**Discussion paper for the second technical meeting ahead of the High-Level Forum on the Future of EU Criminal Justice**

**29 April 2025**

**Topic: Europol**

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Europol, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, plays a key role in supporting Member States’ law enforcement authorities in the fight against serious and organised crime and terrorism. In 2024, Europol supported over 3 300 law enforcement operations, over 2 million messages were exchanged via the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) and almost 15 million searches were performed in its databases. As the EU’s criminal information hub, Europol is at the centre of the EU’s security framework, providing support to EU Member States and coordinating its operational and investigative action with EU agencies and bodies.

In a security context marked by increasingly complex and transnational crime, Europe needs a new model for Europol that is adequately equipped and competent to respond effectively and efficiently to the most serious forms of crime and terrorism online and offline. This is why the Commission will propose an ambitious overhaul of Europol’s mandate, implementing the 2024 Political Guidelines, to:

1. “make Europol a truly operational police agency and more than double its staff over time”;
2. “bolster its capacity to support national law enforcement agencies”;
3. “work towards enhancing coordination and complementarity between Europol and other EU agencies”; and
4. provide the agency “with a strengthened oversight”.

Building on the evaluation of the current Regulation, an in-depth impact assessment and a broad consultation with stakeholders, the European Parliament and Member States, the Commission will propose to strengthen the mandate of Europol, taking into account the limits set out in the Treaties’ provisions. As set out in the ProtectEU Communication, the aim is to bolster Europol’s technological expertise and capacity to support national law enforcement agencies and to enhance its coordination with other EU agencies and bodies. This will be part of the Commission’s work to further improve the effectiveness and complementarity of EU agencies and bodies for internal security, and bolster seamless cooperation between them, notably between Europol, the EPPO, OLAF and Eurojust.

Within this framework and with the goal of enabling an open discussion at the High-Level Forum, experts are invited to share their views on key topics.

1. **Europol’s future reinforced role in the EU criminal justice architecture**

As outlined in the recent EU SOCTA 2025, organised crime is growing, evolving, and becoming more dangerous. In this rapidly evolving threat landscape, the implementation of the new ProtectEU strategy will strengthen security capabilities by expanding the operational capacities of its agencies and bodies, including Europol, Eurojust and the EPPO. It will also enhance the EU’s capacity to combat organised crime and terrorism through proposals to modernise rules on organised crime, harmonise firearms laws, and strengthen the European Investigation Order. In the EU criminal justice architecture, Europol’s operational added value is demonstrated primarily by supporting large-scale and complex investigations affecting multiple Member States. Indeed, large-scale investigations come hand-in-hand with an increasing size of unstructured and encrypted data, often requiring the support of Europol to structure and analyse that data.

From a judicial perspective, how do you see Europol’s future support role in the EU criminal justice architecture evolving to ensure prevention and investigations and support prosecutions of the crimes listed in the Europol Regulation? How can we ensure better judicial follow-up to criminal investigations supported by Europol?

1. **Enhanced Cooperation between Europol, the EPPO and Eurojust to strengthen law enforcement and judicial cooperation**

Enhanced cooperation and coordination with the EPPO and Eurojust are crucial to ensuring better judicial follow-up and providing the most efficient and effective possible support to Member States in the fight against crime, notably in the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).

Europol and Eurojust have developed continuous operational and strategic cooperation, in line with the two agencies’ respective mandates, which has proved to be effective with a high number of successful joint investigations. Regular examples of successful operations illustrate the added value of the potential of the operational inter-agency cooperation. The GHOST-operation (wide-scale operation to take down encrypted communication platform used by organised crime) is a very good illustration of what Europol and Eurojust can do together to support EU Member States to disrupt criminal networks. Another key example of existing cooperation is the co-implementation by Europol and Eurojust, in close partnership with the European Judicial Network, of the EU-funded project SIRIUS that helps law enforcement and judicial authorities access cross-border electronic evidence in the context of criminal investigations and proceedings.

Since the EPPO became operational in June 2021, its operational cooperation with Europol has steadily increased. As mentioned in its programming document endorsed by its Management Board, Europol aims to “foster the established cooperation with the EPPO” and “support an increasing number of EPPO operations”. Recently, Europol has supported the EPPO in a major cross-border operation against VAT fraud, dubbed ‘Moby Dick’. The operation has resulted in detention orders being executed against 43 suspects linked to a criminal enterprise of an estimated value of EUR 520 million. Europol’s capacity to analyse and process enormous amounts of data can contribute to the success of the EPPO’s operations, providing it with useful information for the purposes of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

From a judicial perspective, how do you envisage Europol’s closer operational cooperation with the EPPO and Eurojust? How can their cooperation, including the exchange and analysis of information, be further improved and their complementary roles enhanced? Would changes to the existing legal framework be necessary to provide for Europol’s additional or dedicated support to the EPPO? What should be the specific role of Europol and Eurojust with regard to the establishment and functioning of the JITs?