

Eurojust's role in safeguarding victims' rights in cross-border crime



An estimated 15 % of EU citizens (about 75 million people) fall victim to crime every year. In 2021, Eurojust supported more than 10 000 criminal investigations, helping to deliver justice to almost 100 000 victims of all forms of serious, cross-border crime. The complexity of cross-border cases makes it especially difficult for judicial authorities to protect victims' rights. Involving Eurojust (the [European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation](#)) early in the process helps to overcome these difficulties and ensure victims' protection.

The challenges involved in protecting victims' rights in an international context

Practitioners working on cross-border cases face recurring operational challenges when trying to safeguard victims' rights. These include:

- ▶ Identifying or contacting foreign victims
- ▶ Determining the jurisdiction
- ▶ The risk of victims' repeated exposure to their exploiters due to multiple foreign requests for interviews (known as secondary victimisation)
- ▶ Managing large numbers of victims in online crimes
- ▶ Uncertainties concerning the procedural status of victims ("victims" versus "witnesses" or "perpetrators" of secondary offences)
- ▶ Differences in national legal systems leading to some victims' rights, such as the right to compensation, not always being applied in full

Eurojust's role in protecting victims' rights

Serious cross-border crimes such as terrorist attacks, cyber-enabled and environmental crimes often affect a large number of innocent people worldwide. Eurojust works hard to protect victims' rights in such cross-border criminal investigations and prosecutions. It does this by systematically ensuring that the victims' rights dimension is considered early on and in its own right.

Eurojust minimises 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.



Sinking of the Prestige oil tanker in 2002. Photo © French Ministry of Justice



Tribute to the victims of the Barcelona terrorist attack in August 2017. Photo © Shutterstock



Bucha, Ukraine, March 2022. Photo © Shutterstock

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.

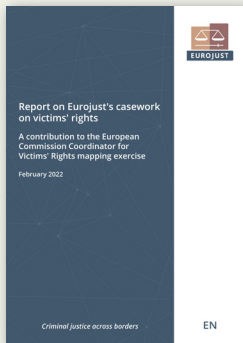
Safeguarding victims' interests is one of the key factors that Eurojust considers when advising national judicial authorities on prosecution strategies. During coordination meetings, judicial authorities can discuss and agree on a common approach and protocols with regards to information, legal aid and other forms of support for victims to ensure their effective access to justice.

Through its guidelines for practitioners, Eurojust advises on the most effective ways to protect victims' rights. These guidelines tackle the following challenges below while always keeping the victims' dimension in mind:

- ▶ [‘Which jurisdiction should prosecute?’](#)
- ▶ [How to decide on competing requests for surrender and extradition](#)
- ▶ [How to Prosecute Investment Fraud](#)

Eurojust's expertise and partnership with other actors

Eurojust's expertise are consolidated within its dedicated Working Group on Victims' Rights comprised of representatives from across the Agency. The Working Group compiles, monitors, and analyses victim-related issues reported by practitioners working on Eurojust-referred cases.



Based on Eurojust's operational work and using real case examples, the [Report on Eurojust's casework on victims' rights](#) captures the Agency's broad experience, and offers an overview of best practices to overcome victim-related challenges in various EU priority crime areas. Eurojust's casework indicates that a greater focus on victims leads to greater success in the prosecution of trafficking in human beings and counter-terrorism cases in particular.

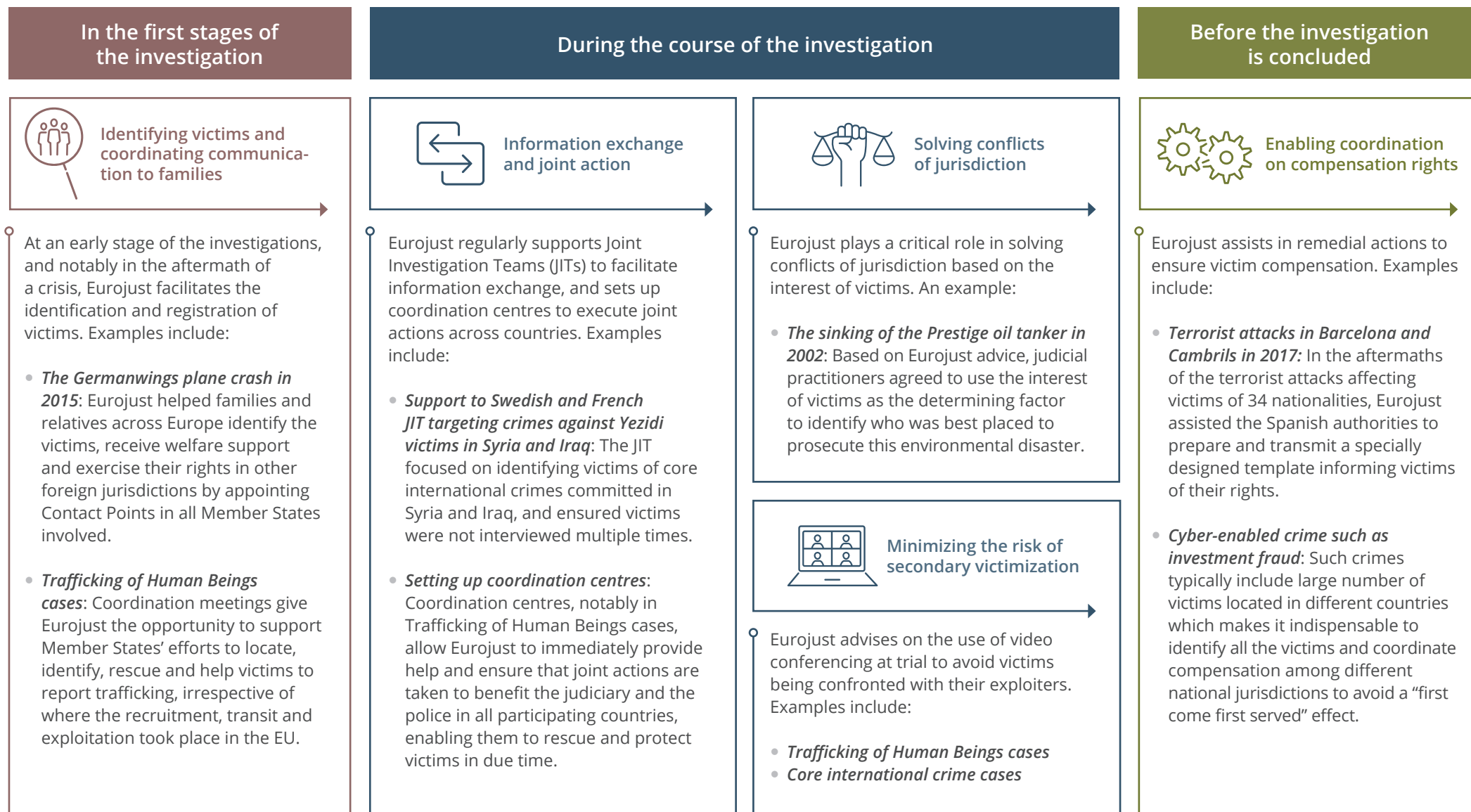
Eurojust is a member of the [EU Victims' Rights Platform](#) consisting of representatives of European networks, agencies, bodies and civil society organisations working on implementing the EU Strategy on Victims' Rights. The Agency works closely with Member States and EU institutions including the [European Commission Coordinator for Victims' rights](#) on the revision of EU legislation, such as the Directive on Victims' Rights.

Together with other EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies, Eurojust contributes to dedicated publications in the area, such as the [Joint Report on the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking](#). The Report constitutes the first full overview of successful actions to detect and protect victims of human trafficking.



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Eurojust's support to national authorities throughout the investigation





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