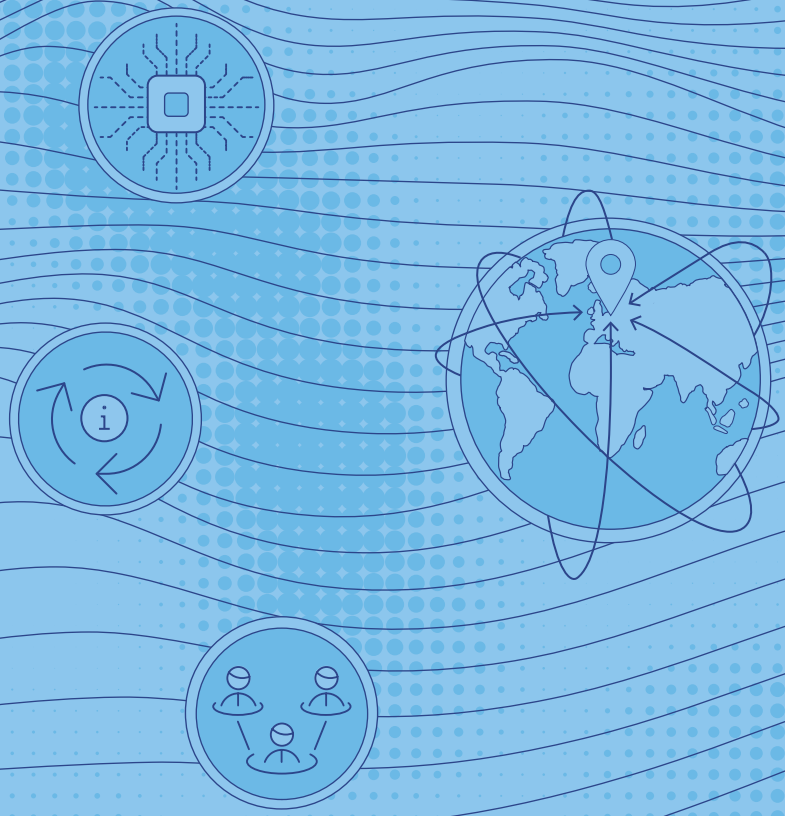
THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

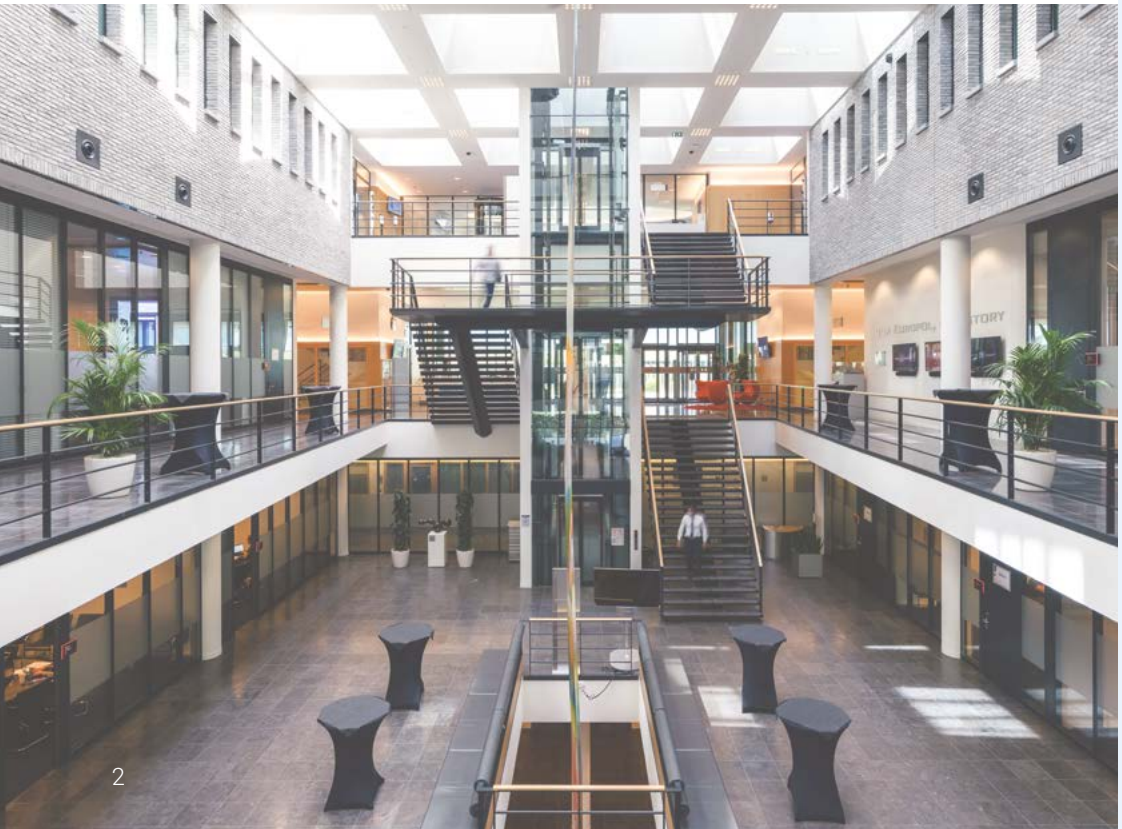
In Brief



EUROPOL

Who works at Europol?

Europol's workforce consists of over 1 700 people from 57 different countries. Furthermore, Europol hosts a network of over 300 liaison officers from EU Member States as well as from third countries and international organisations.



As the threat of international organised crime continues to grow, so must we as an organisation. This publication goes beyond simply outlining Europol's role as the European agency for law enforcement cooperation, it showcases the scale and impact of our work and the importance of cooperation. From our operational successes to our cutting-edge technological initiatives, this resource offers a clear insight into Europol's mission, achievements, and ongoing commitment to addressing the complex and evolving threats we face across Europe.

Catherine De Bolle / Executive Director

How does Europol make Europe safer?

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

Headquarters in

The Hague

The Netherlands

EUR 223.8 million

budget for 2025

> 1 700

people in Europol's workforce*

66% male, 34% female

~ 300

liaison officers from EU MS and Third Parties

* This number includes staff with employment contracts with Europol, law enforcement liaison officers from Member States and third parties, Seconded National Experts, trainees and contractors.

At the heart of European security

Europol ensures an efficient response to criminal threats by acting as the principal criminal information hub, delivering agile operational support and providing European policing solutions in conjunction with an international network of partners.

EUROPOL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Europol's six strategic priorities guide the organisation in implementing its main goals and vision, and in delivering a unique set of operational services to the EU.

Be the EU criminal information hub, including for data acquisition

Deliver agile, real-time operational support

Be at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and research

Be the model EU organisation for law enforcement cooperation

Be a platform for European policing solutions

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

Europol's history

1991

The first formal reference to Europol occurs as the European Council in Luxembourg agrees to the full establishment of a Central European Criminal Investigations Office.

1992

The Treaty on the European Union is signed in Maastricht on 7 February.

1993

Europol Drugs Unit is established by ministerial agreement.

Member States agree to police cooperation on matters considered as common interests (preventing and combatting terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, and other serious forms of international crime) in connection with the organisation of a Union-wide information exchange system within a European Police Office (Europol).

1994

Europol Drugs Unit starts its operations in The Hague with the mandate to assist national police forces in Criminal investigations.

1995

Agreement on the Convention establishing Europol under Article K.3 of the Maastricht Treaty.

1999

Appointment of the first Europol Director, Jürgen Storbeck.

Europol becomes fully operational on 1 July 1999, following the ratification and adoption by all Member States of the legal acts provided for in the Europol Convention.

2001

Signature of the first cooperation agreements with non-EU Member States (Iceland and Norway).

2002

Signature of the Cooperation Agreement with the United States.

2005

Appointment of Max-Peter Ratzel as Director of Europol.

2009

Launch of Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) and appointment of Rob Wainwright as Director of Europol.

2010

Europol becomes a full EU Agency within the EU's competence under the Treaty of Lisbon.

2011

Inauguration of the new Europol headquarters by her Majesty Beatrix, Queen of the Netherlands.

Europol supports Norway after a terrorist attack, marking the first time the Agency provides counter-terrorism operational support of this kind.

2012

Europol supports the investigation into the terrorist attack at Burgas airport, Bulgaria.

2013

Opening of the European Cybercrime Centre at Europol (EC3).

2015

Europol sets up Task Force Fraternité after the terrorist attack in Paris in November, after which the Task Force continues its work when a terrorist attack takes place just a few months later in Brussels.

2016

Establishment of the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) and the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) at Europol.

2017

Europol's official name changes to European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

2018

Appointment of Catherine De Bolle (Belgium) as Executive Director of Europol.

2019

Europol is mandated by the Justice and Home Affairs ministers from all the EU Member States to create an Innovation Lab to support the law enforcement community in the area of innovation.

2020

Europol extends its global reach as, for the first time, Europol's agreements with third countries outnumber those with EU Member States.

Europol supports investigators in France and the Netherlands in blocking the illegal use of EncroChat encrypted communication by large-scale organised crime groups and launches the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC).

2021

Europol supports investigators in Belgium, France and the Netherlands in blocking the illegal use of Sky ECC encrypted communication by large-scale organised crime groups.

2022

Europol launches its Digital Forensics Unit, significantly enhancing its ability to support Member States in processing and analysing digital evidence for law enforcement investigations.

2023

Europol creates the Integrated Operational Services Unit (within its Operational and Analysis Centre) to provide cross-cutting support to internal and external stakeholders in relation to the EU interoperability agenda and travel intelligence.

Europol introduces the new independent advisory and monitoring function of the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO), to produce reports and provide advice on human and fundamental rights.

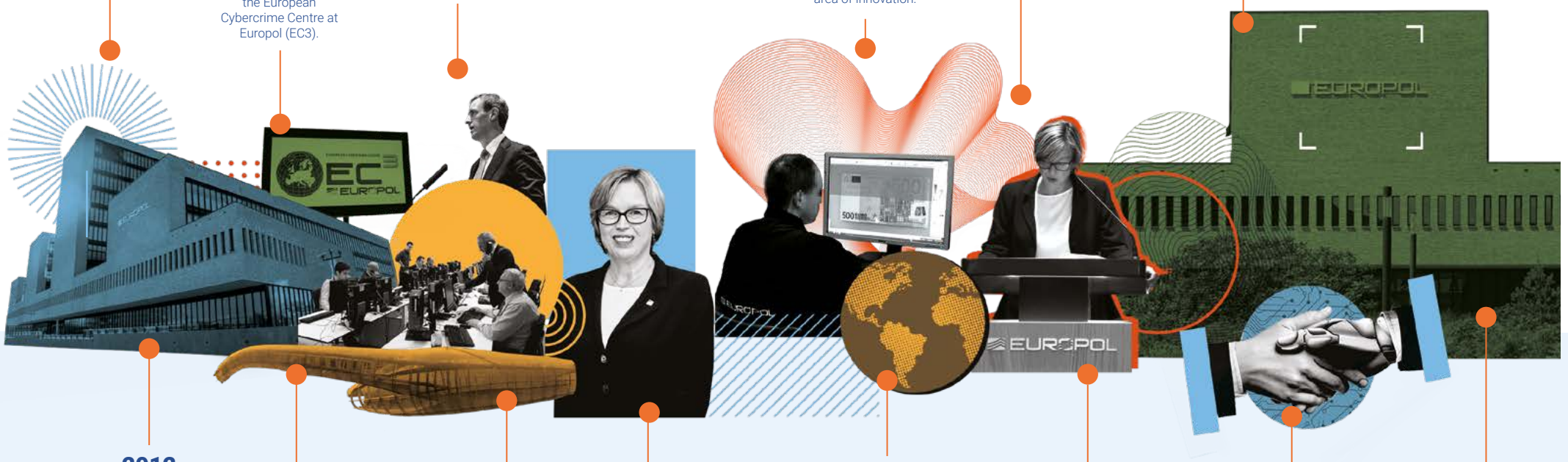
2024

The number of law enforcement authorities connected to Europol through SIENA exceeds 3 000, from more than 70 countries and international entities. Europol appoints its first Artificial Intelligence Officer to steer the adoption of cutting-edge AI technologies, ensuring they align seamlessly with the agency's mission, as well as with strong data protection safeguards.

2025

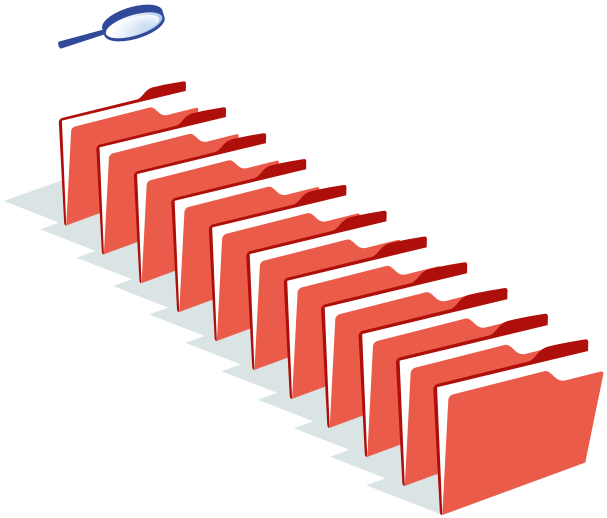
Europol establishes its new External Relations Strategy in 2025, outlining the first strategy on cooperation with private parties.

Europol delivers and uses the Research and Innovation Sandbox as the data processing environment for research and innovation projects.



How does Europol decide which crime areas to focus on?

Europol supports and strengthens action and cooperation by over 3 500 Member States' police authorities and other law enforcement services in preventing and combatting serious and organised international crime. This includes crimes affecting two or more Member States, terrorism and forms of crime which affect a common interest covered by an EU policy.



EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA)

One of Europol's flagship reports, the **EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA)** updates Europe's law enforcement community and decision-makers on such developments in serious and organised crime and the threats it poses to the EU.

Informed by its analysis of the prevailing threats, the EU-SOCTA identifies a number of high priority crime areas that the operational response in the EU should focus on.

EU-SOCTA 2025

Download the report here

EMPACT

EMPACT stands for the **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats.** It introduces an integrated approach to EU internal security, involving measures that range from external border controls, police, customs and judicial cooperation to information management, innovation, training, prevention and the external dimension of internal security, as well as public-private partnerships where appropriate.

These priorities determine the operational work carried out in the framework of **EMPACT** for the next four years. EMPACT stands for the **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats**. It is a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify, prioritise and address threats posed by organised and serious international crime. Linked to the EU-SOCTA, it operates in four-year cycles and brings together the law enforcement authorities of the Member States, Europol and a wide range of partners.

In June 2025, the Council adopted the conclusions on the enhancement of EMPACT and on the EU crime priorities for the next EMPACT cycle 2026-2029.

They provide guidance on how to improve EMPACT, highlighting key areas to focus on during the next cycle:

The fastest growing crimes in the online sphere (cyberattacks, online child sexual exploitation and online fraud schemes)

The most threatening criminal networks and individuals

Migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings

Firearms and explosives crime

Environmental crimes

Economic and financial crimes

Drug trafficking

How does Europol operate?

Europol provides operational support from its headquarters in The Hague, The Netherlands as well as on-the-spot support for law enforcement authorities.

Europol's specialised systems offer fast and secure capabilities for **storing, searching, visualising and linking criminal information.**

THE EUROPOL PODCAST

Learn more about some of Europol's most noteworthy operations on The Europol Podcast

Law enforcement agencies contact Europol for information via the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA).

24/7 OPERATIONAL CENTRE

Europol provides a first-level response to law enforcement and initiates relevant emergency protocols on a 24/7 basis.

Requests and messages from law enforcement agencies are analysed through **Analysis Projects.**

ANALYSIS PROJECTS

Analysis at Europol has both an operational and a strategic component. Analysis Projects focus on certain crime areas from a commodity-based perspective or criminal network approach.

As part of this process, Europol staff can use information from the messages to support investigations all over the world.

The resulting information feeds into an intelligence cycle which may lead to the identification of evolving and emerging threats.

From headquarters

Europol supports law enforcement agencies in different EU Member States from its headquarters in The Hague using sophisticated crime-fighting tools and technologies.

SECURE INFORMATION EXCHANGE NETWORK APPLICATION (SIENA)

When police in different countries seek Europol's help, they can contact Europol via the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). SIENA is an advanced messaging service provided by Europol to quickly exchange crime-related operational and strategic data between Europol and both EU and non-EU countries, as well as between Member States and third parties.

over
3 500
competent authorities
connected via SIENA in 2025

EUROPOL PLATFORM FOR EXPERTS (EPE)

The Europol Platform for Experts is a secure, collaborative web platform for specialists working in a variety of law enforcement areas. Its purpose is to facilitate and support the sharing of non-personal data on crime. It provides content management and communication tools such as wikis, blogs, messaging and file sharing.

60+
platforms

over
22 000+
experts from law enforcement, private sector and academia

EUROPOL INFORMATION SYSTEM (EIS)

The Europol Information System (EIS) is Europol's main reference system that is in place to support Member States, Europol and its partners in their fight against organised crime, terrorism, and other forms of serious crime. It contains information on offences, individuals involved, and other related data linked to suspected and/or convicted persons.

over
1.7 million
objects currently in the database

On-the-spot support

JOINT ACTION DAYS

Joint Action Days (JADs) target criminal networks affecting the EU. JADs are an intelligence-led initiative by Member States and are supported or coordinated by Justice and Home Affairs agencies (in particular by Europol and Frontex). JADs take place within the **EMPACT framework**. Europol also deploys analysts and specialists to support ongoing operations in Member States.

432
Action Days

4 124
Arrests

JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS

A Joint Investigation Team (JIT) is an international cooperation tool based on an agreement between competent authorities – **both judicial** (judges, prosecutors and investigative judges) **and law enforcement authorities** – of two or more states. It is established for a limited duration and for a specific purpose. It conducts criminal investigations in one or more of the states involved.

21
New JITS supported by Europol

33
JITS supported by Europol

OPERATIONAL TASK FORCES

An operational task force (OTF) is a **temporary** group of representatives from Member States and Europol. The group is formed to carry out a specific project. It coordinates intelligence and investigative efforts focusing on the criminal activities of one or more selected **High Value Targets** and members of their criminal network. For example OTF GRIMM, which is tackling violence-as-a-service and the recruitment of young perpetrators into serious and organised crime.

65
New OTFs
in 2025

MOBILE OFFICES

Europol's staff are deployed to provide support for a wide range of activities on an ad hoc basis, such as **ongoing investigations, major sports events, international conferences** and other occasions where police cooperation is needed. In this scenario, they are equipped with a mobile office in order to connect to Europol's databases.

Fundamental Rights at Europol

The amendments to the Europol Regulation introduced an independent **Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO)** to the Agency in 2023, to ensure strengthened safeguards and increased accountability.

The Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) is responsible for supporting Europol in safeguarding the respect for fundamental rights in all its activities as the Agency executes its mandate. The FRO's tasks have a particular emphasis on the Agency's operational work and activities.

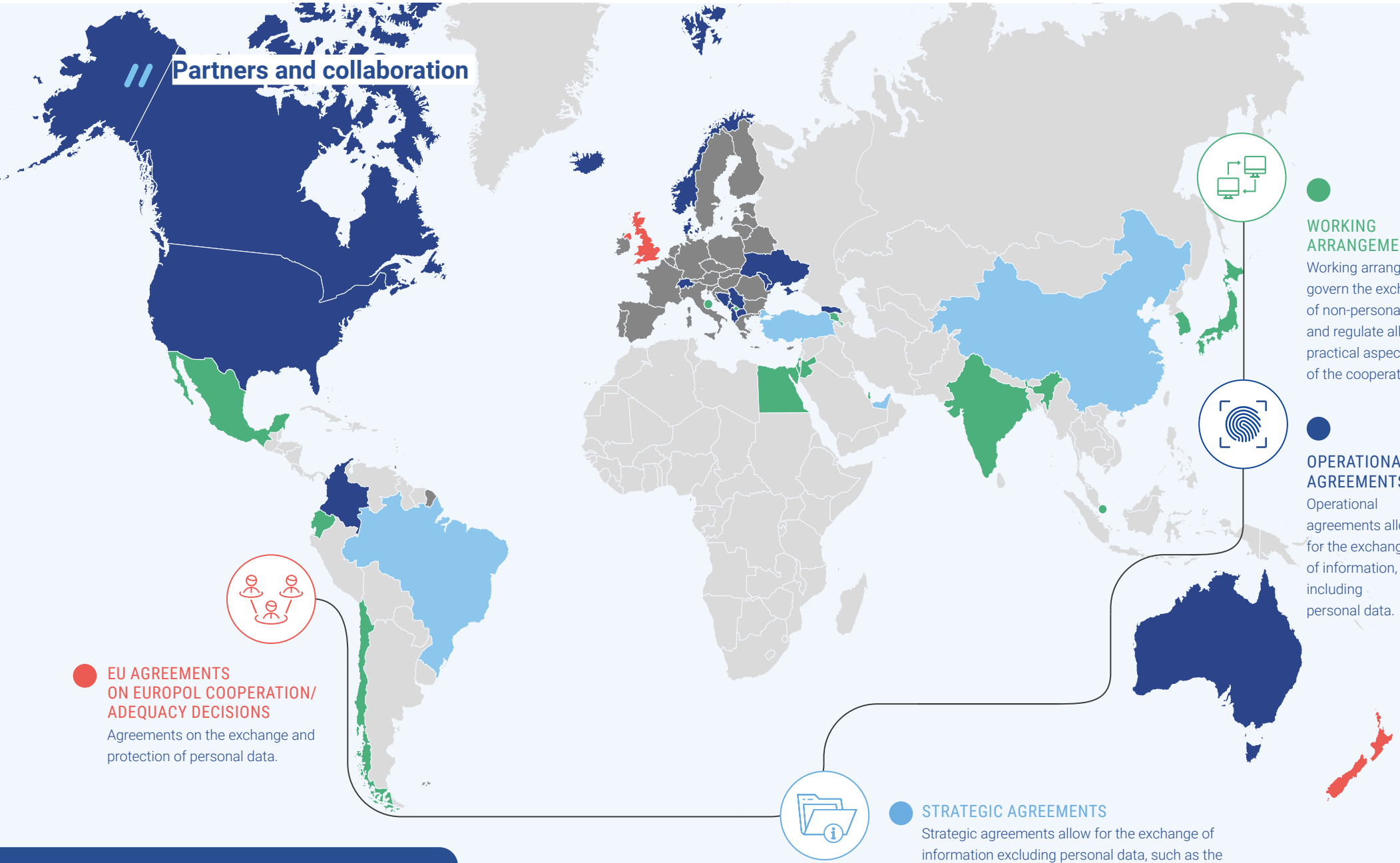
The FRO also produces fundamental rights assessments and reports on the development and use of new technologies, such as the ethical exploration of artificial intelligence.
The FRO also instils knowledge of fundamental rights to all Europol operational staff through comprehensive training.

Data protection at Europol

The Data Protection Function (DPF) is an integral part of Europol and the initial point of contact for all data protection issues. The DPF, which acts with functional independence, works closely with Europol staff. The Data Protection Officer ensures that the applicable data protection rules are applied to all forms of personal data exchange.

The collection and processing of data, particularly personal data, are at the centre of Europol's activities. This requires the application of the highest standards of data protection and data security. The Agency therefore has in place one of the most robust data protection frameworks in the world of law enforcement. This is both an asset and a responsibility, as the tailor-made set of rules has to be duly applied to both the operational needs of Europol and the individual's fundamental right to effective data protection.

Partners and collaboration



EU AGREEMENTS ON EUROPOL COOPERATION/ ADEQUACY DECISIONS

Agreements on the exchange and protection of personal data.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Working arrangements govern the exchange of non-personal data and regulate all practical aspects of the cooperation.

OPERATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Operational agreements allow for the exchange of information, including personal data.

STRATEGIC AGREEMENTS

Strategic agreements allow for the exchange of information excluding personal data, such as the exchange of general intelligence as well as strategic and technical information.

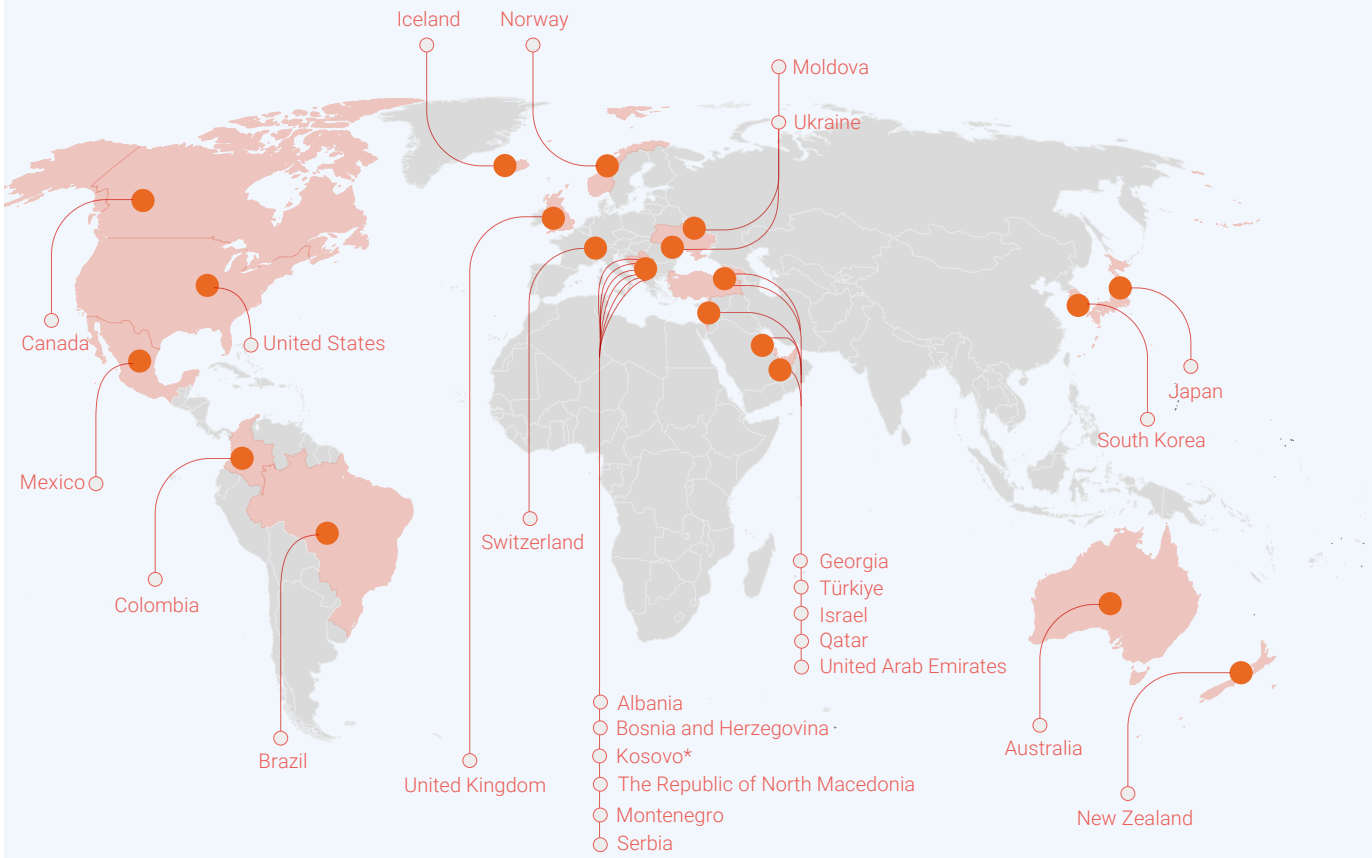
For the latest developments, please consult the Europol website.

A diverse place to work

> 300

Liaison Officers from all over the world

You may be able to hear over 60 languages when walking around Europol headquarters. As well as our colleagues from the European Union, we have liaison officers from all over the world. Liaison officers are law enforcement officials who are seconded to Europol from their home country or from international organisations. They build strong international networks on a daily basis and facilitate operational cooperation while representing the interests of their different countries.



THIRD PARTIES

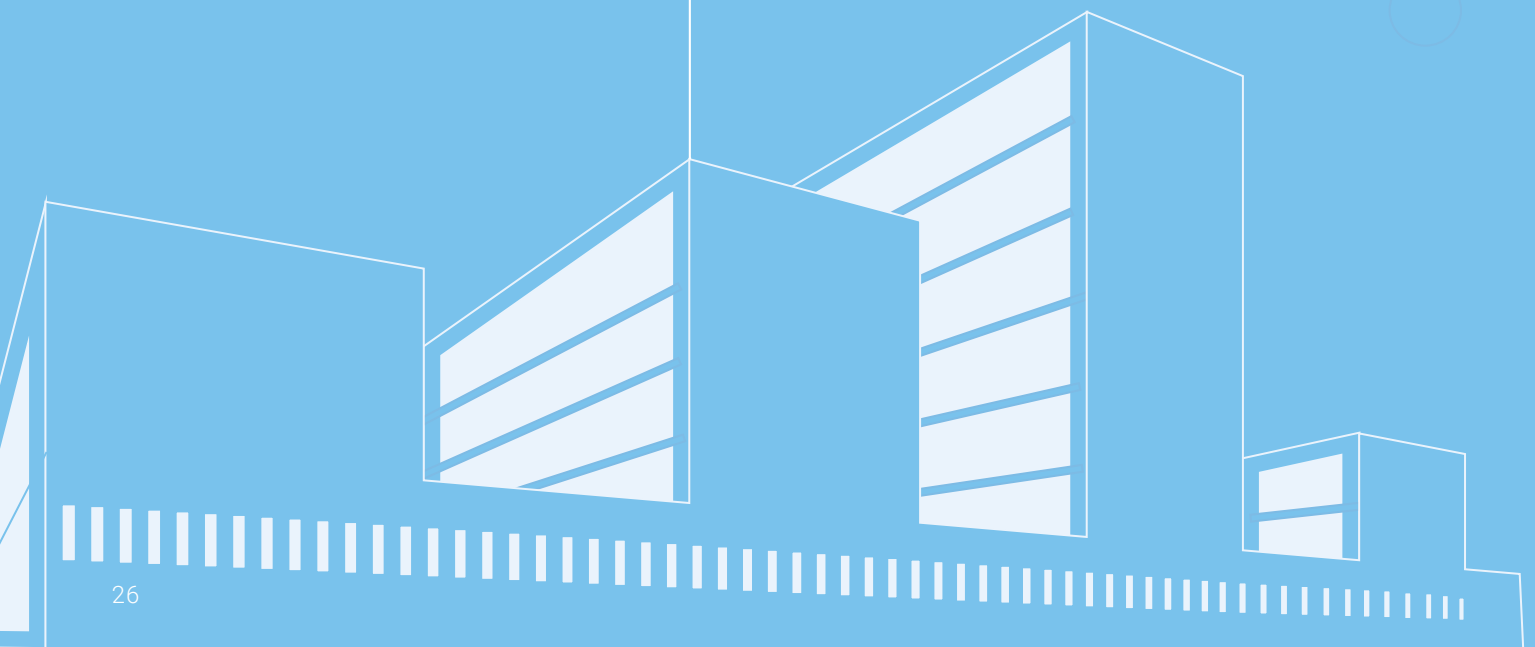
ORGANISATIONS

- Eurojust
- EUIPO
- EU-LISA
- EUNAVFOR MED
- INTERPOL
- OLAF
- FRONTEX

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

How do Europol's different centres fight crime?

Europol is always evolving to make the fight against organised crime and terrorism more effective. Over the years, Europol has launched dedicated centres that focus on specific threats facing the EU.



EUROPOL CENTRES

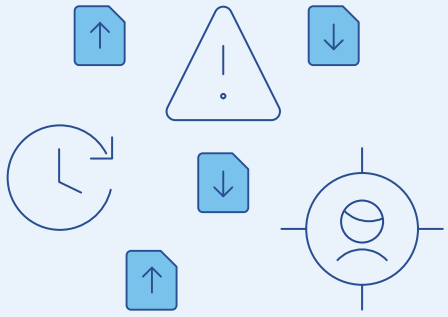
- OPERATIONAL AND ANALYSIS CENTRE
- EUROPEAN SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME CENTRE
- EUROPEAN CYBERCRIME CENTRE
- EUROPEAN COUNTER TERRORISM CENTRE
- EUROPEAN FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRIME CENTRE

Operational and Analysis Centre

Europol's information hub

The Operation and Analysis Centre is the gateway of all information and intelligence channelled through Europol, via Member States and third parties. The centre provides a first level response to law enforcement, monitoring operations and developments on a 24/7 basis. It provides a set of cross-cutting services and capabilities to EU Member States and Europol's associated partners and internal stakeholders.

This centre also supports EMPACT, ENFAST and other stakeholders. It produces a number of Europol's flagship reports, including threat and risk assessments related to crime and terrorism, amongst other crime areas.

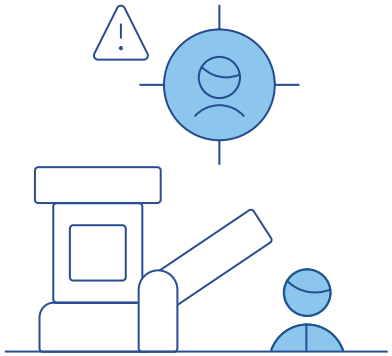


PREVENTING CROSS-BORDER CRIME

Europol's Operational Centre and ten member countries, supported **Operation TRIDENT/OBSERVER**. These joint action days were part of the EMPACT framework to detect high risk individuals and fight against cross-border crime in the Baltic Sea region. The main focus was on property crime and drugs trafficking. During the five days Europol received:

96
crosschecking **requests**

40
people **arrested**



249
hits identified in Europol's databases

EUR 450 000
cash seized as well as several stolen cars, motorcycles, and large quantities of drugs

The Europol Operational Centre, which runs 24/7, is the hub for the exchange of data among Europol, EU Member States and third parties on criminal activity. More than 30 specialists and analysts work in this high-security unit. The Operational Centre:

Manages the constant flow of data between Europol and its operational partners

Receives operational messages

Assesses the data to be included in Europol databases

Supports law enforcement operations within and outside the EU

Maintains a centralised cross-checking service against all existing data

Produces analytical reports whenever common elements ("hits") are found in crosschecks, thus making it possible to identify new trends and developments in the EU criminal landscape

THE EUROPOL TRACKATHON

The **Europol Trackathon** is a collaborative law enforcement two-day event, where experts from across Europe come together to find wanted fugitives. Participants use open-source intelligence and social media intelligence to find information and generate new leads on high-priority cases. The Trackathon organised in March 2024 garnered:

78 participants

33 countries

50 new leads

"The Operational and Analysis Centre at Europol is the hub where on a 24/7 basis, data and information is transformed into intelligence and insight. Through cutting-edge analysis and data-driven support, it supports Member States with operational and strategic knowledge to protect citizens and combat crime and terrorism across Europe and beyond.

Jean-Philippe Lecouffe / Deputy Executive Director of Europol, Operations Directorate

European Serious and Organised Crime Centre

Dismantling criminal networks

The European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC) at Europol aims to provide the most effective and agile operational support to the EU Member States' investigations in prioritised cases related to serious and organised crime.

- **High-risk organised crime groups**
- **Illicit firearms trafficking**
- **Organised property crime**
- **Environmental crime**
- **Drug trafficking**
- **Irregular migration**
- **Trafficking in human beings**

1 187
supported operations in 2024 by ESOCC

14 347
pieces of operational information on high-risk OCGS in 2024

EUROPEAN MIGRANT SMUGGLING CENTRE

As part of ESOCC, the **European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC)** targets and dismantles the complex and sophisticated networks involved in migrant smuggling. The EMSC, launched in 2016, brings together some of the best investigators in Europe to support police and border authorities in coordinating highly complex cross-border anti-smuggling operations.

2016
established

17 708
pieces of operational information on migrant smuggling in 2024

> **We fight serious and organised crime by fully supporting a European data-driven, international, network approach of all investigations. Our unified message to criminals in Europe is that nobody is untouchable.**

Andy Kraag / Head of Department, European Serious and Organised Crime Centre

European Cybercrime Centre

Fighting against cybercriminals

The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) strengthens the law enforcement response to cybercrime in the EU, helping to protect European citizens, businesses and governments from online crime.

> **The landscape of cybercrime is rapidly evolving as new technologies — especially artificial intelligence — transform every aspect of our digital world. In 2025, AI is changing everything: criminals are adopting it, businesses are adopting it, and so must we. Europol remains committed to staying ahead of these developments, empowering law enforcement with innovative tools, intelligence, and expertise to protect society from an ever more sophisticated and adaptive cyber threat.**

Edvardas Šileris / Head of Department, European Cybercrime Centre

THE JOINT CYBERCRIME ACTION TASKFORCE

As cybercrime knows no boundaries, the **Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT)** is composed of cyber liaison officers from various EU Member States, non-EU law enforcement partners and EC3.

Cybercriminals are constantly coming up with new ways to profit from their crimes at the expense of citizens, businesses and governments, across national borders and jurisdictions.

Police forces around the world thus encounter similar cybercrimes and similar criminal targets, and that calls for a coordinated, international approach to the problem.

The Taskforce members stimulate and facilitate joint identification, prioritisation, preparation, initiation and execution of cross-border investigations of high-profile cases and operations in a collaborative manner.

2013
founded

20
countries

24
law enforcement agencies

INTERNET ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT (IOCTA)

The Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) is the European Cybercrime Centre's flagship strategic report on cybercrime.

European Counter Terrorism Centre

Tackling terrorist threats

The European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) is an operations centre and hub of expertise that reflects the growing need for the EU to strengthen its response to terrorism and to ensure an effective response to these challenges. While dealing with terrorist threats, the ECTC also investigates terrorism financing and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons and explosives.

- **Terrorism**
- **Extremism**
- **Terrorist propaganda online**
- **Racism and xenophobia**
- **Genocide/ war crimes/ crimes against humanity**

EUROPEAN UNION INTERNET REFERRAL UNIT

The **EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)** is part of the ECTC. It detects, analyses and refers publicly available terrorist and violent extremist content online. Its goal is to restrict the accessibility of said content, as well as facilitate crime attribution and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Over the past decade, the EU IRU has played a significant role in fighting terrorist and violent extremist content online, demonstrating its effectiveness and adaptability in the ever-evolving digital landscape:

- **Assessed 233 575 pieces of content**, which triggered **217 495 decisions** for referral across **766 platforms.**
- **Coordinated 33 Referral Action Days (RAD)** together with competent authorities of MS, or in collaboration with the affected OSPs.

> **The threat of violent extremism and terrorism has never been more volatile and it continues to evolve at a pace that can scarcely be predicted and in that environment, standing still is not an option. To protect our citizens, our democracy and the EU we need to constantly develop our capacity and work together to prevent and to counter these emerging threats.**

Anna Sjöberg / Head of Department, European Counter Terrorism Centre

EU TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT

The EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) provides figures on terrorist attacks and terrorism-related arrests in the European Union.

European Financial and Economic Crime Centre

Following the money

The European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) enhances Europol's operational and strategic support by preventing and combatting financial and economic crime in the European Union. EFECC promotes the consistent use of financial investigations and asset forfeiture while forging alliances with public and private entities.

- **Intellectual property crime**
- **Corruption**
- **Asset recovery**
- **Exercise fraud/VAT fraud**
- **Money laundering**
- **Currency counterfeiting**

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME COORDINATED COALITION (IPC3)

IPC3 strengthens the fight against intellectual property crime, counterfeiting and piracy online and offline.

EFECC coordinated the fourteenth edition of **Operation Opson**, a global operation dedicated to fighting ood and beverage fraud. It involved authorities from 31 countries, OLAF and the European Commission.

11
tonnes of food seized

1.4 million
litres of beverages taken off the market

165
checks and inspections performed

631
suspects reported to authorities

13
criminal networks disrupted

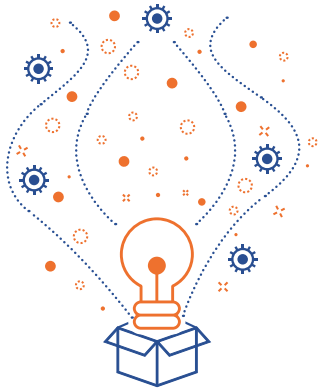
> **Financial and economic crimes are among the most pressing concerns for law enforcement. We work with experts in the field and use the best technologies available to support international financial crime investigations and the recovery of criminal assets.**

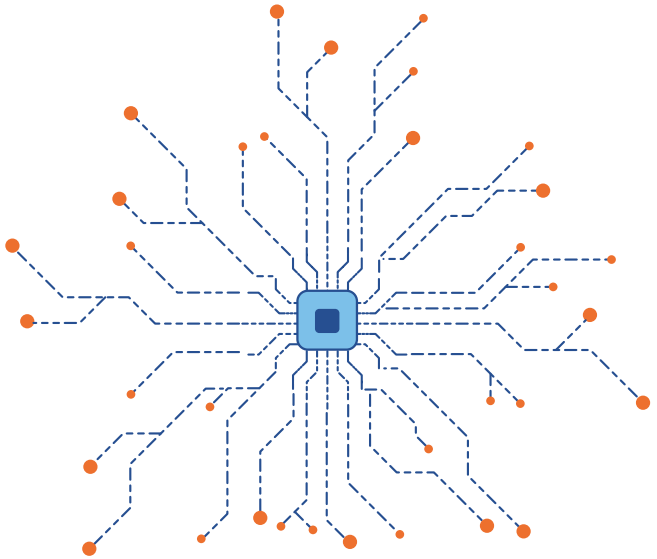
Burkhard Mühl / Head of Department, European Financial and Economic Crime Centre

Europol as a high-tech organisation

UNLEASHING POTENTIAL

Innovation is one of Europol's strategic priorities. As part of this, Europol has established a dedicated Innovation Lab to support the law enforcement community in the area of innovation.





THE INNOVATION LAB

The Innovation Lab aims to identify, promote and develop concrete innovative solutions in support of the EU Member States' operational work. These will help investigators and analysts to make the most of the opportunities offered by new technologies, for instance by finding new and better ways to analyse and visualise large amounts of data to support investigations.

Join us in the fight against crime

TRACE AN OBJECT

This online campaign lists objects which appear in the background of child sexual abuse material. These images are taken from cold cases. Individuals can anonymously submit information about objects to help law enforcement agencies identify both the offender and the victim.

EU MOST WANTED

Fugitives are published on the eumostwanted.eu website and citizens are asked to check if they recognise them. If they do, they can anonymously let law enforcement know by sending a tip via the website.

NO MORE RANSOM

Is your digital life threatened by ransomware? Scan the code to learn more about how to protect yourself.

Public awareness and prevention guides

Protect yourself, your family and your property by reading our crime prevention guides.

HOW TO CREATE A SAFE REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Remote work is now a regular part of many people's professional lives. Whether you're working from home full time or a few days a week, it's essential to follow safe remote practices wherever possible to protect both your organisation and yourself.

HOW TO AVOID ONLINE SCAMS

Scams can take many forms and often change over time, but the methods behind their efficiency usually follow familiar patterns. With the rise of artificial intelligence, scams are becoming more sophisticated and harder to detect, making awareness more important than ever.

HOW TO ENJOY A CYBERSAFE HOLIDAY

As new technologies emerge and our reliance on digital tools grows, when we travel beyond our usual routines, our digital footprint can become a golden opportunity for cybercriminals to strike while our guard is down.

Europe's most wanted fugitives

The EU Most Wanted list has achieved significant success in the past with a number of anonymous tips leading to actual arrests. The EU's Most Wanted was launched by the ENFAST community in January 2016 with the full support of Europol. Since then:

494
profiles of fugitives have been listed on the website

54
arrests came as a direct result of a fugitive profile being published on the website

169
fugitives have been arrested

EU MOST WANTED

Scan here for more info

The Europol Podcast

The Europol Podcast is the official podcast of the EU's agency for law enforcement cooperation. This season, we shine a light on the changing DNA of serious and organised crime and on the future of Europol. We will explore the biggest threats facing our internal security, revealing Europol's analysis, the biggest operations we have supported, and how we continue to fight crime.

Tune in to find out how criminal networks are adapting to new technologies, as told by law enforcement experts that take decisive action against criminal networks worldwide.

THE EUROPOL PODCAST

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