



**EUROJUST**

EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



*Criminal justice across borders*



EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

# Contents

|  |           |  |           |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| Acronyms and abbreviations .....   | 4         | 3.9 Trafficking in human beings .....                                  | 46        |
| Foreword by President of the European Commission .....                                   | 5         | 3.10 Migrant smuggling .....   | 50        |
| Foreword by Eurojust President .....   | 6         | 3.11 Terrorism .....   | 52        |
| Eurojust at a glance .....   | 7         | <b>4. Cooperation with partners .....</b>                              | <b>55</b> |
| 2022 highlights .....  | 8         | 4.1 Cooperation with EU agencies .....                                 | 55        |
| <b>1. 2022 in figures .....</b>  | <b>11</b> | 4.2 Relations with EU institutions and Member States .....             | 58        |
| <b>2. Eurojust's enhanced role in fighting core international crimes .....</b>           | <b>15</b> | 4.3 Cooperation with third countries .....                             | 59        |
| 2.1 Operational support to investigating and prosecuting core international crimes ..... | 15        | <b>5. Eurojust services and judicial cooperation instruments .....</b> | <b>65</b> |
| 2.2 Strategic support to investigating and prosecuting core international crimes .....   | 16        | 5.1 Joint investigation teams .....                                    | 65        |
| 2.3 Eurojust's response to the war in Ukraine .....                                      | 18        | 5.2 Coordination meetings and coordination centres .....               | 67        |
| <b>3. Key cases and developments by crime type .....</b>                                 | <b>25</b> | 5.3 Resolving conflicts of jurisdiction .....                          | 70        |
| 3.1 Overview of cases by crime type in 2022 .....  | 25        | 5.4 European Arrest Warrant .....                                      | 71        |
| 3.2 Ensuring victims' rights across all crime cases .....                                | 26        | 5.5 European Investigation Order .....                                 | 73        |
| 3.3 Drug trafficking .....   | 27        | 5.6 Asset recovery .....   | 74        |
| 3.4 Economic crime .....   | 29        |  |           |
| 3.5 Environmental crime .....  | 35        |  |           |
| 3.6 Intellectual property crime .....  | 38        |  |           |
| 3.7 Organised crime .....  | 40        |  |           |
| 3.8 Cybercrime .....   | 42        |  |           |

The statistics on Eurojust cases included in this report were produced on the basis of data contained in the Eurojust case management system (CMS). The numbers were extracted in January 2023 and reflect the data available at that moment. Due to the ongoing nature of cases, possible discrepancies with previously reported numbers may exist, and statistics may be updated in the future.

# Acronyms and abbreviations

|                  |   |                |   |
|------------------|---|----------------|---|
| <b>AI</b>        | Artificial intelligence   | <b>FRA</b>     | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  |
| <b>CEPOL</b>     | European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training  | <b>FTF</b>     | Foreign terrorist fighter   |
| <b>CICED</b>     | Core International Crimes Evidence Database   | <b>ICC</b>     | International Criminal Court  |
| <b>CJEU</b>      | Court of Justice of the European Union  | <b>ICPA</b>    | International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine |
| <b>CMS</b>       | Case management system  | <b>IP</b>      | Intellectual property   |
| <b>CTR</b>       | European Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register  | <b>IPC</b>     | Intellectual property crime   |
| <b>EAW</b>       | European Arrest Warrant   | <b>JHA</b>     | Justice and Home Affairs  |
| <b>EIO</b>       | European Investigation Order  | <b>JHAAN</b>   | Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network  |
| <b>EJCN</b>      | European Judicial Cybercrime Network  | <b>JIT</b>     | Joint investigation team  |
| <b>EJN</b>       | European Judicial Network   | <b>JIT MCS</b> | Joint investigation team model case scenario  |
| <b>EJTN</b>      | European Judicial Training Network  | <b>MLA</b>     | Mutual legal assistance   |
| <b>EL PACCTO</b> | Europe Latin America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime                          | <b>MTIC</b>    | Missing Trader Intra-Community Fraud  |
| <b>EMJ</b>       | EuroMed Justice Programme   | <b>OCG</b>     | Organised crime group   |
| <b>EMJNet</b>    | Network of Contact Points for criminal justice authorities from South Partner Countries                     | <b>OLAF</b>    | European Anti-Fraud Office  |
| <b>EMPACT</b>    | European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats  | <b>OSP</b>     | Online service providers  |
| <b>ENPE</b>      | European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment   | <b>PIF</b>     | Protection of the financial interests of the European Union                         |
| <b>EPPO</b>      | European Public Prosecutor's Office   | <b>SIRIUS</b>  | Scientific Information Retrieval Integrated Utilisation System                      |
| <b>EU</b>        | European Union  | <b>SPC</b>     | South Partner Country   |
| <b>EUIPO</b>     | European Union Intellectual Property Office   | <b>UNODC</b>   | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  |
| <b>eu-LISA</b>   | EU agency for operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice | <b>UK</b>      | United Kingdom  |
| <b>EUROPOL</b>   | European Union Law Enforcement Agency   | <b>US/U.S.</b> | United States of America  |
|                  |   | <b>WBCJ</b>    | Western Balkans Criminal Justice project  |
|                  |   | <b>WB PaCT</b> | Western Balkans Partnership against Crime and Terrorism                             |

# Forewords

## *Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission*

2022 was a year to remember. Responding to the unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Russia has been at the top of all our agendas. It has permanently changed the nature of Eurojust's work. Just over a month after the start of the war, I spoke with President Zelensky following the atrocities discovered in Bucha and other areas from which Russian troops had left. I was determined to see the European Union lead the fight for full accountability for the horrendous crimes committed in Ukraine. We immediately recognised where Eurojust could help, and it has more than lived up to the challenge.

Determining how to store, preserve and share evidence in the midst of an active war was the first hurdle. Refugees fleeing the country often take vital testimonies with them. Multiple investigations were opened, which are now ongoing in more than 20 countries including 16 EU Member States. The joint investigation team (JIT) set up with six Member States, Ukraine and the International Criminal Court (ICC), also relies on Eurojust's active support and cooperation with the United States. Coordination here is crucial. In April 2022, the Commission presented a proposal to make the storage of evidence at Eurojust legally possible, and, following its adoption in record time, Eurojust established its new Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED). The next step was to coordinate the activities of prosecutors.

In this vein, I welcome the closer collaboration between the ICC and Eurojust, to ensure, for example, that international crimes and human rights violations are appropriately documented, with the needs of victims in mind. Thanks to joint guidance, civil society organisations conducting interviews on the ground have already been well guided in their laudable efforts. With specific regard to investigations into crimes of aggression and as announced at the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit in February 2023, the Commission supports the development of a new International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) in The Hague. It is important that this is attached to the existing JIT because as a participating member, the ICC can also provide strategic guidance on how evidence can be collected and used by prosecutors.

Eurojust also made a significant contribution in 2022 to the Commission's 'Freeze and Seize' Task Force. It has already identified links between sanctioned individuals and companies, collected necessary information for the confiscation of assets and supported national investigations into circumventions of Union restrictive measures. As the world mobilises its support for the reconstruction of Ukraine, we are exploring possible ways to make use of frozen assets for this purpose. We will also be counting on Eurojust's unique position to support investigations once violations become a crime across the Union. Just as no perpetrator of war crime must slip through the net, neither should anyone violating the restrictive measures intended to block funding to the Russian war machine.

Eurojust has stepped up to the plate and has proven exactly what it is capable of. In 2022, it handled more cases than ever before. It had an increasing number of countries, beyond the European Union's borders, seeking out its expertise while taking on new responsibilities that will prove essential over the years to come. I want to thank Eurojust's dedicated staff, including President Ladislav Hamran and Vice-Presidents Margarita Šniutytė-Daugėlienė and Boštjan Škrlec for the work the organisation has been doing, and I am proud of our work in the Commission to support it. I look forward to seeing even more from you in 2023!



## Ladislav Hamran, Eurojust President

For any organisation, an annual report is an opportunity to look back at the previous year and to compare the work that has been done to the initial plans and forecasts. From that perspective, 2022 was a year unlike many others for Eurojust. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February triggered an EU-wide response and included from the onset an important judicial dimension. Only weeks after the start of the war, Eurojust was instrumental in setting up the joint investigation team (JIT) into alleged war crimes in Ukraine, which by the year's end consisted of no fewer than seven countries, including Ukraine itself.

In addition, the European legislator extended Eurojust's mandate in June and entrusted us with storing, preserving and analysing evidence on core international crimes. To meet this new task, Eurojust has in the meantime set up a Core International Crime Evidence Database, and we expect our work in this field to substantially grow in years to come.

In parallel, 2022 was the year in which we celebrated our 20th anniversary since Eurojust started operations in 2002. To mark the occasion, we published the commemorative book 20 years of Eurojust: EU judicial cooperation in the making, which brings to the spotlight the great strides forward European criminal justice cooperation has made over the past two decades.

In its very first year, and in a European Union of 15 Member States, Eurojust covered 202 files. The following years saw a steep increase – aided also by consecutive EU enlargements – with Eurojust dealing with 5 608 cases in

2017 and as many as 11 544 in 2022. Our caseload has more than doubled in the past six years alone, and we look forward to sustaining and supporting the further growth curve that lies ahead, with the undoubtable challenges that this will bring.

With this in mind, I thank you for your interest in Eurojust's work and for your continued support to our mission.



Eurojust Presidency (left to right):  
*Margarita Šniutytė-Daugėlienė*, Vice-President; *Ladislav Hamran*, President; and *Boštjan Škrlec*, Vice-President

# Eurojust at a glance



## EUROJUST

### WHAT IS EUROJUST?

Eurojust is the [EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation](#). We are a specialised [hub](#) providing tailor-made support to **prosecutors and judges** from across the EU and beyond.

To effectively tackle cross-border crime, we also host [networks](#) and run several [programmes and projects](#).



### WHY EUROJUST?

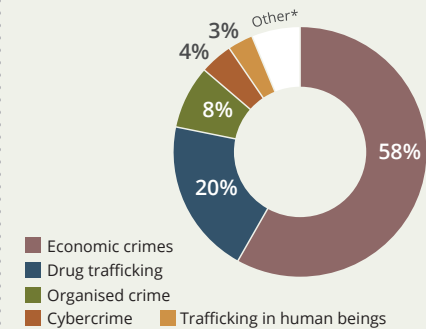
Working across 27 judicial systems is complex. Through our unique know-how, we ensure that national borders are no obstacle to prosecuting criminals and getting justice done. In addition to our **legal expertise**, we provide **secure meeting rooms** with **state-of-the-art IT systems** and **interpretation facilities**, as well as a [24/7 on-call service](#).

### WHAT IS OUR IMPACT?

Each year, Eurojust contributes to important **outcomes**. These include the arrest or surrender of **thousands of suspects** and the seizure or freezing of **billions of euros** worth of criminal assets.

Moreover, we help to deliver **justice to thousands of victims**, ensuring their identification, rescue and protection.

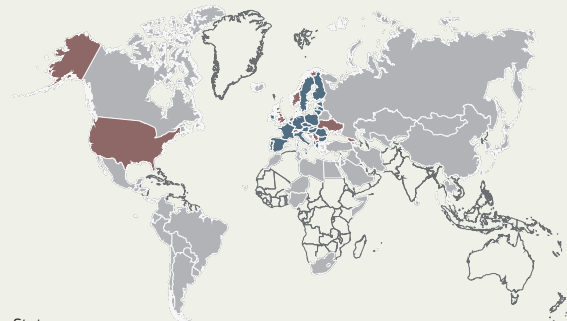
#### Top 5 crime types addressed by Eurojust in 2022



\* Other crime types include migrant smuggling, terrorism, environmental crime, intellectual property crime and core international crimes

### WHO DO WE WORK WITH?

We have [Contact Points](#) in over 60 countries worldwide, as well as several [Liaison Prosecutors](#) from third countries posted at Eurojust. This global network works alongside EU Member States to provide support to cross-border investigations. We also have strong partnerships with other [EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies](#) as well as international partners.



■ EU Member States  
■ Liaison Prosecutors posted at Eurojust  
■ International Judicial Contact Points



### HOW DO WE WORK?

We provide [our services](#) to national authorities throughout all stages of the criminal justice chain, from when a case is opened by a Member State until justice gets done in court:

- ▶ In [coordination meetings](#), we bring together prosecutors from all over Europe to work on cross-border crime cases.
- ▶ We support [joint investigation teams](#) – logistically, financially and with expertise.
- ▶ From our [coordination centre](#), joint action days against criminal networks are steered in real time, with arrests and searches taking place simultaneously in multiple countries.





# 2022 Highlights







## Photos appearing in 2022 Highlights

### Page 8 (counter-clockwise from top left)

- 1-2: Meeting of EU Ministers of Justice to discuss the response to alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine, 24/03/2022
- 3: Press conference on the joint investigation team into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine, 31/05/2022
- 4: Prosecutor General of Ukraine *Andriy Kostin*, speaking at a press briefing, 13/10/2022
- 5: 16th meeting of the Consultative Forum of Prosecutors General of EU Member States, 13/10/2022
- 6: Visit of a delegation of Members of the European Parliament to learn about Eurojust's role in tackling environmental crime, 08/09/2022
- 7: Meeting between Eurojust President *Ladislav Hamran* and Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court *Karim A.A. Khan*, 09/13/2022
- 8: Visit of EU Commissioners for Justice and Home Affairs, *Didier Reynders* and *Ylva Johansson*, 31/05/2022.

### Page 9 (counter-clockwise from top left)

- 1: EU Prosecutors General meeting at Eurojust, 13/10/2022
- 2: Visit of Prime Minister *Eduard Heger* of the Slovak Republic, 21/11/2022
- 3-4: Eurojust Open Day, 16/10/2022
- 5-6: Meeting of the signatories to the joint investigation team into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine, 13/10/2022

Photos © Eurojust

# 1. 2022 in figures

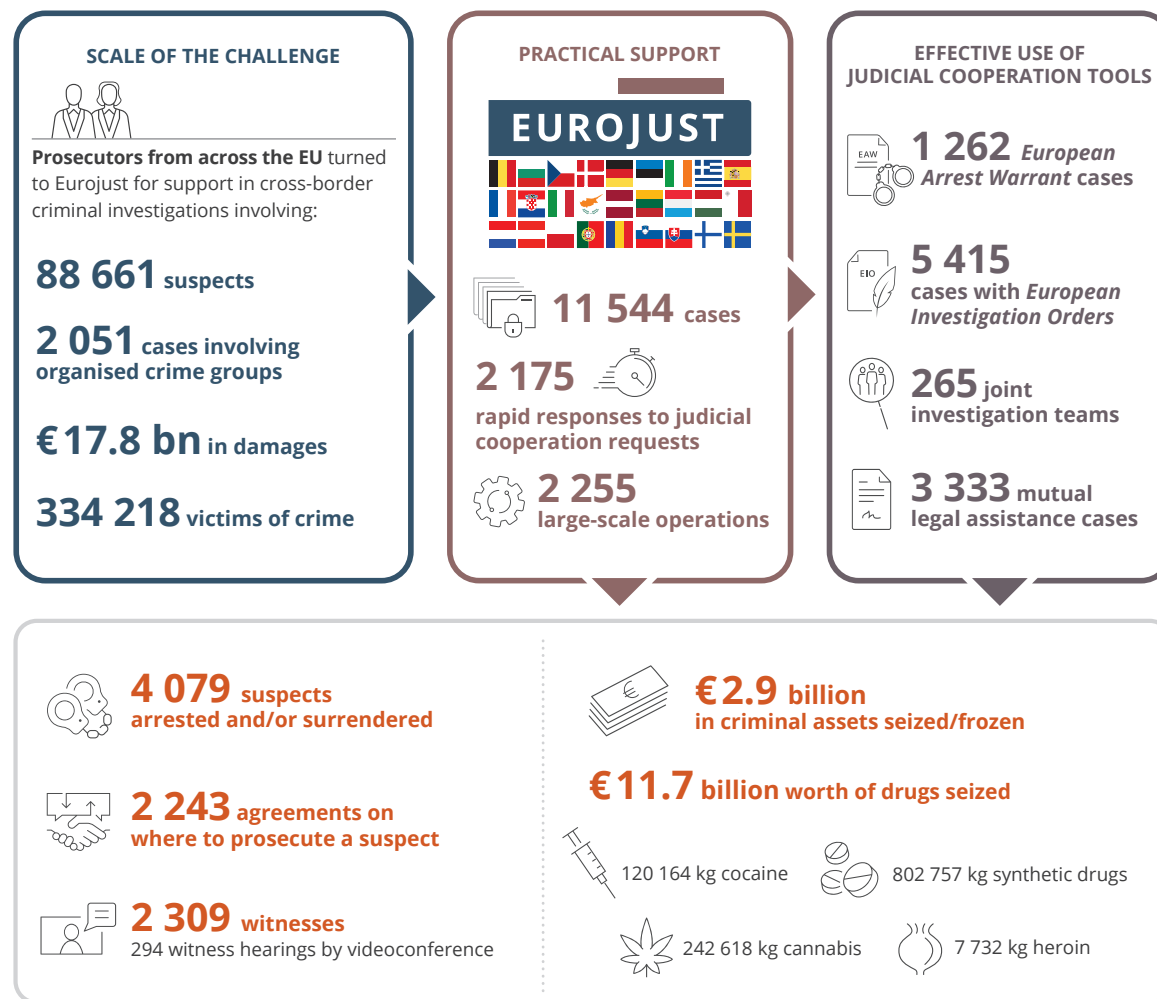
While Eurojust's work in 2022 heavily focused on supporting Member States' and partners' judicial response to the war in Ukraine, the Agency continued to fully deliver on its mandate to fight all serious cross-border crimes.

Eurojust contributed to the arrest of more than 4 000 suspects, the seizure and or freezing of criminal assets worth almost EUR 3 billion and the seizure of drugs worth almost EUR 12 billion.

Reflecting the growing scale of the challenge, the cases dealt with by the Agency in 2022 involved more than triple the number of victims than in 2021. Moreover, compared to the previous year, more than double the number of cases used Eurojust's support in drafting and executing European Arrest Warrants (EAWs).

These impressive operational results<sup>1</sup> could not have been possible without the transnational cooperation between judicial authorities facilitated by Eurojust, in close cooperation with all actors in the criminal justice chain.

## #JusticeDone – Operational Outcomes<sup>2</sup> in 2022



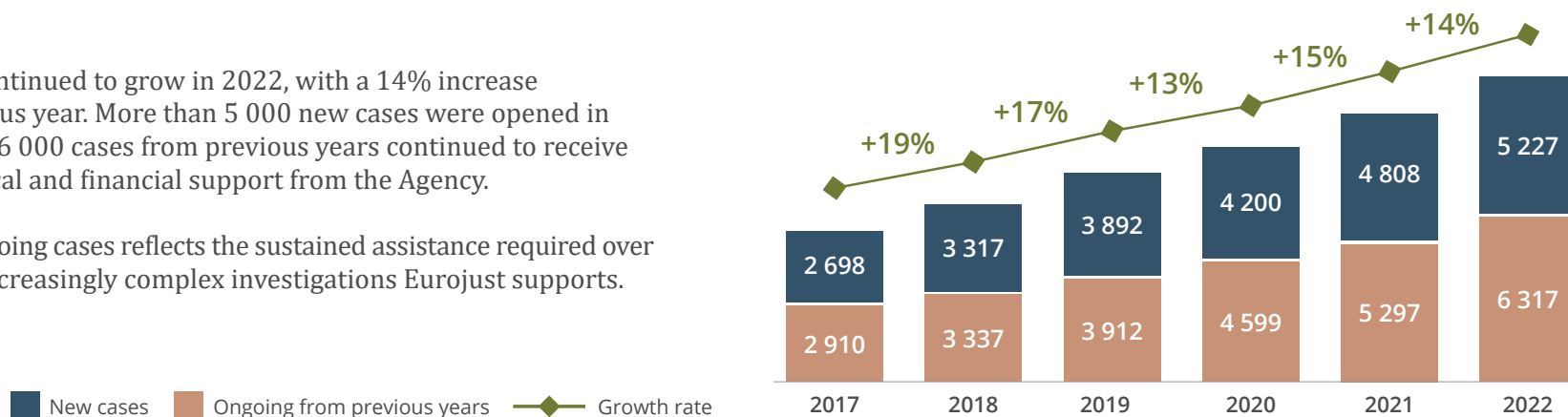
<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that these outcomes were achieved also through cases that were opened before 2022 and were included in the reporting on operational outcomes in Eurojust's 2021 Annual Report. The outcomes of these cases are included again for 2022 reporting purposes, since the cases were still ongoing.

<sup>2</sup> The figures reflected in this diagram are based on cases that were both newly registered in 2022 and ongoing from previous years.

## Casework increase

Eurojust's casework continued to grow in 2022, with a 14% increase compared to the previous year. More than 5 000 new cases were opened in 2022, while more than 6 000 cases from previous years continued to receive legal, analytical, logistical and financial support from the Agency.

The high number of ongoing cases reflects the sustained assistance required over years by many of the increasingly complex investigations Eurojust supports.



## Overview of cases in 2022 involving Member State National Desks

| MEMBER STATE<br>National Desk | Cases initiated by the National Desk |                           |           |                             | Participation in cases initiated by other Desks |                             | Participation in joint activities/meetings |      |             |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|------|-------------|
|                               | New in 2022                          | No. of countries involved |           | Ongoing from previous years | New in 2022                                     | Ongoing from previous years | Coordination meetings                      | JITs | Action days |
|                               |                                      | 2                         | 3 or more |                             |   |                             |  |      |             |
| Belgium                       | 114                                  | 93                        | 21        | 142                         | 306   | 521                         | 89   | 26   | 5           |
| Bulgaria                      | 129                                  | 123                       | 6         | 96                          | 180   | 287                         | 18   | 6    | 2           |
| Czech Republic                | 134                                  | 113                       | 21        | 217                         | 119   | 227                         | 43   | 41   | 3           |
| Germany                       | 970                                  | 902                       | 68        | 683                         | 667   | 1039                        | 152  | 53   | 6           |
| Estonia                       | 48                                   | 42                        | 6         | 65                          | 67  | 106                         | 15   | 8    | 1           |
| Ireland                       | 35                                   | 32                        | 3         | 135                         | 103   | 187                         | 30   | 7    | 0           |
| Greece                        | 193                                  | 191                       | 2         | 666                         | 112   | 189                         | 8  | 3    | 0           |
| Spain                         | 337                                  | 295                       | 42        | 240                         | 541   | 876                         | 79   | 9    | 8           |
| France                        | 285                                  | 174                       | 111       | 614                         | 996   | 974                         | 128  | 43   | 6           |

| MEMBER STATE<br>National Desk | Cases initiated by the National Desk |                           |           |                             | Participation in cases initiated by other Desks |                             | Participation in joint activities/meetings |      |             |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|------|-------------|
|                               | New in 2022                          | No. of countries involved |           | Ongoing from previous years | New in 2022                                     | Ongoing from previous years | Coordination meetings                      | JITs | Action days |
|                               |                                      | 2                         | 3 or more |                             |   |                             |  |      |             |
| Croatia                       | 53                                   | 51                        | 2         | 24                          | 93  | 141                         | 4  | 0    | 2           |
| Italy                         | 507                                  | 427                       | 80        | 622                         | 400   | 600                         | 126  | 56   | 8           |
| Cyprus                        | 72                                   | 72                        | 0         | 94                          | 73  | 179                         | 6  | 0    | 0           |
| Latvia                        | 53                                   | 41                        | 12        | 75                          | 71  | 137                         | 46   | 14   | 4           |
| Lithuania                     | 98                                   | 84                        | 14        | 90                          | 227   | 242                         | 69   | 16   | 1           |
| Luxembourg                    | 8                                    | 8                         | 0         | 73                          | 70  | 195                         | 8  | 1    | 0           |
| Hungary                       | 252                                  | 219                       | 33        | 307                         | 171   | 297                         | 27   | 19   | 2           |
| Malta                         | 27                                   | 23                        | 4         | 54                          | 74  | 181                         | 7  | 0    | 1           |
| Netherlands                   | 147                                  | 132                       | 15        | 243                         | 435   | 672                         | 81   | 17   | 6           |
| Austria                       | 202                                  | 183                       | 19        | 197                         | 208   | 286                         | 29   | 10   | 1           |
| Poland                        | 260                                  | 240                       | 20        | 256                         | 340   | 565                         | 76   | 30   | 2           |
| Portugal                      | 193                                  | 169                       | 24        | 102                         | 141   | 211                         | 21   | 1    | 1           |
| Romania                       | 177                                  | 157                       | 20        | 207                         | 280   | 358                         | 54   | 41   | 6           |
| Slovenia                      | 250                                  | 225                       | 25        | 120                         | 66  | 124                         | 10   | 7    | 1           |
| Slovakia                      | 119                                  | 109                       | 10        | 137                         | 100   | 222                         | 31   | 23   | 1           |
| Finland                       | 67                                   | 54                        | 13        | 91                          | 40  | 107                         | 30   | 10   | 3           |
| Sweden                        | 166                                  | 141                       | 25        | 321                         | 96  | 191                         | 56   | 24   | 1           |
| Denmark                       | 40                                   | 38                        | 2         | 77                          | 56  | 164                         | 16   | 7    | 1           |
| TOTAL                         | 4936                                 | 4338                      | 598       | 5948                        | *   | *                           | *  |      | *           |

\* These columns cannot be summed up, since more than one National Desk can be requested to participate in a single case, and coordination meetings and JITs are often co-organised.



## 2. Eurojust's enhanced role in fighting core international crimes

### 2.1 Operational support to investigating and prosecuting core international crimes



Eurojust provided operational support to 35 core international crime cases in 2022, involving 38 countries<sup>3</sup>. The Agency also supported 2 joint investigation teams (JITs) involving 10 countries<sup>4</sup>, and 23 coordination meetings involving 36 countries<sup>5</sup>.

Since 2016, investigations and prosecutions of the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (known collectively as core international crimes), have steadily risen within the European Union. Overall, the number of newly opened cases in Member States increased by 44% between 2016 and 2021<sup>6</sup>. Since the formal addition of core international crimes to Eurojust's portfolio in 2019, the number of cases supported by

the Agency has also increased. Compared to 2021, the total number of core international crime cases handled by the Agency more than doubled in 2022, while the number of new cases more than tripled.



Eurojust support to joint investigation team targeting crimes against Yazidi victims in Syria and Iraq



**CRIME:** During the armed conflict in Syria and Iraq, core international crimes are committed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) against the civilian population, including the Yazidi community.

**ACTION:** The judicial authorities in Sweden and France set up a JIT in October 2021 to identify the FTFs who perpetrated these crimes, in view of potential prosecution. In October 2022, the Belgian judicial authorities join the JIT. Identifying the victims and witnesses of these crimes committed in Syria and Iraq, is currently a focus of the JIT.

The authorities involved in the JIT are cooperating with the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant pursuant to its mandate. The JIT members are also working with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. Both organisations hold a significant amount of evidence and expertise in investigating core international crimes in the region, which may be crucial in establishing the crimes committed. JIT members are closely cooperating with the judicial authorities also in other states (among others Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and US).



<sup>3</sup> France (19), Ukraine (18), Germany (10), Belgium (9), Sweden (9), Netherlands (7), Lithuania (6), the United Kingdom (6), Ireland (5), Latvia (5), Poland (5), Slovakia (5), Spain (5), United States (5), Estonia (4), Italy (4), Norway (4), Serbia (4), Austria (3), Croatia (3), Czech Republic (3), Finland (3), Hungary (3), Romania (3), Switzerland (3), Bulgaria (2), Cyprus (2), Denmark (2), Greece (2), Luxembourg (2), Malta (2), Portugal (2), Slovenia (2), Albania (2), Georgia (2), Montenegro (2), North Macedonia (2), Canada (1)

<sup>4</sup> France, Ukraine, Belgium, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia and Romania

<sup>5</sup> Ukraine (17), Lithuania (13), Poland (13), France (12), Belgium (8), Sweden (8), Latvia (8), Slovakia (8), Estonia (8), Ireland (7), Germany (6), Netherlands (6), Romania (5), the United Kingdom (5), the United States (5), Norway (4), Spain (3), Czech Republic (3), Switzerland (3), Canada (3), Italy (2), Serbia (2), Austria (2), Hungary (2), Cyprus (2), Denmark (2), Greece (2), Portugal (2), Slovenia (2), North Macedonia (2), Croatia (1), Finland (1), Bulgaria (1), Malta (1), Albania (1), Georgia (1)

<sup>6</sup> According to case statistics compiled by the Genocide Network Secretariat on a yearly basis.

**RESULT:** The investigative efforts of the JIT are ongoing. The results will benefit the judiciary in other EU Member States or third countries, who want to end the impunity of FTFs involved in core international crimes, such as slavery or sexual violence against members of the Yazidi community. So far, two arrest warrants (one *in absentia*) have been issued as a result of the investigation.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency's support to the JIT will enable the long-term coordination of investigations and the swift sharing of information and evidence. The joint efforts will also avoid multiple interviews of the same victims, who have lived through dire circumstances. Eurojust has assisted in the organisation of four coordination meetings in 2022. The Agency is assisting JIT countries in determining the most suitable jurisdiction for prosecution and advising on the prevention of multiple legal actions against perpetrators for the same offence.

## 2.2 Strategic support to investigating and prosecuting core international crimes

The EU Network for investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (the Genocide Network, hosted by Eurojust), provides support to national authorities in their investigations and prosecutions of core international crimes. It serves as a central hub for the exchange of information and expertise, and assists national jurisdictions, international bodies and civil society in coordinating accountability efforts.



### Guidelines for civil society organisations on documenting international crimes

In September 2022, Eurojust, the Genocide Network and the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) published practical [guidelines for civil society organisations](#) on documenting core international crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The guidelines respond to widespread requests from civil society organisations for clearer guidance on effective documentation approaches that can be supportive to action before national and international courts. The publication is built on the collective expertise of

Eurojust, the Genocide Network, the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC, civil society organisations, national prosecutors and international partners. Civil society organisations were consulted throughout the drafting process.

The guidelines contain advice on approaching vulnerable persons; taking a person's account, photographs and videos; dealing with documents, digital information and physical items; and storing, safeguarding and analysing collected information. Importantly, they seek to protect the most vulnerable by ensuring persons are not interviewed several times. This can not only affect their safety and well-being, but also compromise their willingness to contribute to accountability processes by sharing their testimonies.

To assist their use in the field, the guidelines contain a checklist setting out the core principles and practical steps to follow. Most recently, the guidelines have been used by civil society organisations to train their staff working with national investigation and prosecution authorities to set up victim-friendly systems for the identification and referral of persons who would like to testify in relation to the war in Ukraine.

Building on extensive good practice tools developed by civil society organisations in the past, the guidelines are intended to be a living tool to be further developed as collective experience grows over time. With this goal in mind, Eurojust hosted an [online briefing](#) on 6 October 2022 attended by over

“ With the war in Ukraine, peace and justice are under the most severe pressure, and accountability for core international crimes and violations of human rights is more than ever essential for international criminal justice. These guidelines will be a key building block in efforts of authorities and civil society organisations to collect and preserve information and evidence that may become admissible in court. With this joint effort of Eurojust and the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC, we provide practical assistance to get justice done. ”

Ladislav Hamran, Eurojust President, on the publication of the guidelines



a hundred experts from civil society organisations to discuss the guidelines' practical use and future improvements.

A broader dissemination campaign is currently underway with translated guidelines already available in Ukrainian, French, Spanish and Arabic. These translations will enable the guidelines' outreach to grow beyond EU borders.

With the aim of further strengthening the dialogue between national authorities and civil society organisations, the Genocide Network organised two ad-hoc meetings in April and November 2022, on the documentation of crimes committed in Ukraine.

### Training sessions on core international crime provided by the Genocide Network and partners

During 2022, following popular demand, the Genocide Network and partners organised a series of training sessions for prosecutors, judges and law enforcement officers on the investigation and prosecution of core international crimes. The training sessions were highly appreciated by participating judicial practitioners, and proved to be an effective and efficient way of increasing their capacity to deal with the investigation and prosecution of core international crimes.

In March, the Genocide Network conducted an introductory online workshop for EU prosecutors and investigators, delivered by expert prosecutors and national Contact Points of the Genocide Network.

This was followed in June by an in-person [joint training](#) by the Genocide Network, the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the International Nuremberg Principles Academy, bringing together judges and prosecutors from all EU Member States dealing with the prosecution and trial of complex cross-border and/or international crimes. About 40 EU prosecutors and judges joined the training, as well as 2 Ukrainian prosecutors.

Expert speakers from academia, international courts and tribunals, as well as national prosecuting authorities, shared their insights with participants. Between October and December 2022, a series of six online workshops on

practical issues faced when investigating and prosecuting core international crimes were conducted for practitioners of JIT member countries (Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Romania), currently investigating core international crimes committed in Ukraine.

The workshops tackled core international crime cases focusing on specific themes, such as taking witness statements, conflict-related sexual violence, use of open source information, practical aspects of building a case, legal aspects and international cooperation. The speakers from prosecuting authorities of Germany, France, the Netherlands and Sweden, shared their invaluable expertise drawn from practical experience. The series of workshops was organised by the Genocide Network and the EJTN, with the support of the European Commission.



### 7th EU Day Against Impunity for Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes

The EU Day Against Impunity is an annual event that promotes national investigations and prosecutions into genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It recognises the efforts of the European Union and Member States in enforcing international criminal law, and addresses the position and participation of victims in criminal proceedings.

The [7th EU Day Against Impunity](#) took place online on 23 May and was organised by the French Presidency of the Council, the European Commission, Eurojust and the Genocide Network. Commissioner Reynders, Eurojust President Hamran, the French Ambassador to the Netherlands, and a panel of expert practitioners from Member States and civil society participated in the event.

The 2022 edition was dedicated to the assessment of the [EU Genocide Network's 2014 Strategy](#). The assessment report [20 years on: Main developments in the fight against impunity for core international crimes in the EU](#), was published for the occasion, and points out the main achievements and shortcomings of the EU judicial response to core international crimes. A related [factsheet](#) outlining the key factors for successful investigations and prosecutions of core international crimes was also published.

“ In the current situation, we must recognise that peace in Europe cannot be taken for granted. With “war”, often come “war crimes”, which violate the most fundamental laws of international order. We must defend these laws at any cost because the consequences for the victims, and humanity, are too grave to accept. ”

Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice  
at the 7th EU Day Against Impunity

The publications demonstrate that Member States have been increasingly successful in bringing cases to trial and securing convictions for core international crimes, thanks to specialised staff and units uniquely trained to handle the specific challenges of this crime area. However, to date, only six Member States<sup>7</sup> have established fully independent specialised units within prosecution services and/or law enforcement services. National authorities also face other challenges including legislative gaps that hinder the full prosecution of crimes, the exercise of universal jurisdiction, as well as international judicial cooperation or mutual legal assistance (MLA).

### 2.3 Eurojust’s response to the war in Ukraine

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, is the most documented armed conflict in the history of humankind. It has triggered an unprecedented response from the international judicial community, with Ukraine-related investigations ongoing in over 20 countries at the time of writing, including 16 EU Member States.

Eurojust, together with the other eight EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies, issued a [joint statement](#) outlining the agencies’ support to help those affected by the war in Ukraine. Only six days after the start of the war, Eurojust organised a coordination meeting at the request of the Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian national authorities to discuss the prosecution of alleged core

<sup>7</sup> Belgium, Germany, France, Croatia, the Netherlands and Sweden

international crimes committed in Ukraine. This was swiftly followed by the set-up of a joint investigation team involving the three national authorities, supported by Eurojust and the JITs Network Secretariat.

In response to the outbreak of the war, Eurojust’s role in fighting core international crimes has been significantly enhanced, with the Agency playing an active role on various fronts. In addition to its essential support to the joint investigation team into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine, Eurojust has created an innovative tool to collect and analyse core international crimes evidence, and will also host a new structure to support investigations into the crime of aggression.

The Agency’s vital support to the JIT and the European Commission’s Freeze and Seize Task Force (ensuring the implementation of EU sanctions), were officially recognised in the [State of the Union 2022 Achievements Report](#) in September 2022. Moreover, two months later, the [Berlin Declaration](#) following the Meeting of the G7 Justice Ministers, underlined the key roles of Eurojust, the Genocide Network, and the European Judicial Network in ensuring the early coordination of national and international investigations into crimes committed during Russia’s aggression.

#### The rapid set-up of the JIT on alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine

Just three weeks after the war began, Eurojust supported the establishment of a JIT into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine. The speed at which the JIT was set up, followed by the prompt participation of four additional countries, the ICC, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States, has sent a clear message that no effort will be spared in gathering evidence and bringing those responsible to justice. The JIT is enabling close cooperation between all parties involved, and an effective and swift exchange of information and evidence.

The aim of the JIT is to facilitate investigations and prosecutions in the States concerned, as well as those which could be taken forward to the ICC. The Agency has been providing critical support to all JIT parties, including to investigators on the ground in Ukraine.

# One year on

## A timeline of Eurojust's response to the war in Ukraine

**24 February**  
Outbreak of war in Ukraine



**30 May** – Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia become JIT members



**25 April** – ICC joins JIT

2022  
February

March

April

May

June

July

September

October

November

December

February  
2023

**2 March** – First coordination meeting initiated by Lithuania, involving 31 countries, on judicial cooperation to tackle war crimes in Ukraine

**11 March** – Kick-off meeting of the 'Freeze and Seize' Task Force



**24 March** – Meeting of Ministers of Justice at Eurojust



**25 March** – JIT agreement signed by authorities in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine to facilitate investigations into alleged core international crimes in Ukraine

**1 June** – New powers for Eurojust as Regulation amendment enters into force



**17 June**  
Eurojust publishes guidance on JITs with third countries



**14 July** – Eurojust Vice-President speaks at Ukraine Accountability Conference



**6 October**  
Eurojust and the ICC brief civil society organisations on guidelines

**13 October** – Romania becomes seventh JIT member

**13 October** – 16th meeting of the Consultative Forum of Prosecutors General of EU Member States dedicated to Ukraine



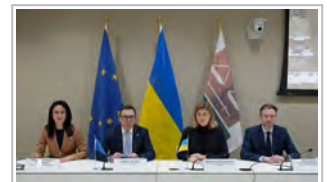
**17 October** – First of six training sessions on prosecuting core international crimes for practitioners of JIT countries

**1 December**  
*National Prosecutors' Day* in Ukraine marked with message from Eurojust



**30 November**  
Presentation of Eurojust's reinforced mandate on core international crimes at European Parliament

**21 September** – Eurojust, the Genocide Network and the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor publish guidelines for civil society organisations



**2 February**  
European Commission President announces International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in Ukraine (ICPA) to be hosted at Eurojust

**23 February**  
Eurojust announces start of Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED) operations

## Eurojust support to justice for Ukraine



### Support to investigations

- ▶ [Joint Investigation Team \(JIT\)](#) into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine
- ▶ Preparation for the set up of the [International Centre for the Prosecution of the crime of Aggression \(ICPA\)](#)
- ▶ Coordination of national investigations into core international crimes committed in Ukraine



### Collection, preservation and analysis of evidence

- ▶ [Core International Crimes Evidence Database \(CICED\)](#)



### Practical guidance

- ▶ Guidelines for [civil society organisations](#), jointly developed with the Genocide Network and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC)
- ▶ Guidelines to support first contact with refugees
- ▶ Guidelines on [JITs with third countries](#)
- ▶ Dialogue Group on Accountability for Ukraine: national investigations work stream



### Training for judicial practitioners

- ▶ Practical training sessions and workshops on the investigation and prosecution of core international crimes by the Genocide Network and partners



### Support to EU Freeze & Seize Task Force

- ▶ Operational support through coordinating Member States' enforcement of [European Union sanctions](#) against listed Russian and Belarussian oligarchs through criminal law

Eurojust ensures that the work of the JIT remains aligned with the various national Ukraine-related investigations currently ongoing in over 20 countries, including 16 EU Member States. During 2022, 18 cases were opened at Eurojust by national authorities in 8 Member States and 2 third countries in support of ongoing investigations in relation to war crimes and crimes against humanity, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine, via the Ukrainian Liaison Prosecutor at Eurojust, is involved in all of these cases.

### Support to the JIT on alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine

The Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams (the JITs Network) is a network of national judicial and law enforcement practitioners who promote the use of JITs by competent national authorities. The JITs Network is supported by the JITs Network Secretariat, which is hosted by Eurojust. The JIT investigating alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine relies on Eurojust's and the JITs Network Secretariat's legal, analytical, financial, logistical, administrative and operational support.

The JITs Network Secretariat has played an active role in supporting the JIT, including in the preparation of the JIT agreement and appendix on cooperation with the ICC, and by assisting the JIT parties with a range of legal issues. The JITs Network Secretariat also provides the JIT with financial support and equipment for JIT parties to communicate securely.

At the time of writing, the JIT has been awarded several grants amounting to nearly EUR 200 000. This funding has covered JIT costs related to travel, accommodation, translation, interpretation and specialist expertise. The JIT was also awarded equipment (60 phones, 57 laptops, 20 printers and 20 scanners) for secure communications. The JITs Network Secretariat urgently delivered these services and assisted the JIT members with access to a special application for encrypted communication.

To respond to the JIT's specific needs, the JITs Network Secretariat has ensured agile support through its standard, urgent and exceptional funding procedures, under its 2022 JITs Funding Programme. Moreover, the Network's [Guidelines on Joint Investigations Involving Third Countries](#) and accompanying [checklist for practitioners](#) have also provided essential support to JIT members.



## JIT into alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine

**2 March 2022** – Just six days after the outbreak of full-scale war, Eurojust organises a coordination meeting at the request of the Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian national authorities to discuss the prosecution of alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine.

**25 March 2022** – A [JIT agreement is signed between the three national authorities](#), supported by Eurojust and the JITs Network Secretariat.

Up until March 2023, Eurojust hosts 16 coordination meetings of the JIT and other national authorities that are investigating alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine. Prosecutors and investigators from 26 EU Member States and 10 third countries participate to map out the best strategy for the investigation.

**25 April 2022** – In its first-ever participation in a JIT, the [Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court](#) joins as a participant. The JITs Network Secretariat is pivotal in facilitating the cooperation of the ICC which enables rapid and real-time coordination with the JIT partner countries, in connection with investigations conducted by the ICC and competent national authorities.

**30 May 2022** – [Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia join the JIT.](#)

**13 October 2022** – [Romania joins as the JIT's latest member.](#)

**2 February 2023** – European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announces the establishment of an International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA), to be based at Eurojust.

**3 March 2023** – The JIT's seven national authorities sign a [Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Justice](#) to enhance coordination between their respective investigations into the war in Ukraine.

**4 March 2023** – During the [United for Justice Conference](#) in Lviv, the JIT's seven partner countries agree to [amend the JIT agreement](#) to reflect the future role of the [ICPA](#).



## Supporting JITs in times of conflict

In October 2022, the JITs Network Secretariat hosted its 18th annual meeting to discuss the use of JITs to support investigations into core international crimes and the benefits of ICC involvement in such JITs. The discussion took place in the context of the ICC having joined the JIT investigating alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine as a participant in April.

Two proposals resulted from the meeting: the publication of joint JITs Network-ICC Guidelines for practitioners on the involvement of the ICC in JITs, and the decision that the ICC should be more closely associated with the work of the JITs Network. This may lead to the ICC becoming an associate partner to the JITs Network in the future.

It is hoped that these actions will result in an increased and more frequent involvement of the ICC in the core operational work of JITs.

## Eurojust's role in the EU Freeze and Seize Task Force

Since March 2022, Eurojust has actively participated in the [EU Freeze and Seize Task Force](#) set up by the European Commission to ensure the efficient implementation of EU sanctions against listed Russian and Belarussian oligarchs across the European Union. Eurojust provides operational support to the Task Force by coordinating Member States' enforcement of Union sanctions through criminal law.

This is done by:

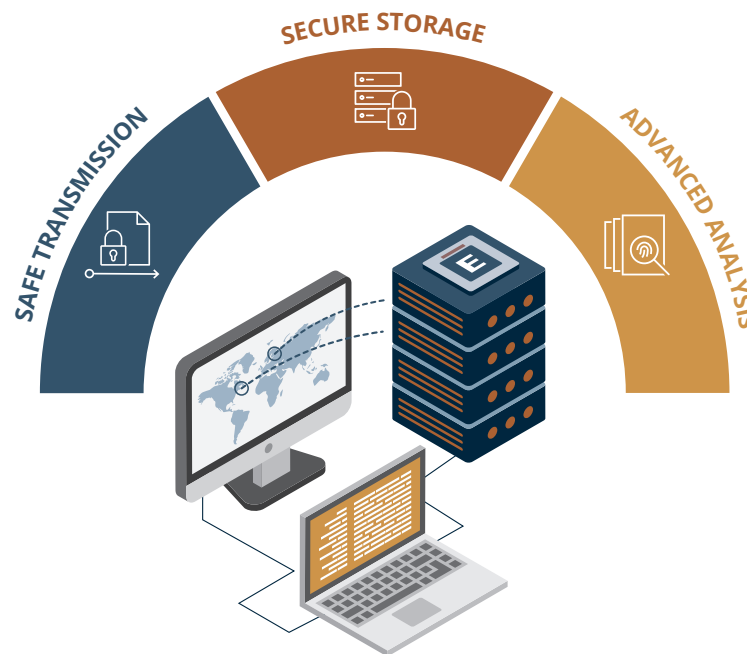
- ▶ regularly cross-checking the list of individuals and companies sanctioned by the European Union against Eurojust's data on existing cases handled by the Agency (this allowed Eurojust to identify and confirm seven links during 2022 that may provide extra leads on existing cases or generate new ones);

- ▶ collecting relevant information at national level on past and ongoing investigations related to those listed in the sanctions list to facilitate criminal proceedings, ultimately leading to the confiscation of assets;
- ▶ mapping legal and practical obstacles that may hinder the confiscation of assets owned or controlled by the listed individuals and companies; and
- ▶ participating in [Operation Oscar](#) set-up by the European Union Law Enforcement Agency (Europol) to support the freezing of criminal assets owned by EU-sanctioned individuals and entities.

### The creation of the Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED)

With such a vast, fragmented landscape and so many stakeholders involved in investigations into the war in Ukraine, the need for a central, secure repository of evidence became clear early on. As an urgent response, in April 2022, the Commission presented a proposal to make the storage of evidence at Eurojust legally possible. The amendment to Eurojust's Regulation was adopted in record time, allowing the Agency to establish its new Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED).

Preparations began in mid-2022 to set up a unique, tailor-made judicial database to preserve, store and analyse evidence of core international crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes). CICED is now helping investigations into the war in Ukraine to deal with the complex landscape of thousands of events, countless pieces of evidence and multiple jurisdictions. Evidence of core international crimes is located in many different countries and comes in various languages. Refugees who can provide victim or



witness statements are dispersed around the world. There are also different stakeholders involved in gathering and storing evidence: national police and judicial authorities, the ICC and non-governmental organisations.

CICED allows us to move from a scattered to a structured approach, providing prosecutors with a detailed analysis of the available evidence that will directly assist them in building their case. The evidence in possession of just one country may not be conclusive. However, through a centralised approach, we can help prosecutors get the full picture and build a stronger case. Thanks to CICED, Eurojust will be able to make crucial links between the evidence and ensure that the efforts of different authorities are not duplicated. Moreover, CICED's centralised approach will support national and international investigations by shedding light, not only on individual offences but also on the systemic actions behind them.

The new database consists of three components: safe transmission, secure storage and advanced analysis of submitted evidence. The technical solutions

“Ukraine's fight is our fight. We must work together to make sure that war criminals are brought to justice. We need to reinforce Eurojust to make sure it has the necessary tools to deal with the scale of atrocities in Ukraine. Europe is determined and we will do what we can to help.”

Věra Jourová, Vice-President for Values and Transparency at the European Commission on the extension of Eurojust's mandate

for transmission and storage are firmly in place, and since February 2023 Eurojust has started to receive evidence from national authorities. The analysis component is still under development, and is expected to be operational by the summer of 2023.

The database meets the highest ICT security standards and complies with Eurojust’s robust data protection framework, overseen by the European Data Protection Supervisor. CISED’s use is not limited to the conflict in Ukraine, and will be able to serve as a repository for evidence for any armed conflict investigated by Eurojust’s partners.

### How CISED works

#### Who can submit evidence?

- ▶ Competent national authorities from EU Member States and countries with Liaison Prosecutors at Eurojust

#### What types of evidence can be submitted?

- ▶ Photographs
- ▶ Video recordings
- ▶ Audio recordings
- ▶ Satellite and drone images
- ▶ Witness statements
- ▶ Victim testimonies
- ▶ Medical, forensic and military reports
- ▶ Battlefield evidence and other types of evidence

#### How will evidence be transmitted?

- ▶ Via secure file transfer

#### How will evidence be stored?

- ▶ Eurojust will ensure secure storage and preservation of the evidence, in full compliance with applicable EU data protection rules

#### What can Eurojust do based on CISED?

- ▶ Maintain a complete overview of all evidence collected
- ▶ Strengthen the coordination of national and international investigations
- ▶ Perform targeted searches for evidence related to a specific event or location
- ▶ Identify evidentiary gaps
- ▶ Identify parallel investigations
- ▶ Advise on prosecution strategies
- ▶ Facilitate evidence and information exchange on core international crimes
- ▶ Prepare thematic reports on specific aspects of core international crime investigations (e.g. gender-based violence)

#### What are the benefits?

- ▶ Centrally storing evidence from national judicial proceedings in one database allows for advanced analysis
- ▶ Based on this analysis, it will be easier to determine a prosecution strategy with the greatest chance of success
- ▶ The early identification of parallel investigations leads to the more efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of legal errors
- ▶ Maintaining an overview of interviewed victims helps to avoid re-victimisation through repeated interviews
- ▶ Targeted searches for evidence result in faster and more effective national investigations
- ▶ The ability to securely store evidence away from the location of an armed conflict can prevent the loss of evidence

## The International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression (ICPA) hosted by Eurojust

At the request of the European Commission in December 2022, Eurojust agreed to support a dedicated centre to safeguard relevant evidence and avoid unnecessary delays in the possible future prosecution of the crime of aggression.

At the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on 2 February 2023, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the establishment of an International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) to be based at Eurojust. This will allow for optimal alignment between the existing investigations into core international crimes and the investigation into the crime of aggression in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The main purpose of the ICPA is to support and enhance investigations into the crime of aggression by securing key evidence and facilitating case-building at the earliest possible stage. The set-up for the deployment of the ICPA is expected to be in place by the summer of 2023.

### Launch of the Ukraine Accountability Dialogue Group

At the [Ukraine Accountability Conference](#) in July 2022, 45 countries pledged

*“ While the damage caused by the Russian invasion can never be undone, we can make sure that those responsible are brought to justice. Setting up the joint investigation team has been a real game-changer in the accountability efforts and Ukraine welcomes the support received from Eurojust so far. At the same time, it is our firm belief that impunity for the crime of aggression should never be accepted. Ukraine therefore strongly welcomes the decision to set up the ICPA at Eurojust, and hopes that this will accelerate the ongoing discussions about the eventual prosecution for this supreme international crime. ”*

Myroslava Krasnoborova, Liaison Prosecutor for Ukraine at Eurojust  
at Eurojust's media briefing marking one year since the start of the war in Ukraine

*“ Russia must be held accountable in court for its odious crimes. Prosecutors from Ukraine and the European Union are already working together. We are collecting evidence. And as a first step, I'm pleased to announce that an International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in Ukraine will be set up in The Hague. This centre will coordinate the collection of evidence. It will be embedded in the joint investigation team, which is supported by our agency Eurojust. So, we will be ready to launch work very rapidly with Eurojust, with Ukraine, with the partners of our joint investigation team, as well as with the Netherlands. The perpetrator must be held accountable. ”*

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission  
at the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit in February 2023

to set up a dialogue group to promote coordination and coherence across the diverse range of accountability initiatives aimed at achieving justice for Ukraine. Delivering on this promise, the Dialogue Group on Accountability for Ukraine was launched by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs at the [United for Justice Conference](#) in Lviv in March 2023. The dialogue group is a coordination mechanism that offers countries, international organisations and stakeholders from civil society a platform to discuss and align national and international accountability initiatives.

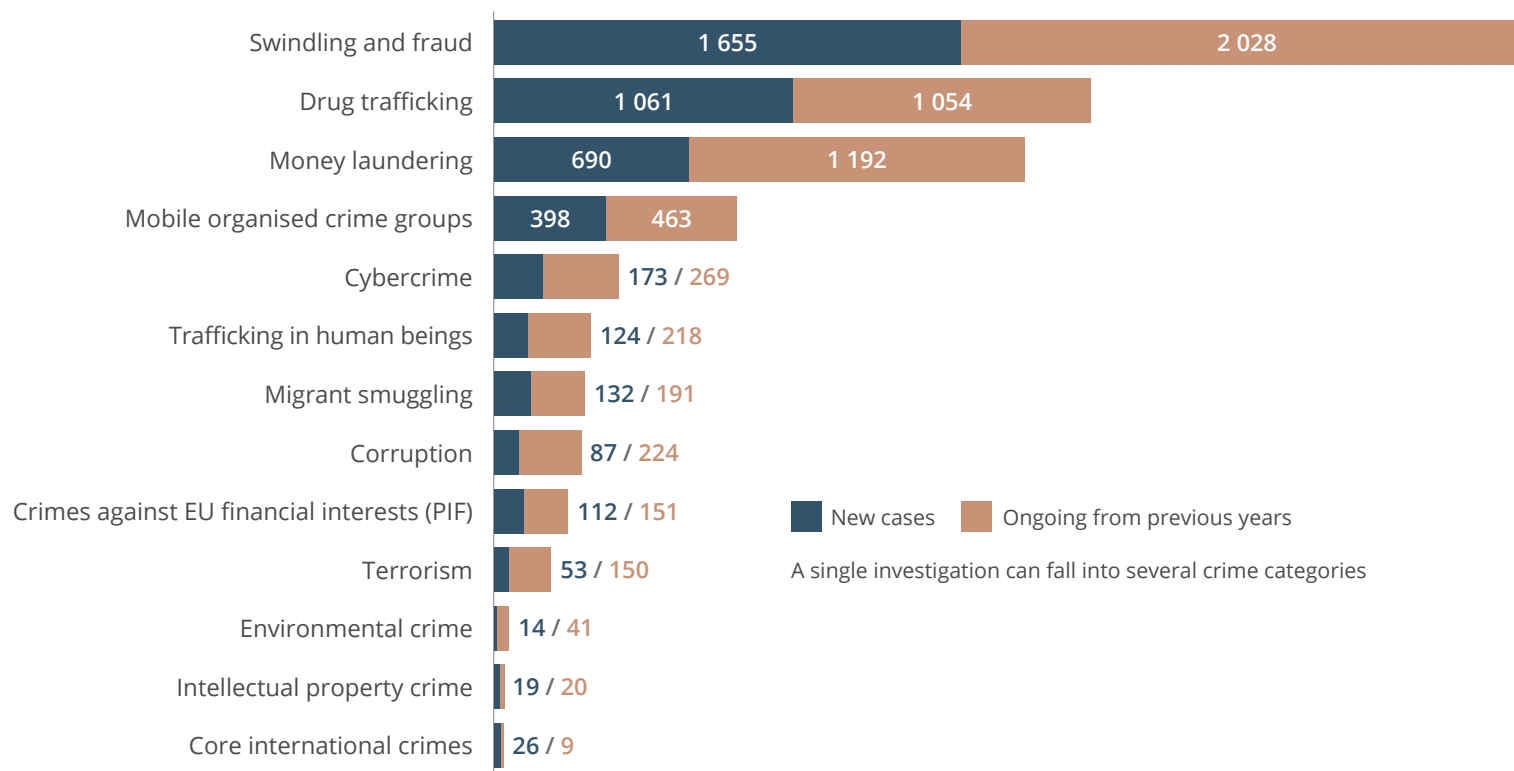
The Group consists of four work streams headed by appointed co-chairpersons, including representatives from the European Union, the ICC, civil society and, in every case, a representative from Ukraine. Eurojust, together with the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office, is co-chair of the workstream on national investigations. This work stream aims to identify key challenges faced in core international crime cases and joint proposals for policy solutions.

The work stream will be built upon the existing coordination mechanisms at Eurojust (the JIT, coordination meetings between all countries investigating crimes committed in Ukraine, CICED and the ICPA). Discussing the issues arising from these operational activities with policy experts from countries with Ukraine-related investigations will allow the next steps to be defined.



### 3. Key cases and developments by crime type

#### 3.1 Overview of Eurojust-referred cases by crime type in 2022



During 2022, Eurojust dealt with more than 11 500 cases across 13 categories of serious cross-border crime, ranging from trafficking in human beings and drugs to terrorism and cybercrime.

The top three crime types handled by the Agency in 2022 continued to be swindling and fraud, drug trafficking and money laundering. More than half of all cases that Eurojust worked on in 2022 involved one of these crime types. Over 3 500 cases in total focused on swindling and fraud crimes, while just

over 2 000 cases dealt with drug trafficking and almost another 2 000 cases with money laundering. In addition to supporting an increasing number of ongoing cases from previous years across all crime types, there was an increase compared to 2021 in the number of new cases brought to Eurojust in six crime areas: swindling and fraud, drug trafficking, money laundering, mobilised organised crime groups (OCGs), intellectual property crime (IPC) and core international crimes. In particular, the number of new core international crime cases opened by the Agency in 2022 more than tripled compared to 2021.

## 3.2 Ensuring victims' rights across all crime cases



In 2022, Eurojust helped deliver justice to more than 300 000 victims of all forms of serious, cross-border crime.

The Agency continued to anchor the victims' rights dimension in all its operational casework. Through its dedicated [Working Group](#) consisting of representatives from all Eurojust crime-based Working Groups, the Agency contributes to ensuring an adequate level of victims' rights protection in cross-border criminal proceedings. The Working Group is responsible for compiling, monitoring and analysing victim-related issues reported by practitioners working on Eurojust cases.

Eurojust aims to minimise the risks associated with the cross-border dimension of cases, by ensuring timely and efficient coordination between the various countries and actors involved to preserve victims' rights. The Agency is uniquely positioned to facilitate information exchange on victims to identify, rescue and protect them. Moreover, it is able to help prevent and solve conflicts of jurisdiction, and find concrete solutions for victims across the European Union, such as the right to compensation.

During 2022, the Agency continued to participate to the [EU Victims' Rights Platform](#), and to exchange best practices and foster cooperation with the [European Commission Coordinator for Victims' Rights](#) and the [European Network on Victims' Rights](#). In particular, the Agency contributed to the EU Victims' Rights Platform's ad-hoc meeting in July 2022, dedicated to understanding the needs of victims of the war in Ukraine and how best respond to them.

At the policy level, Eurojust was invited to suggest amendments to the [Victims' Rights Directive](#). The Agency underlined that cross-border investigations exacerbate the risk of infringement to victims' procedural rights, and mainly, but not exclusively, the risk of secondary victimisation. Eurojust calls on national authorities to refer cases involving victims to the Agency early on, in order to minimise the cross-border risks often related to such cases.

### Eurojust's support to national authorities to ensure victims' rights throughout the investigation

#### In the first stages of the investigation



#### Identifying victims and coordinating communication to families

At an early stage of investigations, and notably in the aftermath of a crisis, Eurojust facilitates the identification and registration of victims.

Examples include:

- ▶ **The Germanwings plane crash in 2015:** Eurojust helped families and relatives across Europe identify the victims, receive welfare support and exercise their rights in other foreign jurisdictions by appointing Contact Points in all Member States involved.
- ▶ **Trafficking of Human Beings cases:** Coordination meetings give Eurojust the opportunity to support Member States' efforts to locate, identify, rescue and help victims to report trafficking, irrespective of where the recruitment, transit and exploitation took place in the EU.

#### During the course of the investigation



#### Information exchange and joint action

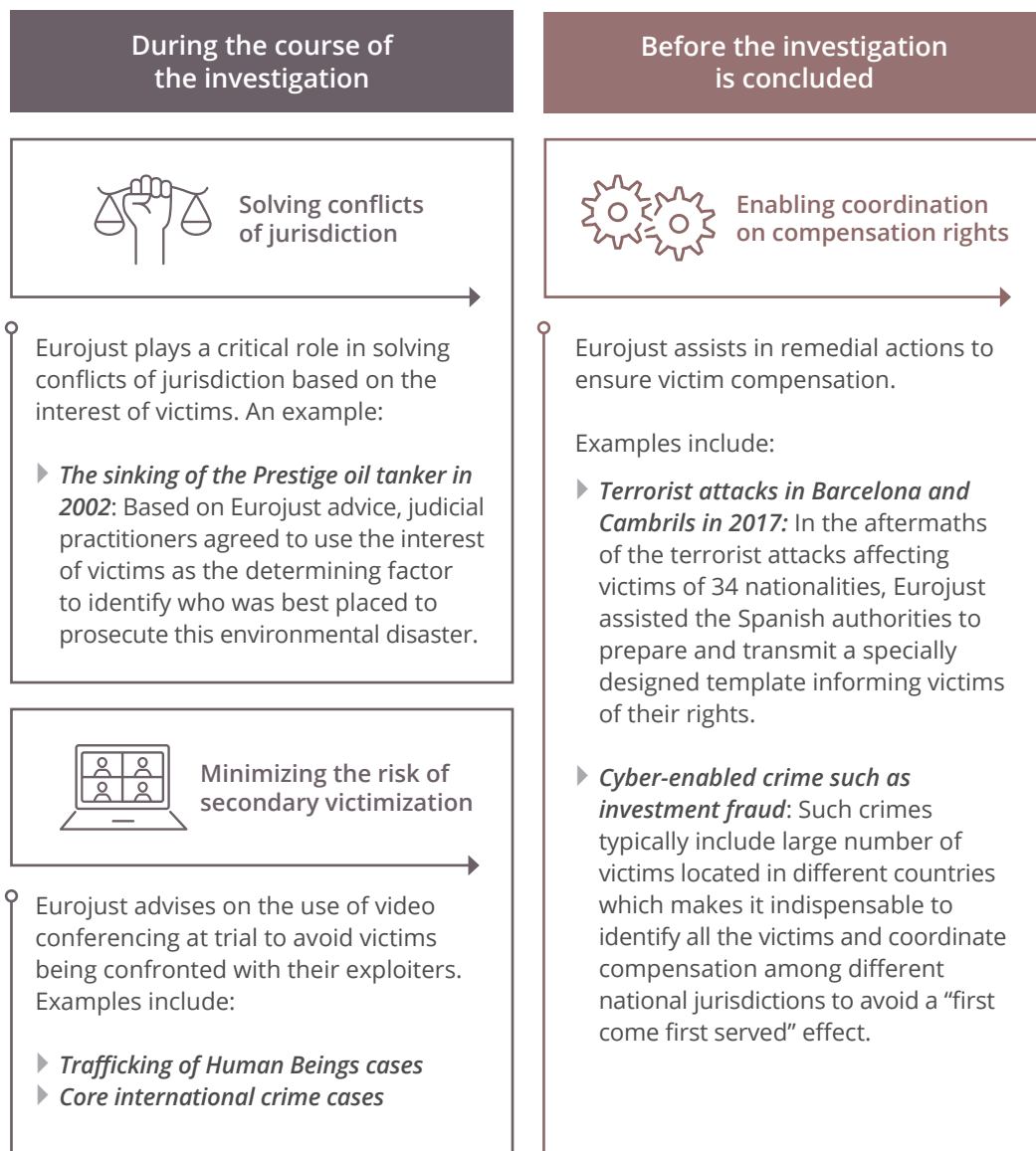
Eurojust regularly supports joint investigation teams (JITs) to facilitate information exchange, and sets up coordination centres to execute joint actions across countries.

Examples include:

- ▶ **Support to Swedish and French JIT targeting crimes against Yazidi victims in Syria and Iraq:** The JIT focused on identifying victims of core international crimes committed in Syria and Iraq, and ensured victims were not interviewed multiple times.
- ▶ **Setting up coordination centres:** Coordination centres, notably in trafficking of human beings cases, allow Eurojust to immediately provide help and ensure that joint actions are taken to benefit the judiciary and the police in all participating countries, enabling them to rescue and protect victims in due time.



## Eurojust's support to national authorities to ensure victims' rights throughout the investigation



### 3.3 Drug trafficking

#### Operational support to drug trafficking cases

Drug trafficking was one of the top two crime types dealt with by the Agency in 2022. Eurojust handled more than 2 000 cases, including 1 054 ongoing cases from the previous year, in addition to 1 061 new cases. This all-time high is partly due to a particularly steep increase in cocaine and synthetic drug cases opened at the Agency in 2022.

Eurojust facilitated the seizure of drugs worth almost EUR 12 billion in 2022, including more than 800 000 kg of synthetic drugs and more than 120 000 kg of cocaine.

During 2022, the Agency provided significant judicial assistance to national authorities on several high-profile cases against organised crime groups dealing in drug trafficking across different continents.

Compared to 2021, there was an increase in the number of JITs, coordination meetings and action days facilitated by Eurojust to tackle cross-border drug trafficking cases in 2022.

#### Drug trafficking cases involving third countries

In 2022, the Agency handled a number of large-scale investigations involving third countries, with the valuable support of the concerned Liaison Prosecutors from these countries posted at Eurojust. As cross-border investigations become ever more complex and demanding from the judicial cooperation perspective, Eurojust's support in such drug trafficking cases proved to be vital for the success of coordinated operations across Europe and beyond.

DRUG TRAFFICKING CASES IN 2022

2 115 CASES

(1061 new cases, 1054 ongoing from previous years)

60

JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS (24 new JITs, 36 ongoing)

126

CASE-SPECIFIC COORDINATION MEETINGS

5

COORDINATED ACTION DAYS

Investigations in cross-border drug trafficking cases benefit significantly from the presence of Liaison Prosecutors from third countries, posted at Eurojust. This is confirmed by the growing number of cases, coordination meetings and JITs involving third countries, facilitated by the Agency. Judicial cooperation with these countries is particularly important in Eurojust's drug trafficking casework, as illustrated by the case illustrations in this section.



### 45 arrests in crackdown on Albanian-speaking criminals flooding Europe with cocaine



**CRIME:** The suspects import cocaine from Latin America to various European ports, organising transport via planes, vessels, cars and lorries. The high-level criminal network runs the wholesale trade of the drugs and sets up a string of enterprises to launder the profits in various countries, including Spain and Croatia. Its members travel regularly to Dubai, Mexico and Colombia to arrange their illegal business and use encrypted communication tools to coordinate activities.

**ACTION:** During an action day supported by Eurojust and Europol, over 600 law enforcement officers in close cooperation with prosecutors and investigative officers carry out raids against the members of the criminal network. Over 80 places are searched in Spain and Belgium, and 45 suspects are arrested. These include a number of high-value targets, investigated in multiple high-profile cases in different jurisdictions. Parallel actions also take place in Croatia, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

**RESULT:** As a result of the international operation involving judicial and law enforcement authorities in seven countries, one of Europe's most active Albanian-speaking cocaine trafficking networks is dismantled.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency sets up a coordination centre to enable rapid cooperation between the judicial authorities involved in the action day. Eurojust and Europol support a JIT set up between Belgium and Spain in 2021.



### Serbian-led drug smuggling network halted in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands



**CRIME:** The OCG traffics cocaine from South America via the Netherlands and Belgium to Germany and the United Kingdom. To conceal this criminal activity, the OCG replaces concrete panels legally acquired in Luxembourg with similar self-produced versions, in which they hide the cocaine.

**ACTION:** An action day, coordinated by Eurojust and supported by Europol, is carried out on 26 November. Seven members of the Serbian-led drug trafficking network are arrested simultaneously in four countries. Four suspects are arrested in the Belgian town of Arlon where the hiding of the drugs took place. The three other members of the OCG are arrested in Serbia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands on the same day.

**RESULT:** 22 concrete panels are seized, each containing several packages of drugs, amounting to approximately 115 kilograms of cocaine.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Eurojust organises several coordination meetings to prepare for the action day. The Agency provides judicial assistance to the national authorities involved and coordinates the operation.

Due to the growing importance of Latin America as a region of origin in a high number of drug trafficking cases, increased cooperation with these countries is paramount to enabling judicial practitioners to better coordinate prosecution strategies.

In October 2022, Eurojust attended a meeting of the Bi-regional Operational Working Group on Drugs in Buenos Aires, organised by the Europe Latin America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime (EL PAcCTO) and the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics). This marked an important step towards closer judicial cooperation with South

American countries and networks in the future. Such cooperation, including supporting the setting up of more JITs, is essential to the success of investigations related to the dismantling of criminal organisations dedicated to drug trafficking.

### Eurojust's contribution to fighting drug trafficking at EU level

During 2022, Eurojust continued to contribute to the implementation of the [EU Drugs Action Plan for 2021–2025](#). The Agency carried out its casework in this area in line with the actions set out in the Council Roadmap to combat drug trafficking, adopted in June 2022.

Throughout 2022, Eurojust also actively contributed to the two drug-related Operational Action Plans of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats ([EMPACT](#)), by representing the judicial cooperation perspective in a significant number of Operational Actions.

Furthermore, the Agency continued its strong cooperation with Europol, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) and the Council of Europe, to ensure effective alignment and greater impact in this area.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting drug trafficking, scan the QR code

## 3.4 Economic crime

Economic crime continued to be a major focus of Eurojust's casework in 2022, covering investigations into a wide range of offences including swindling and fraud, money laundering, corruption and crimes against the financial interests of the European Union.



### Operational support to swindling and fraud cases

As for the past 3 years, swindling and fraud remained the top crime type addressed by Eurojust in 2022, with 3 683 cases handled. In addition to more than 1 500 new cases, more than 2 000 ongoing cases from previous years were coordinated through the Agency. Eurojust dealt with more than 500 extra swindling and fraud cases in 2022 compared to 2021.

During 2022, a large number of economic crime related coordination meetings (115) and JITs (72) were facilitated by Eurojust, as well as 6 action days.

### Investment fraud

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, criminals have increasingly defrauded victims via online trading platforms. This trend continued in 2022 as illustrated by the high number of investment fraud cases registered at Eurojust, and the rise in the number of victims impacted throughout the European Union.

Multilateral investment fraud cases bring particular challenges and an increased need for judicial cooperation via Eurojust. The Agency can assist countries on legal issues concerning cross-border cases, including: centralising proceedings at national and international level; avoiding possible conflicts of jurisdiction; and prioritising the prosecution of common suspects.

### Missing Trader Intra-Community fraud

In 2022, EUROJUST was co-leader for the first time, together with Sweden and Europol, in an EMPACT Operational Activity on Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) fraud. Participants in this specialist group include 13 Member States, as well as Europol, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Commission's DG Justice, with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) as an observer. MTIC fraud is detrimental to EU and national budgets, as well as complex to successfully investigate, prosecute and

convict. Tackling this type of fraud is one of the aims of the EMPACT 2022–2025 priority on fraud, economic and financial crimes.

### Fraud against NextGenerationEU recovery funds

Launched in 2021 and extended in 2022, operation SENTINEL is an EU-wide operation aimed at ensuring the lawful use of the NextGenerationEU recovery funds by detecting, investigating and prosecuting cross-border criminal activities such as fraud and money laundering. The operation was launched by Europol and involves Eurojust, EPPO, OLAF and 20 EU Member States. It aims to

ensure that the EUR 806.9 billion budget is used to strengthen the EU economy rather than ending up in criminals' bank accounts. Eurojust is dedicated to fully supporting this operation, particularly should cases emerge where the EPPO or competent national authorities seek the Agency's assistance.



**Eurojust supports action against large-scale VAT fraud to the EU**



**CRIME:** An OCG regularly smuggles large quantities of cigarettes produced in the United Arab Emirates to Hungary, committing large-scale VAT fraud. The estimated damage caused by the tax evasion to the European Union budget amounts to over EUR 8 750 000.

**ACTION:** On 16 August 2022, a joint action day is supported by Eurojust and Europol, during which one suspect is arrested. International and European Arrest Warrants are issued against three more suspects still at large.

**RESULT:** Authorities in Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland dismantle the criminal network. Over EUR 750 000 in several currencies, 7 high-value cars and 49 very high-value wristwatches are seized in Hungary.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency actively facilitates cross-border judicial cooperation between the national authorities involved, including the execution of European Investigation Orders (EIOs) and the organisation of the joint action day.



**Takedown of infrastructure of call centres involved in online investment fraud responsible for losses of at least EUR 20 million**



**CRIME:** An international OCG commits online investment fraud by convincing victims online and by telephone to make payments to invest in cryptocurrencies. The OCG uses a large-scale IT infrastructure that includes tens of virtual servers, connected by computers in call centres.



The perpetrators install remote access programmes that allow them to illegally access the victims' computers and steal their banking credentials. More than 30 000 people from around 71 countries (with roughly 522 victims registered in Estonia alone) are defrauded of at least EUR 20 million.

**ACTION:** Authorities in Finland, the Netherlands, Latvia, France, Germany and Ukraine support a joint operation on 21 April 2022 to disrupt and paralyse the criminal activities of the OCG.

**RESULT:** More than 50 servers are seized (taken down and data copied), in Finland, the Netherlands, Latvia, France and Germany.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Eurojust facilitates judicial cooperation by setting up and funding a JIT. Two coordination meetings are organised to coordinate the national investigations and prepare for the action day. To support the action day, Eurojust sets up a coordination centre to enable rapid cooperation between the involved judicial authorities.



## MONEY LAUNDERING CASES IN 2022

**1 882 CASES**

(690 new cases,  
1 192 ongoing from previous years)

**63**

**JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS**  
(21 new JITs, 42 ongoing)

**142**

**CASE-SPECIFIC COORDINATION MEETINGS**

**7**

**COORDINATED ACTION DAYS**

### Operational support to money laundering cases

As in previous years, money laundering remained among the top three crime types addressed by the Agency in 2022. Eurojust saw an increase in the number of cases, JITs, coordination meetings and actions days compared to the previous year.

### Eurojust's first money laundering report

In October 2022, Eurojust published its first dedicated Report on Money Laundering. The report aims to support national authorities dealing with cross-border money laundering cases by providing an overview of the legal

and practical challenges, as well as solutions, including the use of Eurojust's judicial cooperation tools.

According to the report, almost 3 000 cross-border money laundering cases have been registered at Eurojust during the past 6 years. Since 2016, the number of cases brought to the Agency has been steadily rising.

Given this large number of cases, the report focuses on certain selected topics: (i) predicate offence; (ii) complex money laundering schemes; (iii) financial and banking information; (iv) asset recovery; (v) cooperation with third countries; (vi) cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office; (vii) potential conflicts of jurisdiction and *ne bis in idem* issues; and (viii) spontaneous exchange of information.

All EU Member States have been involved in international money laundering cases brought to Eurojust during the past six years, with Italy, France, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands dealing with the largest number of cases. Over 60 third countries have also participated in such cases, with Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and Ukraine representing the non-EU states most involved.

Based on Eurojust's casework during the past six years, the report identifies the most relevant legal and practical challenges in this area, as well as the most relevant best practices for national authorities to learn from.

### Money laundering legislative package

Throughout 2022, the legislative procedure for the package of four proposals to strengthen the European Union's anti-money laundering and counter the financing of terrorism was ongoing. The aim of the package is to improve the detection of suspicious transactions and activities, and to close loopholes used by criminals to launder illicit proceeds or finance terrorist activities through the financial system.

Several issues addressed by these proposals are analysed in Eurojust's Report on Money Laundering. These include the identification of beneficial ownership of criminal assets, difficulties linked with the misuse of cryptocurrencies, and the role of asset recovery offices.



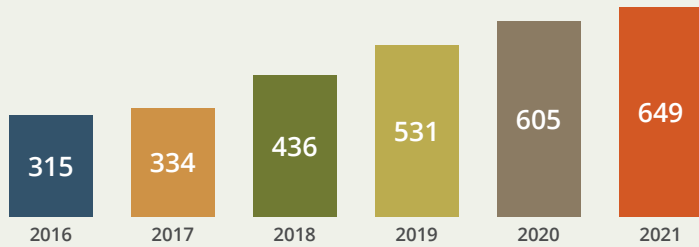


# EUROJUST

## Money laundering casework at Eurojust (2016–2021)

### Increase in money laundering cases

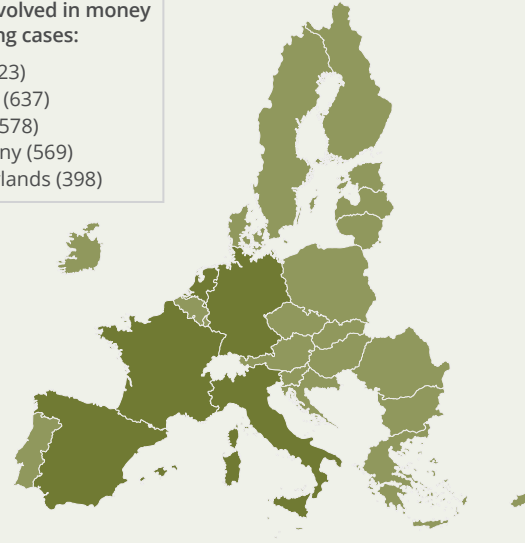
The number of money laundering cases registered at Eurojust has steadily increased since 2016, representing **12–14 % of all registered cases**.



### EU Member State involvement in money laundering cases (2016–2021)

Top-five EU Member States involved in money laundering cases:

- ▶ Italy (723)
- ▶ France (637)
- ▶ Spain (578)
- ▶ Germany (569)
- ▶ Netherlands (398)

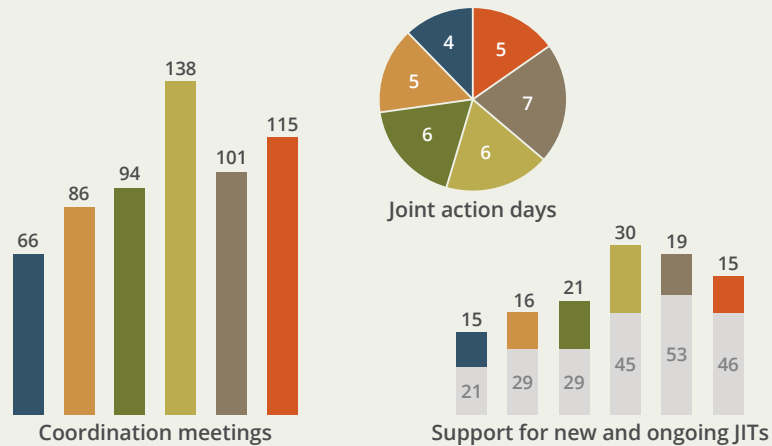


|    |     |     |     |    |     |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| BE | 60  | 219 | 279 | LT | 31  | 103 | 134 |
| BG | 87  | 185 | 272 | LU | 22  | 145 | 167 |
| CZ | 90  | 116 | 206 | HU | 113 | 172 | 285 |
| DK | 20  | 70  | 90  | MT | 16  | 110 | 126 |
| DE | 133 | 436 | 569 | NL | 154 | 244 | 398 |
| EE | 37  | 68  | 105 | AT | 47  | 160 | 207 |
| IE | 13  | 78  | 91  | PL | 70  | 217 | 287 |
| EL | 133 | 73  | 206 | PT | 107 | 120 | 227 |
| ES | 167 | 411 | 578 | RO | 128 | 202 | 330 |
| FR | 267 | 370 | 637 | SI | 96  | 72  | 168 |
| HR | 24  | 88  | 112 | SK | 74  | 110 | 184 |
| IT | 380 | 343 | 723 | FI | 49  | 49  | 98  |
| CY | 59  | 155 | 214 | SE | 92  | 80  | 172 |
| LV | 147 | 105 | 252 |    |     |     |     |

### Use of judicial cooperation tools

Eurojust organised **600 coordination meetings** between involved national authorities, and supported **33 action days** and the establishment of **116 new joint investigation teams (JITs)** to address money laundering crimes in 2016–2021.

■ 2016 
 ■ 2017 
 ■ 2018 
 ■ 2019 
 ■ 2020 
 ■ 2021  
■ Ongoing from the previous year



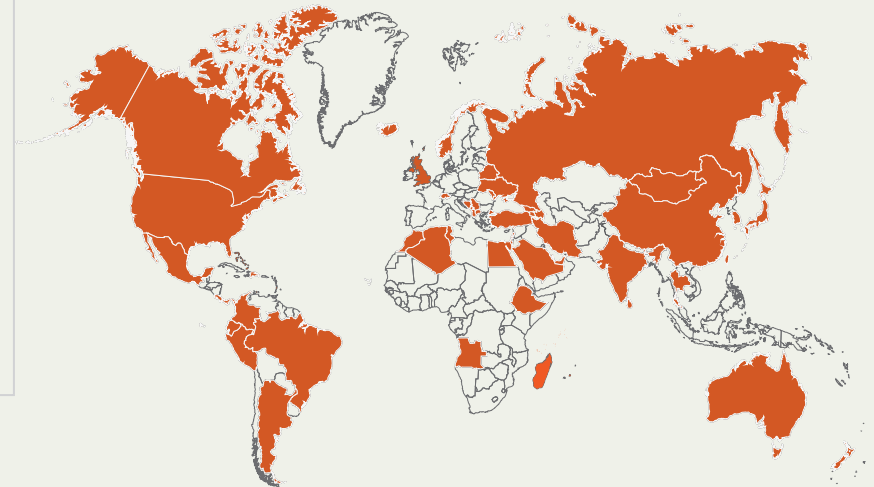
### Third country involvement in money laundering cases (2016–2021)

**Over 60 third countries** were involved in Eurojust money laundering cases between 2016 and 2021, highlighting the importance and added value of having a global network of Contact Points and Liaison Prosecutors stationed at Eurojust.

Top-10 non-EU States involved in money laundering cases:

- ▶ Switzerland (265)
- ▶ United Kingdom (137) (\*)
- ▶ United States (70)
- ▶ Ukraine (57)
- ▶ Serbia (37)
- ▶ Liechtenstein (35)
- ▶ Norway (31)
- ▶ Moldova (20)
- ▶ Israel (17)
- ▶ Monaco (16)

(\*) UK data refers to cases registered at Eurojust from 1 February 2020





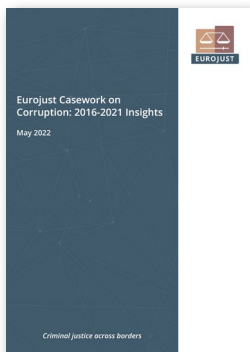


### Operational support to corruption cases

In 2022, Eurojust supported 87 new corruption cases. The Agency continued to provide legal, operational and logistical support to 10 JITs, while also facilitating 14 coordination meetings and 2 successful action days.

### Eurojust's first corruption report

In May 2022, Eurojust published its first dedicated publication in the corruption field: [Eurojust's Casework on Corruption: 2016–2021 Insights](#). During the report's reference period, more than 500 corruption cases were registered at Eurojust.



The report presents key findings based on Eurojust's corruption casework and expertise built up over the years. It provides support to national authorities dealing with cross-border corruption cases by analysing challenges and proposing solutions.

Eurojust is uniquely equipped to address the specific challenges of corruption cases through its judicial cooperation tools. Coordination through Eurojust has led to tangible results, including seizures, confiscations, arrests and convictions in complex cross-border

corruption investigations and prosecutions worldwide.

The top five Member States involved in corruption cases registered at Eurojust are Greece, Germany, Romania, Italy and Spain. Third countries also play a key role in Eurojust's corruption casework, with 42 third countries involved between 2016 and 2021.

### Operational support to PIF cases

Protection of the financial interests of the European Union (PIF) crimes are crimes against the financial interests of the European Union, as defined by Directive 2017/1371 (PIF Directive). During 2022, Eurojust dealt with a slightly higher number of PIF crime cases compared to 2021.

The Agency handled more than 200 cases and supported 4 investigation teams, 19 coordination meetings and 2 action days.

Despite the EPPO starting operations in 2021, Eurojust is still competent in supporting PIF crime cases involving EU Member States not participating in the EPPO, and third countries, also on request of the EPPO.

Moreover, the Agency is also competent in supporting all Member States (whether participating in the EPPO or not) in cross-border judicial cooperation on PIF-related crimes that fall outside the EPPO competence.

In March 2022, Eurojust provided input based on its PIF crime casework to the European Commission's study to support an implementation report on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law. The study assesses the transposition and implementation of the PIF Directive and gathers statistics on relevant criminal offences. The second implementation report of the PIF Directive, based on this study, was published in September 2022.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting economic crimes, scan the QR code

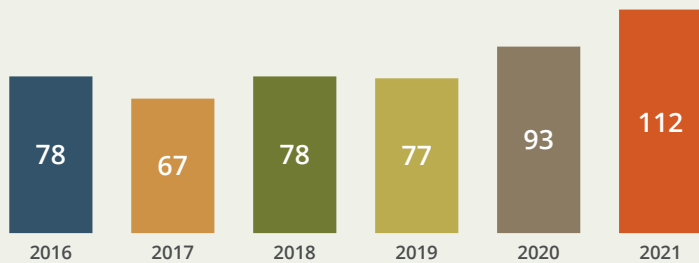


# EUROJUST

## Eurojust casework on corruption (2016-2021)

### Corruption cases registered

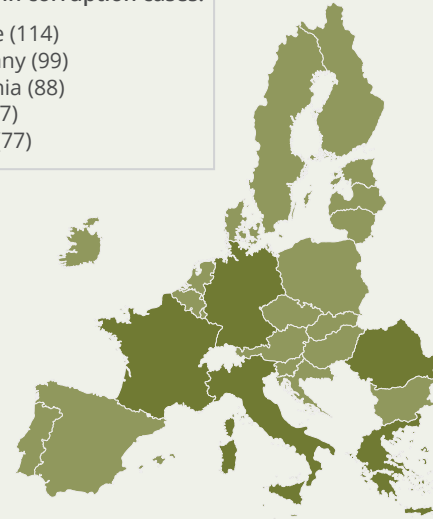
The number of corruption cases, while still low relative to overall casework registered at Eurojust in the 2016-2021 period, has been steadily increasing.



### EU Member State involvement in registered corruption cases 2016-2021

Top 5 Member States involved in corruption cases:

- ▶ Greece (114)
- ▶ Germany (99)
- ▶ Romania (88)
- ▶ Italy (87)
- ▶ Spain (77)



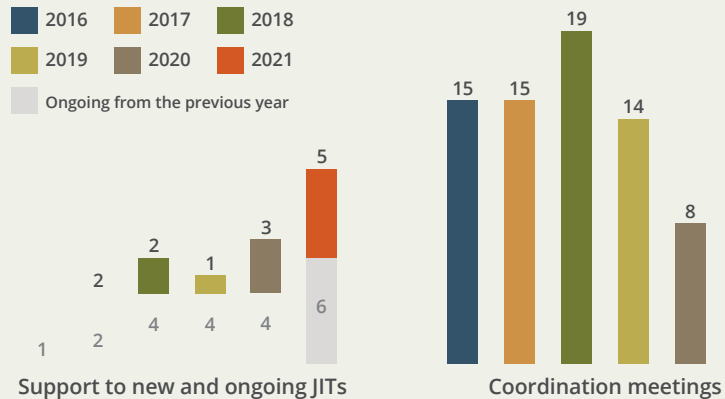
|            |    |    |     |             |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|-----|-------------|----|----|----|
| Belgium    | 8  | 28 | 36  | Latvia      | 12 | 17 | 29 |
| Bulgaria   | 22 | 16 | 38  | Lithuania   | 5  | 14 | 19 |
| Czech Rep. | 13 | 21 | 34  | Luxembourg  | 1  | 19 | 20 |
| Denmark    | 1  | 6  | 7   | Hungary     | 13 | 21 | 34 |
| Germany    | 12 | 87 | 99  | Malta       | 4  | 13 | 17 |
| Estonia    | 1  | 10 | 11  | Netherlands | 20 | 40 | 60 |
| Ireland    | 0  | 18 | 18  | Austria     | 6  | 37 | 43 |
| Greece     | 92 | 22 | 114 | Poland      | 8  | 24 | 32 |
| Spain      | 23 | 54 | 77  | Portugal    | 17 | 13 | 30 |
| France     | 21 | 52 | 73  | Romania     | 71 | 17 | 88 |
| Croatia    | 24 | 13 | 37  | Slovenia    | 4  | 10 | 14 |
| Italy      | 34 | 53 | 87  | Slovakia    | 15 | 13 | 28 |
| Cyprus     | 6  | 38 | 44  | Finland     | 2  | 10 | 12 |
|            |    |    |     | Sweden      | 12 | 9  | 21 |

As owner As requested participant Total

### Access to judicial cooperation tools

**84 coordination meetings** were organised in the 2016-2021 period to address corruption cases, enabling national authorities involved to share information and resolve legal and practical issues. Eurojust also supported **8 action days**, with real-time exchanges of information and evidence and synchronised operations, and **14 new joint investigation teams (JITs)**.

2016 2017 2018  
 2019 2020 2021  
 Ongoing from the previous year



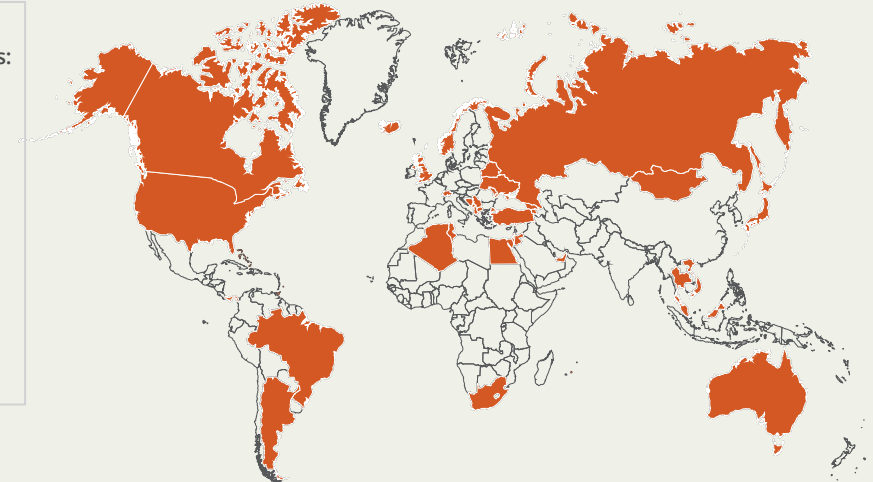
### Access to jurisdictions worldwide

**42 third countries** were involved in Eurojust corruption cases in the period under review, highlighting the importance and added value of having a global network of contact points and Liaison Prosecutors stationed at Eurojust.

Top 10 non-EU states involved in corruption cases:

- ▶ Switzerland (92)
- ▶ Ukraine (28)
- ▶ United Kingdom (23)\*
- ▶ United States (14)
- ▶ Serbia (12)
- ▶ Norway (10)
- ▶ Liechtenstein (9)
- ▶ North Macedonia (8)
- ▶ Moldova (7)
- ▶ Montenegro (6)

\* data for UK considered from 1/2/2020



### 3.5 Environmental crime



#### Operational support to environmental crimes cases

Since 2016, environmental crime has been the fourth-largest criminal activity globally, growing at a rate of between 5% and 7% per year<sup>8</sup>. It endangers entire ecosystems, while posing a serious threat to human health, and is one of the most profitable forms of illegal trade in the world.

Despite this, the number of investigations at national and European level remains low when compared to investigations into other crime areas.

This is reflected in Eurojust’s casework, which slightly decreased compared to the previous year,

with the Agency handling 55 cases in 2022. It should be noted, however, that the Agency routinely deals with various cases not directly registered as environmental cases, which nevertheless have a major impact on the environment.

During 2022, the Agency continued to provide legal, operational and logistical support to ongoing and new environmental cases brought to the Agency. This included facilitating six JITs and seven coordination meetings, involving concerned national authorities from EU Member States and third countries.

#### The lack of environmental crime investigations at national and European level

Part of the reason why there is a lack of environmental crime investigations is because environmental crimes are frequently considered secondary to crimes such as fraud and money laundering, and are therefore rarely prioritised

<sup>8</sup> The Rise of Environmental Crime (2016), Interpol and United Nations Environment Programme

by national authorities. Moreover, administrative, law enforcement and judicial authorities often lack the capacity and resources to effectively detect, investigate and prosecute environmental crimes, which are often complex, multidisciplinary and cross-border in nature. Finally, the existence of different investigative and legislative approaches to dealing with environmental crime across countries also poses legal and operational challenges.

Eurojust is fully equipped to deal with these challenges, and encourages national authorities to engage more actively in cross-border environmental investigations and prosecutions and to refer such cases to the Agency.

#### Eurojust supports action against use of illegal emission devices in South Korean cars

 **EUROJUST**

**CRIME:** Illegal emission devices are placed in more than 210 000 diesel cars produced by 2 South Korean companies. The devices are responsible for interfering with or disabling exhaust gas cleaning mechanisms, causing the vehicles to emit significantly more nitrogen oxides while in operation than legally permitted. Customers buying the vehicles are deceived as they are not informed that the vehicles fail to meet the emissions requirements.

**ACTION:** In an action day coordinated by Eurojust on 28 June 2022, business premises in eight properties across Germany and Luxembourg are searched. The searches are carried out by approximately 180 investigators in Germany, and 14 investigators in Luxembourg.

**RESULT:** Various pieces of evidence, including communication data, software and planning documents are seized.

**EUROJUST’S ROLE:** Eurojust enables the cooperation of the national authorities involved during the action day.

The Council also encourages further cooperation with Eurojust. In 2019, the Council published the [Final report of the eighth round of mutual evaluations on environmental crime](#). One of the report's key recommendations is for Member States to participate actively in the work carried out at EU and international levels to enhance cooperation in tackling environmental crime, including through Eurojust. While cases referred to the Agency did increase following this recommendation both in 2020 and 2021, in 2022 they slightly decreased. The Agency looks forward to working with national authorities more extensively in this area in the future.

### Environmental cases use Eurojust services the most

Compared to all crime areas addressed by the Agency, the highest percentage of coordination meetings and coordination centres facilitated by Eurojust during the last eight years have been dedicated to environmental crime cases.

The number of new JITs supported by Eurojust during 2014–2022 in the environmental crime area is also comparatively very high, demonstrating national authorities' need and reliance on Eurojust's assistance in combatting this complex international crime. Considering the involvement of trafficking routes across the European Union and beyond, the high level of illegal profits, the low risk of detection and the involvement of organised and other crimes, JITs are a particularly efficient tool in the environmental crime area.



Eurojust's crucial role in fighting environmental crime is illustrated by the extensive use of all its judicial tools for past and current environmental crime cases. More information about these tools and Eurojust's expertise in the environmental crime area can be found in Eurojust's [Environmental Crime Factsheet](#).

### Eurojust's contribution to EMPACT Operational Actions in the environmental crime priority area

During 2022, Eurojust continued to support four environmental operational actions under [EMPACT](#).

These actions cover:

- ▶ transnational investigations into waste trafficking and 'follow-the-money' approach to dismantle the involved OCGs;
- ▶ tackling criminal finance, money laundering and asset recovery related to wildlife and timber trafficking;
- ▶ support to multidisciplinary training activities related to environmental crime organised by CEPOL; and
- ▶ strengthening law enforcement and judicial cooperation between the European Union and Asia.

### Proposal for the new Environmental Crime Directive

The legislative procedure for the proposal for the new Environmental Crime Directive was ongoing throughout 2022. The Commission's proposal for the new Directive was discussed during an [MEPs visit to Eurojust](#) in September 2022. The MEP delegation learned about the Agency's work in the environmental crime area and discussed what the new Directive will mean for its future casework. In December 2022, the [Council reached an agreement](#) on its negotiating mandate.

Eurojust welcomes the proposal, which reflects the recommendations stemming from the Agency's casework, and contains a number of provisions that are highly relevant to its work. The new Directive is expected to strengthen the whole environmental enforcement chain, including cross-border judicial cooperation.

The proposal aims to improve the investigation and prosecution of environmental criminal offences by defining environmental crime more precisely, and adding new types of environmental criminal offences. It also provides minimum standards for effective, dissuasive and proportionate sanctions and introduces specific sanction types and levels for environmental criminal offences for natural and legal persons. The draft Directive obliges Member States to publish statistics on environmental crime-related proceedings. Moreover, the proposal promotes the use of harmonised investigative tools and obliges cooperation through Eurojust, Europol and OLAF.

## European Commission adopts revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking

Wildlife trafficking has become one of the most profitable criminal activities worldwide, with devastating effects on biodiversity. In 2022, the European Commission revised its Action Plan to further prevent wildlife trafficking by addressing its root causes. Moreover, the Plan aims to strengthen the legal and policy framework, enforce regulations, and reinforce the global partnership of source, consumer and transit countries against wildlife trafficking.

Eurojust was invited to comment on the draft [revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking](#), which was adopted by the European Commission in November 2022. The Agency is referred to in the framework of several actions aimed to strengthen cross-border cooperation and to enhance specialised knowledge of all actors, including prosecutors and the judiciary. Member States are encouraged to systematically request Eurojust's operational and judicial support on cases related to serious and organised wildlife crime.

## EU and US intensify cooperation in the fight against environmental crime

The European Union and the United States published a [joint statement](#) following the EU-US Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministerial Meeting, in which they committed to further strengthen cooperation against environmental crime. They committed to developing cooperation tools and mechanisms to exchange information and best practices, also via Eurojust where possible.

They further committed to identifying potential joint operational activities and investigations in the areas of marine and maritime pollution, such as ship source pollution, protecting marine biodiversity, and offences involving the transboundary shipment of waste.

National authorities of Member States are encouraged to consider initiation of criminal investigations in these areas and, where relevant, establish cross-border exchange of information and cooperation with US authorities and use Eurojust's assistance to facilitate the cooperation.

During a dedicated [liaison meeting](#) hosted by Eurojust in September 2022, EU

and US officials devised a process to set environmental crime priorities for operational action, criminal intelligence sharing, and developing cooperation tools and mechanisms to exchange information and best practices.

The United States Department of Justice, the Directorates General for Justice and Environment of the European Commission, the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE), and Europol all participated in the meeting. These established contacts will play a key role in enabling strategic and operational cooperation to combat environmental crime. Eurojust and ENPE will provide organisational, operational and logistical support to this cooperation.

## Eurojust's awareness-raising and networking activities on environmental crime

During 2022, Eurojust made significant efforts to raise awareness on how to successfully investigate and prosecute environmental crimes through networking activities for prosecutors and the judiciary. The Agency supported trainings organised by CEPOL and the EJTN, and EU-funded projects such as [Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe](#). Eurojust also participated in the [EU Crime Prevention Network wildlife crime awareness campaign](#).

In March 2022, Eurojust and the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union held a [symposium](#) on environmental crime, bringing together high-level experts in environmental law. The objective of the symposium was to trace the evolution of the fight against environmental crime within the EU, as well as to consider future prospects in this area. The new French judicial organisation to advance prosecution for damage to the environment was also presented.

In a dedicated [conference](#) in Tunisia in June 2022, judicial practitioners from EU Member States and the South Partner Countries shared good practices for the more effective application of environmental law. The main aim of the event was to explore the development of a network of magistrates specialised in environmental law on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. The conference was organised by the EuroMed Justice Programme in close coordination with Algeria and the French and Tunisian Ministries of Justice, under the French Presidency to the EU Council.

Finally, in September 2022, Eurojust hosted the annual general meeting and the

10th anniversary event of the ENPE. This was an important networking event, to which representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice also participated. During the meeting, three case studies were presented covering topics including sustainable biodiesel fraud, marine pollution and illegal pesticides. The case study presenters shared lessons learned and best practices based on their experiences of working on these cases.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting environmental crime, scan the QR code

### 3.6 Intellectual property crime



#### Operational support to intellectual property crime cases

Eurojust handled a similar number of intellectual property crime (IPC) cases in 2022 compared to 2021.

The Agency organised two coordination meetings offering its legal and logistical support to national authorities involved in IPC investigations.

One IPC case opened at the Agency in 2022 concerned the illegal streaming of sports events. Following the reception

of data from UEFA and FIFA, the US Liaison Prosecutor at Eurojust organised a coordination meeting between the national authorities of the involved countries in December 2022. Moving forward, the plan is to pass on the data to Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine and to take coordinated investigative actions against the organised criminal group behind these criminal acts.

#### Responding to the challenge through the IP Crime Project

In today's technology-driven society, the growing scale and severity of intellectual property (IP) violations, particularly in the form of counterfeiting and copyright violations, poses increasing risks to the public. It is therefore necessary for criminal law to ensure strict IP protection and enforcement.

IP crimes cause significant damage to the economy, and in some cases, can endanger consumer health and safety. This crime type is especially attractive to criminals due to its high profit margins and low level of penalties applied. Criminals engaging in this crime often engage in other forms of crime as facilitators for IP crime (e.g. document fraud and money laundering) or use the proceeds gained to finance other serious crimes, including terrorism.

The significant economic, social and health impacts of IP crimes require a robust, effective and coordinated response from both the international community and national authorities.

To contribute to national and EU efforts in this area, Eurojust established the [IP Crime Project](#), financed by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) through a Service Level Agreement. The project aims to raise the profile of IP crime and contribute to a strengthened judicial response against IP infringements in the EU. To that end, the project focuses on building, promoting and exchanging knowledge, tools and expertise, and on promoting cooperation between judicial authorities across EU jurisdictions.

In 2022, the IP Crime project organised two key events and published a series of materials designed to raise awareness and promote knowledge on a wide range of IP crime issues.

#### Annual workshop of the European Intellectual Property Prosecutors Network

In September 2022, over 70 prosecutors from the European Union and neighbouring countries dealing with IP crime investigations and prosecutions participated in the annual workshop of the European Intellectual Property Prosecutors Network, organised by Eurojust and EUIPO. The 2022 edition focused on collaborating with private sector intermediaries. Participants also discussed



other important topics including international judicial cooperation, IP crime investigations and prosecutions in practice, public-private sector cooperation and the perspective of rights holders.

While acknowledging the importance of combating IP crimes, many prosecutors stated that, in several EU jurisdictions, the violation of certain IP rights is not even considered a criminal offence (such as plant variety, violations of geographical indications of origin and trade secrets). It is for this reason that cross-border cooperation facilitated by Eurojust is so important, as it helps to promote understanding of IP systems across the European Union and identify the best prosecutorial strategy to get justice done in these cases.

### Workshop on counterfeit car parts

The increasing use of fake car parts poses a growing security risk for road users, leading to deadly accidents and serious bodily harm. Furthermore, the use of fake parts is a serious infringement of the copyrights of the original manufacturers. To raise visibility and exchange knowledge in this area,

Eurojust organised a practical workshop on counterfeit car parts in November 2022. The workshop brought together members of national police forces and judicial authorities, industry representatives and EU agencies. The event provided participants with an opportunity to discuss key issues faced in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving spare car parts, while learning about current national responses to tackling this crime.

One way to prosecute this crime more effectively is to use cumulative charging – adding charges such as manslaughter or causing bodily harm to counterfeiting cases, or fraud to copyright infringements to raise the level of sentencing. This approach allows prosecutors to tackle multiple criminal offences, ensuring perpetrators are sentenced for the entirety of their criminal activity, rather than just the most prevailing crime. This approach results in higher penalties, while also allowing the use of special investigative methods and tactics reserved for crimes that are considered more serious by legislators.

During the workshop, participants agreed to conduct further analysis of the criminal activities concerning fake parts and to map the investigative process,

outlining all elements necessary to file successful indictments. This includes increasing cooperation between public authorities and the industry.

### IPC publications released in 2022

Throughout 2022, the IP Crime Project released a number of publications that address key issues and provide legislative updates to help strengthen practitioners' knowledge of the legal aspects of IP crimes. The 2022 publications cover a wide range of topics, and provide legal analysis and practical knowledge that legal practitioners can apply to their IP investigations and prosecutions.



The [national case-law analysis](#) and [IP Crime Project Annual Report](#) provide case-law summaries, highlighting examples of the most common issues dealt with by national courts in the IPC area. They identify common practices and assist practitioners in applying relevant legal provisions during IPC prosecutions.

During 2022, the IP Crime Project also published short and user-friendly awareness-raising materials to present the latest policy developments in areas that directly affect IP. One such [factsheet](#) was dedicated to the [Digital Services Act](#) that entered into effect in November 2022. This landmark legislation aims to impose due diligence requirements on online service providers (OSPs), and establishes a number of obligations aimed at removing illegal copyright-infringing content.

A [flyer](#) was published with tips for users on how to identify illegal Internet Protocol television services, which have become a major problem, causing significant damage to rights holders and users through loss of personal data and malware.

A second flyer explaining how to successfully submit a copyright infringement notice was also published in December 2022. Raising awareness of this is important as the copyright infringement notice is one of the most effective tools for drawing attention to a potential violation, removing illegal content, and informing law enforcement agencies about a potential criminal offence.

Finally, the collection of national legislation, [judicial libraries](#), and [contact information for national institutions](#) also published during 2022 offers practitioners and legal experts easy access to a variety of legal resources.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting intellectual property crime, scan the QR code

## 3.7 Organised crime

### Operational support to organised crime cases

During 2022, Eurojust dealt with a higher number of organised crime cases and arranged more coordination meetings in this area, compared to the previous year. More than 800 organised crime cases, nearly 400 of which were newly opened in 2022, were handled by the Agency.

Organised OCGs are active in many crime areas, including theft and property crime, and move around quickly within and across multiple jurisdictions. Close cooperation across borders is therefore crucial to detect them and build a solid prosecution case to achieve justice.

During 2022, Eurojust dealt with a variety of cases ranging from drug trafficking and extortion committed by a mafia-style OCG to criminal networks involved in human trafficking, robbery and fraud.

### Mafia-style organised crime groups

Eurojust's casework in 2022 gave rise to a series of insights concerning mafia-style OCGs.



#### MOCG-RELATED CASES IN 2022

**861** CASES  
(398 new cases,  
463 ongoing from previous years)

**14**  
JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS  
(3 new JITs, 11 ongoing)

**25**  
CASE-SPECIFIC  
COORDINATION MEETINGS





### Action against Italian mafia in Spain: 32 arrests



**CRIME:** Two OCGs operating in Italy and Spain with suspected links to the 'Ndrangheta mafia are allegedly involved in drug trafficking, money laundering and extortion.

**ACTION:** During an action day carried out in Spain, 32 suspects are arrested and 40 places searched across Ibiza, Barcelona, Malaga and Tenerife.

**RESULT:** EUR 300 000 in cash, 18 kilograms of amphetamine and 4.5 kilograms of cocaine are seized, as well as firearms and ammunition. A cannabis plantation with 600 plants is also dismantled during the operation.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency assists the Italian and Spanish authorities by hosting two coordination meetings with the aim to facilitate the judicial cooperation and the exchange of information between the competent judicial authorities. Eurojust's coordination is essential to clarify the nature of the links and to devise a common strategy to support the investigation, which culminates in the organisation of the action day in Spain.

These criminal groups increasingly have a transnational dimension. While their main decision bodies are still located in their Member State of origin, these OCGs also have permanent cells located in several other Member States. In some cases, the OCGs are capable of fully exerting their power in other territories, using the usual mafia means and modalities.

Furthermore, Eurojust casework confirms that different OCGs often cooperate together in networks. Some OCGs are specialised in offering specific criminal services, such as money laundering, to other OCGs.

OCGs continue to develop and evolve, as shown by their rapid adaptation to the coronavirus pandemic through online crime. Cross-border cooperation therefore



### Six suspects indicted in France for extortion and taking jewellers and their families hostage in Switzerland



**CRIME:** In November 2021, heavily armed and masked OCG members take the manager of a high-end jewellery and watch factory in the Jura region hostage, to later force him to open his enterprise. His wife and two young children are also taken hostage. The company's premises are looted, and the suspects escape with over 70 kilos of precious metals and top-end Swiss watches.

In January 2022, the OCG members abduct another businessman in the Neuchatel region, as well as his pregnant wife and drive them to the store, where they also take two employees hostage. After a private security service is alerted, they set off without any loot, hijack a car and cross the border to France. During a police chase, two members of the gang are arrested.

**ACTION:** With the support of Eurojust, two JITs are set up, allowing French authorities to travel to Switzerland to meet their Swiss counterparts at the crime scenes. During a coordinated action in October 2022, 14 suspects are interrogated in an operation involving 60 police officers.

**RESULT:** Six other OCG members are arrested and indicted for extortion, the attempted murder of a police officer and gang membership, among other charges. Several luxury cars, three stolen weapons and illicit drugs are seized.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** In addition to supporting and financing the two JITs, Eurojust organises four coordination meetings with the French and Swiss authorities to prepare for the operation.

remains essential to tackling these complex and constantly evolving criminal networks.

### Eurojust co-leads in EMPACT Operational Action Plan on High Risk Criminal Networks

Eurojust is a co-leader in several Operational Actions within [EMPACT](#), including the Operational Action Plan for High Risk Criminal Networks.

This Action Plan aims at fostering cooperation in the identification and investigation of high-value targets. Due to the poly-criminality associated with high-risk criminal networks, the Action Plan tackles a wide range of crime types. For the first time within EMPACT, the judiciary is leading operational actions.

A kick-off meeting of the Operational Action dedicated to the 'Ndrangheta and the Sicilian mafia, co-led by Eurojust and the Italian Direzione Nazionale Antimafia and Antiterrorism, took place in May 2022. A key outcome of the meeting was the adoption of common guidelines on how to share operational information between judicial and law enforcement authorities worldwide when dealing with high-risk criminal networks.

### EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025

The [EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025](#) sets out the tools and measures to be taken over the next five years to boost law enforcement and judicial cooperation and disrupt the business models and structures of criminal organisations across borders, both on- and offline.

In November 2022, Eurojust participated to a meeting on the implementation of the Strategy, organised by the European Commission. Member State participants were informed about the progress of the implementation of the Organised Crime Strategy and exchanged best practices in the fight against organised crime. The meeting was a follow-up to the brainstorming session involving EU agencies and Member States in February 2021 to prepare the new EU Strategy, in which Eurojust also participated. According to Eurojust's perspective, the

recovery of criminal assets and the cross-border dimensions of modern OCGs are certainly areas where improvements are necessary. This includes broadening the current legal instruments and enhancing the harmonisation of EU legislation.

### Eurojust joins Organised Action to fight OCGs from Ukraine and Russian-speaking countries

In March 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission presented the [10-point Plan](#) that aims to ensure stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The Plan addresses the internal security implications of the war, ensuring maximal vigilance against organised crime.

In response to the Plan, the 'EMPACT Community' was launched under the French Presidency, and specific Operational Actions were set up to ensure a coordinated approach among EU Member States, agencies and institutions. During 2022, Eurojust participated in the 'EMPACT Community' meetings, and became a participant in the Operational Action on OCGs from Ukraine, Russia and other Russian-speaking areas.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting organised crime, scan the QR code

## 3.8 Cybercrime

### Operational support to cybercrime cases

Cybercrime continues to grow and attracts criminals exploiting new opportunities offered by modern technologies.

Following a steep increase during the COVID-19 pandemic that forced society to shop, communicate and work more online, cybercrime has evolved into a significant threat to fundamental rights, democracy, and international peace and stability.



## CYBERCRIME CASES IN 2022

442 CASES

(173 new cases,  
269 ongoing from previous years)

12

JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS  
(all ongoing from previous years)

42

CASE-SPECIFIC  
COORDINATION MEETINGS

1

COORDINATED ACTION DAY

During 2022, Eurojust supported 442 cybercrime cases (44 more than in 2021), ranging from investigations into ransomware to criminal encryption.

### Criminal use of encrypted communications

The criminal use of encryption is increasingly used by criminal organisations to evade investigation and prosecution. Judicial authorities and law enforcement therefore increasingly depend on encrypted digital data, which is difficult to access legally, to proceed with such investigations.

During 2022, Eurojust continued to provide Member States with crucial assistance in

cases related to encrypted communication platforms. Since Eurojust's support to the investigations related to the [EncroChat communication platform in 2020](#) and the [Sky ECC communication platform in 2021](#), the Agency has dealt with thousands of 'spin-off' cases.

Since April 2021, Eurojust's French Desk has processed around 2 000 requests for MLA and European Investigation Orders (EIOs) in 'spin-off' cases related to the decryption of Sky ECC communications.

During the 13th Plenary Meeting of the European Judicial Cybercrime Network (EJCN) in December 2022, experts discussed the lawful access, jurisprudence and admissibility of encrypted digital evidence, with a focus on the EncroChat, Sky ECC and Anom Encrypted Networks.

In September 2022, the [EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security](#) held its annual event in Brussels, organised in cooperation with the [Community of European Research and Innovation for Security](#). The discussions focused on encryption



### Action against criminal website offering 'spoofing' services to fraudsters: 142 arrests

**CRIME:** A website allowing fraudsters to impersonate trusted corporations or contacts to access sensitive information from victims causes an estimated worldwide loss in excess of EUR 115 million. Fraudsters who sign up and pay for these so-called 'spoofing' services are able to anonymously make calls, send recorded messages and intercept one-time passwords by impersonating entities (such as banks, retail companies and government institutions) for financial gain.

**ACTION:** A case is opened at Eurojust in October 2021 at the request of the UK authorities. National authorities from 10 countries support the investigation. In an international coordinated action involving judicial and law enforcement authorities in Europe, Australia, the United States, Ukraine and Canada, 142 website users and administrators are arrested across the world in November 2022. The main website administrator is arrested in the United Kingdom on 6 November.

**RESULT:** On 8 November 2022, the website and server are seized and taken offline by US and Ukrainian authorities.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency plays a key role in facilitating the judicial cross-border cooperation among all parties involved. Two coordination meetings are hosted by Eurojust to coordinate the national investigations and prepare for the international action.

and AI, the Hub's priorities for 2022. Eurojust participated together with other EU agencies, the EU institutions, research and technology organisations, internal security practitioners and academic experts from the EU Member States.

Under the theme 'Shaping responsible solutions for internal security', the 2022 annual event focused on the need to develop effective security solutions while also meeting citizens' privacy, transparency and accountability expectations.

Criminals are increasingly leveraging the benefits of modern technology, such as encryption and cryptocurrency platforms, making the work of innovation labs crucial to ensure judicial authorities and law enforcement can stay one step ahead. Eurojust's Vice-President delivered a keynote speech based on Eurojust's experience in the [EncroChat case](#), underlining the successful elements needed to fight against the criminal use of encrypted communications.

### Ransomware

The scale and impact of ransomware attacks have increased significantly over the past years, affecting the core interests of individuals, businesses and governments. More and more complex forms of ransomware are emerging.



The 2022 edition of Eurojust's [Cybercrime Judicial Monitor](#) featured a special focus on ransomware investigations. The report concludes that the success of criminal investigations and prosecutions depends more than ever on close cross-border cooperation between public authorities, private companies and victims. Public-private cooperation is particularly valuable in such cases, as companies can preserve and provide the data and evidence investigators need to investigate crimes and identify criminals.

Ransomware is a global problem, requiring judicial communities across the world to join forces. In a [dedicated workshop](#) organised by Eurojust and the U.S. Department of Justice in June 2022, judicial experts and practitioners shared best practices and discussed how to enhance collaboration to confront ransomware attacks.

“ *Creating synergies between public authorities and private operators, as well as between law enforcement and judicial authorities of different countries, is the only way forward to effectively combat the cross-border criminal exploitation of encrypted communication platforms.* ”

Boštjan Škrlec, Eurojust Vice-President and National Member for Slovenia  
at the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security 2022 annual event

The event brought together more than 100 prosecutors, law enforcement representatives and experts from the private sector and non-governmental organisations, representing 27 countries. Participants shared their experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in directing an investigation to a successful outcome, including by collaborating with the tech and private sectors.

Law enforcement officers also discussed adversaries' tactics and the latest investigative techniques. Other topics on the agenda included transnational cooperation during ransomware investigations, victim remediation, and prosecution of criminal organisations.

In November 2022, a second [international workshop](#) on conducting criminal investigations of ransomware attacks was organised by Eurojust and the Council of Europe's Cybercrime Programme Office. The workshop brought together experts from across the world to share information on trends and techniques of ransomware attacks, the latest tools that are available to investigate and prosecute such offences, and how to engage in international cooperation.

### Online fraud

Online fraud continues to affect numerous victims in Europe and across the globe. This type of cyber-enabled crime, which often affects individuals and has a low financial impact, is widespread and difficult to punish.

During the 13th EJCEN Plenary, cybercrime judicial experts and practitioners shared best practices and recommendations on how to investigate this type of fraud and protect victims. Participants also discussed online investment

platform scams and how to cooperate effectively with non-EU countries and virtual asset service providers.

### Cryptocurrencies

Cryptocurrencies are posing new challenges to law enforcement and judicial authorities. The growing use of cryptocurrencies and other virtual assets by legitimate businesses, as well as by criminal networks, makes it necessary for judicial authorities to become familiar with their nature and connected challenges.

During the 12th EJCEN Plenary in June 2022, cybercrime judicial experts and practitioners analysed the current EU framework on virtual currencies and how it can address cyber-enabled crime. Various legal and practical aspects of the seizure of virtual currencies and blockchain-based assets were also discussed.

In October 2022, the EJCEN in cooperation with the private sector, delivered several webinars for practitioners, featuring key players in the cybercrime field, on topics including blockchain technology. These webinars were hosted and supported by Eurojust.

Based on the experience of taking down the world's largest marketplace on the dark web (Hydra Marketplace), participants explored the advantages of cooperating with the private sector when dealing with the seizure of assets and the compensation of cybercrime victims.

### Developments from the SIRIUS project on cross-border access to electronic evidence

Over half of all criminal investigations today involve a cross-border request for electronic evidence. Due to the ongoing development of new technologies, more criminal investigations than ever are dependent on prompt, secure and legal means of sharing electronic evidence across borders.

The [Scientific Information Retrieval Integrated Utilisation System \(SIRIUS\)](#) project is a central reference point in the European Union for knowledge sharing on cross-border access to electronic evidence. It offers a variety of services to law enforcement and judicial authorities, such as guidelines,

training sessions and tools, to help with accessing data held by OSPs. SIRIUS serves a community of competent authorities from over 40 countries, representing all EU Member States, the European Public Prosecutor's Office and a growing number of third countries. The project is co-implemented by Eurojust and Europol, in close partnership with EJCEN, and supported financially by the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

The [SIRIUS annual conference](#) took place in November 2022, and brought together 800 participants of law enforcement and judicial authorities from over 20 countries, as well as OSPs, to discuss the way forward on cross-border access to electronic evidence. Participants analysed the process of obtaining electronic evidence in various jurisdictions and crime areas, and delved into the rapidly developing field of Open Source Intelligence.

Highlights from the [SIRIUS EU Digital Evidence Situation Report 2022](#) were also presented at the conference. The joint report of Eurojust, Europol, and the European Judicial Network, presents the experiences of EU Member States' competent authorities and OSPs with cross-border access to digital evidence in criminal investigations.



The report finds that there was a 36% increase in the volume of requests for data to OSPs in 2021, while the number of Emergency Disclosure Requests increased by 29%. The success cases presented in the report illustrate how digital evidence is crucial in all crime areas. The report confirms that the SIRIUS platform remains the number one source of information for law enforcement and judicial practitioners seeking know-how on data acquisition methods in cross-border circumstances.

### US-EU expert group on obtaining (e-)evidence

In November 2022, Eurojust organised a kick-off meeting of the US-EU expert group on obtaining evidence via MLA from the United States. The aim of the expert group is to facilitate the swifter execution of MLA requests for gathering evidence in the United States. The members of the expert group receive thorough training on the US legal framework for gathering evidence.

The expert group currently consists of experts from 29 countries, including the United States, EU Member States, Albania, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. These experts attended the kick-off meeting together with representatives from National Desks and Liaison Prosecutors stationed at Eurojust, representatives from the European Judicial Network, the European Judicial Cybercrime Network, the SIRIUS Project, the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European Commission.

### Enhanced support to the European Judicial Cybercrime Network

The EJCEN, supported by Eurojust, consists of a network of judicial authorities specialised in countering the challenges of cybercrime, cyber-enabled crime and investigations in cyberspace. In 2022, EJCEN participants discussed current criminal trends and analysed cases to improve future cybercrime investigations. Based on these experiences, the Network organised several webinars during 2022 with key players in the cybercrime field.

The Network also contributed expert input to Eurojust's [Cybercrime Judicial Monitor](#), covering legislative developments in the areas of cybercrime, cyber-enabled crime and electronic evidence.

At the end of 2022, the Council supported the creation of a secretariat to provide enhanced support to the European Judicial Cybercrime Network. The secretariat's modalities, resources and implementation will be elaborated during the course of 2023.

### Cybercrime policy developments

While cybercrime is proliferating and the complexity of obtaining electronic evidence, often stored in foreign, multiple, or unknown jurisdictions, is increasing, the powers of law enforcement are limited by territorial boundaries. As a result, very few cybercrime cases reported to criminal justice authorities lead to prosecutions or court decisions.

To respond to this challenge, the [2nd Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) was opened for signature at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in May 2022. The Protocol provides tools for enhanced cooperation and disclosure of electronic evidence – such as direct cooperation with service providers and registrars and immediate cooperation in emergencies or JITs – that are subject to various rules and data protection safeguards.

In November 2022, a political agreement was reached on the electronic evidence legislative package. The [Regulation and Directive](#)<sup>9</sup> will allow European judicial and law enforcement authorities to quickly and more efficiently secure and obtain electronic evidence. The role of the SIRIUS project and the European Judicial Network as knowledge repositories of cross-border access to electronic evidence is acknowledged in the Regulation. Eurojust closely followed these policy developments in 2022, as both the 2nd Additional Protocol and electronic evidence legislative proposals will positively impact the Agency's ability to get justice done in the cybercrime area in the future.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting cybercrime, scan the QR code

## 3.9 Trafficking in human beings

### Operational support to human trafficking cases

Eurojust continued to assist national authorities with more than 300 human trafficking cases in 2022. This crime area saw an increase in the number of coordination meetings and action days organised by the Agency to help judicial authorities in Europe and beyond fight human trafficking. The level of prosecutions and convictions for human trafficking offences however remains low.

<sup>9</sup> Regulation on European Production and Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters; Directive laying down harmonised rules on the appointment of legal representatives for the purpose of gathering evidence in criminal proceedings.



### THB CASES IN 2022

**342** CASES

(124 new cases,  
218 ongoing from previous years)

**42**

JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS  
(9 new JITs, 33 ongoing)

**55**

CASE-SPECIFIC  
COORDINATION MEETINGS

**4**

COORDINATED ACTION DAYS

The number of cases referred to the Agency and the number of JITs it supported slightly decreased in 2022 compared to 2021. There remain serious challenges in judicial cooperation, both at the national and cross-border levels, to effectively tackle this crime area.

Eurojust actively encourages national authorities to refer more cases to the Agency to identify or trigger parallel criminal proceedings in the European Union and beyond. Eurojust can provide assistance with the coordination of such proceedings, the setting up of JITs, the successful prosecution of traffickers and the protection of victims.

### Commission proposes stronger rules to fight human trafficking

Every year over 7 000 people become victims of human trafficking in the European Union, with many more victims remaining undetected. The yearly cost of this crime is EUR 2.7 billion, and the majority of victims are women and girls. In December 2022, the Commission proposed to strengthen the rules in the [EU Anti-trafficking Directive](#) that prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

Forms of exploitation have evolved in recent years, with the crime increasingly taking on an online dimension. Traffickers benefit from opportunities to use technology to recruit, control, transport and exploit victims, as well as move profits within the European Union and beyond. This evolution calls for the legislation to be updated.

Eurojust contributed to the evaluation of the Directive, providing insights from its human trafficking casework and cooperation with national judicial authorities. The updated rules will provide stronger tools for law enforcement and judicial authorities to investigate and prosecute new



**EUROJUST**

### Eurojust assists Hungary and Switzerland in dismantling human trafficking network

**Since 2017** – A criminal network is involved in trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The victims are young Hungarian women from underprivileged backgrounds. The suspects allegedly send the victims to Switzerland where they are forced to enter into prostitution. The victims are under the permanent control of the perpetrators.

**2021** – Investigations are carried out separately in Switzerland and Hungary.

**January 2022** – The case is opened at Eurojust at the request of the Swiss authorities, in order to help prosecutors and investigators connect the relevant information and initiate effective cooperation between the two countries.

**March–October 2022** – Two coordination meetings are hosted by Eurojust to facilitate judicial cooperation and provide support for the coordinated investigative efforts. During the coordination meetings, the Agency ensures a common understanding of the network’s criminal activities, as well as the difference in the provisions of the national legislation on MLA.

**June 2022** – The Agency supports judicial and law enforcement authorities in Hungary and Switzerland in setting up a JIT to pursue the case.

**22 November 2022** – During a joint action day, witness hearings of three potential victims of the criminal group are carried out by the Hungarian law enforcement agency. Four suspects are arrested, two in Hungary and two in Switzerland. Two house searches are carried out in Hungary and another two in Switzerland. A high-value vehicle, HUF 3 million (approximately EUR 7 300) and CHF 2 000 (approximately EUR 2 000) in cash, jewellery, cell phones, electronic devices and 7 real estate properties are seized in Hungary.





**EUROJUST**

## Action against criminal network dealing in human trafficking, pimping and money laundering

**Since 2012** – A criminal network is involved in the trafficking and sexual exploitation of human beings, pimping, child pornography, money laundering and forgery, generating an estimated EUR 3 million. The OCG allegedly recruits women in Romania and forces them into prostitution in the United Kingdom by advertising their services on escort sites. Profits are laundered through UK banks and transmitted back into Romanian bank accounts belonging to OCG members.

One of the leaders of the criminal group is believed to have committed crimes of sexual intercourse with a minor and child pornography after recruiting a 17-year-old victim, having sex with her and recording pornographic material to blackmail her afterwards. The same leader allegedly attempts sexual corruption of minors by trying to persuade a family in a precarious economic situation to release a minor into his custody.

**June 2021** – The case is opened at Eurojust at the request of the Romanian authorities.

**August 2021** – The Agency supports the judicial and law enforcement authorities in Romania and the United Kingdom by setting up and funding a JIT. A first coordination meeting is supported by Eurojust to facilitate judicial cooperation and provide support for the coordinated investigative efforts.

**April 2022** – A second coordination meeting is hosted by the Agency to prepare the joint action day.

**18 May 2022** – An action day takes place during which 9 suspects are found in 10 house searches in Romania. The suspects are called to the Prosecutor's Office for hearings. Four cars with an approximate value of EUR 250 000, EUR 137 000 in cash, weapons and several electronic devices are seized. An order to seize EUR 1 million worth of assets is issued.

In the United Kingdom, five suspects are arrested and six locations searched, in an operation involving the participation of a Romanian delegation. Drugs, weapons and money in cash are seized.

**November 2022** – An indictment is issued and 16 defendants are sent to court. The OCG is successfully dismantled.



forms of exploitation. For example, by making sure that knowingly using the services provided by victims of trafficking constitutes a criminal offence. The Commission's proposal replaces the optional sanctions regime with a regime of mandatory sanctions against companies and other legal persons held liable for trafficking offences. It also aims to improve procedures for early identification and support for victims in Member States, including through the appointment of national focal points for the cross-border referral of victims to enhance transnational cooperation.

### War in Ukraine triggers an increased risk of human trafficking

To protect people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the [EU Solidarity Platform](#) adopted a tailor-made [Common Anti-Trafficking Plan](#) to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims. The [EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator](#) developed the Plan together with Member States and EU agencies, including Eurojust.

The Common Anti-Trafficking Plan aims to better coordinate EU actions for welcoming people fleeing the war in Ukraine. It builds on the [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings](#) and is aligned with the [EU Anti-trafficking Directive](#).

Amongst its goals, are the need to enhance the judicial and law enforcement response to human trafficking, reinforce prevention, and improve the identification, support and protection of human trafficking victims. These goals are being pursued through concrete actions at EU level and through recommendations to EU countries.



The Common Plan refers to Eurojust's crucial role in assisting human trafficking investigations at an early stage by facilitating cross-border judicial cooperation at the EU level and with Ukrainian judicial authorities. Furthermore, it recommends law enforcement and judicial authorities in Member States to cooperate and systematically exchange data with Eurojust on investigations related to the war in Ukraine.

Following the adoption of this Plan, Eurojust disseminated and regularly updated an Information Note for national competent authorities on the increased risk of human trafficking triggered by the war in Ukraine. The Note helped to raise awareness, and encouraged national authorities to exchange information and open human trafficking investigations on suspicion of the exploitation of Ukrainian refugees, in particular with respect to unaccompanied minors. The Note offered Eurojust's availability to assist such investigations at the earliest possibility, and to enhance the exchange of information as well as speed up judicial cooperation, including with Ukrainian authorities.

### First meeting of the new Focus Group of prosecutors specialised in human trafficking

The first meeting of the newly established Focus Group of specialised prosecutors against trafficking in human beings took place in June 2022. The meeting was co-organised by Eurojust and the European Commission, with the participation

“ Over the years, Eurojust has been active in providing the necessary support and assistance to prosecutors dealing with trafficking cases to ensure effective judicial cooperation and coordination in this field. I am confident that creating a forum for practitioners, allowing them to communicate directly, and exchange best practices, knowledge and expertise with the appropriate resources and support will result in more successful investigations, prosecutions and, finally, convictions in this crime area. ”

Daniela Buruiana, Chair of the Eurojust Anti-Trafficking Working Group and National Member for Romania, at the Focus Group meeting of specialised prosecutors against trafficking in human beings

of prosecutors and investigative judges from across the Member States. The objective of the group is to build expertise and intensify judicial cooperation, as outlined in the [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings](#).

Participants discussed the challenges prosecutors face when addressing human trafficking cases at the national and cross-border levels. Enhancing the judicial response to human trafficking cases linked to the war in Ukraine was another key topic of discussion.

A robust criminal justice response is crucial to carrying out effective investigations, prosecutions and convictions. The Focus Group will work towards ensuring this.

### Expert meeting on the trafficking of surrogate mothers and their children

In October 2022, Eurojust co-organised an expert meeting on surrogacy arrangements, together with Bulgarian and Czech national judicial authorities. The meeting raised awareness in all Member States on the potential for human trafficking in international surrogacy arrangements and allowed for the exchange of information on relevant legislation, criminal cases and issues encountered by each country. Eurojust contributed to the expert meeting with lessons learned from its support in a complex case involving the trafficking of surrogate mothers.



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting trafficking in human beings, scan the QR code

## 3.10 Migrant smuggling

### Operational support to migrant smuggling cases



Migrant smuggling is one of the fastest-growing cross-border criminal activities, calling for a global, multidisciplinary and transnational response. Efficiently fighting the OCGs operating worldwide by conducting successful investigations and prosecutions requires the specialised support and expertise that Eurojust is able to offer.

The Agency saw a steady increase in migrant smuggling cases in 2022, supporting more JITs, coordination meetings and action days to prosecute this crime compared to the previous year.

During 2022, Eurojust continued to implement the Roadmap for the

implementation of the [Renewed EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling \(2021–2025\)](#), adopted by its College in December 2021. Through the renewed Action Plan, the European Commission has underlined the need to combat migrant smuggling via judicial and law-enforcement cooperation and reinforced cooperation with partner countries and international organisations. To this end, during 2022, Eurojust deepened its participation in [EMPACT](#) and enhanced its cooperation with third countries in the area of migrant smuggling.

### Largest meeting ever of prosecutors combatting migrant smuggling held at Eurojust

In October 2022, Eurojust hosted the largest meeting ever of prosecutors who specialise in tackling migrant smuggling. In addition to participants from all EU Member States, prosecutors from the Western Balkans,



### Criminal network of migrant smugglers using private aircraft dismantled

**October to December 2020** – Migrants pay an OCG up to EUR 20 000 for false diplomatic passports and a place on a private aircraft flying from Turkey. Rather than continuing to their official destination, the migrants leave during the stopovers at European airports, dispose of their false passports and apply for asylum.

**Autumn 2020** – At least five such smuggling operations take place in European countries. In addition to migrant smuggling and forging identity documents, the OCG is suspected of issuing false checks and scamming airlines, as well as defrauding hotels.

**June 2021** – Eurojust supports the judicial and law enforcement authorities in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, and Italy by setting up a JIT. During the course of the proceedings, Eurojust hosted four coordination meetings to facilitate judicial cooperation, which included the JIT members and the United States as participants.

**13 September 2022** – An action day takes place and leads to 5 arrests (2 in Belgium and 3 in Italy); 7 house searches (1 in Belgium and 6 in Italy); seizures of 2 aircraft, EUR 80 000 in cash, 1 high-end car and electronic equipment; and EUR 173 000 being frozen in Italy.



Western Africa and the South Partner Countries<sup>10</sup> (SPCs) shared experiences and best practices. The 2022 Eurojust Annual Meeting on Migrant Smuggling provided participants with an overview of the latest developments in people smugglers’

<sup>10</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine\* and Tunisia.

\* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

operational models and routes. A wide range of international practitioners from 34 countries, including EU Member States and third countries, as well as specialists from Europol, the European Commission and UNODC, presented updates on the latest people smuggling techniques and how to improve international judicial cooperation. One insight noted is that organised criminal groups are extremely flexible, and changes in one smuggling route (e.g. the Western Balkans route impacted by the war in Ukraine) has repercussions on others (i.e. higher migratory pressure in Greece and Cyprus).

Enhancing cooperation with third countries was a key point of discussion. Participants discussed challenges for international judicial cooperation, including scarce resources and differences in legal frameworks (e.g. lack of a harmonised legal definition of migrant smuggling or differences in the weighting of the element of gain in migrant smuggling offences). Building up trust and direct contact between judicial practitioners across borders was identified as the best solution to overcome such challenges. Eurojust facilitates this cooperation at the institutional level through the [EuroMed Justice Programme \(EMJ\)](#) hosted by the Agency since 2020, and the more recent [Western Balkans Criminal Justice \(WBCJ\) project](#), hosted by Eurojust since 2022.

Another focus of the meeting's agenda was how to investigate the financial streams behind migrant smuggling groups that increasingly use cryptocurrencies. The alternative *hawala* banking system (based on trust and no official documentation), was also discussed as a means often used for

“ *The need for international and worldwide cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking is now more paramount than ever. With the ongoing war in Ukraine and the increased flow of illegal migrants across the smuggling routes, the call for more intense judicial cooperation between all relevant actors is evident. Eurojust's Annual Meeting on Migrant Smuggling has facilitated this important cooperation.* ”

Zacharias Symeou, Chair of the Migrant Smuggling Group at Eurojust and National Member for Cyprus, at the 2022 Eurojust Annual Meeting on Migrant Smuggling

transactions for migrant smuggling services. Participants examined cooperation via public-private partnerships, as well as the rise of so-called 'digital smuggling' (the use of social networks to publicise migrant smuggling services).

### First face-to-face discussion on migrant smuggling with South Partner Countries

In May 2022, judicial practitioners from EU Member States and SPCs met for the first time in person to exchange operational experiences and best practices on preventing, investigating and prosecuting migrant smuggling offences, during a conference organised by the Greek Ministry of Justice. The [conference](#) took place within the framework of the EMJ, for which migrant smuggling is a strategic topic, and was supported by Eurojust and the European Judicial Network Secretariat.

The Conference focused on national actions by the Greek judicial authorities within the context of the renewed EU Action Plan on Migrant Smuggling. Furthermore, the implementation of the EMJ Strategy and Action Plan against migrant smuggling was discussed and the next steps elaborated.

The participants emphasised the importance of judicial and law enforcement cross-Mediterranean cooperation in countering migrant smuggling. They also expressed their commitment to continue working together towards the identification of synergies.

### Eurojust becomes a member of the Joint Liaison Task Force on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings

In September 2022, Eurojust became a member of the Joint Liaison Task Force on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, initiated by the Council and supported by the European Migrant Smuggling Centre at Europol. The Task Force focuses on intelligence-led coordinated action against criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. This joint platform allows law enforcement and judicial practitioners to work more closely together to identify networks, prioritise, prepare and execute cross-border operations. Thanks to Eurojust's recent membership and active participation in bi-weekly meetings, the judicial component of migrant

smuggling and human trafficking cases has been secured. As a result, the information flow and operational cooperation between Eurojust and Europol has significantly been stepped up.

### The migrant smuggling Focus Group of prosecutors and investigative judges

The migrant smuggling Focus Group of prosecutors and investigative judges was established in 2020 to enable exchange between specialised practitioners working on migrant smuggling cases.

The Focus Group, supported by Eurojust, assists Member States and third countries in their joint response to migrant smuggling cases. This includes: sharing lessons learned from landmark investigations; analysing new developments in the operating tactics of OCGs; studying the impact of shifts in migrant smuggling routes; and gathering input from practitioners on current challenges and opportunities in cross-border judicial cooperation.

Over the past 2 years, the Focus Group has gathered more than 45 practitioners from the European Union and third countries, specialised in the fight against migrant smuggling. During 2022, Eurojust organised two virtual workshops and periodical newsletters for Focus Group members, while also enlarging the group's membership to third countries.

*“ Through the years, Eurojust has been active in assisting the national authorities dealing with migrant smuggling cases to ensure effective judicial cooperation and coordination in the field. With the establishment of the Focus Group in 2020, a step forward was taken by creating a hub for prosecutors and investigative judges dealing with migrant smuggling cases to exchange best practices, discuss challenges and connect with relevant judicial actors at the international level. ”*

Daniela Buruiana, Chair of the Eurojust Anti-Trafficking Working Group and National Member for Romania, on the establishment of the migrant smuggling Focus Group of prosecutors and investigative judges



For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting migrant smuggling, scan the QR code

## 3.11 Terrorism

### Operational support to terrorism cases

Throughout 2022, Eurojust continued to coordinate and support complex cross-border investigations and prosecutions of terrorist offences in EU Member States. The Agency supported more than double the number of coordination meetings between national judicial authorities on terrorism cases compared to 2021.

Based on the specific needs of each case, Eurojust provided efficient operational and legal assistance to investigations and prosecutions into terrorist attacks, alleged preparation of such attacks, financing of terrorism, recruitment and training to commit terrorist acts, and dissemination of terrorist propaganda.

In addition to terrorist offences, some of these investigations and prosecutions also involved other crimes, including illicit trafficking in arms, ammunition and explosives; crimes against life, limb or personal freedom; drug trafficking; trafficking in human beings; and money laundering.

### The European Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register

Through the Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register (CTR), Eurojust continued to receive a growing amount of information on ongoing and concluded judicial counter-terrorism proceedings from EU Member States. Set up at Eurojust



in September 2019, the CTR is a unique operational tool that identifies links between judicial proceedings concerning terrorist offences. When such links are identified, Eurojust helps the national authorities of the affected EU Member States to discuss and agree on the necessary follow-up, and make use of the coordination tools offered by Eurojust. Through Eurojust, the CTR has triggered international cooperation and coordination that has led to successful prosecutions and convictions.

However, the sharing of information on judicial counter-terrorism proceedings and the Eurojust case-management system needs to be further enhanced. Eurojust supported the EU institutions throughout the negotiation of the [proposal to amend the Eurojust Regulation as regards the digital information exchange in terrorism cases](#). The proposal aims at rendering the exchange of information between the national competent authorities, Eurojust and the CTR more efficient.

The Agency provided input concerning the operational benefits and concrete results achieved by the CTR's implementation so far, as well as technical input on the proposed IT solutions. The co-legislators reached a provisional agreement in December 2022 which will: enhance Eurojust's capacity to detect links between judicial terrorism cases; create a modern case management system (CMS) to store operational information and a secure digital communication channel between Member States and Eurojust; and simplify cooperation with third countries by granting liaison prosecutors seconded to Eurojust access to the CMS. The amendments are expected to be adopted in the course of 2023.

### The 2022 Eurojust Meeting on Counter-Terrorism

The 2022 Eurojust Meeting on Counter-Terrorism brought together national correspondents for Eurojust for terrorism matters, specialised prosecutors from both EU Member States and partner third countries, as well as representatives from EU institutions and agencies, and international organisations. The meeting focused on operational experience with cases opened on the basis of information transmitted via the European Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register, cross-border investigations into the financing of terrorism, the impact of migrant smuggling on terrorism and various legal



**Slovak and Czech authorities take action against right-wing terrorism**



**CRIME:** A 22-year-old is suspected of committing several terrorist and extremist crimes, with the objective of publicly inciting the overthrow of the democratic political system. He shares photos of glorified far-right extremists, and publishes instructions for the production of weapons, explosives and mines, as well as guidelines on how to carry out sabotage attacks.

**ACTION:** Two action days take place, supported by Eurojust, Europol, the United States, Slovak and Czech authorities: one on 11 May in Slovakia, where one location is searched, followed by a second on 23 May in the Czech Republic where another location is searched.

**RESULT:** During the first action day in Slovakia, one suspect is arrested and a 3D printer, computer and other electronic devices are seized. During the second action day in the Czech Republic, a number of 3D-printed metal parts of weapons are seized.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** The Agency supported the authorities in Slovakia and the Czech Republic by setting up and funding a JIT into the case. One coordination meeting took place in Slovakia to share information, decide on a common strategy, and facilitate cooperation with the United States and Europol.

challenges in counter-terrorism proceedings. The main conclusions from these topics discussed are summarised below:

**The CTR** – Eurojust's CTR is considered to be a crucial tool to identify links between judicial counter-terrorism proceedings in Member States, and has already proven its operational benefits. The proposed amendments to the Eurojust Regulation will improve the CTR by bringing clarity as to

the obligation of Member States to transmit information to Eurojust, the categories of data to be transmitted, the rules on data retention and the access to the Eurojust CMS at national level.

**Terrorism financing cases** – In recent terrorism financing cases, mixed money transfer channels or methods have been used, shifting from regular money transfer providers to *hawala*, cryptocurrencies or PayPal. Therefore, the activation of international cooperation is extremely important in ensuring successful results in such cases.

**The impact of migrant smuggling on terrorism** – The risk of possible exploitation of migration flows by members of terrorist groups and foreign terrorist fighters to attempt to enter the European Union undetected still exists. There is no evidence of terrorists using mixed migration flows systematically to move across the borders. However, people suspected of being linked to terrorism have been identified as travelling to and through the European Union using the services of criminal migrant trafficking networks.

**Battlefield evidence in terrorism and core international crime cases**  
Battlefield evidence is used effectively in terrorism cases and in cases in which terrorism and core international crimes are charged cumulatively. Increased use of battlefield evidence is considered essential and the work of Eurojust and the European Network for investigation and prosecution of genocide,

crimes against humanity and war crimes on this subject matter remains important, also in light of the war in Ukraine.

### Hate crime and hate speech

In April 2022, Eurojust hosted the French EU Presidency [seminar](#) on justice and internal security – ‘Europe that protects’. One key round table was dedicated to the fight against online hate speech. The panellists presented the actions taken by Member States in this area, as well as the existing cooperation between judicial and law enforcement national authorities and dedicated EU agencies. Eurojust’s activities in supporting national authorities in their investigations and prosecutions of hate crime and hate speech were also presented.

In 2022, Eurojust expressed its interest to become further involved in the activities steered by the European Commission to combat hate speech and hate crimes by joining the dedicated working groups on reporting and data collection, hate speech online and victim support.

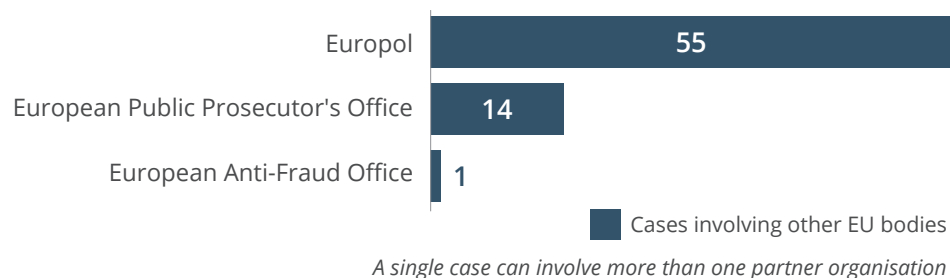


For more Eurojust cases and the latest developments in fighting terrorism, scan the QR code

## 4. Cooperation with partners

### 4.1 Cooperation with EU agencies

Operational cooperation with the main actors in the security chain is vital to ensuring justice gets done. Throughout 2022, Eurojust continued to cooperate closely with the European Justice and Home Affairs agencies and the EU institutions, contributing judicial expertise in the common fight against cross-border crime. During 2022, the Agency handled a significant number of cross-border cases with Europol and the European Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as one case with OLAF.



#### EUROPOL

In 2022, Eurojust and Europol continued their strong operational and strategic partnership. The agencies worked closely together on 55 cases during 2022.

At the level of institutional cooperation, the heads of both agencies met for a high-level meeting in January 2022, followed by a Steering Committee meeting in September 2022. Topics covered ranged from cooperation on JITs, support to Ukraine, capacity building with third countries and possible collaboration in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). The two agencies discussed the novelties introduced by the [Recast Europol Regulation](#), and agreed to carry out internal assessments of the practical implementation of the 2010 Cooperation Agreement between the two agencies.

After a two-year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eurojust and Europol resumed the staff exchange programme. Eurojust hosted a Europol delegation for an open day in December 2022, dedicated to informing Europol's staff about the Agency's work and future possibilities for further collaboration.

#### EPPO

In 2022, Eurojust and the EPPO focused on the implementation of the [Working Arrangement](#) concluded in 2021, which lays out the practical modalities of the cooperation in the fight against crimes affecting the European Union's financial interests. A Liaison Team was established and met twice in 2022 to discuss operational, institutional and strategic cooperation.

An Action Plan for 2022–23 was established, and a workflow on how to open and handle cases involving the EPPO at Eurojust was agreed. A secure communication channel (the so-called EPPOBox) was put in place for the exchange of operational data. Work also started to establish the hit/no-hit system between Eurojust and the EPPO in order to enhance the detection of links between cases.

The EPPO participated in the EMPACT Operational Action on Missing Trader Intra Community fraud, led by Eurojust (see section 3.4), and the US-EU expert group on obtaining evidence via MLA from the United States, also organised by the Agency (see section 3.8).

Several cases were opened at Eurojust to support the EPPO in its investigations involving non-participating Member States and third countries. In one such case, Eurojust assisted the EPPO in setting up its first JIT with a non-participating Member State.

| EPPO-related cases   | No. of cases |
|--|--------------|
| New Eurojust cases involving the EPPO opened in 2022           | 14           |
| Eurojust ongoing cases involving the EPPO                      | 15           |
| Cases reported by Eurojust to the EPPO via the EPPOBox in 2022 | 9            |



## Eurojust assists in setting up first joint investigation team with EPPO at request of Swedish authorities



**CRIME:** A Large-scale cross-border VAT fraud is conducted, related to the trade of electronic goods (mostly mobile phones) and subsequent money laundering involving more than 10 EU Member States. The fraud scheme ultimately damages the Swedish State budget.

**ACTION:** Eurojust, for the first time, supports the setting up of a JIT with the EPPO. The Agency facilitates the establishment of the JIT at the request of the Swedish authorities and the EPPO<sup>11</sup>. The JIT is the first ever to involve the EPPO since taking office in 2021.

In February 2022, the JIT agreement is signed by Sweden and the French European Delegated Prosecutor handling the investigations at the EPPO, with the participation of Eurojust, to support investigations between the Swedish authorities and the EPPO.

The suspect is arrested and detained in Romania.

**RESULT:** During the arrest in September 2022, several phones and computers are seized and transferred to Sweden, containing useful evidence. In addition to supporting this case, the evidence reveals further suspected crimes in other companies in new countries.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Eurojust has already been involved in the case at the request of the Swedish authorities before the EPPO evoked the investigations from the French judicial authorities. The Agency organises coordination meetings to facilitate cooperation and coordination among linked investigations and to prepare for the setting up of the JIT. Eurojust provides legal support during the drafting of the JIT agreement and proposes solutions to new legal issues arising from the involvement of the EPPO in such an investigation team.

## OLAF

During 2022, OLAF remained an important partner in Eurojust's operational work. During the year, OLAF participated in four coordination meetings and worked with the Agency on three ongoing JITs.

The Eurojust and OLAF Liaison Team met regularly during 2022, and discussed new avenues for cooperation, including new crime areas, possible use of each other's networks in third countries and potential collaboration on Eurojust's 'own initiative' cases.

An Action Plan for 2022-23 was agreed. A [Working Arrangement](#) was signed between Eurojust and OLAF in March 2023, allowing for enhanced institutional, strategic and operational cooperation between the agencies on fighting crimes affecting the European Union's financial interests.

## FRA

During 2022, Eurojust and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) significantly enhanced their cooperation. Regular meetings ensured the successful implementation of various joint actions under the 12 identified common areas of interest. Examples include FRA presenting the Directive on combatting terrorism to Eurojust's Counter-Terrorism Working Group in January 2022, and its criminal detention database to Eurojust's College and Liaison Prosecutors in June 2022. Moreover, in October 2022, Eurojust participated in FRA's European Arrest Warrant (EAW) project expert meeting, and joined the Steering Committee of FRA's project on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Changes to the mandates of both agencies in 2022 provided further scope for cooperation. At the high-level meeting held in October 2022, the agencies discussed FRA's amended Regulation (increasing the Agency's scope of

<sup>11</sup> A Cross-border VAT or carousel frauds of over EUR 10 million fall under the competence of the EPPO. As Sweden does not participate in the EPPO, cross-border cooperation in these kinds of cases may be enabled by Eurojust.



action in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters) and Eurojust's amended Regulation (allowing for the establishment of the Core International Crime Evidence Database).

Thematic areas of cooperation for 2023 are, amongst others, procedural safeguards in European Arrest Warrant proceedings, violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, European Law regarding cybercrime and fundamental rights and digitalisation of justice.

## Eu-LISA



In July 2022, Eurojust and the EU agency for operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) jointly published the report [Artificial intelligence supporting cross-border cooperation in criminal justice](#). The field of justice is undergoing digital transformation, and AI has an important role to play in helping judicial authorities operate more efficiently and effectively. Such performance gains can eventually result in better access to justice and reduced time to render judicial decisions.

In recent years, with the European Commission's support, Eurojust and eu-LISA have started preparing for digital judicial cooperation, including AI-based solutions. The joint report builds on that work, analyses related legal and policy issues, and explores AI use cases to highlight how it benefits international judicial cooperation.

## Cooperation with training partners

Eurojust continued to support the training activities of CEPOL and the EJTN, in line with its mandate and Memoranda of Understanding.

In 2022, Eurojust covered judicial cooperation aspects in 16 CEPOL courses, on topics such as trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation, child trafficking, facilitation of illegal immigration, cross-border exchange of e-evidence, corruption, environmental crimes and JITs. Several CEPOL courses

are organised with the involvement of the EJTN, enabling the participation of up to 20 judges and prosecutors. Eurojust contributed to CEPOL's capacity-building projects, in particular the Western Balkans Partnership against Crime and Terrorism Project ([WB PaCT](#)). The Project Coordinator of the new WBCJ project also attended WB PaCT'S Advisory Committee.

Furthermore, Eurojust supported the EU Strategic Training Needs Assessment 2022–2025, published in March 2022, which identifies the EU training priorities in the area of internal security.

The long-term traineeships at Eurojust's National Desks were a continued success in 2022, with 21 EJTN trainees working in the operational field for between 3 and 4 months. In November 2022, Eurojust hosted the annual EJTN study visit, welcoming 29 judges and prosecutors. The Agency also provided expert speakers to EJTN courses on money laundering, asset recovery and confiscation in the European Union, as well as to a practical case-based simulation on environmental crimes.

## Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network

In 2022, the activities of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network (JHAAN) focused on four main thematic priorities: digitalisation, the European Green Deal, the JHA agencies' cooperation with third countries, and training, as a horizontal priority. In addition to the planned activities for 2022, the JHAAN reacted swiftly to the unprecedented aggression against Ukraine.

The Network issued a [joint statement](#) in March 2022 declaring the nine agencies' commitment to responding to the conflict by providing assistance in their respective capacities, and helping people affected and displaced by the war. Moreover, in August 2022, the JHAAN published a [joint paper](#) on each Agency's contribution to the European Union's solidarity with Ukraine.

In September 2022, the JHAAN published an [updated joint paper](#) on the individual and joint efforts by the nine EU agencies active in the field of freedom, security and justice, to deal with the impact of COVID-19.

During the annual high-level meeting in November 2022, the JHAAN took

stock of its main achievements in 2022, including the ongoing engagement with Ukraine and Moldova. The agenda also included a presentation of the extended mandate of Eurojust allowing the Agency to collect, analyse and share evidence of core international crimes.

During 2022, the JHAAN published its Final Report on the JHA agencies' Network Activities 2021. The report describes the successful implementation of the Network's programme. It also contains in the annexe the [JHAAN Assessment Report](#), which provides an overview of the Network's key achievements, observations regarding its format and functioning, and recommendations for improvement, including strengthening cooperation with key stakeholders.

## 4.2 Relations with EU institutions and Member States

### Amendment to the Eurojust Regulation

Eurojust supported the EU institutions throughout the negotiation of the [Proposal to amend the Eurojust Regulation as regards the digital information exchange in terrorism cases](#). The co-legislators reached a provisional agreement in December 2022, and the amendment is expected to enter into force in the second quarter of 2023, once there is agreement on the Proposal for a Directive amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, as regards its alignment with Union rules on the protection of personal data (see section 3.11).

### Council conclusions on enhancing the European Judicial Cybercrime Network (EJCN)

In November 2022, the Council adopted [conclusions on enhancing the capacities of the European judicial cybercrime network \(EJCN\)](#). This allows for the establishment of a formal EJCN Secretariat at Eurojust, providing the necessary support structure to enable the EJCN to meet practitioners' needs in the cybercrime field (see section 3.8).

### Justice and Home Affairs Counsellors visit to Eurojust

In October 2022, Eurojust invited the Justice and Home Affairs Counsellors from the Permanent Representations of the EU Member States to the EU,

to visit the Agency to mark its 20th anniversary. The Agency's work was presented and the important steps taken in the field of cross-border criminal justice cooperation were discussed.

The JHA Counsellors were presented with [Eurojust's Collection of Anniversary Essays](#) – a commemorative publication, gathering the perspectives of policymakers, academics and judicial practitioners who work daily in the joint effort to fight serious cross-border crime. The contributions represent not only what the Agency has achieved over the last two decades, but the many future challenges it is now equipped to face, thanks to its solid foundations and valued network of partners.

The book includes a section dedicated to institutional partners, a series of perspectives from different countries on judicial cooperation through the Agency, and insights on judicial instruments and crime areas in which Eurojust has had and continues to play a critical role.

### New Eurojust Representative for Denmark

A new Eurojust Representative for Denmark was appointed in October 2022. He replaced the previous colleague, who served as the National Member for Denmark between 2010 and 2019, and as a Representative since the Eurojust Regulation entered into force in December 2019.

### Third Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the Evaluation of Eurojust's activities

The [Third Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting](#) on the Evaluation of Eurojust's activities took place in November 2022, at the European Parliament. The aim of this annual meeting is for the European Parliament and National Parliaments to evaluate the Agency's activities, based on [Eurojust's Annual Report](#).

The future challenges for cross-border judicial cooperation in criminal matters were discussed, as well as the strengthening of Eurojust's mandate, which entered into force in June 2022. A focused discussion with the National



Parliaments took place on the implications of Eurojust’s new legal possibility to collect, preserve and share evidence relating to core international crimes.

### 4.3 Cooperation with third countries

#### Casework involving third countries

Eurojust’s international cooperation continues to lead to an increasing number of registered cases at the Agency, with 331 new cases owned by third

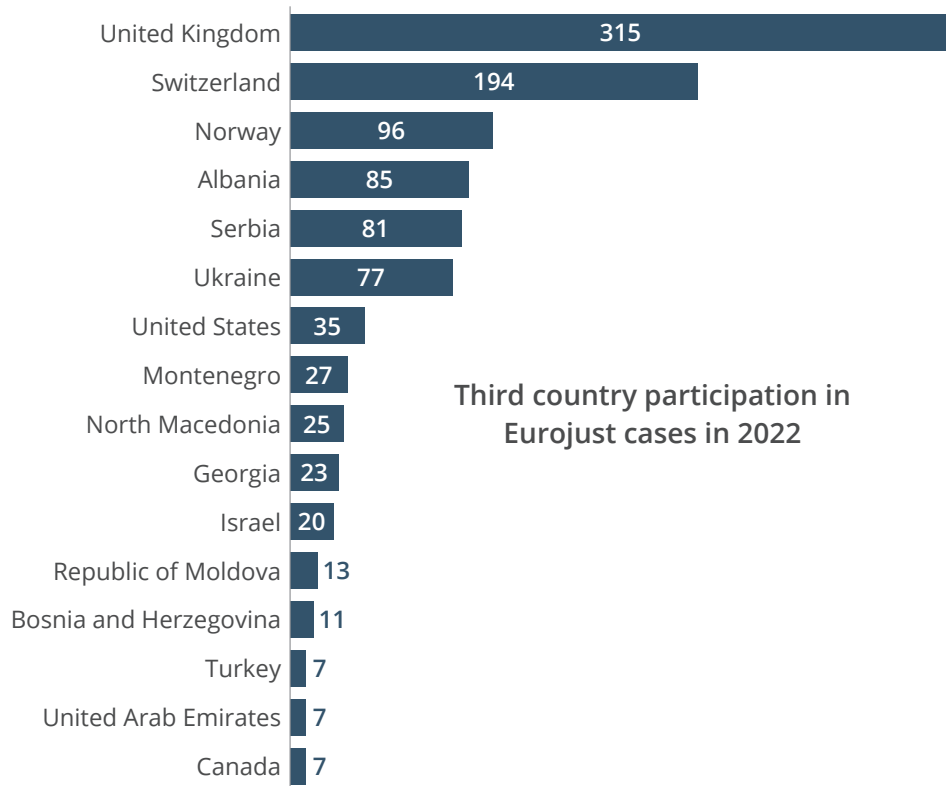
countries opened in 2022 alone. Countries with a Liaison Prosecutor located at Eurojust have been requested to participate in cases 569 times in 2022.

Moreover, 35 cases have involved countries that concluded a cooperation agreement with Eurojust but have not yet posted a Liaison Prosecutor at the Agency. Countries with appointed Eurojust Contact Points have been requested to participate in 79 cases. The United Kingdom is the third country with the highest casework, with 315 cases in 2022, followed by Switzerland, Norway, Albania, Serbia and Ukraine.

#### Overview of cases in 2022 involving Liaison Prosecutors

| LIAISON PROSECUTOR | Cases initiated by the National Desk |                           |           |                             | Participation in cases initiated by other Desks |                             | Participation in joint activities/meetings |      |             |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|------|-------------|
|                    | New in 2022                          | No. of countries involved |           | Ongoing from previous years | New in 2022                                     | Ongoing from previous years | Coordination meetings                      | JITs | Action days |
|                    |                                      | 2                         | 3 or more |                             |   |                             |  |      |             |
| Albania            | 37                                   | 37                        | 0         | 5                           | 48  | 72                          | 36   | 18   | 4           |
| Georgia            | 7                                    | 6                         | 1         | 4                           | 16  | 42                          | 8  | 2    | 1           |
| Montenegro         | 12                                   | 12                        | 0         | 12                          | 15  | 31                          | 1  | 0    | 0           |
| North Macedonia    | 4                                    | 3                         | 1         | 11                          | 21  | 40                          | 8  | 0    | 1           |
| Norway             | 65                                   | 58                        | 7         | 123                         | 31  | 83                          | 26   | 13   | 0           |
| Serbia             | 40                                   | 34                        | 6         | 21                          | 41  | 79                          | 22   | 4    | 1           |
| Switzerland        | 53                                   | 45                        | 8         | 80                          | 141   | 343                         | 37   | 21   | 1           |
| Ukraine            | 20                                   | 16                        | 4         | 49                          | 57  | 125                         | 36   | 17   | 2           |
| United Kingdom     | 47                                   | 41                        | 6         | 54                          | 268   | 712                         | 79   | 29   | 4           |
| United States      | 6                                    | 2                         | 4         | 5                           | 29  | 140                         | 33   | 0    | 1           |
| TOTAL              | 291                                  | 254                       | 37        | 364                         | *   | *                           | *  | *    | *           |

\* These columns cannot be summed up, since more than one National Desk can be requested to participate in a single case, and coordination meetings and JITs are often co-organised.



Third country participation in Eurojust cases in 2022

### International agreements with third countries

In March 2021, the Council adopted a Decision authorising the European Commission to open negotiations on international agreements on cooperation with Eurojust between 13 third countries<sup>12</sup> and the European Union. Negotiations are well advanced with Armenia. As noted in the Commission's [Fifth Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy](#) published in December 2022, official negotiations have also started with Colombia, Algeria and Lebanon. During 2022, Eurojust has maintained

<sup>12</sup> Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey

**Crackdown on criminal network dealing with money laundering and fraud**

**September 2019** – Suspects allegedly set up companies in Romania and open bank accounts for them from which consistent and successive transfers (estimated at over EUR 70 million) from fraudulent activities are conducted. A case into the OCG suspected of money laundering and fraud is opened at Eurojust.

**June 2020** – A JIT is established between Romania and Ukraine, and extended to Italy in June 2021. Eurojust supports the judicial cooperation and coordination of more than 20 countries, hosting 4 coordination meetings and facilitating the execution of many EIOs and requests for MLA.

**6 December 2022** – During an action day nine suspects are detained in Romania and one is placed under judicial control. A total of 24 house searches are carried out, 13 in Romania, 7 in the Republic of Moldova and 4 in Sweden. The total value of the seized assets is over EUR 5 million.

close contact with the Commission services and participated in the negotiation meetings as an observer.

### Liaison Prosecutors

Hosting Liaison Prosecutors from non-EU countries at Eurojust's premises in The Hague allows Member States' authorities to cooperate closely with the judicial authorities in these countries. This enables direct engagement in operational cooperation between them, leading to more successful

investigations and prosecutions. Currently, 10 third countries have Liaison Prosecutors at Eurojust: Albania, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has had a Liaison Prosecutor at the Agency since 2021 under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the [Working Arrangement](#) signed with Eurojust in the same year.



### Eurojust-supported action leads to arrest of 29 people smugglers in Italy, Greece and Albania



**CRIME:** A network of people smugglers transfers at least 1 100 migrants irregularly to the European Union. The suspects make illegal gains of at least several hundred million euros.

**ACTION:** In January 2021, a JIT is set up involving judicial authorities in Italy, Greece and Albania. In preparation for the action day, the authorities carry out long-term surveillance of the suspects, using telephone and online interceptions of evidence and video recordings. This enables them to document the routes used by the network and identify the perpetrators.

**RESULT:** During the action day supported by Eurojust, Europol and Frontex, 29 suspects of Albanian, Turkish, Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi and Pakistani origin are arrested in Italy, Greece and Albania. Eight of them are arrested during an ongoing smuggling operation, and the migrants involved are brought to safety.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** In addition to supporting the JIT, Eurojust sets up a coordination centre during the action day and provides cross-border judicial support via the Agency's Italian and Greek National Desks, and the Liaison Prosecutor for Albania.



## Working arrangements with external partners

In August 2022 Eurojust signed a working arrangement with the Iberomeric Association of Public Prosecutors. The purpose of the working arrangement is to encourage and develop cooperation between the parties in combating serious crime that affects the European Union and Latin America, particularly transnational organised crime, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime and terrorism.

## Eurojust's Contact Points

Since the Agency started operations in 2002, it has been growing its network of Contact Points in third countries, enabling direct contact with the competent authorities in those countries when a crime extends beyond the EU's borders. To date, the network has Contact Points in over 65 countries. During 2022, Eurojust's Contact Point network expanded to include three new third countries: Australia, Bahrain and Morocco. During the year, the Agency began holding regular meetings with Contact Points to better explain the Agency's role in facilitating judicial cooperation with EU Member States.

## Cooperating with regions around the world through projects

### South Partner Countries (SPCs)

Eurojust's growing role and increasing involvement with the SPCs continued in 2022 with the further implementation of the [EuroMed Justice Programme](#) (2020–2023). Eurojust supported the development of practical tools for facilitating cross-border judicial cooperation, designed by the EuroMed Justice Group of Experts to provide up-to-date information and tools for criminal justice practitioners. In 2022, an updated [EuroMed Digital Evidence Manual](#) was published. The guide explains the conditions needed to identify and overcome the practical and legal obstacles in gathering electronic evidence.

In October 2022, the European Judicial Network Secretariat became a member of EMJNet, the network of Contact Points for criminal justice authorities from SPCs and EU Member States. During 2022, Eurojust and the European Judicial Network (EJN) Secretariat contributed to the work of the EMJNet, and provided guidance for the implementation of the 2022–25 cross-Mediterranean strategies.

# Eurojust cooperation with third countries

## International and cooperation agreements



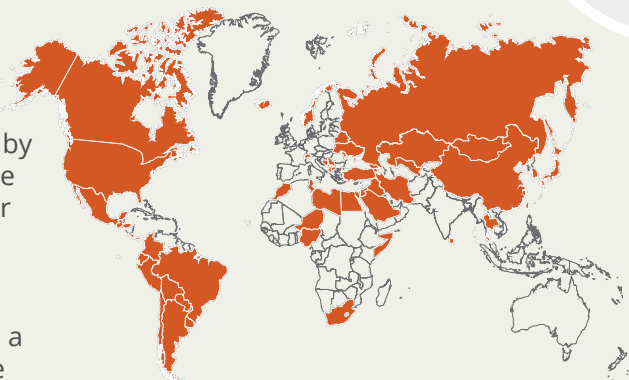
International and cooperation agreements provide the possibility of exchanging operational information, including evidence and personal data, between Eurojust and the national authorities of the country involved in a systematic way.

To date, Eurojust has signed international and cooperation agreements with 13 third countries: **Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.**

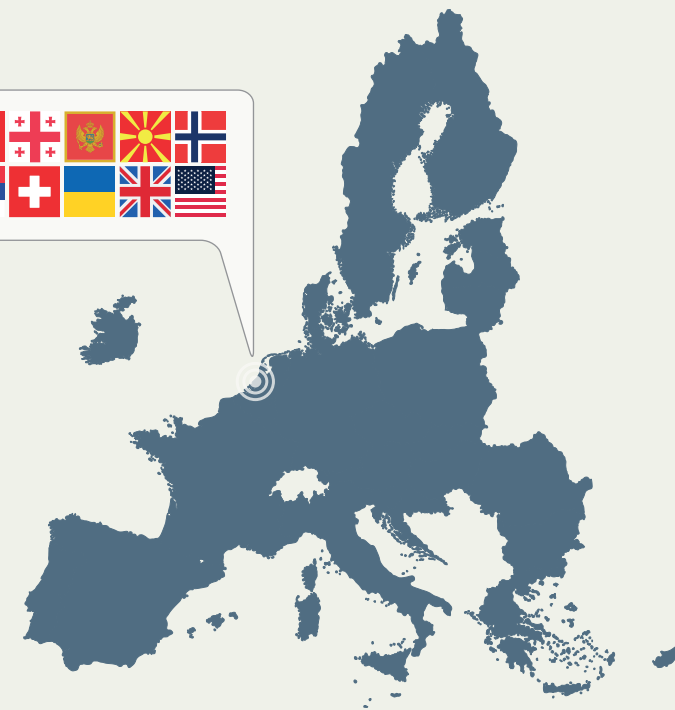
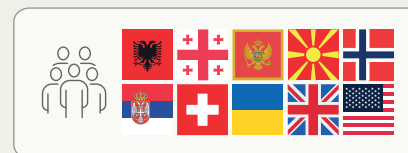
## Contact Point network

Eurojust is actively connected with **over 65 jurisdictions worldwide.**

Contact Points appointed by national authorities enable prosecutors from Member States to get information on these legal systems and solve problems in judicial cooperation when a crime extends beyond the European Union's borders.



## Liaison Prosecutors



Liaison Prosecutors from countries outside the EU are **posted at Eurojust**. They work side by side with their colleagues from the Member States to provide support in cross-border investigations involving their country.

Currently, ten Liaison Prosecutors are seconded to Eurojust from **Albania, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.**



In October 2022, the [4th EuroMed Forum of Prosecutors General](#) brought together high-level public prosecution officials from all SPCs and EU Member States at the Eurojust premises. The Forum assessed the progress made to date and discussed the next steps for the implementation of the 2022–2025 Strategy, including the Action Plans on migrant smuggling, confiscation of crime proceeds and asset recovery. During the event, seven high-level meetings with SPC delegations (with the participation of representatives of the European Commission) took place to discuss the international agreements between the European Union and SPCs for Eurojust.

In 2022, several conferences were organised gathering criminal justice practitioners and experts from the SPCs and EU Member States. In Athens in May 2022, in coordination with the Greek Ministry of Justice, a conference took place where operational experiences and best practices on preventing, investigating and prosecuting migrant smuggling offences were shared. In the same month in Lyon, in close coordination with the French Ministry of Justice, a conference was held to help judicial and law enforcement authorities apply data protection standards when gathering cross-border electronic evidence in criminal matters. In Tunisia in June 2022, the [first Mediterranean conference](#) took place dedicated to environmental justice, where Algeria, France and Tunisia shared good practices for the more effective application of environmental law. The conference explored the development of a network of magistrates specialised in environmental law on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

Additionally, the National Institute of Magistracy in Bucharest and the Belgian Judicial Training Institute co-hosted [two round tables](#) to share practices on the development of cross-Mediterranean curricula on international judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

---

<sup>13</sup> This project is also referred to as WB CRIM JUST.

<sup>14</sup> Including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

“ *The Western Balkan region has long been an important ally of Eurojust in the fight against cross-border organised crime. By hosting this project, we are stepping up existing efforts and helping to overcome any remaining hurdles to judicial cooperation amongst the Western Balkan partners and between them and EU Member States. Our aim is to build long-term, structural partnerships that will result in even greater operational results.* ”

Ladislav Hamran, President of Eurojust, ahead of the visits to the Western Balkan partners of the WBCJ project

### **Western Balkans Criminal Justice Project** <sup>13</sup>

In September 2022, Eurojust began work on the [WBCJ project](#), funded by the EU Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance. The project’s main aim is to strengthen cooperation within the Western Balkans<sup>14</sup> and between the region and the European Union on fighting organised crime and terrorism using modern tools and instruments. This will lead to an enhanced level of interaction and integration between the European Union and the Western Balkan region in the criminal justice field.

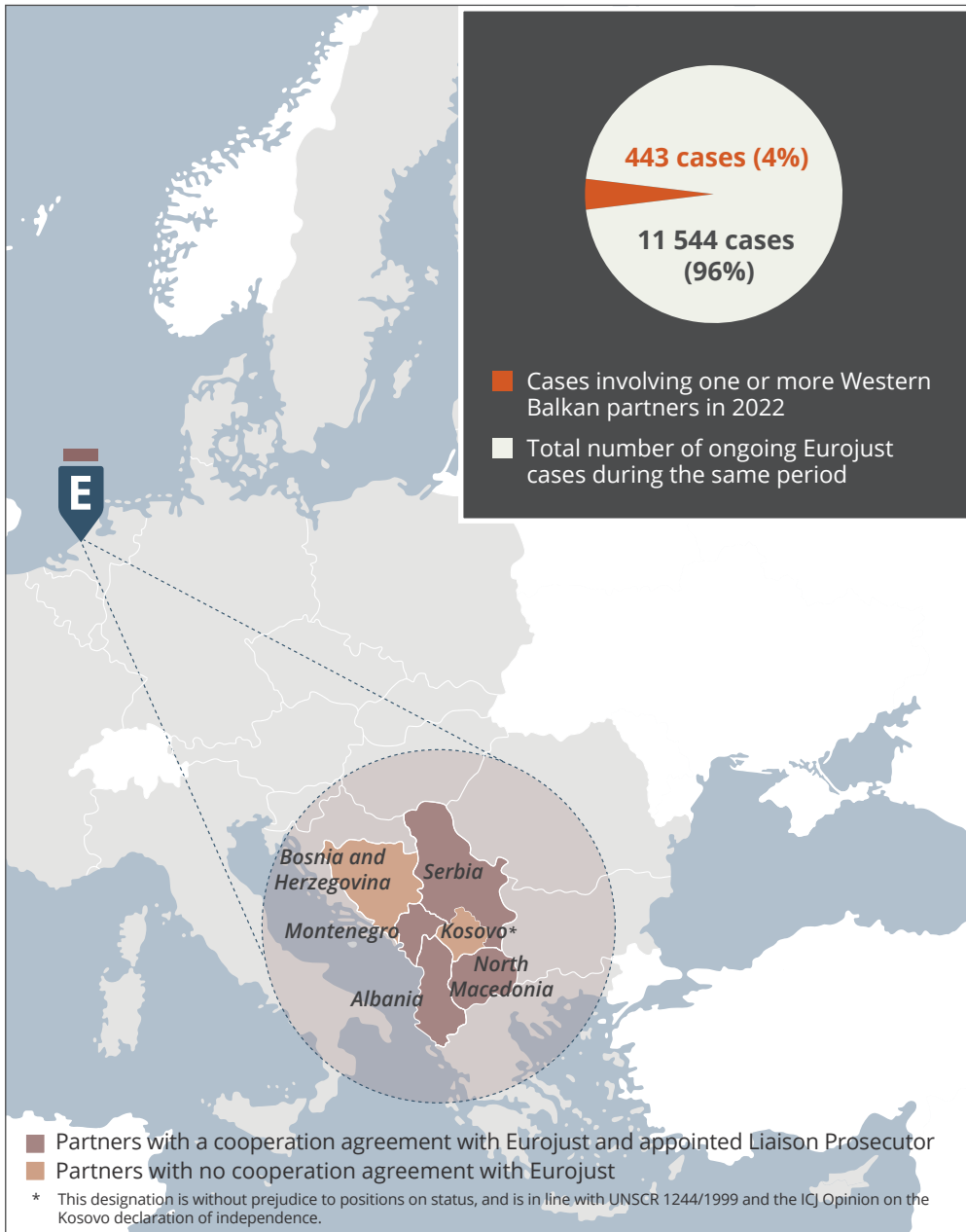
Between October and December 2022, Eurojust’s President and Vice-Presidents [visited the six Western Balkan partners](#) to introduce the project to the participating authorities. The Western Balkan partners appointed their respective members of the contact group, which will be responsible for identifying common cases that would benefit from coordination. These selected cases will receive financial support and expert advice from Eurojust to facilitate coordinated parallel investigations and prosecutions, and JITs.

### **Cooperation with Latin America**

In the framework of the [EL PACCTO project](#) fostering closer dialogue with Latin America, Eurojust developed a guide on cooperation with Eurojust Contact Points in the region. The guide was disseminated to all Contact Points in July 2022 in both Spanish and English. Meetings between Eurojust representatives and Latin American Contact Points are envisaged to discuss the implementation of the guide.

Eurojust participated to the EL PACCTO event in Buenos Aires in November 2022 to discuss cooperation between the Agency and Latin American Contact Points and share the latest updates regarding Eurojust’s support to JITs.

# Eurojust cooperation with the Western Balkans



## Operational outcomes 2022

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <b>99 rapid responses</b> to judicial cooperation requests  |  |   |
|  | Drugs, with an <b>estimated street value of at least € 528 million</b> , seized and/or investigated   |  |   |
|  | <b>44 cases</b> involving <b>€1,8 billion in damages</b> , of which at least <b>€59,6 million were recovered</b>  |  |   |
|  | <b>146 cases involving Organised Crime Groups</b> and <b>1 068 OCG members</b>  |  |   |
|  | <b>128 cases involving large-scale investigations</b> with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ involvement of at least 4 Member States, or</li> <li>▶ the establishment of a joint investigation team (JIT), or</li> <li>▶ one or more coordination meetings, or</li> <li>▶ a coordinated action day</li> </ul> |  |   |
|  | <b>25 joint investigation teams</b> (12 new and 13 ongoing from previous years) between EU Member States and Western Balkan partners  |  |   |
|  | <b>34 witnesses</b>   |  | <b>212 455 victims of crime</b>                 |
|  | <b>1 163 suspects</b>   |  | <b>588 arrests</b>                              |
|  | <b>291 property searches</b>  |  | <b>13 extraditions</b>                          |
|  | <b>52 cases</b> involving <b>European Arrest Warrants (EAWs)</b><br><b>51 cases</b> involving <b>European Investigation Orders (EIOs)</b>   |  |   |
|  | <b>294 cases</b> involving <b>Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) requests</b>  |  |   |
|  | <b>10 cases</b> involving <b>terrorism-related offences</b>   |  |   |
|  | <b>4 cases</b> involving <b>children</b>  |  | <b>24 cases</b> involving <b>asset recovery</b> |
|  | <b>16 cases</b> involving <b>conflicts of jurisdiction</b>  |  |   |
|  | <b>15 witness hearings</b> held via videoconference   |  |   |



## 5. Eurojust services and judicial cooperation instruments

### 5.1 Joint investigation teams

Throughout 2022, JITs continued to prove to be one of the most advanced tools for international cooperation at Eurojust. With the easing of travelling restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency worked on an increased number of both ongoing and newly signed JITs in 2022 compared to the previous year.

JITs were used throughout 2022 in several major cross-border cases involving both EU Member States and third countries. The newly signed JITs in 2022 covered 9 out of 13 crime types addressed by the Agency, ranging from money laundering to migrant smuggling.

#### JIT funding

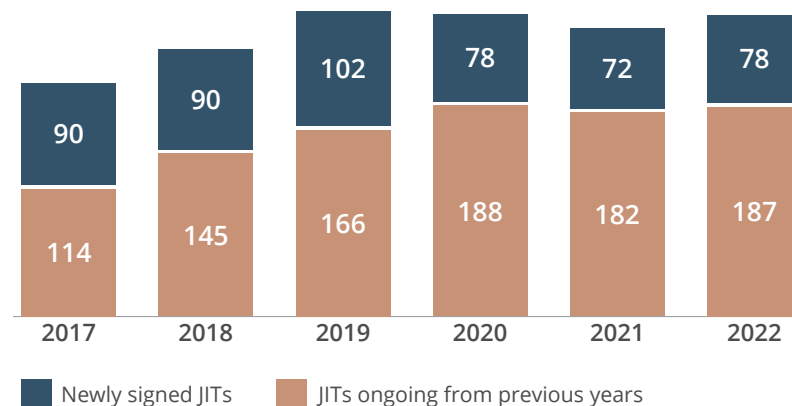
Out of the 265 cases that benefitted from JITs in 2022, 123 were funded by Eurojust, of which 45 were established in 2022. The final budget earmarked for JIT funding in 2022 was EUR 1.91 million. The number of received applications in 2022 increased by 36% in comparison with the previous year, reaching almost pre-pandemic levels.

2022 marked the first full year of operating the funding scheme without a call for proposals, using only the urgent funding scheme. During the course of the year, there were 15 application requests from 7 JITs, of which 13 were awarded urgent funding grants.

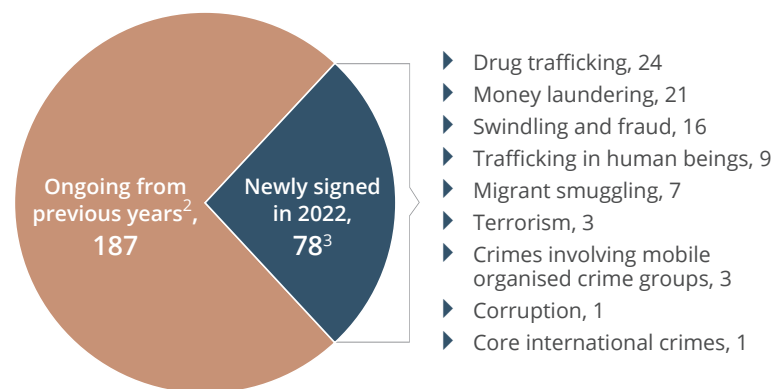
As in previous years, in 2022, the JITs Network Secretariat adjusted its funding schemes to accommodate evolving operational challenges and practitioners' needs. As of 1 October 2022, car rental is eligible for funding and equipment is available for loan, without a call for proposals, through the urgent funding scheme.

During 2022, JITs started to make use of the latest cost categories introduced at the end of 2021: 17% of awarded applications included requests for purchasing low-value equipment and 12% included requests for specialist expertise.

JITs supported between 2017 and 2022



JITs supported in 2022<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Eurojust support to JITs includes financial and operational support. Of the 265 JITs supported, 123 were funded by Eurojust.

<sup>2</sup> As of January 2023. Due to the ongoing nature of the cases, these figures may change after the reporting period.

<sup>3</sup> A single JIT can deal with more than one crime type.

## Joint investigation teams collaboration platform

The proposal for a JITs collaboration platform is part of the European Union's broader digitalisation of justice strategy. The platform's objective is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions carried out via JITs in cross-border cases, by facilitating communication and collaboration among JIT parties through a dedicated digital tool.

Throughout 2022, the JITs Network Secretariat closely cooperated with the European Commission and the European Parliament to finalise the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the

Council establishing a collaboration platform to support the functioning of JITs.

This included several exchanges of view facilitated by the Secretariat between the European Commission and the JITs Network to ensure that the future platform will meet the operational needs of JIT practitioners. These exchanges led to reducing the administrative burden of using this tool, as well as a more prominent role for the Secretariat in facilitating national practitioners' day-to-day use of the platform.

In December 2022, the co-legislators reached a provisional agreement on the proposed Regulation setting up a JITs digital collaboration platform for easy and secure exchange and temporary storage of operational information and evidence. The platform should start its operations no later than two and a half years after the entry into force of the Regulation. The agreed text will need to be approved by the Council and the European Parliament before undergoing the formal adoption procedure.

### Tools and training

During 2022, the JITs Network Secretariat proactively participated in training activities for JIT practitioners organised both at regional and international levels. The Secretariat conducted coaching at seminars on JIT implementation in April 2022, and on JIT leadership in October 2022, co-organised by ERA, CEPOL and EJTN.

Furthermore, during 2022, the Secretariat developed new training tools to facilitate and



### 44 arrested in Europe-wide crackdown against high-risk criminal network



**CRIME:** Several criminal organisations, belonging to one of the most dangerous high-risk criminal networks in the European Union, work together to carry out large-scale poly-criminal activities (including drug trafficking and money laundering) in and outside the European Union.

**ACTION:** On 22 November, 94 searches are executed across Europe, targeting the leaders of the criminal organisations and their associates. In an unprecedented international operation, involving judicial and law enforcement authorities from 11 countries, 44 individuals are arrested in Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Latvia, France, Germany, Poland, Norway, Slovakia, Spain and the United States.

**RESULT:** During the action day, large quantities of various illicit drugs, such as cocaine, hashish and cannabis and methamphetamine are seized.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** International cooperation coordinated by Eurojust and Europol is key to bringing the perpetrators located in different locations across the world to justice. Eurojust sets up and finances two JITs, which, together with Europol's Operational Taskforce, serve as a joint hub for criminal intelligence. Based on this pool of information and evidence, the different authorities agree on a common strategy to bring down the whole network. Eurojust organises 15 coordination meetings to prepare for the action day and sets up a coordination centre to provide cross-border judicial assistance.



assist JIT experts engaged in promoting the use of JITs by national practitioners. The Secretariat also continued to work on developing further electronic tools for the benefit of JIT practitioners, including the JITs Portal and System Claims Modules.

One important training resource completed in 2022, is the JIT model case scenario (MCS). The JIT MCS is inspired by real JIT cases and investigations and reflects every stage in the life cycle of a JIT. It is a flexible and versatile tool that can be adapted to different training needs to suit specific audiences and crime types, as well as the duration of the training session and size of the group. It is available to JIT national experts and training institutions for training purposes at national and international level, and can be obtained from the JITs Network Secretariat upon request.

## 5.2 Coordination meetings and coordination centres

### Coordination meetings

In cross-border crime cases, coordination meetings are designed to bring together the judicial and law enforcement authorities of the involved countries to reach an agreement on their cooperation and the coordination of investigations and prosecutions at national level. Prosecutors, investigative judges and law enforcement representatives come together, share information and agree on the next steps – how to resolve legal and practical issues, what actions to take and which measures to apply. Coordination meetings are held at Eurojust’s premises or via secure videoconferencing. These meetings are fully supported by Eurojust’s expertise and infrastructure.

### Coordination meetings by crime type (2019–2022)

| Crime types   | Coordination meetings |      |      |            |
|---|-----------------------|------|------|------------|
|   | 2019                  | 2020 | 2021 | 2022       |
| <b>ECONOMIC CRIMES *</b>  | 198                   | 165  | 185  | <b>211</b> |
| • Swindling and fraud   | 112                   | 91   | 111  | <b>115</b> |
| • Money laundering  | 138                   | 101  | 115  | <b>142</b> |
| • Corruption  | 14                    | 8    | 13   | <b>14</b>  |
| • Crimes against the financial interests of the EU (PIF crimes) | 12                    | 12   | 16   | <b>19</b>  |
| <b>DRUG TRAFFICKING</b>   | 80                    | 87   | 107  | <b>126</b> |
| <b>TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS *</b>                            | 54                    | 56   | 46   | <b>55</b>  |
| • Sexual exploitation   | 36                    | 33   | 24   | <b>36</b>  |
| • Labour exploitation   | 16                    | 15   | 16   | <b>16</b>  |
| • Other   | 5                     | 12   | 12   | <b>8</b>   |
| <b>CYBERCRIME</b>   | 34                    | 45   | 67   | <b>42</b>  |
| <b>MIGRANT SMUGGLING</b>  | 24                    | 21   | 25   | <b>33</b>  |
| <b>MOBILE ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS</b>                            | 20                    | 19   | 19   | <b>25</b>  |
| <b>TERRORISM</b>  | 24                    | 12   | 9    | <b>21</b>  |
| <b>CORE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES</b>                                | 0                     | 2    | 6    | <b>23</b>  |
| <b>ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME</b>                                      | 8                     | 6    | 11   | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME</b>                              | 3                     | 3    | 0    | <b>2</b>   |

\* These crime types cannot be summed up, since more than one sub-category may apply to a single case.

*The data contained in this table were extracted from Eurojust's CMS on 11 January 2023. Due to the ongoing nature of cases, possible discrepancies with previously reported numbers may exist, and statistics may be updated in the future.*

In 2022, coordination meetings were organised to tackle all crime types addressed by the Agency. The highest number of coordination meetings were organised to discuss money laundering cases (142), followed by drug trafficking cases (126), and swindling and fraud cases (115).

The number of coordination meetings facilitated by Eurojust annually has been steadily increasing over the past 3 years, with a total of 528 coordination meetings organised in 2022.

### Coordination centres and joint action days

Coordination centres are an essential part of Eurojust's judicial toolkit in the fight against organised cross-border crime.

Coordination centres support action days against criminal organisations and terrorist groups, in which arrests, searches, interviews of suspects and witnesses, seizures of evidence and freezing of assets are executed in several countries simultaneously.

Eurojust coordinates the efforts of the competent national authorities, continuously monitors the ongoing operations, assists with legal and practical advice and facilitates the issuing of critical judicial instruments. This support ensures that the actions taken lead to successful prosecutions.

Coordination centres are set up from dedicated rooms equipped with state-of-the-art technology and/or virtually via videoconference facilities, to ensure that evidence and information collected on the ground are swiftly exchanged amongst all involved national authorities in a secure environment.

### Coordination centres by crime type (2019–2022)

| Crime types   | Coordination centres / action days |      |      |      |
|---|------------------------------------|------|------|------|
|   | 2019                               | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| ECONOMIC CRIMES *   | 17                                 | 11   | 13   | 10   |
| • Swindling and fraud   | 12                                 | 8    | 11   | 6    |
| • Money laundering  | 6                                  | 7    | 5    | 7    |
| • Corruption  | 0                                  | 0    | 0    | 2    |
| • Crimes against the financial interests of the EU (PIF crimes) | 2                                  | 2    | 3    | 2    |
| DRUG TRAFFICKING  | 2                                  | 4    | 1    | 5    |
| TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS *                                   | 4                                  | 2    | 3    | 4    |
| • Sexual exploitation   | 3                                  | 0    | 0    | 4    |
| • Labour exploitation   | 2                                  | 1    | 3    | 0    |
| • Other   | 0                                  | 1    | 0    | 0    |
| CYBERCRIME  | 3                                  | 1    | 5    | 1    |
| MIGRANT SMUGGLING   | 2                                  | 2    | 0    | 4    |
| MOBILE ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS                                   | 2                                  | 1    | 1    | 0    |
| TERRORISM   | 0                                  | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| CORE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES                                       | 0                                  | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME   | 1                                  | 0    | 1    | 0    |
| INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME                                     | 1                                  | 2    | 0    | 0    |

\* These crime types cannot be summed up, since more than one sub-category may apply to a single case.

The data contained in this table were extracted from Eurojust's CMS on 11 January 2023. Due to the ongoing nature of cases, possible discrepancies with previously reported numbers may exist, and statistics may be updated in the future.

A second coordination centre room was developed at Eurojust in 2021. This extra coordination centre has proved particularly useful in post-pandemic times, as the Agency saw an increase in physical presence at coordination centres in 2022, including from representatives of judicial and law enforcement authorities taking part in joint action days.

In 2022, 17 coordination centres were organised to tackle economic crimes, representing more than half of all coordination centres organised by Eurojust during the year. Drug trafficking represented the next crime type for which the most coordination centres (five) were organised in

2022, followed by trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, for which four coordination centres were organised respectively. Finally, one coordination centre was also organised for a cybercrime case. The total number of coordination centres organised in 2022 (22), was the same as in the previous year.

In November 2022, a Eurojust coordination centre was set up for the first time with the participation of four Liaison Prosecutors from third countries (Albania, Georgia, North Macedonia and Ukraine), in a successful action against massive investment fraud (see the case illustration below for more details).



### Eurojust coordinates action against massive investment fraud with hundreds of thousands of victims worldwide



**From at least 2016** – A Hundreds of thousands of investors all over the world fall victim to fraud by being lured into making fake cryptocurrency investments. Dozens of call centres and hundreds of fraudulent websites are set up by the suspected OCG.

**2018** – Investigations into the cyber scam begin, with seven countries opening judicial cases against the OCG to date.

**Between March 2020 and March 2023** – Thirteen coordination meetings are organised to coordinate the national investigations and prepare for the action day. The Agency facilitates the execution of International Arrest Warrants, EIOs and Letters of Request to third countries.

**April 2021** – Eurojust supports and funds a JIT, set up at the request of the Swedish authorities, also involving Albania, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Spain and Ukraine.

**8-9 November 2022** – Eurojust sets up a coordination centre to enable rapid cooperation between the involved judicial authorities during the joint action day. Fifteen call centres are searched (6 in Albania, 5 in Georgia, 3 in Ukraine and 1 in North Macedonia), as well as 5 vehicles and 27 other locations, including in Bulgaria. Five suspects are arrested, four in Albania and one in Georgia. Approximately 50 hearings of suspects and witnesses are conducted.

Overall, the seizures include over 500 electronic devices, more than EUR 340 000 in cash, several mobile phones, bank accounts, bank cards, cryptocurrency wallets, ID documents and properties. In Georgia alone, approximately 12 000 000 Euros worth of properties, EUR 480 000 from bank accounts, EUR 565 000 in cash and 15 luxury watches are seized.



## Major operation against migrant smuggling in the English Channel



**CRIME:** A criminal network is suspected of using small boats to smuggle up to 10 000 migrants across the English Channel. The suspects charge EUR 2 500 to 3 500 on average per migrant, depending on the migrant's nationality, to facilitate their transfer across the English Channel. At times, up to 15 boats are launched simultaneously, with only half successfully making it across to the United Kingdom.

**ACTION:** During an action day, involving over 900 police officers, 39 suspects are arrested and over 50 locations are searched in what is believed to be the largest ever international operation targeting small boat people smugglers.

**RESULT:** Supported by Eurojust and Europol, judicial and law enforcement authorities in France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom successfully dismantle the criminal network of people smugglers. Seizures include 1 200 lifejackets, close to 150 boats and 50 engines, several thousand euros in cash, firearms and drugs.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Four coordination meetings are hosted by the Agency to facilitate judicial cooperation and the preparation of the joint action day. A coordination centre is set up by Eurojust to enable rapid cooperation between the concerned judicial authorities during the action day.

### 5.3 Resolving conflicts of jurisdiction

Eurojust has significant experience in preventing and settling conflicts of jurisdiction. The Agency is uniquely placed to detect linked and parallel proceedings, and advise the judicial authorities from involved Member States on making a shared decision on which State is best placed to prosecute, based on [Eurojust's Guidelines on Jurisdiction](#).

In 2022, the Agency continued to advise national authorities on which State is best placed to prosecute a case, how to prevent *ne bis in idem* issues, and how to overcome issues related to transfers of proceedings.

### Eurojust Report on the Transfer of Proceedings in the EU

In January 2023, the Agency published the [Eurojust Report on the Transfer of Proceedings in the EU](#). The aim of this report is to inform practitioners and policymakers of the main challenges encountered in Eurojust casework on transfer of proceedings, as well as solutions and best practices identified, including Eurojust's involvement in overcoming such issues.



Transfers of proceedings serve the interests of justice, as they help resolve issues related to concurrent jurisdictions by several Member States in relation to the same offences, while also respecting the fundamental rights of the accused. Despite its crucial function, there is currently no specific EU instrument regulating the transfer of proceedings. Multiple legal bases apply across the Member States involving different procedures and conditions, which leads to various challenges.

Given its crucial role in assisting national authorities in preventing and solving conflicts of jurisdiction between Member States, Eurojust has gained extensive experience in facilitating transfers of proceedings across a wide range of case types. Based on this experience, the report also offers final recommendations and conclusions for practitioners and for the EU legislator.

### Eurojust's participation in a research project on transfer of proceedings

During 2022, Eurojust participated in an EU-funded research project on transfer of criminal proceedings in the European Union, led by the University of Rotterdam. The Agency provided input via an interview and contributions to two conferences.

In October 2022, a [report](#) containing the conclusions of the project was published. It outlines the current practice of transferring criminal proceedings

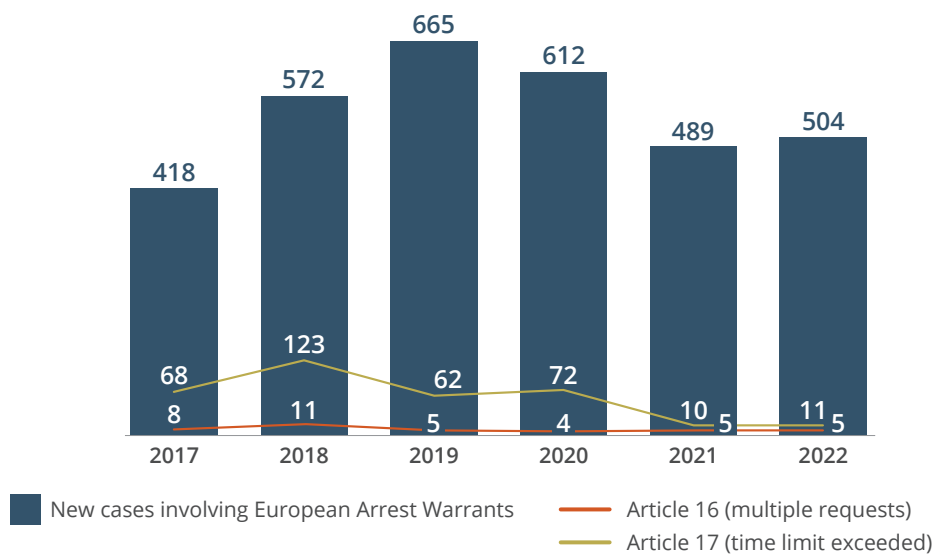
in the European Union, and identifies the main challenges experienced by practitioners. Moreover, the report describes possible solutions to those challenges, all of which have been tested in multiple discussions between practitioners, academics and policymakers.

### Legislative proposal for a new EU legal instrument on transfer of proceedings

In 2022, the Commission started working on a legislative proposal for a new EU legal instrument on transfer of proceedings, to be published in 2023. The Agency was consulted by the Commission, and Eurojust's College provided replies to a targeted questionnaire on transfer of proceedings. In February 2022, the Agency participated in the Commission's follow-up experts' meeting on transfer of proceedings, where it shared its experience in the field. The gathered input will feed into the legislative proposal.

## 5.4 European Arrest Warrant

In 2022, 1 262 Eurojust cases (including 504 new and 758 ongoing from previous years) involved European Arrest Warrants (EAWs). The number of new cases involving EAWs increased slightly compared to the previous year.



### Swift transfer of proceedings following Eurojust recommendation on which State is best placed to prosecute



**CRIME:** Two suspects are arrested by the French authorities when found transporting large quantities of cocaine on board a yacht, navigating under the flag of Spain, and are charged with drug trafficking and participation in an organised crime group.

**JUDICIAL ISSUE:** The two suspects are also under investigation in Spain for being part of a bigger criminal group involved in drug trafficking, and two EAWs are issued against them towards France. There is therefore a conflict of jurisdiction.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Two coordination meetings are held at Eurojust to clarify whether there was an overlap between the facts under investigation in the two countries and to find a solution to this conflict of jurisdiction, since initially no agreement can be found among the authorities.

The National Members involved issue a joint request to their national authorities, suggesting that Spain transfer its proceedings against the two suspects to France, as it is best placed to prosecute them.

The prosecutor in charge of the case in Spain follows Eurojust's advice and requests the competent court authorisation for the transfer of proceedings, also submitting to its attention the Eurojust joint request. The court, relying also on the arguments put forward in Eurojust's request, approves the transfer of proceedings, which are successfully completed with the acceptance of France in less than two months. The two EAWs issued by Spain are also accordingly withdrawn.

### Eurojust support to national authorities with the drafting and execution of EAWs

During 2022, Eurojust continued to provide support and advice to national authorities across the full life cycle of the EAW, from drafting to the execution phase. Support was provided to (urgent) requests for additional information,

advice in case of competing EAWs, questions on *in absentia* judgments and *Petruhhin*-related requests.

In addition to providing support to cases, Eurojust's Judicial Cooperation Instruments Team discussed legal issues emerging from Eurojust cases. They addressed, for instance, questions surrounding the detention of the requested person in the context of a postponement of a surrender or extradition. They also discussed the speciality rule in the context of surrender and extradition.

### Case law by the Court of Justice of the European Union on the EAW

Throughout the year, the Agency monitored the relevant case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, and in December 2022 published an [overview](#). This latest edition includes summaries of six new judgments compared to the previous edition, touching upon issues such as the right to an independent tribunal previously established by law, the *ne bis in idem* principle, dual criminality and force majeure.

### Evaluating the application of the EAW

The EAW was one of the key instruments evaluated in the 9th Round of mutual evaluations on mutual recognition of legal instruments in the field of deprivation or restriction of liberty. Between 2019 and 2022, Eurojust participated as an observer in the vast majority of evaluation visits organised, including five that took place in 2022.

The [final report](#) on the ninth round of mutual evaluations was published by the Council in March 2022. It contains key recommendations addressed to Member States and EU institutions and agencies, aiming to further enhance the application of the EAW and other instruments addressed by the evaluations.

### High-level conference of French EU Presidency on 20 years of judicial cooperation and use of the European Arrest Warrant

In February 2022, the French Ministry of Justice organised a high-level [conference](#) on the role the EAW plays in countering terrorism. During the first session moderated by Eurojust's National Member for Spain, French and

## Eurojust's advice on competing EAWs and temporary surrender followed by executing court



**CRIME:** Belgium and Germany each issue EAWs against the same person, in relation to different acts of voluntary manslaughter. Both the German and the Belgian EAWs are for the purposes of prosecution. The requested person is in prison in France for the execution of a custodial sentence for other offences.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** In 2022, the General Prosecution Office of Paris requests Eurojust to provide an opinion on the priority to be given between the German and the Belgian EAWs, and to clarify legal issues related to a subsequent surrender.

**JUDICIAL TOOL:** Eurojust, applying its Guidelines for deciding on competing requests for surrender and extradition, advises, based on the specifics of the case, that priority should be given to the Belgian EAW. However, since the requested person is currently serving a custodial sentence in France, the competent French Court should also consider, after its decision to execute the Belgian EAW, a temporary surrender of the requested person to Belgium based on Article 24(2) EAW FD for the duration of the Belgian proceedings.

The French court follows Eurojust's advice to prioritise the Belgian EAW and agrees with the Belgian counterparts on a temporary surrender. The French and Belgian authorities also remain in close contact with the German authorities to ensure the execution of the German EAW at a later stage.

Belgian prosecutors specialised in counter-terrorism debated the use of the EAW since its introduction in 2004.

The conference's second session paid particular attention to the importance of the fundamental rights of suspects. High-level representatives from the Court of Justice, the European Bar Association and legal experts discussed how to maintain a good balance between maintaining guarantees for fundamental rights and ensuring the continued effectiveness of the warrant.





**EUROJUST**

### Rapid arrest in Hungary via Eurojust of suspected killer of Argentinian rugby star

**19 March 2022** – The former Argentinian rugby professional, Federico Martín Aramburú, who played for his national squad as well as several top-division teams in Scotland and France, is fatally wounded during a shooting in Paris.

**22 March 2022** – The suspect, who had fled to Hungary heading for Ukraine, is held by the border police following a search warrant from French law enforcement authorities.

**23 March 2022** – Via on-call coordination during the night, the French and Hungarian desks at Eurojust rapidly transmit the EAW issued by the judicial authorities in Paris in just a few hours, before the end of the legal preventive custody. Thanks to this overnight support from Eurojust, the alleged suspect of the murder is arrested in Hungary in the morning.

**25 March 2022** – The Hungarian judge surrenders the suspect to the French authorities.

## 5.5 European Investigation Order

Eurojust handled over 5 000 cases involving an EIO in 2022. Around half of these cases were newly opened, while the other half were ongoing cases from previous years.

### Eurojust support to national authorities on the drafting and execution of EIOs

During 2022, the Agency continued to provide support and advice to national authorities across the full life cycle of the EIO, from drafting to the execution phase. For instance, Eurojust supported several cases where legal or practical issues arose in relation to the hearing by videoconference or interception

of telecommunication. These issues often relate to different national legal provisions or different understandings of the relevant provision of the EIO Directive. In relation to cases involving the bugging of a car, GPS tracking or surveillance through a Trojan-horse-like device or audio surveillance in private places, Eurojust has often assisted judicial authorities and informed them of legal requirements in other States.

In other cases, Eurojust also supported in obtaining clarifications or additional information prior to the execution of an EIO. The Agency also advised on the adequate instruments to use either in addition to or instead of an EIO. In multilateral cases, Eurojust often ensured coordination amongst the execution of different EIOs in several Member States.

### Case law by the Court of Justice of the European Union on the EIO

The Agency monitored the relevant case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and its impact on judicial cooperation. In May 2022, Eurojust and the EJM jointly published a questionnaire and compilation of replies from Member States on the impact of the judgment of the CJEU in case C-852/19 (*Gavanozov II*).

Eurojust and the EJM worked closely on analysing the results of the questionnaire to shed light on the issues raised by the CJEU's case law. The analysis provides a clear picture on the availability of legal remedies against the issuing of EIOs for the search, seizure and the hearing of a witness via videoconference in the Member States. Additionally, the analysis assesses the impact of the *Gavanozov II* judgment on judicial cooperation in the EIO field in daily practice.

The overview of replies by Member States is useful in facilitating judicial cooperation as it provides executing judicial authorities with a document to consult, including first-hand information on the situation of legal remedies in the different Member States.

### Evaluating the application of the EIO

The EIO will be the main focus of the 10th Round of Mutual Evaluations on mutual recognition of legal instruments in the field of deprivation or restriction

of liberty. In October 2022, Eurojust held a meeting at working level with the Council Secretariat to prepare the evaluation visits and share the Agency's practical experience in the field. Eurojust will participate as an observer in the evaluation visits planned for 2023 and 2024.



### Support to action against sexual exploitation of Romanian victims in the Netherlands



**CRIME:** Sexual exploitation of young female victims takes place in the Netherlands and other European countries. The suspects use the so-called 'lover boy' method, approaching young female victims from disadvantaged backgrounds, promising them good job prospects in the Netherlands and other EU countries. The victims' identity documents are taken away and they are forced into prostitution. The suspects transfer their illegal profits to Romania via money transfers, before spending it on luxury cars, drugs and gambling.

**ACTION:** During an action day, five suspects are identified by the Romanian authorities for involvement in an OCG, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, pimping, organised property crime and money laundering. The identified suspects are placed under preventive measures in Romania. Eight places are searched in Romania and the Netherlands and a further 30 individuals are heard as part of the case.

**RESULT:** During the action day, luxury vehicles, phones, bikes, weapons and money are seized.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Eurojust supports the national authorities involved, including by setting up a coordination centre for the action day, and assists in the preparations by organising seven coordination meetings. The Agency also assists with the transmission and execution of EIOs.

## 5.6 Asset recovery

Eurojust continued to provide support and advice to national authorities across the full life cycle of the asset recovery process, from tracing, freezing, confiscating and disposal of assets. This support included supporting national authorities with issues in relation to the application of the Regulation on the Mutual Recognition of Freezing Orders and Confiscation Orders. Issues covered include recognition and execution of freezing and confiscation certificates, victims' rights, and affected persons' rights.

In 2022, Eurojust contributed to the freezing of criminal assets worth almost EUR 3 billion and the seizure of drugs worth almost EUR 12 billion.

Throughout 2022, Eurojust monitored the relevant case law of the CJEU in the asset recovery area.

### Asset recovery issues arising from Eurojust casework

A number of issues arose through Eurojust's casework related to assets recovery in 2022. These included questions surrounding the scope of the Regulation, the restitution of frozen property to the victim, and exceptional costs.

### Eurojust's contribution to the EU Freeze and Seize Task Force

Since March 2022, Eurojust has actively participated in the [EU Freeze and Seize Task Force](#) set up by the European Commission to ensure the efficient implementation of EU sanctions against listed Russian and Belarussian oligarchs across the EU. Eurojust provides operational support to the Task Force by coordinating Member States' enforcement of Union sanctions through criminal law (see section 2.3).

### Proposals for new EU Directives on asset recovery and the violation of Union restrictive measures

In May 2022, the Commission launched a [proposal for a Directive on asset recovery and confiscation](#). The aim of the proposal is to update the existing legal framework, and to facilitate and ensure effective asset recovery and confiscation efforts across

the Union. The Directive will also ensure the effective tracing, freezing, management and confiscation of proceeds derived from the violation of Union restrictive measures.

The Directive's legislative procedure was ongoing throughout 2022. In December 2022, Eurojust was invited by the European Parliament Rapporteur responsible for the Directive to provide written input on the Commission's proposal. The Agency's input concerned the cooperation between asset recovery/management offices with EU bodies and agencies, including Eurojust.



### Eurojust helps return historic painting by Artemisia Gentileschi to Italy



**CRIME:** A historic 17th-century painting, estimated at over EUR 2 million, by the Italian baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, is transferred to Austria where it is due to be auctioned. The suspects obtained an export license from the Italian Ministry of Culture in 2019, by disguising the painter's identity and underestimating its true value.

**ACTION:** Following the cancellation of the export license by the Ministry of Culture, two suspects are investigated for fraud and attempts to illegally sell the painting in Austria by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Bari.

**RESULT:** Thanks to the judicial cooperation facilitated by Eurojust, the painting is seized at the auction house by the Austrian Police, with the assistance of the Italian embassy in Austria. The painting is successfully returned to Italy.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** Eurojust provides rapid assistance through its Italian and Austrian National Desks by supporting the execution of an EIO and a freezing certificate at the request of the judicial authorities in Bari.



### Major operation against call centre fraud: 108 persons detained in Latvia and Lithuania



**CRIME:** An OCG commits large-scale call centre fraud and money laundering. The OCG approaches victims by phone, promising high returns on investments in cryptocurrencies, commodities and foreign currencies.



Up to 200 fake traders proficient in English, Hindi, Polish and Russian are used to defraud victims in various countries. The suspects allegedly make illegal gains estimated at more than EUR 3 million per month.

**ACTION:** Eurojust supports the establishment and funding of a JIT involving judicial and law enforcement authorities from Latvia and Lithuania. During two action days in March 2022, hundreds of law enforcement officers search and dismantle three call centres belonging to the OCG in Riga and Vilnius. With support from Eurojust and Europol, the coordinated operation enables the authorities in Latvia and Lithuania to detain 108 persons (80 in Latvia and 28 in Lithuania).

**RESULT:** During the two action days, funds and bank accounts are frozen. Cash and luxury vehicles are also seized, as well as cryptocurrencies with an estimated value of EUR 95 000.

**EUROJUST'S ROLE:** In addition to setting up the JIT within just a week, Eurojust helps to prepare the operation by organising a first coordination meeting at very short notice, followed by two further meetings to discuss the next investigative steps.

As it becomes clear that Polish citizens are also victims of this fraud, Eurojust supports the extension of the JIT in December 2022 to involve the Polish authorities. Eurojust's support to the investigations into this case is still ongoing.

The Directive's proposal states that asset recovery offices should cooperate with Eurojust and Europol for the purposes of facilitating the identification of instrumentalities and proceeds, or property that may become or is the object of a freezing or confiscation order issued by a competent authority in the course of criminal proceedings. Cooperation with Eurojust and Europol should also take place where necessary to prevent, detect or investigate criminal offences related to the violation of Union restrictive measures.

In December 2022, the Commission launched a [proposal for a Directive on criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures](#),

which encompasses freezing and confiscation measures. The Directive's proposal states that Eurojust should cooperate with Member States' authorities, Europol, EPPO, and the Commission in the fight against criminal offences related to the violation of Union restrictive measures. To this end, Eurojust should provide technical and operational assistance in order to facilitate the coordination of investigations and prosecutions by the competent authorities.

Eurojust was consulted by the European Commission on the Directive proposal in September 2022, concerning the offences, penalties, jurisdiction rules, and provisions on cross-border cooperation.

Experience the digital version of this report:



Download all the data featured in this report:



Access more information on Eurojust's activities in 2022  
in the Consolidated Annual Activity Report:



© Eurojust, 2023 • Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg), 2023

*Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.*

*For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under Eurojust copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.*



**Eurojust**, Johan de Wittlaan 9, 2517 JR The Hague, Netherlands  
Phone: +31 70 412 5000 - E-mail: [info@eurojust.europa.eu](mailto:info@eurojust.europa.eu) - Website: [www.eurojust.europa.eu](http://www.eurojust.europa.eu)

Print: Catalogue number: QP-AA-23-001-EN-C • ISBN: 978-92-9490-933-6 • ISSN: 1831-4279 • DOI: 10.2812/944159  
PDF: Catalogue number: QP-AA-23-001-EN-N • ISBN: 978-92-9490-946-6 • ISSN: 2443-6518 • DOI: 10.2812/022275