



## Prosecuting with EMPACT

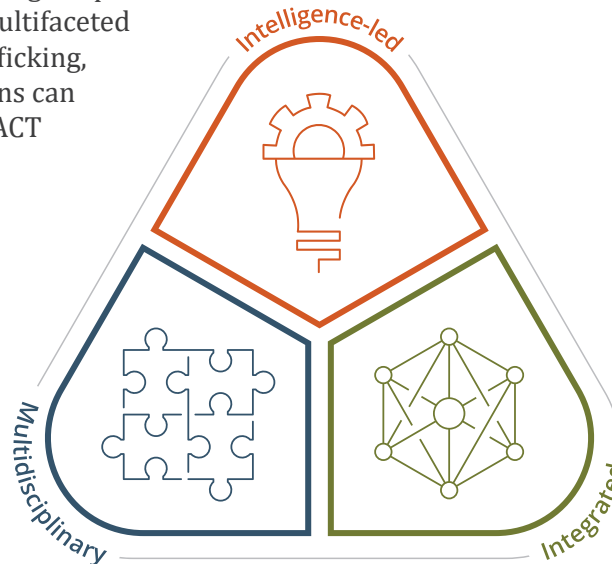
EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) is a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify, prioritise and address threats posed by organised and serious international crime. EMPACT brings together a broad range of multidisciplinary professionals from Mem-

ber States and third countries to take concrete actions against criminal networks. Participants include law enforcement authorities, the judiciary, EU agencies, customs and tax offices and private partners. With EMPACT, every year over 200 operational actions are carried out in targeted key crime areas.

## An intelligence-led, integrated and multidisciplinary platform

By building on knowledge and expertise from a diverse range of partners, various insights are taken on board, facilitating a multifaceted approach. For instance, in operations against human trafficking, the expertise of specialist non-governmental organisations can play an important role. Depending on assessments, EMPACT can have a preventive or repressive character.

By improving cross-border cooperation, EMPACT helps build trust between partners as they gain familiarity with each other and their specific fields of expertise. This leads to continuity in crime fighting between participants and between countries. Due to its long-term approach, EMPACT provides insights into patterns in certain crime areas. It also furthers knowledge on the persistence and backgrounds of certain criminal phenomena, feeding into the intelligence-led principle of the platform.



**EUROJUST**

## Refer EMPACT cases to Eurojust

EMPACT targets the most serious crimes threatening European citizens: complex, high-impact, cross-border criminal activities. Judicial involvement in these cases is essential to ensure that criminals are not just found and arrested, but that they are brought to justice in the courts. Eurojust is well equipped to assist prosecutors in coordinating the judicial follow-up for these cases – preferably from the early stages of the investigations.

Eurojust provides access to its full range of tools, including [coordination meetings](#), [coordination centres](#) and funding for [joint investigation teams \(JITs\)](#). With its experience and expertise in judicial cooperation, Eurojust offers quick and efficient solutions to tackle legal issues in cross-border cases, including [conflicts of jurisdiction](#), [extradition](#), [admissibility of evidence](#) and the [freezing and recovery of assets](#).

Eurojust takes the lead in one Operational Action on judicial cooperation and coordination under one or more crime priorities.

## How does EMPACT work?

EMPACT operates in four-year cycles. Every four years, Europol produces the *European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA)*, based on input provided by Member States and other stakeholders, including Eurojust. The EU SOCTA identifies the major criminal threats affecting the European Union and sets out potential crime priorities.

The EU SOCTA is then used by the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union to advise Justice and Home Affairs ministers so they adopt the EU crime priorities being fought by EMPACT over the following four years.

A multi-annual strategic plan and set of goals are drawn up based on these key priorities to form the basis of Operational Action Plans (OAPs).

For each OAP, so-called drivers and co-drivers are appointed who oversee the planning with assistance from national coordinators. Concrete actions are organised for the particular targeted crime areas, leading to joint operational actions days or weeks.

The process is constantly monitored and fully evaluated at the end of each cycle.



## Priority crime areas

For each four-year cycle, priority crime areas are determined by the Council. This is based on the EU SOCTA.

For the 2022-2025 cycle, the following key areas were identified for priority action:

- ▶ High-risk criminal networks
- ▶ Cyber attacks
- ▶ Trafficking in human beings
- ▶ Child sexual exploitation
- ▶ Migrant smuggling
- ▶ Drug trafficking
- ▶ Fraud, economic and financial crimes
- ▶ Organised property crime
- ▶ Environmental crime
- ▶ Firearms trafficking
- ▶ Cross-cutting threats: document fraud

## EMPACT in the future

Planning for the 2022-2025 cycle is underway in the Council, which adopted *Conclusions on the permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime: EMPACT 2022+*. Meanwhile,

the European Commission has published plans to make EMPACT the EU flagship instrument to fight organised and serious international crime.

### Interested to know more?

The dedicated EMPACT page on the [Eurojust website](#) provides an overview of this important security initiative and its partners. It also presents the most recent results and offers examples of successful EMPACT operations from Eurojust's casework. More information from a law enforcement perspective can be found on the [Europol website](#), with additional online resources provided by the [European Commission](#) and the [Council](#).

## EMPACT and the judiciary

Intelligence- and analysis-led, EMPACT widens the scope for prosecutors and investigative judges, enabling an integrated and long-term approach to tackle major crimes in the identified key areas and increased learning experiences for all participants. The involvement of prosecutors at the early stages of investigations and actions is especially valuable to ensure these interventions lead to justice being done. As a well-proven, ready-made solution, EMPACT allows participants to make optimal use of existing capacities, resources and best practice during time-sensitive cases.

# EMPACT in action: Operation Brooks

Rare books recovered and 12 individuals sentenced in connection with a EUR 2 million heist

Historical books worth an estimated EUR 2 million, including first editions of works by Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton, were stolen from a postal warehouse in London in 2017. The criminal organisation involved, composed of Romanian nationals, had a history of committing complex, high-value thefts and had managed to avoid detection and prosecution by mainly operating outside Romania.



Following the warehouse heist in 2017, a **joint investigation team (JIT)** was set up between judicial and law enforcement authorities in Romania, the United Kingdom and Italy, with support from Eurojust and Europol. The JIT provided the authorities with the necessary judicial coordination, information exchange and analytical tools to carry out various investigative activities.



**June 2019** – 15 suspects linked to the criminal organisation were arrested in the United Kingdom and Romania. 45 addresses were searched across both countries as well as Italy.



**January 2020** – The kingpin of the group was arrested by Monza Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Turin, Italy. This arrest led to the retrieval of the rare books.



National Desks at Eurojust continued to support the judicial follow-up throughout 2020, including facilitating the **transfer of judicial proceedings** from Romania to the UK.



**16 September 2020** – Following the execution of a **European Investigation Order**, a house search led by the Romanian police and the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) uncovered the rare books buried underground in the county of Neamt.



On trial in the UK, **12 suspects pleaded guilty** to conspiring to commit burglary between December 2016 and April 2019 and to one count of conspiracy to conceal, disguise, convert, transfer and remove criminal property. Each was **sentenced to 3 to 5 years in prison**. A **13th suspect stood trial in March 2021**.



“ These sentences bring a successful conclusion to a complicated three year investigation, which identified and convicted a previously unknown Romanian organised crime gang ... I am proud the Met investigation team, working with the Romanian National Police and the Italian Carabinieri, have brought their offending to an end. ”

Andy Durham  
Detective Inspector in charge of the investigation