver, in close cooperation with Member States, analytical products and services with actionable intelligence, which are recognised and can be used by Member States' jurisdictions.

Highlights:

- A dynamic knowledge platform, able to exploit the information Europol holds and that which it can access.
- Development of a common methodology and standards of analysis.
- A central inventory of skills available across Member States' law enforcement agencies in view of connecting expertise, promoting best practices and delivering joint training activities.
- A platform for complex EU policing solutions such as decryption and cryptocurrency.

Strategic Priority 4: Be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research

The advent of new technologies and the increasing sophistication of crime, the exponential growth of data types and volume are major challenges for today's law enforcement community. Making incremental changes to existing solutions is not enough; to remain relevant and effective, it is necessary to invest in and actively pursue new solutions. Europol will become a central contact point for law enforcement innovation, bringing together the most suitable partners to build a network of innovation, tailored to the needs of Member States' law enforcement agencies. New methods to leverage the full value of available data and the application of innovative business models in law enforcement will be co-developed, tested and hosted by Europol for the benefit of the Member States.

Highlights:

- Common understanding of innovation and research needs of Member States
- Identification of best innovation partners.

- Development of an innovation strategy defining the priority fields for investment.
- A culture of innovation including an innovation lab.

Strategic Priority 5: Be the model EU Law Enforcement organisation

Europol will work closely with all its partners to develop synergies ensuring the most efficient and effective use of its resources. The agency will maintain the highest governance standards while remaining accountable to its EU law enforcement partners and EU institutional stakeholders, ensuring that our work is visible to EU citizens at large.

Europol will create the conditions for a culture of innovation by nurturing an environment of transparency, communication, creativity and diversity, where staff engagement, motivation and well-being are key.

Highlights:

- Further strengthening a workforce with the skills to drive the organisation forward.
- Managing resources in a transparent, trusted and compliant way.
- Develop new communication strategies.
- A diversity and inclusion strategy.

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

Key Performance Indicator	Target 2024	Indicative targets 2025	2026
Number of searches through EIS and QUEST			
Number of SIENA messages exchanged			
Number of Operations Supported by Europol			
Number of Accepted Contributions by Europol[23]			
Number of Action Days organised/supported by Europol			
Number of Operational Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Number of Cross Match Reports and SIENA hit notifications produced by Europol			
Number of Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Satisfaction with Operational Support delivered by Europol			
Satisfaction with Strategic Analysis Reports produced by Europol			
Satisfaction with Operational Training delivered by Europol			
Emissions (CO2)[24]			
Vacancy Rate			
% Female staff			
Budget Commitment Rate			
Implementation of Audit Recommendations			

[23] 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.
[24] It should be noted that measurement of this indicator is done on a yearly basis with results for year N being available well into year N+1; despite this time lag, Europol considers it important to monitor this KPI.

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

2.1. Overview of the past and current situation

Europol's role in the security landscape of the EU has been recognised and, as a result, the agency was entrusted with several important functions, such as the European Cybercrime Centre, the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, the European Internet Referral Unit, within the European Counter-Terrorism Centre, and most recently, the 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 resources are envisaged as part of the Prüm II regulation proposal.

2.2. Outlook for the years 2024 - 2026

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

2.3. Resource programming for the years 2024 - 2026

HUMAN RESOURCES

Interoperability – Additional resource request for ETIAS entry into operation

As discussed at the Europol MB meeting in October 2022, there is a significant human resources gap to implement the interoperability tasks to be performed by Europol, estimated at approximately 130 posts in subsequent years. Taking into account the current challenges facing the EU budget and the European Commission's Budget Circular for 2024 which states a principle of stable staffing levels for all European Commission services and decentralised agencies, Europol (as announced at the MB in December 2022 and after having discussed the matter with the Directorate-General (DG) Migration and Home Affairs and Frontex) is proposing to transfer 20 Contract Agent (CA) positions and 5 Temporary Agent establishment plan posts (and the corresponding budget) from Frontex to Europol for the period 2024-2027, with the purpose of implementing, in particular, tasks stemming from the ETIAS entry into operation (expected for November 2023). This solution would allow for Europol to cover the most pressing resource gap, while it would be budget and staff neutral across Home Affairs Agencies. The proposal is subject to the approval of Frontex's MB and consultation with the relevant European Commission services.

Temporary agents

Starting from the 2023 Establishment Plan of 716 posts, the net number of posts in 2024 is envisaged to increase by 38 Temporary Agent (TA) posts, including 26 posts stemming from the amended Europol Regulation, 6.5[25] posts from the Prüm II regulation and 5 posts (as a result of the foreseen transfer from Frontex) related to the implementation of the Interoperability agenda.

[25] Rounded to 7 posts.

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

	2024	2025	2026
AD9	1		
AD7	9	5	1
AD6	28	14	6
AST2			
Total	**38**	**19**	**7**

Contract Agents
As detailed above, (as a result of the foreseen transfer from Frontex) the number of CAs in 2024 is envisaged to rise by 20 posts related to the implementation of the Interoperability-related regulations, to a total number of 255 and remain stable in the following years.

Seconded National Experts
The number of Seconded National Experts (SNEs) in 2023-2025 is foreseen to remain at the same level as in 2022, thus maintaining the number at 121, including the 50 SNE FTE envisaged for short-term deployments during the year (GE/OTF, costed, short term SNEs). For detailed data and numbers per staff category, see Annex IV.

Staff financed with Grant Agreements / Contribution Agreements / Service Legal Agreements (SLAs)
For 2023 Europol will continue having a number of Contract Agents (CAs) and SNEs directly funded via grant, contribution or service legal agreements. For detailed information and numbers per agreement and staff category, see Annex XI.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Revenue:
The main financial source of Europol is the regular Community subsidy. The envisaged revenue for 2024 is € 219.2M, including € 1M additional budget related to the implementation of the Interoperability agenda.[26]

Item	Heading	Revenue 2022	Revenue 2023	Draft Estimate 2024	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
9000	Regular subsidy from the Community	192,380,773	207,176,212	219,245,205	225,690,397	237,765,913
9010	Other subsidies and grants		P.M	P.M	P.M	P.M
9101	Denmark contribution[27]		P.M	P.M	P.M	P.M
9200	Other revenue		P.M	P.M	P.M	P.M
	Total Revenue	**192,380,773**	**207,176,212**	**219,245,205**	**225,690,397**	**237,765,913**

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

[26] Subject to verification on the exact amount with Frontex and European Commission services
[27] It is envisaged that the budget will be amended later in the year with an additional contribution from Denmark via a separate procedure.

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

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

Commitment Appropriations (CA)

Title	Heading	Outturn 2022	Budget 2023	Estimate 2024 (CA)	Diff 2024/2023	% of the budget
1	Staff	100,108,826	112,219,112	118,547,502	6,328,390	54.1%
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	11,643,924	16,267,400	17,135,312	867,912	7.8%
3	Operational Activities	74,116,614	78,689,700	83,562,391	4,872,691	38.1%
	Total expenditure	**185,869,365**	**207,176,212**	**219,245,205**	**12,068,993**	**100%**

Payment Appropriations (PA)

Title	Heading	Outturn 2022	Budget 2023	Estimate 2024 (PA)
1	Staff	100,108,826	112,219,112	118,547,502
2	Other Administrative Expenditure	11,643,924	16,267,400	17,135,312
3	Operational Activities	74,116,614	76,612,900	80,054,191
	Total expenditure	**185,869,365**	**205,099,412**	**215,737,005**

Title 1 – Staff expenditure:

Staff related expenditure in 2024 amounts to € 118.6M and represents 54.1% of the total Estimate 2024. It reflects an increase of € 6.3M or 5.6% compared to the 2023 Budget.

The budget for Staff in active employment (Chapter 11) comes to € 108.1M, which is € 5.4M or 5.3% above 2023, 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 Estimate 2024 foresees an expenditure related to overall 753.5 TAs and 255 CAs. € 1M is included in Chapter 11 related to the potential transfer of posts for the implementation of the interoperability agenda. Moreover, 2024 estimations consider the full year financial effect of new staff in 2023 (+30 TAs) and the assumptions for salary adjustments in line with the guidelines from the Budget Circular 2024[28].

The budget for Socio-medical infrastructure (Chapter 13) and Training (Chapter 14) is € 1.4M and it is € 0.1M or 3.5% lower than the 2023 budget, mainly because of the internal established medical services for staff. The budget for other staff related expenditure (Chapter

[28] Salary adjustments consider a 2% salary increase plus the weighting coefficient for The Netherlands at the same level as 2022 (109.8).

15) is envisaged to reach around € 9M, which is an increase of € 0.9M or 11.8% compared to the year 2023. The increase is foreseen for additional External Security Officers and consultancy services, required for the new developments of the Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR).

Title 1 remains non-differentiated and 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 € 17.1M and represents 7.8% of the total Estimate 2024. It reflects an increase of € 0.9M or 5.3% compared to the 2023 Budget.

The total Estimate for 2024 for the rental of buildings and associated costs (Chapter 20) came to € 10.9M, which is an increase of € 0.2M or 1.9%. Beside the regular running costs[29] for the Headquarters (HQ) and the first Temporary Satellite Building (TSB1), the additional budget is foreseen for the ICT infrastructure related to the connectivity works between the HQ and the secondary temporary satellite building (TSB2), as well as higher running costs of electricity and gas due to the latest price developments on the market.

The Estimate 2024 for administrative ICT expenses (Chapter 21) amounts to € 1.9M and it is envisaged mainly for ICT infrastructure costs such as administrative hardware and software licenses management.

The Estimate 2024 for other governance, administrative and telecommunication expenditure (Chapters 22 – 24) comes to € 3.3M, which is an increase of € 0.7M or 26.5% versus the previous year. 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.

The Estimate 2024 for the activities of the Management Board (MB) and its Working Groups (WGs)[30] , included under Chapter 25, reaches a total of € 1M, which is € 40K or 3.7% lower than the previous year. This budget is foreseen to cover four physical and two virtual MB meetings, as well as four physical WGs meetings.

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

Title 3 – Operational activities:

The Estimate 2024 for Operational activities comes to € 83.6M and represents 38.1% of the total Estimate. The increase for operational activities compared to 2023 amounts to € 4.9M or 6.2%, mainly due to the new budget estimated for the implementation of differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the grant related budget.

The differentiated appropriations (DAs) were introduced in 2022 with the set-up of a new budget structure; however, it is only as of 2023 that Europol establishes multi-annual grant scheme planning, with a differentiation between commitments and payments appropriations. This new way of implementing the budget will enable to support grant beneficiaries (mainly

[29] Preventive and corrective maintenance, electricity, water, cleaning, rents, insurance and other building -related investments.
[30] Corporate Matters Working Group (CMWG) and Information Management Working Group (IMWG).

law enforcement entities) with multi-annual funding and planning[31], allowing additional time to implement the respective grants budgets.

The Estimate 2024 for Operations (Chapter 30) comes to € 15M, which is € 0.2M or 1% lower than the previous year. This budget is foreseen for operational support in operational meetings, conference, staff missions and deployments, providing training for 3rd parties, external operational expertise, operational WEB campaign, and other audio-visuals services, operational equipment and operational training.

The Estimate 2024 for operational ICT services and programmes (Chapters 31 and 32 together) comes to a total of € 45.8M, which is an increase of € 1.4M of 3.1% compared to 2023, mainly for the new initiatives related to Prüm II and other higher cost related to market prices indexation.

The Estimate 2024 for Seconded National Experts (Chapter 33) comes to a budget of € 7.4M and it is € 0.1M or 1.4% above previous year. This budget is foreseen to cover allowances for 71 Seconded National Experts (€ 4.3M) and 50 Guest Experts for the dedicated support to MS investigations for the Operational task Forces (OTF) (€ 3.1M).

The Estimate 2024 for high-level external stakeholder meetings, Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs), and events such as the Europol Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC) (Chapters 34 and 35), come to a budget of € 0.5M which is € 30K or 6.2% lower than the previous year.

The Estimate 2024 for the Decryption platform (Chapter 38) is € 1.4M[32] and is envisaged to cover operational running costs of the platform, mainly electricity as well as other maintenance and security services.

A new Grants Chapter (Chapter 39) was created to centralise grants budget activities. Because of this change, the Grants-related budget previously included under Operations (Chapter 30) was moved to the new Chapter 39.

The Estimate 2024 foresees commitment appropriations for a total of € 13.5M necessary to cover the total legal obligations related to operations to be carried out over more than one financial year. This budget includes € 8M for EMPACT grants, € 2M for OTF grants, €300K for grants support against EURO counterfeiting, € 3M for ATLAS grants and € 175K for Innovation grants.

The related payment appropriations amount to € 10M, which represent the actual payments planned to be made to beneficiaries during the 2024 financial year and refers to € 4.5M for EMPACT, € 180K for support against EURO counterfeiting grants, € 2M for OTF, € 3.1M for ATLAS and € 140K for Innovation grants.

Item	Heading	2024 (CA)	2024 (PA)
B3-920	EMPACT grants	8,000,000	4,500,000
B3-930	SA Euro CF Grants	300,000	180,000
B3-940	OTF Grants	2,000,000	2,000,000
B3-950	ATLAS Grants	3,000,000	3,146,800
B3-960	Innovation Grants	175,000	140,000
Total		**13,475,000**	**9,966,800**

[31] Further details are provided in the annex on grants (Annex XI).
[32] Provisional – subject to Steering Committee (JRC and Europol) discussions.

2.4 Efficiency gains

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

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

2.5 Negative priorities/decrease of existing tasks

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

SECTION III - Work Programme 2024

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 2024, 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 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.

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

The work on EU Interoperability will also continue as part of the new ICT governance model, in line with the European Commission planning and in close cooperation with eu-LISA. The Europol Roadmap on EU Interoperability (endorsed by the MB) and subsequent implementation plan will be regularly reviewed and, as required, adjusted following new developments, such as adoption of new legal instruments, adoption of new implementing acts or re-planning of activities by the European Commission and/or eu-LISA.

In line with the 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 Europol TechWatch Forum, 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 Europol Regulation Recast, the Lab will provide the environment for Europol and MS to develop, train and validate models

and tools using operational data. The Innovation Lab will 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.

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

A dedicated Business Stream will continue working to renovate the way the agency operates in the administration domain. The target is to rationalise the diverse application landscape by streamlining the corporate processes and 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 2024-2026, taking into account the work done in 2023.

2024 Objectives

Information Management Strategy
Objectives and actions
A.1.1 Continue with the implementation of the Information Management Strategy[33]. ○ Coordinate and manage information management products and services in accordance with the business demand and organisational strategy. ○ Further develop and enforce information management standards and a single information management governance for Europol. ○ Continue aligning the Catalogue of Products & Services and underlying information such as process landscape, data flows, and performance reporting. ○ 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. ○ Continue efforts to promote best practices in relation to Member States' information management capabilities and strategies. ○ 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 Europol's revised Regulation in the Information Management Strategy of Europol and the ICT planning.

[33] 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.

○ 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 Europol's revised Regulation. Operational users at Europol and in the Member States benefit from improved information management capabilities, for use in criminal investigations and related information exchange and analysis. Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

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

Objectives and actions

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

Analysis Capability

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

- Further develop the Visualisation Analysis Toolset based on analysis from 2023, for example by enhancing advanced graphing and geomapping capabilities.
- Ensure that developments are in line with security and accreditation rules, DPF, EDPS feedback and in particular new rules arising from the Europol Regulation Recast.

Data Management Capability

In 2024, work will:

- Further evolve the Data Analysis Portal with the features outlined in the architecture roadmap, such as strategic intelligence and additional data retention requirements (for example hard deletion).
- Transit to Phase 2 of the Case Management and Joint Analysis capabilities; 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.
- Continue supporting other key technology developments, such as data refinery in the New Forensic Environment or alphanumeric visualisations for EU Interoperability.

SMART Capabilities

- Further develop new smart capabilities, in line with business needs.

Specialised Capabilities

- Finalise the development of the EU platform for referrals and removal orders (PERCI) by enhancing its functionalities.

- Progress with the integration of the Internet Facing Operations Environment (IFOE) capabilities with the ICT landscape, leveraging existing services and avoiding data / processing silo conditions.

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, including shortened delivery times and completed cross-domain interactions, and services integration.
- Finalise the development of the Malware Information Sharing platform.

Operations support capabilities

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

Europol Regulation and other policy initiatives

- Continue and finalise assessment identify and develop the opportunities stemming from the Europol Regulation and other relevant policy initiatives, including, but not limited to, facilitating the secure information exchange between EU MS and private parties, further evolving the secure information exchange between Europol and EU-bodies, and facilitating join operational analysis. Explore further the ability to deal with research data and research and innovation environments.

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 for increased implementation rate of National System Integrations (NSI) with SIENA web services. Subject to the final text of the Directive on Information Exchange, ensure required support to MS in implementation of the provisions of the Directive.
- 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, notifications through other channels, integrated smart services, 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.
- Continue automating immediate follow-up processes through SIENA for successful searches and hits resulting from cross-checks against Europol data and between Member States.
- Review the existing SIENA Organisational Entity and Organisational Sub-Entity concept, with a view to allowing more flexibility in the use of SIENA for MS internal communication flows.
- Ensure that the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) and its counterpart in the Operations Network (ONEP) develop in line with business needs as formulated by the platform managers, for example by adding new capabilities or enhancing existing ones.
- Ensure the EPE and ONEP solutions remain secure and relevant.
- Utilise EPE and ONEP as a gateway to (national) Law Enforcement specialist databases.
- Dependent on the outcome of the VCP-Connect pilot project, further mature the VCP -Connect solution in line with business demand. Ensure VCP remains secure and relevant.
- 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 UMF standard through participation in UMF governance and initiatives. Increase the use of structured data by Europol and further facilitate the provision of structured data by MS by using UMF.

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

- Advance with redesigning the EIS from a technical perspective as a future component of the Europol Data Sharing Capability in accordance with the new ICT environment.
- Continue improving data quality in the EIS including by implementing automated data compliance checks.
- Continue improving the interoperability between EIS and QUEST.
- Revise and expand automated data loading services. Further proceed with the development of a new generation dataloader; dependent on the outcome of the analysis carried out in 2023, initiate the development of a new service extending the capacity for the direct loading of EIS data by third parties.
- Continue improving the search mechanism of QUEST according to MS needs.
- Initiate integration of biometric searching capability integration with the (new) EIS, dependent on the outcome of the feasibility analysis done in 2023.
- Continue supporting rollout of QUEST (BPL and EU-RESTRICTED) in all Member States.
- Extend QUEST with searches on additional objects.
- Further roll-out Member States access to Europol's Analysis Projects on a hit/no hit basis (dependent on the QUEST+ pilot outcome).
- Dependent on the outcome of the Commission feasibility study on the interoperability between the Customs Import Control System ICS2 and the EIS and SIS, initiate the development of the interoperability between the EIS and ICS2.

Information management enablers - IAM and secure lines

- Harmonise further the IAM landscape of Europol by integrating more systems with IAM and taking further steps towards establishing single enterprise identity.
- 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

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 2024 Europol will:

- Contribute to the work on interoperability and connectivity of IM systems at EU level by participating in relevant committees, advisory groups and project boards, e.g. IXIM, SIS II, VIS, EURODAC, EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN, UMF and EPRIS.ADEP. Provide technical advice on initiatives related to the implementation of the EU Interoperability Agenda.
- Finalise 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.
- Further enhance Europol's capabilities related to biometrics, in particular fingerprints and facial recognition to meet the business needs and technical requirements in the context of the EU Interoperability framework.
- Launch into operation Europol's connection to and use of the European Search Portal to access SIS, VIS, EES data.
- Depending on the outcome of the legal discussion on the use of European Search Portal (ESP), further develop QUEST BPL allowing MS to query Europol data via the ESP for law enforcement purposes.

- In line with the outcome of negotiations of Eurodac Recast, implement Europol's access to Eurodac to replace current access via Member State's Access Point.
- In line with the outcome of negotiations of Screening Regulation, implement security checks of the applicants for international protection and irregular migrants via ESP against Europol data and the provision of appropriate follow up action.
- In line with the outcome of the negotiations on the legislative proposal on the revision of the Prüm Decisions, start the implementation of: 1) Member States access to biometric data provided to Europol by Third Parties and the development of QUEST-BIO, 2) Europol's access to Member States Prüm data and 3) develop and implement EPRIS to support the search of police records.
- Ensure support to and implement relevant improvements in business processes and technical solutions supporting Europol's tasks in relation to SIS, ETIAS, EES, VIS, CIR and ECRIS-TCN.
- Upon delivery of the building by the Host State, continue working towards the implementation of the new Europol Data Centre in support of the ETIAS solution.
- Support CEPOL, eu-LISA and Frontex in EU interoperability and large-scale EU systems' related training activities.

Expected results:	Europol is a fully integrated part of the European security architecture in accordance with respective EU legislation. The Member States' needs in terms of efficient access to information are better met. Interoperability and complementarity of Europol systems and tools with other EU information management systems leads to increased and more efficient exchange of information. Enhanced Europol contribution to relevant EU policies.

Innovation Lab

Objectives and actions

A.1.5 Further implement Europol's Innovation Strategy.

- Implement the new research and innovation provisions of the Europol Regulation, in particular by making use of the Research and Innovation Sandbox (RIS), i.e. a separate, isolated and protected data processing environment within Europol for the sole purpose of carrying out research and innovation projects. Identify and receive datasets for the explicit purpose of pursuing research and innovation projects.
- Factor in fundamental rights compliance throughout the innovation process.
- 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.
- Depending on the assessment of the possibility (2023), implement and/or further develop a scheme to host LEA and non-LEA researchers of key emerging technologies in the Europol Innovation Lab.
- Act as the secretariat for the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security and lead the Hub Team in collaboration with other JHA agencies, implement the tasks and functions adopted by COSI on 15 May 2020[34].

[34] EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security main principles for establishment, Council Secretariat reference 7829/20 LIMITE COSI 77 ENFOPOL 109 CYBERE 69 JAI 341.

- Act as the secretariat of the European Clearing Board (EuCB), a coordination and prioritisation structure composed of EU Member States' representatives. The EuCB should channel their needs and operational requirements to the Lab, discuss the creation of core groups and decide 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 a policy to provide targeted financial support from the EU Innovation Lab budget to Member States in their efforts to co-create innovative tools.
- 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.
- Continue to feed the ETR with innovative tools developed by EU MS, external partners and Europol.
- Manage the Europol Code Repository (ECR) in support of Core Group projects and Europol's projects.
- Further develop networks of relevant partners in the industry and academia and organise Industry Days in partnership with existing LEA and industry networks.
- Assist the European Commission in identifying key research themes, drawing up and implementing the Union framework programmes for research and innovation that are relevant to Europol's objectives.
- Coordinate the implementation of selected H2020 projects:
  - Project AIDA aims to develop a solution aimed at delivering a descriptive and predictive data analytics platform using machine learning and artificial intelligence methods to prevent, detect, analyse, and combat criminal activities. AIDA focuses on cybercrime and terrorism.
  - Project GRACE aims to develop a platform to process referrals from electronic service providers of child sexual exploitation material.
  - Project STARLIGHT 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 contributing 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 with the Records Management Programme. ○ Continue the transition to a new electronic Document, Records and Workflow management platform. ○ Progress with the Archiving Programme: maintain the central archive of official documents and corporate records in hard copy and electronic format; progress with the restructuring of the corporate archive facilities and the implementation of a historic archive (EU Archive Regulation 2015/496 amending Council Regulation 354/1983). ○ Maintain the overall organisational structure and support business stakeholders when defining and implementing organisational change; define and 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 organisational strategy and IM strategy; facilitate the development, analysis and improvement of business processes in prioritised areas of organisational development in line with the Europol Regulation Recast. ○ 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, including demand management and resource allocation, and monitor its implementation. ○ Design, build, maintain and manage the product lifecycles of Business applications, their processes and their evolution in alignment with the relevant stakeholders and strategies, legal, security and data protection requirements. ○ Create enabling technology roadmaps, including retirement / replacement of obsolete solutions and identification of technology-driven innovation opportunities, with attention to integration, interoperability and data management. ○ Develop and maintain the Business, Solution, and Information architecture, as well as the portfolio of ICT capabilities, to enable deliberate decision making and ensuring evolution in alignment with Europol's strategy, business needs, and compliance standards. ○ Guided by ICT Architecture, procure new ICT capabilities or develop new solutions according to agile practices and Secure Coding techniques while applying high standards of Quality and Assurance. ○ Continue optimisation of ICT costs, including license spending, right-size security measures, capacity and availability of Systems and Services. ○ Assure uptime and availability according to the set SLA's with the stakeholders. ○ Provide workplace-related services and customer service and support to users of all Europol ICT capabilities, in-house, in MS and Third Partners. Maintain an up-to-date Service Catalogue.
Expected results: Member States, Partners and Europol staff receive reliable and secure systems and services that enable the achievement of Europol's strategy.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024[35]
Core Business Project Delivery		
Operational Stability - Uptime of Core systems		
% of Active Users on the EPE		

[35] 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.

Number of Searches through EIS and QUEST
Number of SIENA Cases initiated
Number of SIENA Messages exchanged

A.2. Operational Coordination

Overview

Europol's Operational 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. In addition it handles and compares the biometric data received across the different cases (prioritised and non-prioritised), managing the existing dedicated databases for fingerprints (ABIS) and DNA.

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 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.

In parallel, the Operational Centre is also 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.

An increasingly important and considerable part of the Operational Centre's work is the implementation of Europol's role in the EU PNR, EES, ETIAS, VIS and other relevant information management initiatives on the movements of persons. In particular, with the ETIAS and VIS-recast mechanisms becoming operational in 2023-2024, Europol is expected to have in place a 24/7 service providing swift follow-up and reasoned opinion on hits of visa or travel authorisation applications against Europol data.

Special Tactics in the Operational centre at Europol offers specialist law enforcement techniques 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.

Europol supports the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) by facilitating the development, monitoring and reporting of the EMPACT operational action plans (OAP). With dedicated funds integrated into Europol's regular budget the agency is in a position to financially support actions of the OAPs on an annual basis in the form of EMPACT grants. Further support is provided in the form of organising and funding the EMPACT strategic meetings. 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.

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 requested by MS and partner countries. Currently, one of the main tasks of the team is to manage and coordinate the training and deployment aspects of the Guest Officer project with deployments to migration hotspots (Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta) but also to other conflicting areas at the request of the MSs and the European Commission, such as Ukraine and Belarus bordering countries.

2024 Objectives

Operational Centre
Objectives and actions
A.2.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the Operational Centre in managing operational information. ○ Monitor operational data on 24/7 basis as the single point of entry for any incoming information from stakeholders. ○ Decide on the acceptance of information into Europol's databases. ○ Process and handle urgent messages in priority cases, in close cooperation with competent analysis projects. ○ Handle non-priority cases and manage hits on related information including evaluation and reporting of matches. ○ 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. ○ Provide permanent monitoring and reporting of Open Source information about incidents related to the mandate of Europol. ○ Manage EIS operational data including the insertion of data on behalf of third parties and hit management. ○ Manage operational information exchange with third parties. ○ 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). ○ Maintain business intelligence dashboards to support management decisions. ○ Continuously develop, maintain and deliver the 3-month induction training for newly recruited analysts. Contribute to the delivery of the criminal analysis, EIS and SIENA trainings.
Expected results: Increased quality and completeness of Europol's criminal intelligence picture allows for more effective response to MS operational cases and crisis situations.

Operational Centre
Objectives and actions
A.2.2 Provide support to operations and crisis management.

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

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

Operational Centre

Objectives and actions

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

- Consolidate Europol business processes to fulfil legal obligations emanating from the EU PNR, EES, ETIAS, SIS and VIS.
- Initiate preparations for Prüm II, Screening Regulation, the Directive on Information Exchange and any other relevant information management legislative frameworks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources)**.**
- Operate the SIRENE office within Europol and implement the agency's tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources) under the SIS II Recast, which include:
  - Handling hits on terrorist alerts on 24/7 basis;
  - Exchanging supplementary information with MS SIRENE Bureaux;
  - Making (justified) searches in the alerts and data stored in SIS II.
- 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.

- Following the initiation of ETIAS operations, ensure the implementation of Europol's tasks (to the extent possible given the availability of resources)[36], 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; management of Europol's entries in the ETIAS Watchlist;
  - Making (justified) searches in the data stored in the ETIAS Central System.
- Process and compare the biometric data received at Europol (fingerprints and DNA profiles), being the Agency's point of contact and knowledge hub for handling biometric data.
- Following the initiation of VIS Recast operations, ensure readiness for the implementation 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.
- Search operational data provided by third partners in the VIS, EES and SIS on a case by case basis and include the relevant information retrieved in the operational outputs.

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

- Utilise opportunities stemming from the EU PNR/API, EES, ETIAS, SIS, VIS, ECRIS-TCN and other relevant information management initiatives, including the crosschecking of dactiloscopic data where possible, in order to enrich the criminal intelligence picture of law enforcement.
- Ensure readiness to operate direct search access to EURODAC as foreseen by the EURODAC regulation recast.
- Define, develop and deliver operational and strategic products and services on the basis of an integrated approach to accessible data beyond Europol databases to support the Member States.
- Provide support to PNR related projects of Member States and other relevant partners; host the Secretariat for the informal working group on PNR and participate in the IWG-PNR events.
- Subject to technical and EDPS assessments, provide support to the connectivity and data exchange among the Passenger Information Units (PIUs) in MS.
- Contribute to the coordination and delivery of dedicated training for the analysis of travel related information in partnership with CEPOL.
- Enhance cooperation with private partners relevant for the collection of travel intelligence. Utilise the opportunities provided by Europol Regulation Recast regarding information exchange with private parties.

Expected results:	Operational readiness for the full implementation of SIS, ETIAS, EES, ECRIS-TCN and VIS capabilities. Europol's compliance with its new tasks in the framework of the implementation of EU large-scale systems and other horizontal interoperability components**.**

[36] LFS of ETIAS Regulation did not foresee resources for Europol; LFS for Interoperability and LFS for Europol Regulation Recast did not foresee additional resources for Europol for ETIAS purposes. Europol provided a business case outlining this resource gap to the EU Commission in 2022.

	Increased quality and completeness of Europol's criminal intelligence picture with regards to the identification and movement of persons, including travel information and biometric data. Member States' investigations receive the required support for the processing of travel data and the results of such processing through Europol's operational products.

Special tactics
Objectives and actions
A.2.5 Provide support to Member States in the area of special tactics. o Act as the EU knowledge and expertise broker on specialist law enforcement techniques supporting MS investigations in the area of SOC, terrorism and cybercrime. o 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. o Develop and maintain expertise about all counter measures used by OCGs to defeat police operations in general and special tactics policing operations in particular. o 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. o 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. Update the EU Most Wanted website. o Manage the High Risk Informant Database (HRIDB) - a coded database allowing a more accurate risk assessment when working with foreign informants. o Manage and monitor the European Tracking Solution (ETS). Ensure the operational availability at large and aim to connect all interested MS and third parties. o Manage the Virtual Command Post tool for live information exchange during special tactics operations. Initiate the upgrade of the tool if operational needs arise. o Act as the EU Single Point of Contact for all Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (drones) related matters, including MS requests for information and analysis. o Follow up on the research on the operational use of geospatial images (Copernicus Programme, Frontex, EMSA and EUSATCEN) and other space assets for law enforcement by: - Extending the use of Europol's access to Integrated Maritime Services Portal at the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to the MS; - Implementing a central point of access for LEA to use the European Commission's Copernicus services; and - Supporting the informal network of experts on the use of geospatial images for law enforcement purposes. o Organise strategic expert meetings, training, awareness raising and prevention activities in the area of knowledge management and in support of specialist networks. o Explore new areas of special tactics support which Europol could potentially provide. o Implement the Guest Experts (GE) concept to create a pool of experts in the area of special tactics.

- Support the establishment of an EU wide informal expert network on covert surveillance (if progress made in 2023) based on Europol's ARGOS initiative (which set up links among the informal EU networks on covert surveillance).
- Develop in-house expertise on crowd-sourcing tools and special tactics open source intelligence.
- Manage additional EPE networks under the sosXnet[37] umbrella and give guidance to the related 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.

EMPACT support

Objectives and actions

A.2.6 Provide support and funding opportunities to EMPACT priorities and actions.

- Contribute to the identification of key issues and good practices related to EMPACT and provide input to the Council's Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI).
- Provide methodological, administrative and logistical support to the drafting of the Operational Action Plans (OAPs).
- 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.
- Facilitate communication and collaboration between the crime priorities and horizontal goals having common objectives and/or interdependencies.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Common Horizontal Strategic Goal on Criminal intelligence picture, assuming the coordinator's functions.
- Contribute to the implementation of Operational Action Plans; provide stakeholder management and support to operational meetings.
- Manage the EMPACT Grant scheme and inform MS systematically about funding opportunities.
- Maintain contacts with stakeholders in order to identify and report on issues of general relevance for the successful implementation of EMPACT.
- Coordinate and support the planning of Joint Action Days.
- Monitor the implementation of the Operational Action Plans.
- Advance the features of the digital/online EMPACT platform (EMPACT Goes Green) in view of ensuring more efficient planning and reporting.
- 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).

[37] Specialist Operational Support Exchange Network

○ Continue implementing the funding mechanism[38] earmarked for (Member-States-led) EMPACT-related projects for the benefit of the law enforcement authorities of the EU Eastern Neighbourhood countries. Through capacity building enable the beneficiary countries to incorporate the EMPACT methodology in their national and regional planning.	
Expected results:	Member States receive efficient support for the implementation of their OAPs, including the activation of EMPACT community as emergency mechanism. Administrative aspects of EMPACT are improved in efficiency due to digitalisation. Europol's support to EMPACT increasingly contributes to operational outcomes in the Member States. Strengthened partner countries' institutional knowledge of and criminal intelligence capacity in the EMPACT priority crime areas. Enhanced operational cooperation of partner countries with EU Member States and agencies.

Deployment management and support
Objectives and actions
A.2.7 Manage and support deployments, incl. Europol's Guest Officers and Guest Experts capabilities. ○ Manage and support medium to long-term deployments by Europol, as well as deployments linked to first responses requested by Member States or partners, such as deployments to hotspots and other EU security-related incident areas. ○ Coordinate, manage and support the guest officer (GO) deployments, including: - Maintaining a pool of GOs ready for deployment; - Managing ongoing deployments of GOs; - Delivering the GO training programme which encompasses hands-on training on Europol systems and the mobile office, as well as getting GOs up to speed to operate under the aegis of Europol; - Providing input to the development and common training materials of the Migration Management Support Teams (MMST) together with FRONTEX and EUAA; - Implementing mobile team arrangements and rapid deployments when required; - Extending the network of national contact points to ensure that more disembarkation points/areas of interest agreed upon with host states, 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. ○ Ensure that all modalities are in place for the implementation of the GE concept. ○ Maintain and maximise the use of a pool with short-term costed SNEs for future deployments requiring specific expertise (remaining on stand-by after recruitment to be activated when necessary) on the basis of the profiles indicated in the Implementation Plan for the GE Concept.

[38] 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.

○ Support Europol's operational centres in utilising the Guest expert concept as indicated in their planning: in the area of special tactics (A.2.5), cyber-crime (A.4.1), counter-terrorism (A.5.1) and asset recovery (A.6.5). ○ Explore additional areas where Europol may deploy GEs to support 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 and management of deployments, implementation of safe and effective deployments, 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 2023)	Target 2024
Speed of first-line response to MS requests		
Number of Accepted SIENA contributions by OAC[39]		
Number of deployments of Guest Officers		

[39] 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 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 has facilitated already the implementation of three EU Policy Cycles for organised and serious international crime and is currently working on the next one - EMPACT 2022-2025 - which will be again a key driver for the operational support provided by Europol to MS competent authorities in 2024. In addition to the current planning, Europol will include its tasks and responsibilities stemming from the Operational Action Plans for 2024 once those are finalised.

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

Europol is following closely EU policy developments and in 2024 it will be contributing to the implementation of 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 EU Action Plan on migrant smuggling 2021-2025.

2024 Objectives

European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)
Objectives and actions

A.3.1 Ensure the effective functioning of the ESOCC in providing strategic and operational support to EU MS' investigations on SOC and the implementation of EMPACT priorities.

- 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.
- Promote the use of the dedicated OTF grant to finance the application of special investigative techniques and other resource demanding activities in MS. Ensure the complementarity of the grant mechanism to the EMPACT funding provided by Europol.
- 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).
- Promote the recruitment of short-term SNEs to reinforce OTFs in view of improving operational support for HVT cases and achieving closer cooperation with involved MS.
- 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 horizontal support of the EFECC.
- Develop the capacity of the ESOCC in open source and social media monitoring with the support of the ECTC/EU IRU.
- Support the preparation of prevention materials and campaigns.

Expected results:	Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to SOC. Enhanced law enforcement coordination of actions and operational cooperation in the EU against organised crime groups constituting the highest risk for the internal security. Europol contributes to the objectives of relevant EU policies.

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

Operations on Drugs
Disrupt the Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) involved in cocaine and heroin trafficking and distribution.
Disrupt the OCGs involved in the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, as well as the supply of relevant materials and precursors.
Disrupt the OCGs involved in cannabis cultivation, trafficking and distribution.
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 and the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025[40]. ○ 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. ○ Collaborate closely with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) to ensure a full coherence of the work of the two agencies. In cooperation with the EMCDDA support the EU Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances. ○ Contribute with the support of EC3 Dark Web team to the joint project with EMCDDA and JRC for development of a tool for monitoring and analysis of drug activity on Dark Web markets.

[40] COM(2020) 606 final.

- Reinforce cooperation with the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) by promoting awareness sessions, workshops and joint operations in order to improve effectiveness of information flow and operational collaboration.
- Strengthen operational cooperation with major seaports that are being abused for large-scale drug trafficking.
- Utilise new opportunities stemming from the Europol Regulation Recast enabling more effective cooperation with private parties and foster the setting-up of public-private partnerships such as with relevant EU courier/parcel post companies, aviation and maritime authorities concerning trafficking of drugs or precursors; or with relevant chemical and pharmaceutical industries concerning suspicious orders or purchases.
- Prioritise cooperation with high-risk countries[41] from a drug production and smuggling perspective in order to support MS investigations, and trace and identify drugs-related criminal proceeds.
- Support EU dialogues on drugs that focus on specific drug trafficking routes, involving producer, transit and consumer markets[42].
- Support MS investigations against environmental crime related to illicit drug production and trafficking.
- Organise and fund the annual Drug Conference.

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

Operations on Weapons & Explosives

Disrupt illicit trafficking in firearms and explosives.

Objectives and actions

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

- 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[43].
- 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 contribute to the collection of intelligence, analysis, forensic examination results and reporting on used/seized weapons.

[41] Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, UAE, Morocco and China.
[42] 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.
[43] COM(2020) 608 final

- Use biometric technologies (facial recognition) to support surveillance work targeting international weapons trafficking networks.
- Conduct proactive criminal intelligence gathering on (dark web) online weapons and explosives trade, with the support of EC3's DarkWeb team.
- Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the weapon/explosives production and trafficking logistical facilitators (defined as facilitators involved in the production, transportation or financing of weapons-related illicit activities).
- Develop capacities for weapons and explosives tracing and utilise the access to CAR's iTRACE and Interpol's iARMs. Resume discussions with the US ATF's eTRACE in view of establishing access.
- Support MS investigations to counter the diversion of firearms and explosive precursors with the help of the counter diversion information cell collecting and cross-checking information on suspicious dealers and brokers.
- Focus on trafficking of weapons through postal and fast parcels.
- Focus on the analysis of open source intelligence to identify and analyse patterns of firearms-related violence and firearms trafficking by utilising horizontal support from the EU IRU.
- Develop, in cooperation with the European Commission, common reporting on firearms seizures to create conditions towards establishing a standard EU statistical data collection procedure, and an EU-level tool to track in real-time firearms-related incidents and seizures.
- Contribute to the Frontex Firearms Handbook for Border Guard and Customs updates and regional versions.

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

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

Disrupt structures of high risk OCGs and criminal networks.

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

Disrupt the capacity of Organised Crime facilitators and enablers.

Objectives and actions

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

- Support investigations on high risk OCGs and criminal networks in accordance with the new mandate of AP High Risk OCGs, especially those criminal activities involving extensive money laundering, extreme violence (murders, kidnap and torture) and corruption.
- Support umbrella investigations against organised criminal groups offering facilitation services to other OCGs, criminal networks or individual criminals.
- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of high risk OCGs and criminal networks, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.

- Support the implementation of the Common Horizontal Strategic Goal and the Operational Action Plan under the EMPACT priority High Risk Criminal Networks (HRCN), assuming co-driver and coordinator functions.
- Ensure the overall coherence of actions targeting key criminal structures and individuals (HRCN and HVT). Inform regularly the EMPACT community about the strategic implications of the implementation of the OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EU Strategy on Organised Crime 2021-2025.
- Contribute to the development of innovative tools in view of facilitating data processing and analysis in support of HVT and priority cases.
- Explore opportunities for further development of the OTF concept and the respective toolbox and promote use by MS/TP and harmonised implementation across all crime areas.
- Further develop Europol's capacity to address encrypted communication and other new technology-related methods used by organised crime groups to protect criminal activities and to conceal related communications.
- Support the implementation of special tactics targeting the illicit activities of the members of high risk OCGs, including their money laundering operations.
- Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meeting and other dedicated meetings, as needed.
- Establish cooperation with relevant EU-financed projects, which seek to support MS in identifying international organised crime groups and criminal networks through intelligence-led actions, centralised analysis and effective use of forensic tools, and promote the use of Europol's services in achieving the objectives of such projects.

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

Operations on Organised Property Crime

Combat organised property crime committed by Mobile Organised Crime Groups.

Objectives and actions

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

- Identify HVT(s) active in the field of organised property crime, including cultural goods, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying HVT/OTF concept.
- Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Organised Property Crime.
- Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Consolidate efforts with MS in the area of ATM attacks and Crimes against the Elderly to counter the extreme violence, high frequency and extensive illicit proceeds stemming from these criminal activities, by prioritising relevant investigations and promoting the establishment of OTFs.
- Contribute to the implementation of the EU Action Plan tackling trafficking in cultural goods.

○ Enhance the collaboration with the EU CULTNET through the newly established contact point at Europol who will streamline initiatives, explore new opportunities for cooperation and facilitate the interaction between Europol and the network. ○ Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting to present developments in the property crime domain and Europol's tools and services.
Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality analytical and operational support related to organised property crime. Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

Operations on Environmental crime Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in environmental crime.
Objectives and actions
A.3.6 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on environmental crime. ○ Identify HVT(s) active in the field of environmental crime, set up operational meetings and proactively support the coordination and the conduct of investigations by applying the HVT/OTF concept. ○ Support the implementation of the EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Environmental crime. ○ Perform data processing, criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support. ○ Support MS investigations in cross border waste and pollution crime and cases of infiltration of criminal networks in the respective legal business structures. ○ Focus on trafficking of fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases) and ozone depleting substances and in particular on cases that include infiltration of legal business structures and internet enabled activities. ○ Focus on the illicit management of Electronic and Electric Equipment Waste, especially the export to third countries. ○ Conduct mapping of the specialised public or private technical support resources (such as accredited laboratories, sampling companies, etc.) in the EU which could be used to address concrete operational needs of MS investigations on environmental crimes. ○ Provide support to the EnviCrimeNet Secretariat and the activities of the network. ○ Organise and fund a Plenary Meeting.
Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality technical, analytical and operational support related to environmental crimes. Arrests of High Value Targets, identification and seizures of criminal assets, and disruption/dismantling of criminal networks.

European Migrant Smuggling Centre **Migrant Smuggling:** Disrupt OCGs involved in the facilitation of illegal immigration into and within the EU Member States. **Trafficking in Human Beings:** Disrupt OCGs involved in intra-EU human trafficking and human trafficking from the most prevalent external source countries for the purposes of

labour and sexual exploitation; including those groups using legal business structures to facilitate or disguise their criminal activities.	
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 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, incl. 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 Action Plan on 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 EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Management Mechanism Network and support the implementation of the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint. ○ Support the Joint Liaison Task Force on migrant smuggling embedded within the EMSC and composed of a permanent operational team of MS and third countries liaison officers. ○ Maintain the Information Clearing House (ICH) with international agencies and partners. ○ 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). ○ Actively participate in EU ISF Common Operational Partnership programme with third countries in fighting migrant smuggling. ○ 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. ○ 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. ○ 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.
A.3.8 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on trafficking in human beings. ○ Support Member States investigations concerning trafficking in human beings within, into or through the EU for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation, or any other form of exploitation. ○ 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. ○ 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. ○ 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 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by ESOCC[44]		
Number of Operational Task Forces established		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ESOCC		
Number of Operations supported 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		

[44] 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 distant 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 Laboratory provides on-the-spot and in-house computer forensic support services, including decryption, vehicle forensics, network, mobile device and counterfeit banknote analysis. 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.

Concerning cybercrime intelligence, EC3 focuses on information collection from a wide array of public, private and open sources in order to enrich available law enforcement data. The goal is to expand the intelligence picture on cybercrime across Europe in order to 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 actively cooperate on R&D requirements as input for projects funded under the European Commission's Programme Horizon 2020.

One of EC3's main goals is to increase its preventive capabilities in the fight against cybercrime, while, at the same time, helping the Member States' law enforcement in being one step ahead of cybercriminals. An important part of this effort is specialising in early warnings, cybercrime threat assessments and awareness-raising methods.

2024 Objectives

European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)
Objectives and actions
A.4.1 Ensure the effective functioning of EC3 in providing strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on cybercrime and the implementation of EMPACT priorities. ○ 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. ○ 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. ○ Provide an on-the-spot service by deploying cyber analysts and/or specialists to support ongoing operations. ○ 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). ○ Support the implementation of Operational Action Plans under EMPACT priority threats. ○ Strengthen the support to Member States on Operational Taskforces, the effective prioritisation of HVTs and identification of optimal follow-up response measures. ○ Explore the opportunities offered by the Guest Experts concept for deploying short-term costed SNEs to MS requiring specific expertise in the cybercrime domain. ○ 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)[45] and the EU Cyber Crisis Taskforce. ○ 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. ○ 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. Ensure the representation of the law enforcement interests related to lawful interception at the EU level. ○ Participate in the discussions on the establishment of the EU Joint Cyber Unit[46] put forward by the EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade.

[45] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2017/1584/oj
[46] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/cyber-security

- Monitor 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 and the Cyber Resilience Act.
- 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.
- Contribute to the preparation and delivery of standardised prevention and awareness campaigns and activities in the cybercrime-mandated areas as detailed in the EC3 Cybercrime Prevention and Awareness Programme 2024. Facilitate the interaction and cooperation with partners such as the Cybercrime Prevention Network.
- Coordinate and support the demand, development and delivery of comprehensive cybercrime training under the umbrella of a Training Governance Model or Cybercrime Capacity Building Strategy at EU level, including the CEPOL Cybercrime Academy.
- Promote the EC3 Secure Platform for Accredited Cybercrime Experts (SPACE) as a centre of excellence where relevant experts exchange strategic information and best practices.
- Continue to use the EC3 Twitter Account as a fast dissemination channel for EC3's products and services, as well as to engage with the relevant external stakeholders.

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

Digital Support Services - Digital Forensics

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

Objectives and actions

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

- Deliver digital operational support services, such as criminal infrastructure oriented cyber forensics to tackle encrypted communication networks (in close cooperation with Cyber Intelligence) and ransomware infrastructure.
- 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, developing dedicated tools, and sharing best practices to respond to the emerging operational needs (e.g. hardware and Internet of Things (IoT) forensics, mobile extractions and analysis).
- 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 methods and share them on Europol Code Repository.
- Design the further evolution of the Decryption Platform on the basis of previous experience and developments of new technologies.
- Improve capabilities to perform in-depth hardware analysis and reverse engineering, to increase capacity to tackle encrypted communication networks, to extract data from mobile devices, portable encrypted devices, cryptocurrency wallets, as well as Internet of Things (IoT) devices.
- Establish capacity to use custom data extraction methods from mobile devices, not supported by commercial forensic tools.
- Establish capacity to provide blockchain forensic services.
- Maintain and support Forums (e.g. the Forensic Expert Forum) and communities on EPE in relevant forensic areas such as digital forensics, vehicle forensics, decryption etc.
- Contribute to the implementation of the EU Forensic Science Area 2.0 Action Plan.
- Contribute to the annual Digital Forensic Investigator training course organised by CEPOL. Provide highly specialised training on decryption for top-level software developers from competent authorities in cooperation with ECTEG. Support ECTEG in the development of other training courses on encryption.

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. ○ Improve the criminal intelligence position of EC3 and the Member States by proactively identifying 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, in line with the provisions of the Europol Regulation Recast. ○ 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 crypto currencies. 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) analysis and expertise, and the development of national cyber intelligence models. Develop an OSINT Hub for sharing expertise on the exploitation of open source data for operational purposes. ○ Utilise the Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) 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 NFE project and transfer of information to OPS environment.
Expected results: Member States' investigations receive quality cyber intelligence support and benefit from improved criminal intelligence picture.

Operations on Cyber-Dependent Crimes
Disrupt criminal networks involved in cyber-dependent crimes associated with internet and ICT (Information and Communication Technology).
Objectives and actions
A.4.5 Provide support to EU Member States' investigations on cyber-dependent crimes. ○ Provide operational coordination and support to Member States' investigations with regards to cyber-dependent crimes of greatest concern.

- Focus on preventing and combating cyber criminality affecting critical infrastructure and network and information systems.
- Focus on investigating, targeting and disrupting cybercrimes associated with organised groups generating greatest harm and/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.
- Provide a dedicated, secure and automated malware analysis platform to MS through the Europol Malware Analysis Solution (EMAS). Enhance EMAS technical and analysis capabilities in regards to reverse engineering and ATM malware.
- Expand the new International Law Enforcement Ransomware Response Model (IRRM), which was developed jointly with the J-CAT, in view of reinforcing the operational and tactical response to ransomware. 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 FREETOOLS).

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 identification of optimal follow-up response measures.
- Identify a High Value Target among the Dark Web's most prolific perpetrators and set up an OTF to coordinate and de-conflict operations.

- Develop a more pro-active approach to identify investigation possibilities for MS. Provide packages with necessary analysis and information to successfully start investigations.
- Prepare to implement effectively the EU Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse. Assess EC3 data collection modalities and the possibilities for establishing a data warehouse to ensure effective handling of the expected increase in data contributions. Support MS in case coordination and prioritisation for the anticipated growing number of investigations.
- 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[47].
- Continue hosting the Victim Identification Taskforce to foster cooperation and pooling of expertise from different police agencies and Interpol.
- Enhance the support provided to the MS in the area of victim identification by further developing the existing Image and Video Analysis Solution (IVAS) 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.
- Advance work on the setting up of a dedicated solution to facilitate communication and information flow for 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 ensuring that this is consistently done in a time-sensitive manner.[48]
- 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 Recast).
- Deliver and support training courses on Victim Identification (in cooperation with CEPOL) and Combating Online Sexual Exploitation of Children.

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

Operations on Payment Fraud and Online Fraud Schemes

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

Objectives and actions

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

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

[47] This initiative does not foresee any capacity reinforcement for Europol.
[48] The action is related to the H2020 grant to the GRACE Project.

- 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).
- 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, 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[49], 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, investment/marketing fraud, 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.
- Establish a platform/framework 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 Recast.

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.

[49] Smishing is a phishing cybersecurity attack carried out over mobile text messaging, also known as SMS phishing.

- 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 Member States and Europol's Analysis Projects in the coordination and development of EMPACT Operational Actions relevant to Dark Web.
- 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.
- Extend 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.
- 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 to enable the undertaking of joint initiatives between J-CAT, EC3 and the private sector.	
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, 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, 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. Member States' investigations receive up-to-date technical support in the cyber domain.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by EC3[50]		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EC3		
Number of Operations supported by EC3		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EC3		
Number of Decryption platform successes		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EC3		

[50] 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. 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 also 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.

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

2024 Objectives

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. ○ Evaluate information received from third countries on suspected foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and support the process for the possible entering of this information in the SIS II by Member States in accordance with the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) protocol for a coordinated approach[51]. ○ Propose the insertion of the new information alerts on third-country nationals in the interest of the Union once this new alert category is implemented in the Schengen Information System, following the new provisions of the Europol Regulation Recast. ○ Increase the exploitation of SIS II 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.

[51] EU Council 13037/20

- 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 cooperation with EU institutions and agencies, international organisations, law enforcement, academia and private sector entities with a particular focus on stakeholders at policy level. Produce joint risk or threat analysis with EU institutions and agencies as well as with academic think tanks working in the CT field.
- Develop and increase 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[52] or CEPOL INFLOW[53];
  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.
- Initiate cooperation with other non-EU CT units active in areas of possible interest for the EU internal security, in particular in Caucasus, Central Asia 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.

[52] CT JUST Project: Counter Terrorism in the MENA region, West Africa & the Horn of Africa
[53] 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 who evoke Islam to justify 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.
- Adjust the concept for the establishment of Operational Task Forces (OTFs) according to the specific requirements of the CT area. Based on the adjusted concept, provide support to an increased number of OTFs in the CT area.
- Following the emerging trend of right wing terrorism and violent extremism, set up a dedicated target group and an EU-wide coordination mechanism to tackle this crime phenomenon.
- Perform priority actions related to right-wing terrorism and violent extremism, aiming at identifying targets (Organisations/Individuals) in high profile cases.
- Contribute to the update of Frontex's Common Risk Indicators to enhance rules-based screening and risk identification.
- Make effective use of the new face recognition tool.
- Contribute to the collection of intelligence, analysis and reporting on used/seized terrorist weapons.
- Explore opportunities to enhance Europol's capabilities to support MS through acquiring additional translators for Arabic, as well as Farsi, Urdu, Pashto and Kurdish.

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

Operations on War Crimes, Genocide, Crimes against Humanity

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

Objectives and actions

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

- Streamline the gathering and processing of information at EU level for selected priority cases of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support Member States with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- 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 Europol Regulation Recast 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/tools 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.

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).
- Provide training to MS on the possibility to request searches in financial payments data.

○ Provide feedback to the US Treasury on the effectiveness of the TFTP. Explore mutually the potential to maintain a dynamic, accurate and result-oriented TFTP protocol. ○ Liaise with Europol's Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) and with the competent ESOCC 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 in partnership with CEPOL. ○ 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 Annual Work Programme. ○ Further develop the ATLAS connectivity initiative (EPE, ONEP-EPE, SIENA, NEOS, Pooling & Sharing, etc.).
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.

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. ○ 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 Action Plan. Maintain a close dialogue with the internet industry in the framework of the Forum. ○ 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. ○ Reinforce and streamline the ECTC expertise on the abuse of the Internet by right-wing terrorist and violent extremist networks. ○ 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 prioritised Third parties (Western Balkans, MENA region).

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 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.

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

- Continue work on the PERCI roadmap following the goals achieved in 2023 to reach full implementation of the project:
  - Create the possibility for Hosting Service Providers (HSPs) to directly update the status of referrals and removal orders within PERCI (received/ assessed/ removed/ not removed) through an ad-hoc Application Program Interface;
  - Provide HSPs with a secured vehicle to voluntary report content that presents an imminent threat to life (Ar. 14(5) of the TCO Regulation) in order to allow MS to take action to avert threats to life and support attribution;
  - Allow competent authorities in MS to work on the scrutiny process of cross-border removal orders.
- Manage the PERCI Focus Group enrolling MS in support of the technical and operational development of the platform, and afterwards annual PERCI-meetings.
- Organise tailored trainings for MS competent authorities' use of PERCI.
- Extend the scope of PERCI to handle in addition to online terrorist content any other type of illegal content related to crime areas covered by the Digital Services Act.
- Use PERCI platform as the operational platform for EUCP crisis mechanism to enable the 24/7 real time crisis response and knowledge sharing across sectors.
- Based on the consultation of Member States within the framework of the dedicated working group, coordinate the implementation of a de-confliction process for law enforcement investigative digital information such as social media accounts.
- Explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the context of PERCI ecosystem. Identify the potential business opportunities of AI to enrich the existing dataset, improve the data quality and identify trends on online illegal content dissemination.
- Advance with the automation of data extraction, ingestion and real time crosschecks with Europol Databases.
- Enhance the search experience in the existing dataset as well as the provision of detailed statistics.
- Support the monitoring and evaluation of the TCO Regulation to enable the Commission to report on the application and the evaluation of the regulation.
- Utilise new opportunities stemming from Europol Regulation Recast 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.

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

EU IRU - Internet Investigations

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

Objectives and actions

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

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

Expected results: CT internet-based investigations and referrals receive adequate technical support.

EU IRU's toolset remains at the forefront of the available technology.

Better cooperation with external partners on technical research and development.

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

- Support Member States in connecting with online service providers and analysing the digital footprint of a target in CT investigations through the SIRIUS capability.
- Continue to improve the knowledge of Member States' law enforcement and judicial authorities on access to digital data from OSPs, via guidelines published on the SIRIUS platform.
- Build the capacities of MS law enforcement and judiciary authorities to produce quality information requests to OSPs.
- 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.
- 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 OSPs and obtain electronic evidence.

Increased mutual trust and understanding between MS and OSPs.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by ECTC[54]		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by ECTC		
Number of Operations supported 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		

[54] 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

Based on the clear demand from Member States and partners to receive more support in the area of financial and economic crimes, as well as the commitment of Europol to put more focus on financial investigations and asset recovery in its Strategy 2020+, the agency set up in 2020 a new operational centre, the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) which is dedicated to maximising Europol's responsiveness and operational performance in the areas of fraud, money laundering, asset recovery, corruption and counterfeiting.

The establishment of the EFECC was driven by four main factors:

- The growing financial impact of economic crimes such as complex fraud and trans-national money laundering which remain a persistent threat, recognised as critical by recent EU level regulations which allow for the criminalisation of money laundering as a standalone offence;
- The need to increase the effectiveness of national law enforcement authorities in the pursuit of illicit profits of organised crime through reinforced asset recovery capabilities. The EFECC should be beneficial to the financial crime priorities in the EMPACT framework;
- The growing attention to crimes against the financial interests of the Union and the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO). Under the EPPO Regulation, Europol is called to provide analytical support to EPPO investigations and share any relevant information held at Europol concerning offences under the EPPO competence; and
- The growing political attention to grand corruption cases and institutional calls for stronger Europol involvement in this area.

The new operational Centre aims at achieving the following goals:

- Reinforced operational effectiveness: by concentrating all financial intelligence and economic crime capabilities under one coordinated entity. This should develop 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: A Financial and Economic Crime Centre brings 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 brings a better understanding of the allocation of responsibilities; and
- Enhanced stakeholder management and funding opportunities: the new Centre offers a single point of contact and should become 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.

2024 Objectives

European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC)
Objectives and actions
A.6.1 Reinforce the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) to extend the provision of strategic and operational support to EU Member States' investigations on financial and economic crime. ○ 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. ○ 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. ○ Provide support to High Value Targets investigations of Member States and the work of the Operational Task Forces on particular HVT. ○ Support the implementation of the EMPACT priorities on MTIC, excise fraud, counterfeiting, criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery. ○ Establish a dedicated team in EFECC to provide horizontal operational support in financial investigations to Operational Task Forces and HVT (to the extent possible given existing capacities vs. demand). ○ Following the legal clarity stemming from the Europol Regulation Recast 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. ○ 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. ○ Produce dedicated risk and threat assessments, strategic and situation reports in the areas of EFECC competence. Contribute to the drafting of a flagship report on economic and financial crime. ○ Further extend the Joint Financial Intelligence Group (JFIG) at Europol to improve communication and cooperation between Europol Liaison Bureaux and EFECC Analysis Projects in order to better align investigative priorities and effectiveness of pursued cases. ○ Maintain the Customs cooperation function within the EFECC including the cooperation with the Commission Service competent for customs matters. Exploit modalities for mutual information exchange between Customs risk profiling and Europol's criminal analysis. Follow up on the results of the Working Group[55] from 2022. Utilise the operation use from the established interoperability connection between the Customs Information System and Europol's databases, enabling automated cross-checking. ○ Further develop cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO) in line with the requirements of the Europol Regulation Recast. With the EPPO SIENA connection being in place, prepare to support an increasing number of EPPO operations. ○ Enhance operational cooperation and exchange of strategic and technical information with OLAF by making extensive use of the established SIENA connection and dedicated OLAF Liaison Officer posted within the EFECC.

[55] Working Group on "Mutual support of Customs Risk management and criminal intelligence of other Law Enforcement Authorities"

- 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.
- Develop strategic cooperation with the European Banking Authority and the European Investment Bank as key partners of the EFECC.
- Increase the outreach towards the most relevant third countries in the field of EU related economic and financial crime, including China, UAE, Brazil and Morocco.
- Enhance the quantity and quality of EFECC external communication and visibility.
- Contribute to policy development such as drafting of guidelines or revision of standards when requested by the Commission.

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

Operations on Fraud

Disrupt the capacity of OCGs involved in fraud.

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

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

Objectives and actions

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

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Set up operational meetings and support priority- and HVT investigations.
- Support the implementation of EMPACT Operational Action Plans on Excise Fraud and MTIC fraud.
- Support at least one joint operation (Week of Action, Joint Action Day, etc.) developed in the frame of the EMPACT OAP Excise Fraud, also involving other EU bodies or agencies (OLAF, FRONTEX, etc.).
- Contribute to at least one operation in the framework of EMPACT priority Online Fraud.
- Organise a public/private partnership conference on tobacco excise fraud, in the framework of the annual meeting of AP Smoke.
- Continue developing cooperation with Eurofisc and EPPO, including by extending Europol's operational and analytical support to Eurofisc and EPPO international MTIC and Tax Fraud and Evasion investigations.
- Organise a conference on VAT fraud with the participation of 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.
- Prepare a strategic report on MTIC fraud highlighting, if new trends/modus operandi or typologies emerge.

○ 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 Insider trading, market manipulation and CEO fraud. Assess major "leaks" (like panama papers) on strategic level and provide policy advice concerning legal loopholes and advice for LEAs.
○ Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meetings.
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.
○ Process and handle financial intelligence information. Perform intelligence analysis and provide analytical support.
○ Provide financial intelligence to the ESOCC, EC3 and the ECTC (with regards to terrorist financing).
○ 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.
○ Improve operational support by enhancing virtual assets expertise and provide tracing and analysis support to financial investigations involving virtual assets.
○ Support the strategic and operational information exchange between the Member States' Financial Investigators.
○ Contribute to the development of the Supra-National Risk Assessment and high-risk third countries assessment on money laundering and terrorist financing in the framework of the Expert group on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.
○ Support and host the secretariats for the Anti-Money Laundering Operational Network (AMON) and the Association of Law Enforcement Forensic Accountants (ALEFA).
○ Support the triparty Working Group on criminal finances and cryptocurrencies (co-host the secretariat jointly with Interpol and the Basel Institute).
○ Promote and support the Europol Financial Intelligence Public Private Partnership (EFIPPP).
○ Continue engaging with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Egmont group in view of developing global cooperation on money laundering and terrorist financing. Support targeted FATF projects when operational needs are identified.
○ Prepare for taking up any potential new task arising from the anti-money laundering legislative proposal for a comprehensive Union policy on preventing money laundering and terrorism financing[56].
○ Establish a well-functioning working relation with the new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA), if founded in 2023. Undertake preparations for setting up secure

[56] C(2020) 2800 final, published by the European Commission on 7 May 2020.

channels of communication (i.e. SIENA and FIU.net) and a mutual hit- no hit access to data (if applicable). ○ Contribute to developments in the field of Countering Financing of Terrorism (CTF) and its links to AML, in particular by leading or supporting strategic CFT projects. ○ Support the Counter Terrorism Financial Investigators Network, which facilitates the exchange of investigation techniques and experiences on CT financial investigations. ○ Support the Datacros project[57] that aims at analysing fraudulent patterns in business ownership and control structures data in order to enhance financial analysis and investigations. ○ Coordinate training activities and support the financial intelligence training delivered to Europol and the EU Member States. Provide expertise in various events on money laundering and terrorism financing including by supporting CEPOL courses. ○ Organise and fund the Annual Plenary Meeting.
A.6.4 Increase cooperation with FIUs. ○ Work towards the improvement of the cooperation with the FIUs and increase the number of countries contributing financial intelligence to Europol (Suspicious Transactions Reports (STRs), Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) and cash declarations). ○ Prepare the grounds for establishing close cooperation with the future Cooperation and Support Mechanism (CSM) for the FIUs, including possible secondment of liaison officers, SIENA connection, use of FIU.net etc. ○ Negotiate an SLA regarding the "Europol node" when the CSM/ new Authority takes over the FIU.net as a channel of operational communication with EU FIUs and FIU Norway. ○ Provide information sessions on the use and benefits of matching technologies to APs. ○ 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[58], 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' investigations receive better and extended financial intelligence support. Investigations on organised crime and terrorism can better benefit from synergies between financial and criminal intelligence.

[57] https://www.transcrime.it/datacros/

[58] 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.

Asset Recovery

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

Objectives and actions

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

- Perform criminal intelligence analysis and support MS with operational capabilities and expertise, including on-the-spot support.
- Set up operational meetings and support priority- and HVT investigations.
- Support the implementation of EMPACT Operational Action Plan on Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery.
- Support the European Commission in the peer-reviews of the EU Asset Recovery Offices (ARO).
- Co-chair with the European Commission the ARO platform meetings. Host the meeting of the ARO platform. Liaise with each Asset Recovery Office within the Member States to increase visibility of the EFECC's work.
- Support and host the secretariats of the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN).
- Connect to Siena EU Asset Recovery Offices that are not directly connected yet and strengthen MS AROs partnership with the EFECC resulting in an increase of their contribution level.
- Contribute to the work of the Task Force 'Freeze and Seize' established by the European Commission to coordinate MS enforcement of the adopted sanctions against Russian and Belarusian individuals and companies in the context of the war 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.
- Provide analytical and operational horizontal support to OTFs established by Europol's crime centres.
- Explore the opportunities provided by the EU Directive 2019/1153 to request from Member States financial information and intelligence.
- Follow the adoption of the new Directive on Asset Recovery and Confiscation. Prepare for taking up new tasks, if relevant.
- Promote and utilise the GE concept in terms of receiving additional expertise from MS in the area of asset recovery.
- Organise and fund the AP Asset Recovery Annual Plenary Meeting.

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

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.
- 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, Global Lottery Monitoring System (GLMS), etc.
- Support strategic activities, including policy developments, relating to sports corruption.
- Prepare the drafting of a strategic product in the field of corruption.
- Provide technical advice to the European Commission if requested in the case of a new EU legislative initiative concerning the improvement of fighting corruption.
- 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 2022/2023.
- Provide support to the European Anti-Corruption Network (EACN) and the European Partners Against Corruption (EPAC) network.

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.
- 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.

- Based on the updated MoU with UEFA (if concluded in 2023) extend the scope of cooperation to cover illegal Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) being an increasing concern for intellectual property rights holders.
- 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 (IPC³) established in cooperation with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), and undertake work according to the new 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 and fund 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.
- Establish a connection to SIENA for the European Central Bank through which Europol can receive information with respect to (online) distributors 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.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Number of Accepted contributions by EFECC[59]		
Number of Operational Reports delivered by EFECC		
Number of Operations supported by EFECC		
Number of Action Days coordinated/supported by EFECC		
Satisfaction with Operational Support and Analysis provided by EFECC		

[59] 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 increase of supervision from the European Data Protection Supervisor and the natural implementation of a new technical environment for the data handling and data processing for the purpose of strategic and operational analysis. The recast of the Europol Regulation strengthens 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. 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.

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 other cooperation partners at Europol and maintains Europol liaison offices in other countries and organisations.

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

At the same time, Europol pursues the further strengthening of its partnership with Interpol, the EU Institutions and relevant EU agencies, in particular those active in the area of Justice and Home affairs, in order to ensure complementarity and maximum benefit from possible synergies.

2024 Objectives

Analysis coordination
Objectives and actions
A.7.1 Reinforce criminal analysis coordination and expertise at Europol to ensure provision of quality analysis support to EU Member States' investigations. o Expand the support to the work on criminal analysis at Europol by: - Further developing the Visualisation and Analysis Toolbox; - Enhancing the Data Analysis Portal; and - Establishing a pool of analysts specialised in technical analysis and specialised methods and tools to support all Europol's Centres with expertise. o Act a single point of contact for new tools for analysis. o Coordinate user feedback and requirements in relation to the core Europol analysis, data sharing and messaging capabilities from an internal business need perspective. o Monitor and enforce the standards related to the different process steps in the operational information management lifecycle to improve and maintain the quality and speed of Europol's services. o Implement and roll out changes in relation to data processing linked to the Europol Regulation Recast – including the development of a case management system and the Joint Analysis environment. o Invest in the development of handling and processing complex datasets, in particular for high-level investigations such as OTFs. o Develop mechanisms, based on data science to increase efficiency in monitoring and detecting trends in crime and terrorism data.
A.7.2 Ensure data and analysis quality control at Europol. o Maintain efficient services of the Data and Analysis Quality Control Office established at Europol in 2022. o Ensure the implementation of the current data review mechanism and that data processing is performed in line with Europol's legal framework. o Strengthen the focus on data protection by design and by default throughout all data management tools and processes. o Fine-tune the Data Review module within the Data Analysis Portal. o Work in close cooperation with the DPF and ensure compliance with the data protection rules. o Report internally on regular basis on the enhanced data review activities; Provide progress reports to DPF. o Provide guidance and training to improve the quality of analytical reporting.
Expected results: Compliance with the legal requirements for data processing. Increased efficiency of handling, processing and monitoring information. Enhanced quality of Europol's operational analysis support to Member States.

Analysis coordination
Objectives and actions
A.7.3 Reinforce analysis training capabilities at Europol to ensure full coverage of training needs on the new analysis environment. o Maintain a centralised overview of in-house analytical competencies and knowledge. o Develop and provide in-house analysis trainings. Further develop the new Europol criminal intelligence training curriculum. o Train all relevant staff on the new analysis environment for Operations, Data Analysis Portal and related tools. o Further develop the analysis training environment and a learning management solution for assessing the impact of training on quality. o 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.). o Train MS on the use of the joint analysis environment. o Further progress with the accreditation process of analysis training in Europol (provided that there was a positive initial assessment in 2023). o Manage the online Intelligence Analysis Platform CONAN. o Organise the annual EU Crime Analysis Conference. o Organise the Europol Summer School.
Expected results: Provision of effective and up-to-date operational and strategic analysis training for Europol's analysts leading to increased quality of Europol's analysis support to Member States. Fully trained criminal intelligence analysts at Europol. More efficient and faster processing and analysing of data. Increased standardisation and quality of products.

Strategic analysis
Objectives and actions
A.7.4 Deliver quality strategic reports o Deliver Flagship reports on serious and organised crime, cybercrime or terrorism that have a key importance for Europol, such as: - Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) - EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) - Report for EFECC/on economic and financial crime o Deliver Threat Assessments on current or future threat by one or more crime areas (or types of terrorism) and by criminal networks. o Deliver Early warning notifications giving rapid alert on new and emerging threats and modi operandi. o Deliver Intelligence notifications identifying intelligence gaps, recommendations or key areas to target, and present a basis for decision making. o Deliver Joint reports with EU agencies/national authorities, such as: - Joint analysis with Frontex, Joint analysis with Frontex and EUAA on secondary movements, Joint analysis with EUIPO, Joint analysis with EMCDDA (European Drug Markets reports modules)

○ Deliver Crisis response reports on crisis situations (geo-political crises or crisis events). ○ Deliver ad-hoc reports requested by COSI or in the framework of VISA and Schengen evaluations, and risk assessments requested by the Council and Commission. ○ Maintain a common, consistent and holistic approach towards strategic analysis across the Operations Directorate. ○ Enhance networking with experts (e.g. SOCTA, TE-SAT Advisory Group) to advance methodologies, increase access to information and improve the quality of reports. ○ Support strategic analysis in the MENA region by contributing to the EU funded project Euromed Police V. ○ Support strategic analysis in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region by contributing to the EU funded project EaP Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP).
Expected results: Provision of timely and quality strategic reports. Enhanced analytical capacities of the EU Neighbourhood countries to perform thread 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.

Cooperation with Member States
Objectives and actions
A.7.5 Manage cooperation with EU Member States. ○ Manage strategic cooperation of Europol with Member States' competent authorities including Law Enforcement, Counter-Terrorism services and Customs. ○ Ensure appropriate intake of Member State's needs and priorities across all relevant areas of Europol's work. ○ Coordinate Europol contribution to the Management Board/MB Working Groups ensuring submission of the relevant documentation according to the established deadlines, and follow up to MB decisions. ○ Coordinate and prepare meetings of the Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs). ○ Support the implementation of the operational agreement with Denmark. ○ Support the liaison officers' community based at Europol, including by facilitating the regular meetings of the Heads of Liaison Bureaux (LB) and the newly established informal Consultation Group. ○ Provide information to MS on agency's wide operational activities via Operational Meeting updates. ○ Support Member States' cooperation on matters outside Europol's mandate by offering a specific EPE platform dedicated for such communication and exchanges of information.
Expected results: Effective involvement of Member States' competent authorities in the consultations and decision-making on Europol matters. Enhanced cooperation with and between LBs, their respective national authorities and related stakeholders for the additional benefit in the operational area.

Cooperation with third countries
Objectives and actions
A.7.6 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 arrangement with Andorra, Armenia, Israel, Japan, Kosovo[60], New Zealand, Qatar, 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. ○ Establish or reinforce cooperation with selected high-priority third countries in line with Europol's External Strategy 2021-2024 and as listed in the Management Board decision on Europol's external relations priorities. ○ Begin preparatory work for the final report of the Europol External Strategy. ○ Initiate the preparation of the next Europol External Strategy beyond 2024. ○ Contribute to the EU funded project WB Partnership against Crime and Terrorism (WBPaCT) and monitor the future development of an EU funding scheme to support the operational cooperation in the region. ○ Further develop Europol's relations with the countries from the MENA region. Continue introducing the concept of Policing Partnerships and enhance cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council – Police Network (GCCPOL) and the Arab Interior Ministers Council (AIMC) as a gateway to the region. ○ Take appropriate actions to implement the possible Agreement between the EU and Israel to exchange personal data between Europol and the competent authorities of Israel. ○ Continue contributing to the EU funded project Euromed V. ○ Progress in building cooperation with India, Pakistan and other priority partners in Asia, provided there is mutual interest. ○ Contribute to the EU funded projects in the Eastern Neighbourhood region: 1) EaP Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP) and 2) Fighting against Organised Crime in the EaP Region. ○ Strengthen cooperation with Georgia and Armenia according to the concluded cooperation agreements. ○ Keep monitoring evolvement of crime threats in Azerbaijan to evaluate the operational need for establishing a cooperation agreement. ○ Explore possibilities to extend cooperation with the EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine, paving the way for Mission's support to Ukrainian authorities in addressing threats for EU internal security and in facilitating information exchange. EU technical assistance to Ukrainian law enforcement authorities might require Europol's contribution. ○ Strengthen cooperation with Brazil and Colombia and further develop Europol's relations with Chile and Mexico according to the concluded agreements. Continue to

[60] 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.

advance negotiations of working arrangements with other prioritised partners in Latin America. Utilise the linkages to the EU funded project El PAcCTO[61] as a gateway to other countries in the region.
○ Prepare a strategic review of the cooperation with Colombia.
○ Assist the European Commission, where required and requested, in the negotiation of international agreements according to Art.218 TFEU.
○ Complete any administrative arrangements needed to implement international agreements concluded by the European Commission.
○ Undertake follow-up actions with partners, if required, on the basis of the European Commission's review of the existing operational agreements.
○ Elaborate legal advice on new possibilities for case by case cooperation with any third country, in the absence of an agreement or adequacy decision.
○ Provide legal advice as regards the new possibilities stemming from the Europol Regulation Recast 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.7.7 Manage cooperation with EU institutions, agencies or bodies.
○ Manage strategic cooperation of Europol with EU institutions, agencies or bodies, including EU CSDP missions and operations; manage the Liaison Office in Brussels.
○ Manage and coordinate the interaction with the European Commission, the External Action Service (EEAS), including the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN), and EU Council and Parliamentary committees, including the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG).
○ Provide (technical) advice and contribute to the preparation of new EU policy and legislative initiatives.
○ Follow closely the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy and relevant EU policies and initiatives[62], for emerging tasks falling within Europol's mandate.
○ Contribute to the annual Schengen Cycle, which provides a new governance model for the Schengen area. Support activities regarding Schengen evaluations on police cooperation, such as evaluations, on-site visits to Schengen countries and training.
○ Develop cooperation with new bodies established by the EU involved in crime areas covered by Europol's mandate, i.e. Joint Cyber Unit, a European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse and a new EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority.
○ 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.

[61] El PAcCTO is an EU funded project which provides technical assistance to Latin American States to efficiently fight organised crime.

[62] The EU Cybersecurity Strategy, the Strategy to tackle Organised Crime (2020-2025), 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), the EU Drug strategy (2021-2025), EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse and Action Plan on migrants smuggling.

- Support the implementation of the strategic agreements, MoUs and administrative and working arrangements with CEPOL, ECB, ECDC, EEAS, EMCDDA, EMSA, ENISA, EPPO, EUIPO, EU-LISA, the European Commission, FRA and OLAF.
- Continue the reinforced cooperation between the Eurojust Contact Points and Europol's Analysis Projects with regard to exchange of information, identification of HVT and Eurojust's participation in EMPACT. Support the coordination of the annual networking meeting.
- Support the Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) of the Member States in cooperation with Eurojust and OLAF including the provision of complementary funding and training.
- Foster the implementation of the working arrangement with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the working modalities for Europol's support, taking into the account the relevant provisions from the Europol Regulation Recast. Ensure synergies with Eurojust and OLAF in the respective efforts to collaborate with the EPPO.
- Enhance the cooperation with Frontex by implementing the new working arrangement, including exchange of personal data.
- Enhance the cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) based on a new working arrangement (if concluded in 2023).
- Enhance the cooperation with the European Labour Authority (ELA) on the basis of a new Memorandum of Understanding (if concluded in 2023).
- Support the establishment of a CEPOL Liaison Officer at Europol in order to strengthen cooperation in the area of law enforcement training.
- 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 Compact, as endorsed by European Council in December 2019. Establish structured cooperation with selected CSDP missions prioritised on basis on their relevance for the implementation of Europol's External Strategy.
- 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 (CSDP missions and operations and SATCEN) 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 and private parties

Objectives and actions

A.7.8 Manage cooperation with international and regional organisations, and private parties.

- Support the implementation of the operational agreement with Interpol and manage Europol's Liaison Office at Interpol.
- Support the implementation of the EU-Interpol agreement and assist with the preparation of the Administrative and Working Arrangements to give effect to this agreement. (Subject to progress in 2023).

○ Support the implementation of the strategic agreements with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO). Continue to build relations with relevant UN offices for establishing of cooperation in line with Europol's operational needs. ○ Advance with the negotiations for establishing a cooperation agreement with the International Criminal Court (ICC) (subject to progress in 2023). ○ Advance the negotiations for a cooperation agreement with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (subject to progress in 2023). ○ Pursue progress in concluding a working arrangement with NATO in order to enrich the criminal intelligence picture with strategic information from military sources. ○ Continue to enhance cooperation with the Council of Europe, in areas of mutual interest. ○ Monitor developments in relevant regional organisations and collaboration platforms such as the Baltic Sea Task Force, Danube River Strategy group, the Western Balkan regional initiatives, SELEC, MAOC-N, and EUMed, Afripol, GCCPOL, the Western Africa Platforms, Aseanapol and Ameripol, and identify areas of collaboration depending on operational needs. ○ Establish cooperation agreement with AMERIPOL, provided AMERIPOL's legal framework allows for it (subject to progress in 2023). ○ Provide legal advice related to Europol's negotiation and conclusion of working arrangements with international organisations and private parties. ○ Implement the new strategy for dealing with private parties in light of the provisions in the Europol Regulation Recast. Assess opportunities and reach out to the private sector following established priorities. ○ Provide legal advice as regards the new possibilities stemming from the Europol Regulation Recast concerning the exchange of personal data with private parties.	
Expected results:	Cooperation with international and regional organisations, and private parties brings forward better criminal intelligence picture and operational results. Cooperation with private parties improves in effectiveness and reduces information gaps.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
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[63]		

[63] 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

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.

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.

In 2024, work will continue to implement organisational initiatives or changes identified through the new Europol Strategy while the Agency will continue making progress in promoting workforce diversity and inclusion, in line with Europol's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

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

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

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

Objectives 2024

Corporate affairs and services	
Objectives and actions	
A.8.1 Continue optimising Europol's corporate functions. ○ Coordinate and oversee the implementation of Europol's Strategy and Europol's External Strategy. ○ Assess, introduce or further implement related organisational initiatives and changes in line with the new Europol Strategy. ○ Support and promote the implementation of the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy. ○ Provide policy, technical and expert advice, and prepare related policy documents; Identify key strategic opportunities for Europol's growth in priority areas. ○ Consolidate the implementation of the provisions of the amended Europol Regulation. ○ Coordinate all audit activities and Europol's response to audit activities and findings. ○ Ensure monitoring and annual assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system, based on a dedicated list of internal control indicators. ○ Support the implementation of a software module for internal control. ○ Monitor Europol's corporate risks. Continue implementing the risk management policy and enhance awareness, through training and communication measures. ○ Coordinate the Home Affairs Agencies cluster in the 2024 Peer Risk Review Exercise of the European Commission. ○ Prepare Europol's multi-annual and annual business planning documents, and quarterly, bi-annual and annual corporate performance reporting. ○ Streamline the use of corporate analytics and reporting to ensure high quality and accurate corporate performance measurement and reporting. ○ Maintain and further develop the User Survey. ○ Provide legal advice on the implementation of Europol's legal framework and data protection rules. Advice on legality and compatibility of new Europol initiatives with EU law, as well as on new EU initiatives having an impact on Europol. ○ Coordinate legal advice in matters related to the interaction with the EDPS. ○ Develop and maintain Europol's legal framework for finance, procurement, grants and facilities. Finalise the review of the financial model, based on the revised Financial Regulation. ○ Provide internally legal support on contracts, service level agreements, licenses, grant agreements, etc. Handle contract related complaints and court cases. ○ Develop and maintain the HR legal framework and implementing rules to the EU Staff Regulations. Handle staff related complaints, requests and court cases. ○ Manage public access to Europol's documents.	
Expected results:	Europol progresses along the strategic priorities; areas for further development are identified and utilised. Transparency and accountability of the organisation's strategic planning and performance. Increased benefits to Europol's stakeholders. Legal frameworks, implementing rules and corporate processes are up-to-date and compliant.

Corporate communications
Objectives and actions
A.8.2 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. ○ Maintain and continuously develop Europol's website. Maintain the new EU Most Wanted website. ○ Continue mapping and documenting processes and workflows in the area of digital communication. Continue the implementation of the digital asset management system. ○ Implement actions for raising awareness 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. ○ Continue to explore possible ways to translate promotional material in all EU languages, taking into account budgetary impact. ○ Provide access to, user support and training on the use of Open Source (OS) tools and databases. Organise the Europol Open Sources (OS) Intelligence Conference. Produce OS reports and contribute to country reports to support governance activities. ○ Deliver the annual Europol Excellence Award in Innovation. ○ Manage and promote the use of the Europol Media Monitoring tool; 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 the new internal communication platform.
Expected results: Europol maintains effective communication to external partners and stakeholders. Europol and its brand identity are 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 and Financial resources
Objectives and actions
A.8.3 Ensure efficient human resources and budget management. ○ Plan and monitor the implementation of the budget and staff establishment plan. ○ Develop and update finance related policies, implementing rules and processes. ○ Execute financial initiation of revenue and expenditure; Perform ex-ante and ex-post financial verification of all financial operations. ○ 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 Europol Finance 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.
- Coordinate the implementation of the HR Strategy as well as other organisational changes across Europol as approved by the MB.
- Coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, in line with the relevant implementation plan, which includes key actions addressing i.a. gender balance.
- 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.
- Manage the Travel Management System. Implement the Missions Integrated Processing System (MiPS) as the new travel management system at Europol.
- Finalise preparations for the replacement of the current accounting system at Europol.
- Ensure the coordination of talent acquisition, learning and development, appraisal, probation and reclassification, on boarding and personnel administration for staff, SNEs, interns and law enforcement trainees.
- Coordinate training of Europol staff. Further implement the Leadership and Management Development Program.
- Manage the administration and coordination of grants, including EMPACT grants.
- Assess and utilise, where appropriate and subject to checking potential and actual conflicts of interest as well as confirming availability of capacities, funding opportunities in relation to calls within Europol's remit for which the agency is eligible.
- Deliver health and wellbeing-related services.
- Ensure the quality of the services after the insourcing of the medical service covering both Europol and Eurojust (if progress achieved in 2023).

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

Security

Objectives and actions

A.8.4 Ensure the necessary level of physical, personal and information security at Europol.

- Ensure the physical security of Europol's buildings. Execute protective security operations for the Executive Director, staff and participants at high-level meetings and events.
- Continuously strengthen operational effectiveness, improve incident response and security compliance capabilities, enhance the security posture and foster cross-departmental cooperation.
- Ensure that security requirements concerning the expansion of Europol to a third temporary satellite building are fulfilled.

- Continue supporting the preparations for acquiring Europol's second permanent headquarters in terms of security requirements.
- Continue upgrading the Security Control Room to cope with expanding security tasks (e.g. monitoring of the satellite buildings).
- Identify innovative ways to communicate security awareness to Europol users.
- Ensure timely accreditation of information systems to ensure Information Security; assess information security risks and provide risk treatment options.
- Perform technical security assessments of Europol's ICT systems and propose appropriate actions.
- 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 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 security for Europol's buildings, staff and visitors. Europol fulfils its obligations in terms of confidentiality and information security.

Facilities

Objectives and actions

A.8.5 Progress towards the rationalisation and expansion of Europol's facilities services and capabilities.

- Develop, maintain and implement the policies, guidelines and processes related to services and products.
- Develop, maintain and implement the budget, contracts and agreements related to services and products.
- Manage the non-ICT related assets and ensure compliance with the financial processes and insurance scope.
- Develop, maintain and implement digital workflows and self-service functionalities via the Facilities Management Information System (FMIS).
- Provide integrated, cross-horizontal services, with a focus on prioritising sustainability.
- Support high-level visits and organise high-level events such as the European Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC).
- Continue with the implementation of the Strategic Housing Roadmap:
  - Mid-Term Housing Solution (MTHS) project at Europol's headquarters to increase capacity and strengthen the building in line with the applicable new governmental standards.
  - Temporary Satellite Building I (TSB I) project to safeguard the building's availability after 1 January 2024, or to explore alternative options.
  - Temporary Satellite Building II (TSB II) project to create additional workplaces and create swing space during the implementation of the MTHS at Europol's headquarters, and to support organisational growth as well as new business

initiatives, until the delivery of the second permanent headquarters (Long Term Housing Measures - LTHM). - Temporary Satellite Building III (TSB III) project to create additional workplaces to support organisational growth and new business initiatives, until the delivery of the second permanent building (LTHM). - Long-Term Housing Measures (LTHM) project to deliver a second permanent headquarters by redeveloping a current office building. - Long-Term Housing Measures (LTHM) project to deliver a second Data Centre. - On the basis of the assessment done in 2023, proceed with the relocation of the Medical Centre and Europol Gym from the headquarters, in order to increase capacity for the implementation of the MTHS. ○ 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:	Existing workspace and new office locations are used in an optimal way to accommodate organisational growth. Effective processes and tooling are in place to ensure optimal facilities services and proper corporate environmental management.

Indicators	Latest result (Q2 2023)	Target 2024
Budget Outturn Rate		
Budget Commitment Rate		
Budget Payment Rate		
% of Late Payments (in value)		
Vacancy rate		
% of Female Staff		
Emissions (tonnes CO2)		
% of pending critical/very important audit recommendations implemented within the timeline committed to by Europol agreed deadline with the auditing		
Total number of News Articles mentioning Europol (high-impact web-based media)		
User Satisfaction		

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 Europol Regulation Recast, 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;

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

ANNEXES

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Annex II: Resource allocation per Activity 2024-2026

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

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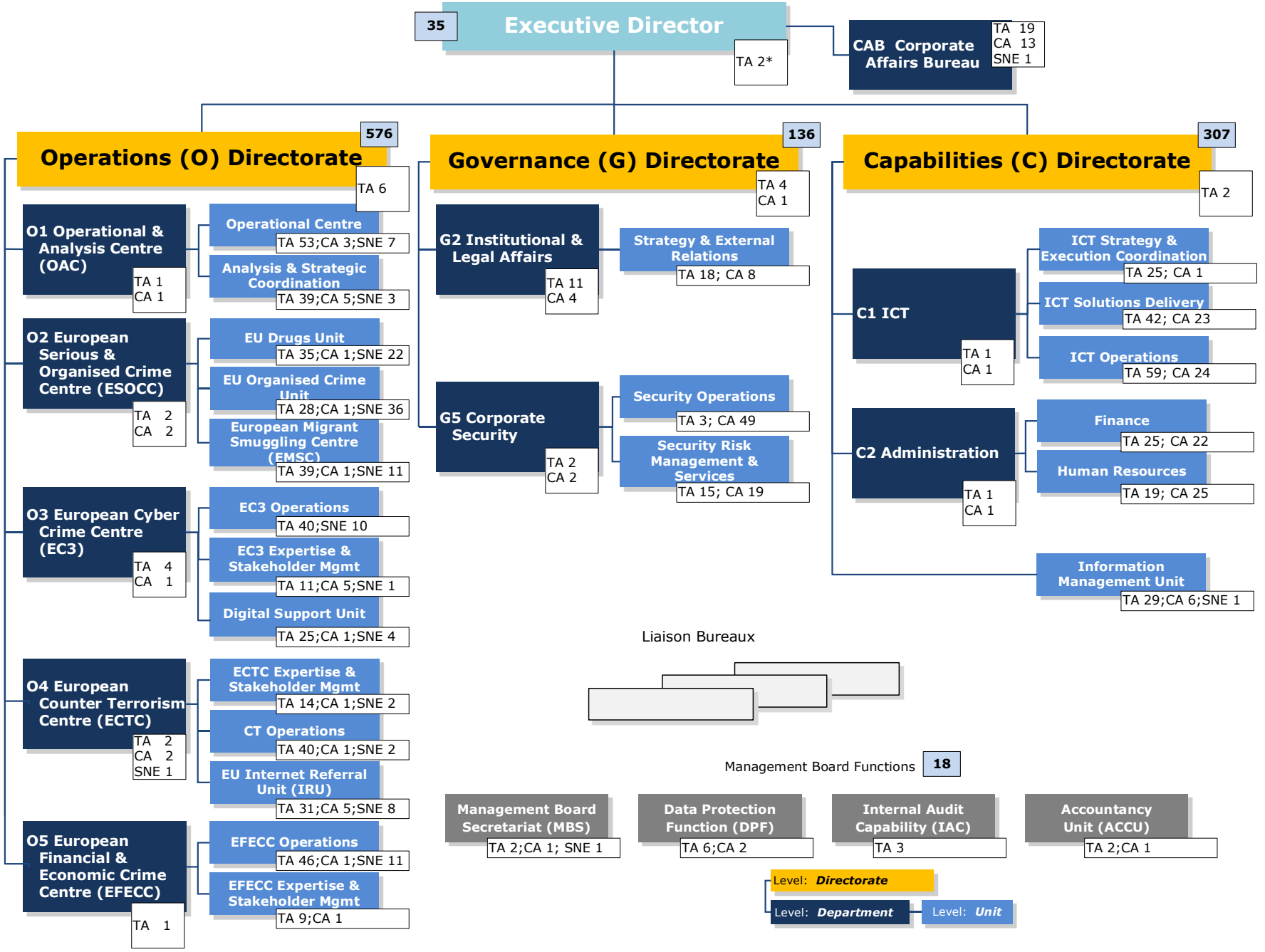
Annex XII: Strategy for cooperation with third countries and/or international organisations

Annex I: Organisational chart of the Agency for year 2024



* Including the Fundamental Rights Officer

Annex II: Resources allocation per activity 2024 – 2026

	Year 2023			Year 2024 Resource estimates			Year 2025[64] Resource estimates			Year 2026[65] 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
A.1. Development of operational ICT and IM capabilities	154	56	74,022,100	164	56	77,137,331	167	56	79,834,600	166	56	84,853,000
A.2. Operational Coordination	68	14	16,340,400	71	14	16,436,697	74	14	17,223,700	76	14	18,348,400
A.3. Combating Serious and Organised Crime	105	28	26,468,500	108	28	30,036,138	110	28	27,462,800	111	28	30,501,600
A.4. Combating Cyber Crime	80	22	16,591,800	84	22	17,883,009	87	22	17,579,300	88	22	19,937,300
A.5. Counter-Terrorism	87	22	18,573,300	91	22	18,707,752	93	22	22,558,100	94	22	17,786,600
A.6. Combating Financial and Economic Crime	54	9	10,252,300	58	9	11,643,062	60	9	10,820,500	61	9	13,092,300
A.7. Strategic and Analysis Coordination	48	11	8,603,200	51	11	8,967,103	53	11	9,521,600	54	11	10,240,400
Total Operational Activities	**596**	**162**	**170,851,600**	**627**	**162**	**180,811,091**	**644**	**162**	**185,000,600**	**650**	**162**	**194,759,600**
A.8. Governance, support and administration (incl. MBF)	120	144	36,324,612	122	144	37,416,614	124	144	38,614,097	125	144	40,889,099
Interoperability[66]				**5**	**20**	**1,017,500**	**5**	**20**	**2,075,700**	**5**	**20**	**2,117,214**
TOTAL	**716**	**306**	**207,176,212**	**754**	**326**	**219,245,205**	**773**	**326**	**225,690,397**	**780**	**326**	**237,765,913**

[64] Figures for 2025 and 2026 are indicative.
[65] idem
[66] Proposal for a transfer of 20 Contract Agent (CA) positions and 5 Temporary Agent (TA) establishment plan posts (and the corresponding budget) from Frontex to Europol for the period 2024-2027, with the purpose of implementing, in particular, tasks stemming from the ETIAS entry into operation. This solution would allow for Europol to cover in part the resource gap related to the implementation of the Interoperability agenda (full resource gap estimated at approx. 130 FTE for the current MFF), while it would be budget/staff neutral across Home Affairs Agencies. The proposal is subject to the approval of Frontex's Management Board and consultation with the relevant European Commission services.

Annex III: Financial Resources 2024 - 2026

Table 1 - Revenue
General revenues

REVENUES	2023	2024
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
EU contribution	207,176,212	219,245,205
Other revenue		
TOTAL REVENUES	**207,176,212**	**219,245,205**

REVENUES	General revenues						
	Executed 2022	Estimated by the agency 2023	2024		VAR 2024/ 2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
1 REVENUE FROM FEES AND CHARGES							
2 EU CONTRIBUTION	192,380,773	207,176,212	219,245,205		105.8%	225,690,397	237,765,913
- Of which assigned revenues deriving from previous years' surpluses	3,349,469	5,098,619	10,315,153				
3 THIRD COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTION (incl. EEA/EFTA and candidate countries)							
- Of which EEA/EFTA (excl. Switzerland)							
- Of which candidate countries							
4 OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS							
5 ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS							
- Of which interest generated by funds paid by the Commission by way of the EU contribution (FFR Art. 58)							
6 REVENUES FROM SERVICES RENDERED AGAINST PAYMENT							
7 CORRECTION OF BUDGETARY IMBALANCES							
TOTAL	**192,380,773**	**207,176,212**	**219,245,205**		**105.8%**	**225,690,397**	**237,765,913**

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

REVENUES	2023	2024
	Revenues estimated by the agency	Budget forecast
TOTAL REVENUES	3,196,134	999,712

REVENUES	Additional EU funding: grant, contribution and service-level agreements						
	Executed 2022	Estimated by the agency 2023	2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM GRANTS (FFR Art.7)	1,807,626	543,299	222,800		41.0%	167,100	
ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENTS (FFR Art.7)	1,065,003	1,422,835	656,912		46.2%	-	
ADDITIONAL EU FUNDING STEMMING FROM SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (FFR Art. 43.2)	1,572,164	1,230,000	120,000		9.8%	-	
TOTAL	**4,444,793**	**3,196,134**	**999,712**		**31.3%**	**167,100**	

Table 2 - Expenditure

Expenditure	2023		2024	
	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations	Commitment appropriations	Payment appropriations
Title 1 - Staff expenditure	112,219,112	112,219,112	118,547,502	118,547,502
Title 2 - Infrastructure and operating expenditure	16,267,400	16,267,400	17,135,312	17,135,312
Title 3 - Operational expenditure	78,689,700	76,612,900	83,562,391	80,054,191
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**207,176,212**	**205,099,412**	**219,245,205**	**215,737,005**

EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Draft Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
Title 1 Staff Expenditure	**100,108,826**	**112,219,112**	**118,547,502**		106%	**125,401,280**	**130,975,913**
11 Salaries & allowances	92,007,321	102,628,112	108,050,800		105%	114,694,280	120,039,913
- of which establishment plan posts	76,310,521	86,047,712	90,205,400		105%	95,785,080	100,563,913
- of which external personnel	15,696,800	16,580,400	17,845,400		108%	18,909,200	19,476,000
13 Socio-medical infrastructure	873,605	1,297,700	1,234,461		95%	1,259,000	1,297,000
14 Training	144,470	175,000	186,000		106%	190,000	196,000
15 Other staff-related expenditure	6,982,832	8,009,300	8,955,501		112%	9,135,000	9,318,000
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	100,598	109,000	120,740		111%	123,000	125,000
Title 2 Other administrative expenditure	**11,643,924**	**16,267,400**	**17,135,312**		105%	**18,449,117**	**18,819,000**
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	6,433,102	10,689,800	10,897,197		102%	12,086,117	12,328,000
21 Administrative information technology	1,677,535	1,866,700	1,866,650		100%	1,904,000	1,942,000
22 Movable property and associated costs	1,133,326	798,100	1,076,705		135%	1,098,000	1,120,000
23 Current administrative expenditure	493,000	685,500	1,109,009		162%	1,131,000	1,154,000
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,099,694	1,162,500	1,160,751		100%	1,184,000	1,208,000
25 Statutory expenditure	807,267	1,064,800	1,025,000		96%	1,046,000	1,067,000
Title 3 Operational activities	**74,116,614**	**78,689,700**	**83,562,391**		106%	**81,840,000**	**87,971,000**

EXPENDITURE	Commitment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Draft Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
30 Operations[67]	22,788,694	15,109,100	14,957,600		99%	15,257,000	15,562,000
31 Operational information technology	42,884,568	42,633,600	43,996,791		103%	44,877,000	46,450,000
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	1,849,316	1,840,000	1,840,000		100%	1,877,000	1,915,000
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) [68]	5,229,338	7,300,000	7,400,000		101%	7,548,000	7,774,000
34 EPCC	276,566	300,000	270,000		90%	275,000	281,000
35 Heads of Europol National Units	91,475	183,000	183,000		100%	187,000	191,000
38 Decryption Platform	996,656	1,440,000	1,440,000		100%	1,469,000	1,498,000
39 Grants[69]		9,884,000	13,475,000		136%	10,350,000	14,300,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**185,869,365**	**207,176,212**	**219,245,205**		106%	**225,690,397**	**237,765,913**

EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Draft Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
Title 1 Staff Expenditure	**100,108,826**	**112,219,112**	**118,547,502**		106%	**125,401,280**	**130,975,913**
11 Salaries & allowances	92,007,321	102,628,112	108,050,800		105%	114,694,280	120,039,913
- of which establishment plan posts	76,310,521	86,047,712	90,205,400		105%	95,785,080	100,563,913
- of which external personnel	15,696,800	16,580,400	17,845,400		108%	18,909,200	19,476,000
13 Sociomedical infrastructure	873,605	1,297,700	1,234,461		95%	1,259,000	1,297,000
14 Training	144,470	175,000	186,000		106%	190,000	196,000
15 Other staff-related expenditure	6,982,832	8,009,300	8,955,501		112%	9,135,000	9,318,000
16 Entertainment and representation expenses	100,598	109,000	120,740		111%	123,000	125,000
Title 2 Other administrative expenditure	**11,643,924**	**16,267,400**	**17,135,312**		105%	**18,449,117**	**18,819,000**

[67] As of 2023, differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the grants related budget items are introduced - a new Chapter (Chapter 39 – Grants) has been created and budget accordingly moved from Chapter 30.
[68] Including for 2024 EUR 3M for Short-term SNEs.
[69] Including for 2024 differentiated appropriations amounting to EUR 13,475,000 (EUR 8 000 000 for EMPACT, EUR 300 000 for fighting EURO counterfeiting, EUR 2 000 000 for HVT/OTF, EUR 3 000 000 for ATLAS and EUR 175 000 for Innovation grants).

EXPENDITURE	Payment appropriations						
	Executed Budget 2022	Budget 2023	Draft Budget 2024		VAR 2024/2023 (%)	Envisaged 2025	Envisaged 2026
			Agency request	Budget forecast			
20 Rental of buildings and associated costs	6,433,102	10,689,800	10,897,197		102%	12,086,117	12,328,000
21 Administrative information technology	1,677,535	1,866,700	1,866,650		100%	1,904,000	1,942,000
22 Movable property and associated costs	1,133,326	798,100	1,076,705		135%	1,098,000	1,120,000
23 Current administrative expenditure	493,000	685,500	1,109,009		162%	1,131,000	1,154,000
24 Postal charges and telecommunications	1,099,694	1,162,500	1,160,751		100%	1,184,000	1,208,000
25 Statutory expenditure	807,267	1,064,800	1,025,000		96%	1,046,000	1,067,000
Title 3 Operational activities	**74,116,614**	**76,612,900**	**80,054,191**		104%	**80,695,000**	**84,686,333**
30 Operations[70]	22,788,694	15,109,100	14,957,600		99%	15,257,000	15,562,000
31 Operational information technology	42,884,568	42,633,600	43,996,791		103%	44,877,000	48,084,333
32 Telecommunication costs for operational activities	1,849,316	1,840,000	1,840,000		100%	1,877,000	1,915,000
33 Seconded National Experts (Operational) [71]	5,229,338	7,300,000	7,400,000		101%	7,548,000	7,925,000
34 EPCC	276,566	300,000	270,000		90%	275,000	281,000
35 Heads of Europol National Units	91,475	183,000	183,000		100%	187,000	191,000
38 Decryption Platform	996,656	1,440,000	1,440,000		100%	1,469,000	1,498,000
39 Grants[72]		7,807,200	9,966,800		128%	9,205,000	9,230,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**185,869,365**	**205,099,412**	**215,737,005**		105%	**224,545,397**	**238,695,913**

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

Budget outturn	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue actually received (+)	143,094,062	160,660,117	177,370,336	201,325,849
Payments made (-)	(128,591,904)	(132,636,293)	(148,871,757)	(165,414,326)
Carry-over of appropriations (-)	(22,802,657)	(32,201,626)	(37,028,367)	(40,478,220)

[70] As of 2023, differentiated appropriations (DAs) for the grants-related budget items were introduced: a new Chapter (Chapter 39 – Grants) was created and the related grants budget was moved from Chapter 30.
[71] Including for 2024 EUR 3M for Short-term SNEs.
[72] Including for 2024, among others, differentiated payments appropriations amounting to EUR 9.966.800 (EUR 4 500 000 for EMPACT, EUR 180 000 for fighting EURO counterfeiting, EUR 2 000 000 for HVT/OTF, EUR 3 146 800 for ATLAS and EUR 140 000 for Innovation grants).

Budget outturn	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	1,557,227	2,471,557	2,926,585	3,802,497
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriations from previous year (+)	9,108,957	5,056,138	10,702,251	11,078,105
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	(2,137)	(424)	(428)	1,248
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (-)				
Total	**2,363,548**	**3,349,469**	**5,098,619**	**10,315,153**

Descriptive information and justification on:
Budget outturn

The overall budget result for the financial year 2022 comes to € 10.3M. This includes the following:
- An amount of € 6.5M of the 2022 budget was not committed and lapsed.
- An amount of € 3.8M of appropriations carried forward from 2021 to 2022 was not used.
- The exchange rate difference in 2022 was € 1.248 (gain).

Cancellation of payment appropriations carried forward

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

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

Annex IV: Human resources quantitative

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

A. Statutory staff and SNE

Staff	Year 2022			Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026
ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS	**Authorised Budget**	**Actually filled as of 31/12/2022**	**Occupancy rate %**	**Authorised staff**	**Envisaged staff**	**Envisaged staff**	**Envisaged staff**
Administrators (AD)	654	660	100.9%	693	731	750	757
Assistants (AST)	32	22	68.8%	23	23	23	23
Assistants/Secretaries (AST/SC)							
TOTAL ESTABLISHMENT PLAN POSTS	**686**	**682**	**99.4%**	**716**	**754**	**773**	**780**
EXTERNAL STAFF	**FTE corresponding to the authorised budget**	**Executed FTE as of 31/12/2022** [73]	**Execution rate %**	**Headcount as of 31/12/2022**	**FTE corresponding to the authorised budget**[74]	**Envisaged FTE**	**Envisaged FTE**
Contract Agents (CA)	235	212.2	90.3%	217	255	255	255
Seconded National Experts (SNE)	71	59.3	83.5%	55	121	121	121
TOTAL EXTERNAL STAFF	**306**	**271.5**	**88.7%**	**272**	**376**	**376**	**376**
TOTAL STAFF	**992**	**953.5**	**96.1%**				

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

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

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

Human Resources	Year 2023	Year 2024	Year 2025	Year 2026
	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE	Envisaged FTE
Contract Agents (CA)	26	14	3	
Seconded National Experts (SNE)	8			
TOTAL	**34**	**14**	**3**	**-**

C. Other Human Resources

Structural service providers[75]

	Actually in place as of 31/12/2022
IT	168
Facilities	39
Security	15
Other	3
TOTAL	**225**

Interim workers

	Total FTEs in year 2022
Number	N/A

[75] 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.

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

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

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

External personnel

Contract Agents

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

Seconded National Experts

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

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

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

Job title in the Agency	Type of contract (Official, TA or CA)		TA/Official Function group/grade of recruitment internal (brackets) and external (single grade) foreseen for publication*		CA Recruitment Function Group (I, II, III or IV)
	Due to foreseen retirement/mobility	New posts requested due to additional tasks	Internal (brackets)	External (brackets)	
Allocation of new posts / replacement of staff members due to resignation / contract expiry and definition of profiles will be done in line with Europol's mandate and business priorities and on the basis of the MASPP.	Number of anticipated compulsory retirements: 5 (2 TAs and 3 CAs) End of 2nd contracts: - TA contracts: 16 (restricted) + 21 potentially (non-restricted – pending outcome of different indefinite contract procedures) - CA contracts: 15 (5 FGII, 7 FGIII and 3 FGIV)	38 TA posts (including 26 stemming from amended Europol Regulation, 7 from Prüm II regulation and 5 for Interoperability – ETIAS operations) 20 CA posts for Interoperability – ETIAS operations[76]	Will be updated once the final budget is adopted; however most internal recruitments will be in the brackets AD5-AD12 and AD7-AD12	Will be updated once the final budget is adopted; however most recruitments will be AD6/Specialist or AD7/Senior Specialist	No significant change expected vis-à-vis current CAs.

*Indication of both is required

Number of inter-agency mobility Year 2023 from and to the Agency:

[76] see Annex II for more information on additional posts for ETIAS

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		
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 5 October 2021 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		
Appraisal of TA	Commission Decision C(2013)8985 and C(2016) 7270	X		

Appraisal of CA	Commission Decision C(2014)2226	X		
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

	Average seniority in the grade among reclassified staff						
Grades	**Year 2019**	**Year 2020**	**Year 2021**	**Year 2022**	**Year 2023**	**Actual average over 5 years**	**Average over 5 years** (According to Decision C(2015)9563)
AD05		4.0					2.8
AD06	3.7	5.0	4.8	5.3			2.8
AD07	4.3	5.2	5.2	5.3			2.8
AD08	7.5	5.8	7.1	5.8			3
AD09	7	7.2	8.2	3.9			4
AD10			6.8	7			4
AD11				5.5			4
AD12							6.7
AD13							6.7
AST1							3
AST2							3
AST3							3
AST4	2.42	2.3	3.4				3
AST5	5			5.71			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

Table 2 -Reclassification of contract staff

Function Group	Grade	Staff in activity at 1.01.2021	How many staff members were reclassified in Year 2022	Average number of years in grade of reclassified staff members	Average number of years in grade of reclassified staff members according to decision C(2015)9561
CA IV	17	1			N.A
	16	10	2	5.2	Between 5 and 7 years
	15	6	1	4	Between 4 and 6 years
	14	24	3	4	Between 3 and 5 years
	13	6	2	3.3	Between 3 and 5 years
CA III	12	3			N.A
	11	34	10	6.4	Between 6 and 10 years
	10	25	7	5.9	Between 5 and 7 years
	9	30	2	4.7	Between 4 and 6 years
	8	15	1	3.8	Between 3 and 5 years
CA II	7	2			N.A
	6	13	2	5	Between 6 and 10 years
	5	25	1	5.1	Between 5 and 7 years
	4	9			Between 3 and 5 years
CA I	2				Between 6 and 10 years
	1				Between 3 and 5 years

C. Gender representation

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

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

Table 2 - Data regarding gender evolution over 5 years of Middle and Senior management[77]

	2018		2022	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Female Managers	4	12%	6	18%
Male Managers	30	88%	28	82%

.

[77] Staff defined as middle manager by the applicable General Implementing provisions on middle management.

D. Geographical Balance

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

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

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

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

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

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

E. Schooling

Agreement in place with the European School(s) of The Hague				
Contribution agreements signed with the EC on type I European schools	Yes		No	X
Contribution agreements[78] 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				

[78] 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

In line with the strategic goal of being the model EU law enforcement agency with strong performance, good governance and accountability, promoting diversity and staff well-being, Europol respects its *Environmental Policy*.

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.

In support of that, Europol has an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place, complying with ISO 14001:2015 requirements and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). In 2021, Europol received a Certificate of Registration confirming the compliance of the agency's EMS with the ISO 14001:2015 standard followed by EMAS registration in February 2022.

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 2020+, and in particular, the strategic priority number 5, which is 'to be the model EU law enforcement organisation with robust performance, good governance and accountability, promoting diversity and staff engagement'. 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*** will be shortly finalised and will establish the organisational long-term ambitions and objectives, supporting the goals of the *EU Green Deal*. Furthermore, the new mid-term objectives and action plan "*Environmental Objectives and Action Plan 2023 – 2025*" that has been already developed will be approved and put into action.

Europol will publish in the beginning of 2023 its second updated environmental statement demonstrating the implementation of EMAS at Europol and the Agency's environmental performance for 2021. Europol met most of the environmental objectives set. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis undoubtedly contributed to the achievement of most of the targets, and its impact has been duly analysed.

4. Actions to improve and communicate environmental performance

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

- *Structural environmental management and compliance;* is related to the environmental management and communication of the organisation;
- *Sustainable operations;* is the overall reduction of the carbon footprint and improved environmental performance by implementing organisational measures to reduce water, energy and paper consumption, waste generation and improved waste separation, reduce 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 environmental 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:

- In cooperation with the Central Government Real Estate Agency (CGREA) of the Host State, the recommendations of the Energy Audit, performed in 2020, will be implemented and the legal compliance will be monitored (use of the underground water for cooling of the headquarters building).
- Furthermore, Europol will continue to include and consider EMAS and organisations' environmental requirements in the development process of Strategic Housing Roadmap (referred to Annex VII).
- Lastly, in line with the EMAS regulation, Europol intends to continue publishing annually its Environmental Statement, reporting on its environmental performance.

Europol's intended actions can be summarised as follows:

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

  This Annex will be updated with more detailed information on environmental objectives, indicators and targets once the *Environmental Vision 2030* and the *Environmental Objectives and Action Plan 2023 – 2025* are finalised in early 2023, and before the final adoption of the Programming Document by the Management Board in November 2023.

Annex VII: Buildings – year 2024

#	Building Name and type	Location	SURFACE AREA (in m²)			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.
TOTAL											

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.

In 2016, the Host State and Europol established a Strategic Housing Roadmap (SHR) Programme[79] to be implemented during the period 2016 – 2031. The main objective of the SHR is to proactively align Europol's growth and new business demands with the housing needs of the organisation, enabling timely planning and development of the necessary housing solutions. The SHR enables the necessary updating and planning of real estate developments covering a larger time span until 2045.

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

An overall minimum capacity of 2,100 permanent workplaces (WP) is essential, for up to 2,500 employees until 2045, taking into account the flex ratio of 0.8 (1 FTE : 0.8 WP).

[79] 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.

Mid-Term Housing Solution (HQ1)
Via the Mid-Term Housing Solution (HQ1), the spaces (m^2/m^3) 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 2023 – 2027.

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

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

Temporary Satellite Building I
Due to Europol's organisational growth and capacity reduction of workplaces in the Headquarters because of the Plank Floor Slabs issues, the Host State established a Temporary Satellite Building I in The Hague in 2019.

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

The Host State is negotiating the extension of the lease of Temporary Satellite Building I, which is due to expire on 31 December 2023. For Europol's business continuity, it is of high importance to preserve this housing, knowing the complexity and narrow timeframe in establishing an alternative. Nevertheless, alternative potential office buildings in the vicinity of the Headquarters are under investigation.

Temporary Satellite Building II
The Host State and Europol successfully completed a study on a potential office building, in The Hague, to fulfil the function of Temporary Satellite Building II, in close proximity to the Temporary Satellite Building I.

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

The net rentable floor space is 2,275 m^2; the building consists of 5 storeys and supports the accommodation of 150 workplaces. The distance from the Headquarters is 700 metres.

The Host State and Europol validated the results of the study and provisionally endorsed another office building as Temporary Satellite Building II, to accommodate Europol.

Temporary Satellite Building III

The Host State's expectation is that the lease agreement of Temporary Satellite Building I cannot be extended until the delivery of the long-term office building (HQ2). The feasibility study on the other shortlisted office building, with a capacity of 350 workplaces, 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^2) 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.

Europol completed its user Spatial-, Functional- and Technical Programme of Requirements in 2021. Following-up on this, the Host State and Europol are conducting two studies. The first study focuses on the implementation of the security requirements in the building and its public surroundings, taking into account the Urban Zoning Plan of the "Zorgvliet" neighbourhood, and the building's historical and architectural value. The second study focuses on examining the maximum number of workplaces that can be realised, taking into account possible extensions to increase the building volume.

Europol's Programme of Requirements of the Long-Term Housing Measures includes a second *high-availability* "(Hot) Data Centre". As both buildings HQ1 and HQ2 are connected to the same electricity grid in The Hague, Europol requested the Host State to establish this data centre at a different, highly secure location within the Netherlands.

The Host State completed the shortlisting exercise with eight possible locations in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the Host State and Europol will initiate a Feasibility Study to select the most suitable site, which can support Europol's security, business continuity and ICT requirements. The establishment of a (Hot) Data Centre is of key importance for the agency, in order to ensure business continuity of the current information systems towards the Member States and Third Parties.

Data Recovery Site Austria

Europol's Data Recovery Site is hosted at a location owned by the Republic of Austria. The original contract, running from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2021, has been renewed by an Addendum for a period of 5 years, starting as of 1 August 2021 until 31 July 2026. The Data Recovery Site is used to continuously store a backup of Europol's data and is therefore important for Europol's ICT business continuity.

Annex VIII: Privileges and immunities

Agency privileges	Privileges granted to staff	
	Protocol of privileges and immunities / diplomatic status	**Education / day care**
According to Article 63(1) Europol Regulation the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the European Union ("Protocol No. 7"[80] 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 Europol Regulation*).	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): - 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) - 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) 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 Europol Regulation*), which is itself supplemented regarding staff privileges and immunities by a number of *Notes Verbales* 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 *Notes Verbales* of 25 October 2007.	Europol staff members can benefit from the ordinary rules regarding tax benefits linked to day care expenses just as any other residents of the Netherlands.

[80] 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

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[81].

[81] 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, performs a risk assessment on Europol's governance, administrative and support process areas at regular intervals, with a view to identifying the overall risk profile of key administrative processes outside the core business area. On the basis of the risk assessment concerning Europol's process landscape, the Europol MB endorses a multi-annual IAS Strategic Audit Plan for Europol, subsequently implemented by corresponding IAS audit engagements at Europol. The latest risk assessment was conducted in 2021 and the Strategic Internal Audit Plan for Europol 2022-2024 outlines three prospective audit topics, namely: (1) coordination and working arrangements in DG HOME and EU decentralised agencies CEPOL, EUAA, EMCDDA, Europol and eu-LISA, (2) Europol's information management strategy – design of key controls, and (3) Innovation lab.

The **European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS)** holds regular meetings with the Data Protection Function (DPF) of Europol; the DPF facilitates the EDPS' annual and other inspection activities.

The **European Court of Auditors (ECA)** conducts annual audits on the annual accounts presented to the discharge authority, including on topics of horizontal nature across EU agencies, as well as 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 properly present the income, expenditure and financial position of Europol. The results of this audit work inform the annual report of the ECA.

Recommendations, observations and opportunities for improvement put forward during external monitoring and evaluation activities are assessed by Europol. To address these, Europol develops action plans, the implementation of which is monitored and reported upon including in the CAAR.

Ad-hoc evaluations

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 Europol Strategy 2020+ sets out the strategic direction for Europol and the five strategic priorities. Europol's **Internal Control System (ICS)** is a key component to help deliver the Europol Strategy 2020+ 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 organisational structure and the internal control system. In the design and implementation of internal controls, the Executive Director is supported 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, (IT) security, financial actors and the planning and performance and process management functions. The Management Board and independent functions have a distinct role in Europol's administrative and management structure.

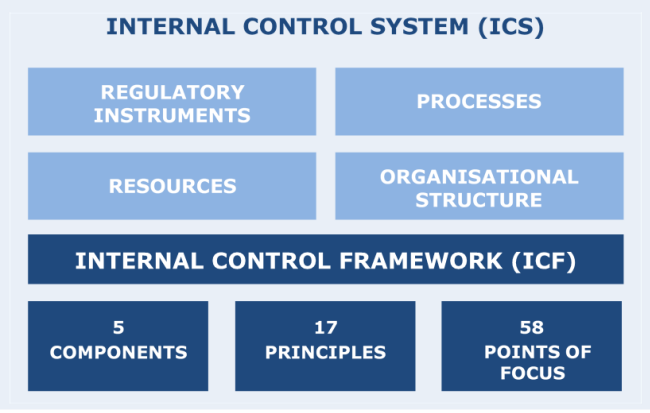
Organisational management integrates the three lines of defence model with dedicated risk management and compliance functions, an Internal Audit Capability and Data Protection Officer, as independent MB functions, and operates in line with the applicable framework of rules and regulations.

Internal Control System (ICS)

The **ICS** translates the **Europol Internal Control Framework (ICF)**, which was developed in line with the COSO Integrated Internal Control Framework and the ICF of the European Commission and adopted by the Management Board in December 2018. 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 Europol ICF consists of five components[82] and seventeen principles - underpinned by fifty-eight so-called 'Points of Focus'[83] - to achieve the operational, reporting and compliance objectives. The ICS is designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the elements of internal control, as set out in the Financial Regulation (Financial Rules) 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.



[82] (1) Control environment, (2) Risk assessment, (3) Control activities, (4) Information and communication, (5) Monitoring activities
[83] Important characteristics of the internal control principles

Continuous monitoring, using both quantitative and qualitative measurements, including a set of internal control indicators and an annual assessment, is performed 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 operations, reporting, and compliance - of the organisation. Improvements identified in the annual assessment of the ICS set the strategy for the further development of the existing internal controls.

Further to the control environment, control activities, management of information and communication as well as monitoring activities, a corporate **risk management** process aggregates and assesses risks (including the related responses) at organisational level. Risk management is expanded from a vertical (e.g. in departments or programmes/projects) to a horizontal perspective (corporate, organisational wide view) in line with the four principles and related points of focus of the risk assessment component, 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 time-critical or high impact risks. A risk management policy was adopted in 2022 and an automated risk management tool is envisaged for implementation and organisational wide roll-out in 2023.

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 principle, 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.

To achieve the objectives, thirteen detailed actions were defined, based on the risk assessment, 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 will be reviewed and reported upon annually. A next revision of the Anti-Fraud Strategy will take place in 2024.

Annex XI: Grants

A. Grant, Contribution and Service-level Agreements resulting in revenue and additional budget

	General information						Financial and HR impacts							
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description		N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)	
Grant agreements														
3. H2020 - GRACE 883341 - part of consortium coordinated by Vicom, ES	18/05/2020 (starting date 1/6/2020)	6,823,512.50 for the consortium of which 702,550 for Europol	42 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Global Response Against Child Exploitation based on big-data technologies supported by advanced AI powered algorithms	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							184,001	184,001	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
4. H2020 - INFINITY 883293 - part of consortium coordinated by Airbus, FR	11/05/2020 (starting date 1/6/2020)	6,866,503.75 for the consortium of which 533,600 for Europol	36 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	To become a flagship project that revolutionises how LEAs view, analyse and share information to combat crime and terrorism	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							74,111	74,111	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	1		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
5. H2020 - AIDA 883596 - part of consortium coordinated by Ingegneria Informatica, IT	20/05/2020 (starting date 1/9/2020)	7,690,272.50 for the consortium of which 935,800 for Europol	30 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Artificial Intelligence and advanced Data Analytics for Law Enforcement Agencies	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							62,387	62,387	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	5		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
6. H2020 - STARLIGHT 101021797 - part of consortium coordinated by CEA, FR	05/05/2021 (starting date 1/10/2021)	17,000,000 for the consortium of which 891,200 for Europol	48 months	European Commission Research Executive Agency	Sustainable Autonomy and Resilience for LEAs using AI against High priority Threats	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							222,800	222,800	222,800	222,800	167,100	167,100	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		3		3		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
Total grant agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							543,299	543,299	222,800	222,800	167,100	167,100	-	-
						Number of CAs	12		3		3		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	

	General information						Financial and HR impacts							
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description		N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)	
Contribution agreements														
1. EaP EMPACT ENI/2020 / 416-376	11/06/2020 (starting date 1/7/2020)	2,500,000	48 months	European Commission DG Near	Fighting organised crime in the EaP region	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							625,000	625,000	312,500	312,500	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	2		2		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
2. SIRIUS phase 2 New Agreement	21/12/2020 (starting date 1/1/2021)	3,491,891.50 (2,226,456 Europol, 1,265,435.50 Eurojust)	42 months (staff for year 1 still in SIRIUS I)	European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments	International Digital Cooperation - Cross border access to electronic evidence	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							797,835	797,835	344,412	344,412	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	7		7		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
Total contribution agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							1,422,835	1,422,835	656,912	656,912	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	9		9		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	

	General information						Financial and HR impacts							
Service-level agreements	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description		N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)	
1. EUIPO - IP Crime	07/11/2019 (starting date 1/1/2020)	maximum 3,800,000	48 months	The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)	To support law enforcement authorities preventing crime related to Intellectual Property Rights	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							950,000	950,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	2		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	7		0		0		0	
2. EUIPO - Fraud	13/08/2019 (starting date 1/1/2020)	No amount specified in SLA, 80,000 annually agreed	48 months	The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)	Preventing fraud against users of the European Union Intellectual Propery Systems	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							80,000	80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	0		0		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	1		0		0		0	
3. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (funded via Contribution Agreement with DG Near)	05/08/2020	880,000	Maximum duration until 1/9/2024	The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training	EUROMED POLICE V (Contract No. ENI/2020/414-940), WB PaCT (Contract No. 2019/ 413-822) and TOPCOP (Contract No. ENI/2020/415-941) projects	Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							200,000	200,000	120,000	120,000	-	-	-	-
						Number of CAs	3		2		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	0		0		0		0	
Total service-level agreements						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							1,230,000	1,230,000	120,000	120,000				
						Number of CAs	5		2		0		0	
						Number of SNEs	8		0		0		0	

	General information						Financial and HR impacts							
	Date of signature	Total amount	Duration	Counterpart	Short description		N-1 (2023)		N (2024)		N+1 (2025)		N+2 (2026)	
TOTAL AGREEMENTS						Amount	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA	CA	PA
							3,196,134	3,196,134	999,712	999,712	167,100	167,100	-	-
						Number of CAs	26		14		3		0	
						Number of SNEs	8		0		0		0	

B. Grants to be awarded

Since 2006, Europol has supported the law enforcement community with grants. Initially for the support in the fight against Euro counterfeiting via Low Value Grants (LVGs). Later, from 2014 onwards, Europol started supporting the EMPACT activities via High Value Grants (HVGs) under a Delegation Agreement with DG Home.

In 2017, the Europol Regulation allowed the agency to support activities directly from the budget, other than Euro Counterfeiting, via grants. This additional support was initially provided through one or more HVGs for each Operational Action Plan (12-15 annually) and through LVGs for operational activities for EMPACT. This last category has been progressively utilised since and grew from six applications in 2017 to 108 applications in 2022.

Grant activities further increased in 2020 by the inclusion of the direct award of a grant to the ATLAS community after the support from the ISF Police had stopped. Europol developed the new grant scheme for the Operational Task Forces for High Value Targets. For this scheme 12 LVG applications were received in the first year (2020), 51 LVG applications in the second year (2021) and 53 LVG applications in the third year (2022) of existence.

From 2023 onwards, Europol plans to implement another LVG scheme dedicated to the support of the EU MS in the field of innovation. The objective is to provide targeted and agile financial support to group of EU MS and Schengen-associated countries that are working to co-develop the future services and tools that the EU LEA community will use in the future.

The total annual amount budgeted to award grants comes to roughly € 10M per year.

Running grant schemes under strictly annual budgets ("non-differentiated appropriations") is causing more and more challenges, especially because grants must be closed before the end of year N+1 and the peaks in workload are difficult to manage with limited staff resources.

In addition, Europol's beneficiaries, mainly the MS law-enforcement community (law-enforcement public bodies such as police, criminal investigation offices, gendarmerie, border guards, customs, etc.) are seeking possibilities for multi-annual funding and planning. As an example, for EMPACT, the Council is requesting Europol to introduce grants that run over multiple years, in support of the development of multi-annual Operation Action Plans (OAP) and similar signals are received from the ATLAS community.

In 2023 Europol already introduces differentiated appropriations but still continues to support Member States via the different grant schemes with annual budgets. From 2024 onwards, Europol aims at introducing calls and invitations for periods longer than one year via differentiated appropriations.

1. Restricted call for proposals to support the implementation of activities identified by the Council – EMPACT High Value Grants

Legal basis
Article 4 and Article 61 of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.
Council conclusions on setting the EU's Priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2022 and 2025, doc. 8665/21 COSI 90 of 12 May 2021.

Budget line
3920 EMPACT Grants

Priorities of the years, objectives pursued and expected results
Enhancing the fight against serious and organised international crime during the third and fourth year of implementation of EMPACT activities 2022-2025.

The call is restricted to EMPACT participants, while all relevant documents are published on the Europol Platform for Experts – a communication tool with EMPACT participants used to reach all potential applicants. In accordance with the Europol legal basis, the Europol National Unit (ENU) shall be the liaison body between Europol and the competent authorities of the Member States. Thus, the applications must always be submitted via the ENU of the Lead Applicant.

The objective of the call is to provide support to Operational Actions laid down in the fifteen Operational Action Plans (OAPs) as adopted by the Council. EMPACT 2022-2025 addresses the following crime areas: High-risk criminal networks; Cyber-attacks; Trafficking in Human Beings (THB); Child sexual exploitation; Migrant smuggling; Drugs trafficking: (i) the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin, (ii) the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS); Fraud, economic and financial crimes: (i) online fraud schemes, (ii) excise fraud; (iii) MTIC fraud, (iv) intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies, (v) Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery; Organised Property Crime; Environmental crime; and Firearms trafficking.

It is expected that the support will provide for improved cooperation between Member States law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies and relevant third parties, while delivering coherent actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU.

Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals
Transnational operational and non-operational activities addressing in each of the EMPACT Priorities at least one of the following objectives: awareness raising and exchange of best practices; improving data gathering and intelligence sharing, providing strategic support for current or proposed operational activities; enhancing operational support and cross-border cooperation.

Grants may not be awarded for activities that are funded under another EU programme or from Europol's budget. In this respect, it is noted that Europol is active in an environment which has undergone a proliferation of EU funding sources. A statement to ensure respect for the principle of no double funding from EU sources must be made by applicant(s) in the Application form. Europol is entitled to perform checks in this respect, including by liaising with external partners (e.g. DG HOME, Eurojust).

Calls will be designed with the aim of promoting one or more of the following outcomes which projects applications should aim at achieving:

- fostering communication and coordination amongst participants of OAPs;
- sharing of experiences and best practices between EU Member States;
- improving intelligence gathering and analyses;
- expanding data sharing with Europol information systems and prioritising the use of SIENA (secure line) as an operational communication tool;
- establishing support frameworks to implement operational activities, including where relevant with third countries or the private sector;
- enhancing cross-border/transnational operational cooperation between EU Member States and, where relevant, with third countries or the private sector;
- establishing joint investigations, joint operations or joint action days.

To take account of the operational nature of the activities, Europol may allow use of contingency budget for unplanned actions ("red-envelope procedure") in addition to planned actions ("blue envelope"). This is justified based on the need for law enforcement to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges and is further specified in the Call documentation.
Europol may award using simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

Eligibility criteria:

I. In order to be eligible the Applicant must be a public body established in an EU Member State participating in the OAP in question (i.e. the particular EMPACT crime priority) and in the law-enforcement cooperation under Europol Regulation.

No differentiation is made in Europol's constituent act between different Member States. However, the opt-in structure used for JHA under the TFEU creates a varying degree of participation of Member States. Europol pays due regard to the status of EU Member States with regard to the Europol Regulation and/or Justice and Home Affairs matters as regards eligibility to be a (lead) Applicant.

II. The Co-Applicants must be:

• An entity explicitly mentioned as a participant in the OAP;

• If the entity is not explicitly mentioned in the OAP, any of the following entities may be Co-Applicants, provided their participation is justified by the nature of the action:

- A public body established in an EU Member State or in a third country OR
- A profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in a third country, OR
- An International Organisation.

As regards co-applicants, even non-opting-in Member States could be eligible as co-applicants on the same basis as third countries and third parties provided that their participation is justified by the nature of the action. Their meaningful participation has however to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States.

Law Enforcement applicants may involve non-LE entities for the purpose of managing a grant provided that the manner and degree of their involvement satisfies security and confidentiality concerns. Costs incurred by other types of bodies could be eligible, provided that these can be justified by the aims of the action and respect the principle of sound financial management.

IV. The proposed activities must be mentioned in the respective OAPs as approved by COSI Council decisions.

Selection criteria:

In accordance with Article 198 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.

The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198(5) and (6) of the Financial Regulation.

Award criteria:

In accordance with Article 199 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the quality and expected results and cost-effectiveness of the proposed action. Applications will also be assessed with regard to their impact on the implementation of the OAPs concerned, European added value and involvement of Europol.

Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their publication in accordance with Article 189 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation, shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

Indicative timetable and indicative amount of the call for proposals

Date	Amount
Publication: Q4 2023 Award of grants: Q1 2024	TBC[84]

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
95%

2. Ad-hoc low-value grants in support of operational activities as laid down in the Operational Action Plans implementing the EMPACT Priorities.

Legal basis
Article 4 and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.
Council conclusions on setting the EU's Priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2022 and 2025, doc. 8665/21 COSI 90 of 12 May 2021.

Budget line
3920 EMPACT Grants

Priorities of the years, objectives pursued and expected results
Enhancing the fight against serious and organised international crime during the third and fourth year of the implementation of EMPACT activities 2022-2025. These grants are focussed on supporting Member States' cross-border operations and investigations as well as joint investigation teams as per Europol's tasks under Article 4(1)(h) of the Europol Regulation. Applications from eligible applicants can be submitted throughout the period indicated below rather than on any fixed deadline(s).

The objective of the low-value grants is to provide support tailored to operational activities within the fifteen Operational Action Plans (OAPs) adopted by the Council. They target activities that are developed on an ad-hoc basis rather than as a result of a long-term planning, due to their investigative nature or other quickly changing aspects of crime phenomena and crime-countering measures. EMPACT 2022-2025 addresses the following crime areas: High-risk criminal networks; Cyber-attacks; Trafficking in Human Beings (THB); Child sexual exploitation; Migrant smuggling; Drugs trafficking: (i) the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin, (ii) the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NPS); Fraud, economic and financial crimes: (i) online fraud schemes, (ii) excise fraud; (iii) MTIC fraud, (iv) intellectual property (IP) crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies, (v) Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery; Organised Property Crime; Environmental crime; and Firearms trafficking.

It is expected that the support will provide for effective cooperation between Member States law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies and relevant third parties while delivering coherent operational actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU. The funded measures should achieve concrete, quantifiable / measurable operational results. This scheme shall take due consideration of the existence of a separate grant scheme supporting actions against euro-counterfeiting.

[84] Europol will request COSI Strategic guidance pertaining to the division of available funds between EMPACT HVGs and LVGs in Q2 or Q3 2023.

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, if justified operationally.
Europol may use simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.

Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

Eligibility criteria:
I. In order to be eligible the Applicant must be a public body established in an EU Member state participating in the OAP in question (i.e. the particular EMPACT crime priority) and in the law-enforcement cooperation under the Europol Regulation.
No differentiation is made in Europol's constituent act between different Member States. However the opt-in structure used for JHA under the TFEU creates a varying degree of participation of Member States. Europol pays due regard to the status of EU Member States with regard to the Europol Regulation and/or Justice and Home Affairs matters as regards eligibility to be a (lead) Applicant.

II. The Co-Applicants must be:
• An entity explicitly mentioned as a participant in the OAP;
• If the entity is not explicitly mentioned in the OAP, any of the following entities may be Co-Applicants, provided their participation is justified by the nature of the action:
- A public body established in an EU Member State or in a third country OR
- A profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in a third country, OR
- An International Organisation.

As regards co-applicants even non-opting-in Member States could be eligible as co-applicants on the same basis as third countries and third parties provided that their participation is justified by the nature of the action. Their meaningful participation has however to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States.

IV. The proposed activities must be mentioned in the respective OAPs as approved by COSI Council decisions.

V. The requested grant cannot be higher than 60,000 EUR, or in line with the current threshold for low-value grants established by the EU Financial Regulation.

Selection criteria:
In accordance with Article 198 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for action shall be evaluated on the basis of the following selection criteria:
- Financial capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its funding.
- Operational capacity - Applicants and co-applicants must have the professional resources, competences and qualifications required to complete the proposed action.
- The verification of the financial and operational capacity shall not apply to public bodies and international organisations in accordance with Article 198(5) & (6) of the Financial Regulation.

To ensure that the operational needs are met, a pool of evaluators shall be duly appointed by the responsible authorising officer. In each evaluation at least 2 evaluators from that list (with complementary expertise in law enforcement and finance) shall perform the evaluation (without a separate ad hoc appointment).

To allow for fast processing, applicants must use the templates to apply and reply within maximum 24 hours to any questions raised during evaluation.

Award criteria:
In accordance with Article 199 of the Financial Regulation, proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the quality and expected results and cost-effectiveness of the 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	TBC + internal assigned revenue [85]

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
95%

3. Support for combatting Euro-counterfeiting

Legal basis
Article 4(4) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.

Budget line
3930 Support against Euro Counterfeiting Grants

Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results
Operational actions and support for coordination activities within the guidelines approved by the Europol Management Board with the objective of protecting the euro currency from counterfeiting activities.

Description of the activities to be funded through low-value grants
Applications from eligible applicants can be submitted throughout the period indicated below rather than on any fixed deadline(s). Applications submitted must involve at least one of the following activities, all designed with the objective of protecting the integrity of the Euro currency:
- Investigations into or related to euro counterfeiting. This means inquiries related to counterfeit euro banknotes and counterfeit euro coins, as well as the production and the distribution of them;
- Technical investigations using forensic and/or scientific analysis to identify, sites, raw materials and technical equipment used for the production of counterfeit euro notes and coins as well as measures to locate technical equipment used;
- Investigative measures carried out in compliance with the applicable national law and in accordance with these guidelines;
- Operational or technical investigations into euro counterfeiting involving cooperation with third countries.
In addition, the applicant must commit to a degree of involvement of Europol:

[85] If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

- 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 + internal assigned revenue[86]

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
100% maximum

4. ATLAS Network grant

Legal basis
Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA. Terms of Reference signed between Europol, Atlas Chair and Austrian Ministry of Interior and entering into force on 10 October 2018.

Budget line
3950 ATLAS Grants

Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results
The ATLAS Network is a cooperation structure between 38 Special Intervention Units (SIUs) that includes and supports different training platforms and sharing of best practices in terms of proficiency and tactics.
The main priority for the years 2024 and 2025 is the execution of cross border operations and the implementation of trainings, workshops and exercises. These priorities as well as the overall ATLAS strategy are influenced amongst others by the tailor-made strategic document of the European Counter Terrorism Centre - "ECTC Outlook for ATLAS Commanders". The identified challenges need special attention and preparation on all levels and areas of competence: intervention in urban, rural and maritime areas; transport means and buildings are focal points as well as drone handling/robotics, sniper, communication,

[86] As mentioned in the guidelines EDOC #878276.

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:
  - entry techniques
  - silent techniques
  - rural mountain operations
  - buildings (assault tactics and knowledge)
  - 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

Date	Amount
Q1 2024	TBC[87]

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
95%

5. HVT/OTF grants

Legal basis
Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.
Standard Operating Procedure - Standard Operating Procedure on the Selection of High Value Targets and Establishment of Operational Task Forces within O2-ESOCC, EDOC #901933 v13.
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 established OTF in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure in place. If operationally justified, several subsequent applications could be submitted, enabling Member States to apply for funding throughout the lifetime of the operation.
Europol may use simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted. The duration of grants will be 9 months extendable, if operationally justified.

Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria

Eligibility criteria:

[87] While EUR 3M is included in the preliminary estimate 2024, Europol will re-assess the amount in the course of 2023, also taking into account the overall planning situation for the 2024 budget. If possible, Europol will for ATLAS (as for EMPACT) introduce multiannual planning already in 2024 for which a higher amount of Commitment Appropriations would be needed. This will only be performed if the overall budget planning and latest estimates allow for it.

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.

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 [88] 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.

[88] EDOC #901933 v13 "Standard Operating Procedure - Selection of High Value Targets and establishment of Operational Task Forces within O2-ESOCC".

Information for Applicants
The Invitation to submit applications shall be restricted to OTF participants only. Once an OTF is established, the Invitation, accompanied by the application package, shall be circulated to the targeted audience only. All OTF participants shall receive the information simultaneously, in accordance with the principle of equal treatment.

Indicative timetable for the direct award and indicative amount of the grant
Unlike the EMPACT and ATLAS grant schemes, Europol intends to introduce differentiated appropriations with a multi-annual invitation to apply for the OTF Grant scheme only from 2025 onwards.

Date	Amount
Publication Q1 2024 Award of Grants: Q1-Q4 2024	EUR 2,000,000 or TBC[89]

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

[89] If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

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

Date	Amount
Publication: Q1 2024 Award of grants: Q1 2024-Q4 2024	EUR 175,000 + internal assigned revenue [90]

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
95%

7. Low-value grants for cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries - End date for award under this grant scheme foreseen per 31/12/2023

Legal basis
Article 4(1)(h) and (i) and Article 61(3) of the REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA.
Contribution Agreement between the European Commission and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation ENI/2020/416/376.

Budget line
B-3600 EMP-EAP-Grants (EDOC#1111249)

Priorities, objectives pursued and expected results
Supporting the cooperation of the six Eastern Partnership countries with EU Member States and Europol for the fight against serious and organised international crime, including through their participation in EMPACT.
The Invitation to submit applications is directed to EU Member States and the Eastern Partnership countries collaborating in the framework of a specific action. In accordance with Europol legal basis, the Europol National Unit (ENU) shall be the liaison body between Europol and the competent authorities of the Member States. Thus, the applications must always be submitted via the ENU of the Lead Applicant.
It is expected that the support will provide for improved cooperation between Member States' and Eastern Partnership countries' law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies while delivering coherent actions targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU.

Description of the activities to be funded

[90] If operationally justified, the authorising officer may decide to increase the maximum amount for this scheme, subject to Europol budget availability.

Activities addressing at least one of the following objectives: (i) strengthening Eastern Partnership countries' institutional knowledge and capacity on EMPACT crime areas and increasing cooperation within EMPACT; (ii) enhancing criminal intelligence in the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood region as well as the exchange of intelligence and information between EaP countries, EU MS and Europol; (iii) enhancing operational cooperation with of the EaP countries with the EU Member States and Agencies, including through EMPACT.

The activities to be funded include operational and/or investigative activities (e.g. travel and accommodation for operational meetings, direct operational costs such as informant rewards, buying/renting operational technical and forensic equipment, interpretation or deployments, etc.) as well as activities related to strategic or operational intelligence exchange (e.g. meetings and workshops) implemented by the targeted law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, activities and equipment related to identification and setting of legal and technical requirements for the exchange of intelligence.

In case of larger investigations, if operationally justified, subsequently submitted applications, each within the limit of 60,000 EUR, could cover a particular stage of the ongoing investigation enabling the participating countries to apply for funding throughout the lifetime of the operation.

Grants may not be awarded for activities that are funded under another EU programme or from Europol's budget, including through EMPACT grants. In this respect, it is noted that Europol is active in an environment which has undergone a proliferation of EU funding sources. A statement to ensure respect for the principle of no double funding from EU sources must be made by applicant(s) in the Application form. Europol is entitled to perform checks in this respect, including by liaising with external partners (e.g. DG HOME, Eurojust).

Europol may award using simplified cost options provided that a decision by the Executive Director has been adopted.
The maximum duration of grants will be 6 months extendable by 3 months, if justified.

Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria
Eligibility criteria:
I. In order to be eligible the Lead Applicant must be a law enforcement or judiciary public body established in an EU Member State participating in EU law enforcement cooperation under Europol Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).

II. The Co-Applicants must be:
- a public body established in an EU Member State OR
- a public body established in one of the six Eastern Partnership countries[91] or, if relevant for the action, in a third country OR
- a profit or non-profit-oriented organisation established in an EU Member State or in one of the six Eastern Partnership countries or, if relevant for the action, in a third country, OR
- an International Organisation.

The meaningful participation of co-applicants based in third countries, has to be possible having due regard to Europol's legal obligations on exchange of information with third countries.

III. Applications must involve at least two (2) public bodies established in two (2) different EU Member States and at least one (1) public body of one of the six Eastern Partnership countries, which have a status of a law enforcement authority or judiciary.

IV. The requested grant cannot be higher than 60,000 EUR, or in line with the current threshold for low-value grants established by the EU Financial Regulation.

[91] Following instructions provided by the EEAS, Belarus is at the moment not eligible to receive funding under this grant-scheme.

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).

Award criteria:
In accordance with Article 199 of the EU Financial Regulation proposals for an action shall be evaluated on the basis of the relevance, quality, cost-effectiveness and European added value of the proposed action.

Ex-post publicity for award of grants (in particular their publication in accordance with Article 189 of EU Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) and the financial verification of the payment requests, including the required supporting documentation shall take into account the confidentiality and security of the operational and classified information.

Information for Applicants
The Invitation to submit applications and the relevant application documents are published on Europol website.

Indicative timetable and indicative amount of the grant

Date	Amount
Publication Q2 2021 Award of Grants: Q2 2021 – Q4 2023	EUR 1,420,000

Maximum possible rate of co-financing of the total eligible costs
95%

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

Europol External Strategy 2021-2024

1. Framework of the Europol External Strategy 2021-2024

The External Strategy is part of Europol's multiannual programming, in accordance with Article 12 of the Europol Regulation (hereafter "Regulation"). The provisions for Europol's relations with partners are laid down in Chapter V of the Regulation.

The political framework of the Europol External Strategy 2021-2024 includes the European Council's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, the EU Global Strategy, the Political Guidelines of the current Commission and the steps leading to the European Security Union, to which Europol will continue to contribute.

The key analytical reports on crime in the EU, including Europol's assessments, provide the operational framework for Europol's external relations and an indication of the operational needs of the MS.

The Strategy 2020+ represents the internal framework within which Europol's external relations are set; its 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 will be 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 will guide Europol's cooperation with external partners and fulfil the Agency's objectives set by its Regulation, namely to support the competent authorities of the Member States and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime, terrorism and other forms of crime affecting a common interest covered by a Union policy.

Europol performing as an integral part of the EU security architecture

The protection of citizens and freedoms is one of the priorities of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024[92]. 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.

[92] 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.

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+:

1. Be the EU criminal information hub
2. Deliver agile operational support
3. Be the platform for European policing solutions
4. Be at the forefront of innovation and research for law enforcement

Bearing in mind the strategic priorities, Europol's objectives in the external relations will be:

Enhancing the partnerships with external parties at both strategic and operational levels

This overarching objective is the major driver for the further development of effective partnerships with external partners. Europol will also support the Commission in the negotiations of new agreements allowing personal data exchange, which have achieved limited results during the first years of implementation of the Regulation.

The list of priority partners with which Europol may conclude working arrangements adopted by the Management Board, and the criteria for setting the priorities regarding the conclusion of Working Arrangements, discussed by the Corporate Matters Working Group in 2019, guide the implementation of the External Strategy.

Europol will use the tools provided by the European Union to enhance external partnerships, such as Union-funded projects, EU operations and missions when relevant.

Using an extended network of partners to develop further the EU criminal information hub

Europol's external relations will focus on the further development of its role as the EU criminal information hub, in order to contribute to the preventive measures and to support the delivery of operational results to fulfil the priorities set by the EU strategic orientation. Europol will also contribute, within its legal mandate, to other Union endeavours, such as achieving a more effective control of its external borders, ensuring the proper functioning of Schengen and providing improved crisis management mechanisms. In addition, Europol will continue exploring its possible role in countering hybrid threats and in the European Union crisis management scheme.

Special attention will be paid to the further development of cooperation with private parties, non-governmental actors and international organisations that could contribute to the work of Europol, according to its legal basis.

Further developing Europol's cooperation tools to provide agile operational support

Europol attracts external partners due to its unique and well-functioning environment for cooperation. Europol will continue to cultivate this environment, which represents a potential for further growth of new interested external partners.

The current security threats and ever-changing criminal environment require a complex multidisciplinary approach of law enforcement. This is reflected in the community of liaison officers hosted by Europol, which consists of police forces, customs representatives, members of the intelligence services and other law enforcement authorities. Europol will further invest to expand this multidisciplinary environment.

While Europol will continue to develop the community of liaison officers in order to ensure an effective connection with Member States and third parties, the future deployment of Europol liaison officers will take place as agreed by the Management Board.

Europol will further expand SIENA with all its functionalities and other platforms, such as the Europol Platform of Experts, in order to ensure the desired flow of operational information. Europol will develop its external relations with a focus on interoperability and interconnection of information (in line with and exploiting the ongoing implementation of the interoperability of EU information systems) to address EU security threats in all their complexity.

Interconnection and synergies will be of the utmost importance in the external relations of the Agency. Europol will explore possibilities to cooperate with EU bodies, such as agencies, CSDP missions and operations: the ultimate goal of this cooperation will be to secure the operational data needed to support the law enforcement authorities of Member States. However, any form of cooperation with civilian CSDP mission must be assessed case-by-case, taking into account the Europol's operational needs, its alignment with the legal basis and the availability of resources.

Promoting EU policing solutions, innovation and research

Europol has completed the phase of promoting its business model to potential external partners: the business model has helped establish solid external cooperation relations in almost all the continents. The continued threats call for new law enforcement approaches,

in particular in the areas of counterterrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime, as well as emerging threats from environmental crime. Due to a strong external element, tackling such criminality requires new forms and levels of external cooperation. Consequently, Europol has stepped up its efforts towards some external partners, for example via Union-funded projects.

Europol will continue to promote the model of the European Union law enforcement work with the goal to establish well-functioning external partnerships according to the operational needs. For example, the Innovation Lab will coordinate innovation and research activities for the benefit of the EU Member States' law enforcement agencies and other EU agencies and bodies. The Innovation Lab will focus on developing its external outreach with the established operational partners of Europol. Close cooperation with the Interpol Global Centre for Innovation (IGCI) is being established to monitor emerging technologies relevant to law enforcement work. In this context, cooperation with private parties will be further explored, keeping in mind current limitations in Europol's mandate.

In promoting EU policing solutions, Europol will focus on serving as a knowledge platform also for external partners, on promoting EU criminal analysis standards, on mediating and interconnecting expertise between the Member States, Europol and external partners.

4. Partners

Europol will continue to set priorities for engaging with external partners. The criteria for setting Europol's priorities regarding the conclusion of Working Arrangements, discussed by the Corporate Matters Working Group in 2019, will be applied to identify new external partners.

Europol will continue serving as a platform for EU Member States' competent authorities to interact with their counterparts from the partner countries in a coordinated way. Concerning the general focus of Europol's external relations led by the priority topics of organised crime, counterterrorism and cybercrime, the following areas will be further developed: cooperation on financial investigations, namely through the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre, Europol's travel intelligence function, innovation and forensics.

Third countries and regions

Europol has established cooperation with a number of external partners. The Agency will maintain the relations stemming from the existing agreements and working arrangements.

The Europol Strategy 2020+ 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** [93] 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

[93] Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

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.**[94] Similar to the Western Balkan and MENA regions, Europol will assist in the establishment of regional network of analysts and through the participation in EMPACT activities. Strengthening cooperation with **Ukraine** in the fight against cybercrime, financial and economic crime will be further pursued. Active information sharing with the countries that have established cooperation with Europol and promoting Europol's model of cooperation to potential partners will also be in the focus.

Maintaining and further developing cooperation with **the United States, Canada and Australia** will remain another top priority. Europol will also strive to develop excellent cooperation with **New Zealand**. Crime areas such as serious organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime will be in focus.

Asia

The need for additional cooperation might arise after the Covid-19 crisis in relation to Asian countries. In particular, Europol recognises the importance of further engagement with **China**, within the framework of the strategic cooperation agreement, which should go hand in hand with growing Chinese investments and expanding relations with some Member States.

Countering cybercrime, child sexual exploitation and cooperation on innovation will be high on the agenda for future cooperation in the region.

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**.

<u>International organisations</u>

[94] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.

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 Strategies.

From:	MB Secretariat
To:	METSOLA Roberta, President
Cc:	MB Secretariat
Subject:	@EXT: Europol's draft Programming Document 2024-2026
Date:	31 January 2023 19:59:18
Attachments:	EDOC-#1258316-v10B-Draft_Europol_Programming_Document_2024-2026.pdf EDOC-#1281254-v1-_Draft_PD_2024-2026_Letter_from_the_MB_Chairperson_to_the_European_Parliament.pdf

Dear President Metsola,

Please find attached the following documents:

- Letter from the Chairperson of the Management Board transmitting Europol's draft Programming Document 2024-2026:

- Europol's draft Programming Document 2024-2026:

Sincerely,

Borja Barbosa

Secretary of the Management Board

Phone: +31 (0)70 302 5115

Mobile: +31 (0)6 2482 3130

mbs@europol.europa.eu