

Eurojust and COVID-19

Agency remains fully operational despite crisis



The COVID-19 crisis is a challenge for society and the judiciary across the European Union. Eurojust continues to be fully operational in assisting prosecutors in all Member States, ensuring that cross-border crime is tackled and decisive action is taken against criminals abusing the situation.



Operational continuity throughout the pandemic

- ▶ Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Eurojust has opened **more than 2700 new cases**, including 156 directly related to the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ During the same period, Eurojust organised **220 coordination meetings** (186 of which were held via video-conference), **13 coordination centres** and supported the establishment of **46 new joint investigation teams**.
- ▶ In some of these cases, Member States asked Eurojust's support in specific COVID-19-related offences, such as frauds related to the selling of facial masks. In other cases, Eurojust has intervened to facilitate the execution of judicial cooperation instruments, such as EAWs and EIOs, impacted by the application of the COVID-19-related measures.
- ▶ Since March, Eurojust has supported – **remotely**, that is via videoconference, email and 'on call' phone assistance – more than **20 joint cross-border operations**. Altogether, these operations have resulted in the arrest of 200 suspects and the seizure of more than 15 tonnes of drugs and EUR 20 million of illicit profits.



Guidance and support in times of COVID-19

- ▶ To further support practitioners, Eurojust and the European Judicial Network (EJN) have been **compiling information** on the impact of such measures in the Member States, Iceland and Norway, and analysed the main practical and legal issues arising from the current COVID-19 crisis. This compilation is updated biweekly and published as Council document [LIMITE].
- ▶ Eurojust has published *Guidelines on Operational Support during the COVID-19 pandemic* to **guide the execution of core business activities** during the physical restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 crisis. The guidelines cover the use of secure videoconferencing systems to allow prosecutors to still meet and discuss cooperation strategies on common cases during the pandemic.
- ▶ Eurojust is currently reviewing the **COVID-19-related casework** to analyse recurring common issues and solutions. The *Report on the impact of COVID-19* on Eurojust casework is expected to be released at the beginning of 2021.



Initiatives and activities to further strengthen judicial cooperation

- ▶ Eurojust supported the Commission in analysing business needs concerning the digitalisation of judicial cooperation in criminal matters (**Digital Criminal Justice**). As the pandemic has confirmed, it is crucial to establish a digital infrastructure that enables the fast and secure exchange of information and evidence between prosecutors across Europe.
- ▶ In spite of the pandemic, Eurojust successfully launched the **Focus Group on Migrant Smuggling** to provide a platform for prosecutors to exchange good practices and discuss issues on this topic.
- ▶ Eurojust is ensuring **full operational continuity in the work of the hosted networks** (European Judicial Network, JITs Network, Genocide Network and European Judicial Cybercrime Network) during the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ As the 2020 **chair of the Justice and Home Affairs agencies network** (JHAAN), Eurojust has organised virtual meetings and coordinated several joint publications related to the operational continuity during the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ Eurojust has **published several reports** with detailed analyses and conclusions based on its casework, such as the *Memorandum on Battlefield Evidence*, the *Report on Eurojust's casework in the field of the European Investigation Order*, the *Report on national legislation and Eurojust casework analysis on sham marriages*, and the report *Challenges and best practices from Eurojust's casework in the area of cybercrime*.
- ▶ Eurojust is organising **virtual expert workshops** on topics such as right-wing extremism and terrorism, and sham marriages. The aim of these workshops is to provide insights into legal and operational challenges in investigating and prosecuting such offences, and drawing lessons and best practice from concrete case examples.