



EUROJUST

European Union Agency for
Criminal Justice Cooperation

Eurojust Strategy on Cooperation with International Partners 2024–2027

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Criminal justice across borders



Eurojust Strategy on Cooperation with International Partners 2024–2027

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Mission and vision

The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) pursues one of the main aims of the European Union, laid down in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union: to offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice, including by preventing and combating crime.

Eurojust has established itself as a hub for judicial cooperation, delivering hands-on support to prosecutors and judges working together in the fight against cross-border crime. Relying on its unique expertise, partnerships and modern digital tools, Eurojust ensures that national borders are no obstacle to prosecuting crime and that justice is served.

To this end, Eurojust has been engaging with competent authorities of countries outside the European Union and with international organisations to foster closer cooperation, in order to more effectively combat serious and organised crime that threatens the Union. Mindful of the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, the agency has built strong ties with those countries and organisations that share the EU's desire for a more secure world in which equality, rule of law and human rights are respected.

This strategy on cooperation with international partners builds on Eurojust's previous cooperation strategy and highlights the steps that the agency intends to take over the next 4 years to strengthen its role as a gateway for cross-border cooperation between authorities investigating and prosecuting serious crime in and outside the European Union.

To achieve this overarching goal, the agency needs a robust mandate and adequate resources. This strategy proposes a range of activities, from enabling the hosting of an increasing number of liaison prosecutors or officers from non-EU countries and international organisations to providing the European Commission with the support needed to carry out international agreement negotiations and building close relations and mutual trust with priority partners. To put its proposals into practice, Eurojust will require human and financial resources and these will need to be clearly allocated to specific activities.

Rationale and guiding principles

Criminal networks have considerably expanded in recent years, including in the European Union, with increased criminal activity affecting, to varying degrees, every Member State. From cybercrime to human trafficking, the offences that criminals commit, often through highly organised structures, are varied and intertwined.

These networks are in many cases located in or led from countries outside the European Union. Consequently, establishing close relations with these countries and with like-minded organisations would enable Eurojust to provide effective support to the investigating and prosecuting authorities of EU Member States.

The importance of swift information exchange and close cooperation with partners has been recognised in the various strategies and action plans adopted by the European Commission in recent years. For example, the **EU Security Union Strategy**¹ states that international cooperation is 'key to effective law enforcement and judicial cooperation', and recognises the importance of Eurojust in this and other roles.

The **EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime**² reflects on the complexity of new criminal groups and how they operate transnationally in a networked environment. It also states that the level of Eurojust's cooperation with countries outside the European Union should be stepped up, in particular by establishing international agreements to enable judicial cooperation with the agency.

Similar references are included in other thematic policy documents, such as the European Union's dedicated **Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings**³, which highlights the need for cooperation with countries in the Western Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia; the **Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU**⁴, which calls for engagement with the Western Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa and South-East Asia; and the

EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs⁵, which calls for regular dialogues with Latin America and the Caribbean, the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries, Central Asia and the United States.

Eurojust will therefore continue aligning its external outreach with EU priorities in key regions, reinforcing cooperation with the Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood, the Eastern Partnership, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Efforts will also be invested in establishing cooperation with countries in other regions, such as the Gulf, West Africa, Central Asia and South-East Asia.

To this end, this strategy presents a structured set of **specific priorities and key actions**, building on the previous strategy and taking into consideration the principles that guide the external outreach of the agency. The strategy:

- reflects the most recent Union policy documents on fighting serious organised crime;
- builds on the operational and strategic priorities of Eurojust, while ensuring alignment with EU positions in the area of external relations;
- combines formal and informal tools, such as working arrangements, the exchange of letters, cooperation with EU-funded projects and high-level dialogues;
- highlights the importance of mutual trust, reciprocity and common ideals when establishing closer relations with partners outside the Union;
- recognises important differences in culture and practices between countries and the need to respect them to the greatest extent possible.

1 Commission communication – EU Security Union Strategy (COM(2020) 605 final).

2 Commission communication – EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025 (COM(2021) 170 final).

3 Commission communication – EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025 (COM(2021) 171 final).

4 Commission communication – A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, prevent, protect, respond (COM(2020) 795 final).

5 Commission communication – EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021–2025 (COM(2020)606 final).

Strategic and operational priorities

Priority 1: Intensify efforts to enable the conclusion of international agreements

Eurojust may exchange personal data systematically only where an agreement concluded with a specific country or international organisation allows for such transfers, or where the Commission has adopted for the country or international organisation in question an adequacy decision applicable to the law enforcement and judicial area.

To date, Eurojust can count on 13 such agreements, with Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Based on experience gained so far, the conclusion of an **international agreement** that enables the systematic exchange of operational personal data and the subsequent secondment of a liaison prosecutor to Eurojust enable a much smoother exchange of information and a considerable increase in cooperation.

Under the previous cooperation strategy, Eurojust proposed the conclusion of international agreements with a number of non-EU countries and international organisations, and the Council of the European Union authorised the opening of negotiations with 13 of them (Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye), as well as with one international organisation (Interpol).

In recent years, triggered by international developments, cooperation has intensified with a number of countries and organisations, notably the International Criminal Court (ICC). Therefore, the strategy identifies additional partners with which an operational need to cooperate exists, and the Council's authorisation for opening negotiations with them will be sought.

Potential new partners were identified using several criteria, with a focus on operational necessity and following consultations with the competent authorities of the Member States. Operational necessity was assessed, on the one hand, by considering the volume of existing information

exchange with non-EU countries and organisations, which denotes a need for information exchange to take place more systematically, and, on the other hand, by considering criminal phenomena that currently affect Member States and specific non-EU countries, which would require for information exchange to be established or increased so that such phenomena be more effectively combated. The potential new partner countries identified are **Bolivia, Canada, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Peru** and the **United Arab Emirates**. An operational need for cooperation was identified with other countries, but following consultations with the Commission means of engagement other than through the conclusion of an international agreement will be considered.

In addition, operational cooperation has intensified with the **International Criminal Court**, which participates in the Eurojust-supported joint investigation team for alleged core international crimes committed in Ukraine. The ICC also participates in the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) established by Eurojust to provide ICPA members with tailored operational, technical, logistical and financial support. Furthermore, the recent amendment to the Eurojust regulation mandates the agency to exchange evidence with, or otherwise make evidence directly available to, international judicial authorities, in particular to the ICC. To facilitate such exchange, an international agreement with the ICC is therefore a necessity.

Eurojust will continue to contribute its **technical expertise to the negotiations led by the European Commission with non-EU countries and international organisations** to establish international agreements on cooperation with the agency. Eurojust will also support negotiations by interacting at a technical level with the competent authorities of the countries and international organisations concerned, to prepare the ground for negotiations by clarifying the role of the agency and the benefits of working with Eurojust.

Eurojust's engagement, at the technical level, with the countries included in the Council mandates has been welcomed by the Commission, as this engagement can work in synergy with the Commission's own engagement, and will be an important part of the agency's external outreach in the years to come. Depending on the circumstances of each particular case, the agency may consider different ways to support negotiations, such as those listed below.

- **Technical meetings** could be held with relevant national authorities, at Eurojust or online, to explain the role of the agency and how the conclusion of an international agreement could strengthen judicial cooperation with the European Union. For Southern Neighbourhood countries, such meetings may be facilitated by the EuroMed Justice project; for Latin American countries; Eurojust may seek support from the Europe Latin America programme of assistance against transnational organised crime (EL PAcCTO 2.0).

- **Visits to relevant countries** could be organised for the specific purpose of strengthening relations or as part of other events organised by Eurojust or that the agency is participating in.
- **Study visits** to Eurojust by representatives of relevant countries could also be organised.

Furthermore, in order to implement international agreements concluded by the European Union, Eurojust will seek to negotiate and conclude detailed working arrangements with the competent authorities of the non-EU countries and international organisations concerned. Eurojust also stands ready to negotiate and implement such working arrangements with the countries and organisations for which the Commission adopts **adequacy decisions** in the area of law enforcement and justice.

Additional resources will be necessary for Eurojust to negotiate and implement future agreements.

Key actions

- ✎ Propose that the European Commission seeks authorisation from the Council to open negotiations for international agreements with the ICC and the following countries: Bolivia, Canada, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Peru and the United Arab Emirates.
- ✎ Provide reliable support to the Commission in the implementation of the Council's negotiating mandates, particularly by:
 - contributing its technical expertise to international negotiations;
 - engaging with authorities of relevant non-EU countries to clarify the role and benefits of cooperating with Eurojust.
- ✎ Establish working arrangements to implement international agreements on cooperation with Eurojust concluded with non-EU countries or adequacy decisions adopted by the Commission for such countries in the area of law enforcement and justice.

Priority 2: Formalise, where possible, cooperation with relevant non-EU countries

Eurojust recently concluded strategic working arrangements with two non-EU countries, that is, Nigeria and Panama, and other strategic instruments are currently being negotiated.

Eurojust will increase its efforts to build trust with non-EU countries, as indicated under Priority 6, and, where possible, formalise this cooperation by means of **working arrangements**. Such arrangements will be concluded only when a certain level of cooperation has been established and the need to formalise this cooperation has become apparent.

Working arrangements will therefore be sought, where possible and relevant, with countries and international organisations that, in terms of operational needs, are of strategic relevance. Without pre-empting future circumstances, countries with which working arrangements may be sought are **Australia, Chile, the Dominican Republic, India, Kosovo¹, the Philippines, the Seychelles, South Africa, Thailand and Viet Nam**. In addition, countries that were proposed to the Council for opening negotiations to conclude international agreements and were not included in the mandate will be prioritised for working arrangements.

Furthermore, where the conclusion of an international agreement with a country included in a Council mandate is not deemed feasible in the near future, Eurojust will aim, where relevant, to conclude a strategic working arrangement with its competent authorities, in order to pave the way for enhanced relations, including on operational matters within the framework set by the Eurojust regulation. In agreement with the Commission, such relations may be pursued with **Egypt and Türkiye**.

Key actions

- ✎ Negotiate and conclude, where possible and relevant, strategic working arrangements or similar instruments with new partners, prioritising the following countries: Australia, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Kosovo, the Philippines, the Seychelles, South Africa, Türkiye, Thailand and Viet Nam.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Priority 3: Reinforce the global network of Eurojust contact points

Eurojust has established contact points in more than 70 countries around the world. They are appointed by the competent authority of their country or by the organisation they represent to ensure swift communication with the agency. Contact points are the foundation of our cooperation with partners and are essential to liaising swiftly with the competent authorities of a country when a crime extends beyond the European Union's borders. Contact points may be appointed by countries, organisations or judicial networks and associations.

Eurojust has invested considerable effort in expanding the network of contact points and establishing regular interactions. As the level of interaction with the contact points varies greatly, from regular to sporadic, the agency will continue organising bilateral meetings with individual contact points to clarify their role and how working with Eurojust can be beneficial to both EU and non-EU authorities. In addition, a Guide on Cooperation with Non-EU Countries via Contact Points has been produced and translated into three EU languages widely spoken in non-EU countries (French, Portuguese and Spanish) in order to facilitate the work of partner countries and organisations when dealing with Eurojust.

The agency will strive to organise regular meetings with contact points on Eurojust premises, in order to ensure receptivity and build closer ties. In view of the limited resources allocated to Eurojust and the order of priorities falling under this strategy, the organisation of such general meetings may prove to be a long-term endeavour.

Finally, Eurojust will, subject to the availability and allocation of resources, explore the possibility of posting liaison magistrates to priority non-EU countries, to ensure better access to the authorities of countries with which more effective cooperation is needed in order to strengthen the EU-wide fight against increasing serious and organised crime.

Key actions

- ✎ Pursue the expansion of the network of Eurojust contact points to other countries, relevant international organisations, and judicial networks and associations.
- ✎ Engage regularly with Eurojust contact points on a bilateral basis.
- ✎ Strive to organise **regular meetings of contact points** at Eurojust.
- ✎ Explore the possibility of posting **Eurojust liaison magistrates** to priority non-EU countries.

Priority 4: Increase engagement with regional judicial networks and associations

In recent years, Eurojust has established relations with judicial networks and associations established in other regions, in particular with the **Ibero-American Network for International Legal Cooperation (IberRed)**, the **Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP)** and the **West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors (WACAP)**. These networks and associations can act as a gateway to several countries in a given region, as contact points appointed by these networks may prove well placed to reach out to their members and establish direct contacts with Eurojust to ensure smooth cooperation in specific cases. Eurojust has also engaged with several other networks and associations through targeted meetings or by attending their annual gatherings and discussing the possible conclusion of cooperation instruments.

It is sought for cooperation to continue and deepen with the aforementioned networks and associations, as well as with the **Africa Prosecutors Association (APA)**, the **Arab Association for Prosecutors (AAP)**, the **Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and Southern Caucasus (CASC)** and the **South East Asia Justice Network (SEAJust)**.

A series of other activities will be pursued, in particular awareness-raising activities, preparatory technical meetings and study visits for the members of these network and association. In view of the increased role that regional networks and associations play in multilateral judicial cooperation, the establishment of working arrangements will be explored more closely.

Key actions

- ✎ Engage more closely with judicial networks and associations operating in other regions of the world.
- ✎ Seek the appointment by these networks and associations of Eurojust contact points to facilitate engagement with their members.

Priority 5: Seek opportunities for closer cooperation and joint actions with like-minded international organisations

Eurojust cooperates closely with a number of international organisations to ensure that outreach activities fit the needs and purposes of all of the parties involved in the investigation and prosecution of serious cross-border crime. Cooperation has been particularly fruitful with the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, resulting in closer ties between West Africa Europe. Joint activities with UNODC will be further pursued to ensure that the foundations laid will enable closer relations between authorities in EU Member States and West African countries.

The agency cooperates with an increasing number of **Council of Europe** working groups and committees in areas such as human and drug trafficking, counter-terrorism and cybercrime. This cooperation will be streamlined and advanced, including by establishing ties with other specialised groups and committees.

Eurojust will also pursue the conclusion of strategic working arrangements with the **International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism – Syria (IIIM)** and with the **United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD)**, in order to pave the way for closer operational cooperation.

Ameripol has recently been granted international legal personality, and the potential role of the organisation as a main hub for information exchange in Latin America is of interest to Eurojust.

Collaboration will also be sought with the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, in specific areas such as trafficking in cultural property.

These actors remain important partners for Eurojust, and regular contact and strengthened cooperation will be pursued, including through the conclusion of working arrangements.

Key actions

- ✎ Identify opportunities for joint actions with international organisations, and particularly with the Council of Europe, OSCE and UNODC.
- ✎ Pursue the conclusion of strategic working arrangements with Ameripol, IIIM and UNITAD, in order to pave the way for closer operational cooperation.

Priority 6: Build mutual trust with partner countries and provide support to strengthen their capacities

Eurojust will continue to invest efforts in learning further from its partners and supporting them when possible and needed. In this regard, increased efforts will be made, subject to the availability of resources, to engage more closely with countries of interest, notably those indicated under Priority 2, in order to develop trust and an effective partnership, before pursuing the conclusion of a working arrangement.

EU-funded projects and joint actions with like-minded international organisations will be the cornerstone of this endeavour.

In collaboration with the European Commission, Eurojust is implementing two projects – the **EuroMed Justice (EMJ)** project in the Southern Neighbourhood and the **Western Balkans Criminal Justice (WBCJ)** project – funded under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III, respectively. Both projects aim to strengthen operational and strategic cooperation between the countries within these two regions, as well as between them and EU Member States, by providing situation-specific support to national authorities and promoting the use of cooperation tools and instruments used at Eurojust. In addition, Eurojust is implementing, together with Europol, the **Sirius** project – a non-operational capacity-building initiative also funded by the Commission, which aims to help authorities in the Member States, the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) and non-EU countries

with whom either Eurojust or Europol has concluded operational working arrangements access cross-border electronic evidence. All of these projects will be continued in the years covered by this strategy.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the European Commission, a new project will be pursued by Eurojust and the Genocide Network in several parts of the world (e.g. Africa, Asia and Latin America) in order to strengthen the fight against impunity for international crimes by providing support and advice on obtaining evidence for use in judicial proceedings, including via civil society organisations.

Eurojust will also work closely with other EU-funded projects, such as EL PACCTO 2.0 and Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism (CT JUST), exploring synergies and providing technical support to build closer ties with countries in various parts of the world, most notably Latin America and the Gulf region.

The agency will increase its engagement with the European External Action Service, on the basis of the existing cooperation instruments, to ensure communication and coordination with EU delegations and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations in countries of strategic relevance to the agency.

Key actions

- ✎ Increase efforts, where necessary and subject to the availability of resources, to build trust with countries of interest, notably those indicated under Priority 2.
- ✎ Use externally funded projects to the fullest extent possible to support closer relations with partners.
- ✎ Increase intra-EU coordination and ensure goals and actions are aligned.



Eurojust, Johan de Wittlaan 9, 2517 JR The Hague, The Netherlands
www.eurojust.europa.eu • info@eurojust.europa.eu • +31 70 412 5000
Follow Eurojust on X, LinkedIn and YouTube @Eurojust

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