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EUROPEAN JUDICIAL NETWORK

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT

2023 – 2024



REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT 2023 – 2024

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AIAMP	Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors
CASC	Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and Southern Caucasus
CISA	Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CoE	Council of Europe
COPEN	Working Party on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters
CP(s)	Contact Point(s) of the European Judicial Network
EAW	European Arrest Warrant
ECRIS	European Criminal Records Information System
e-EDES	e-Evidence Digital Exchange System
EIO	European Investigation Order
EL PAcCTO	Europe Latin America Assistance Program against Transnational Organized Crime
EJCN	European Judicial Cybercrime Network
EJN	European Judicial Network
EJN Decision	Council Decision 2008/976/ JHA of 16 December 2008 on the European Judicial Network
EJNSC	EJN Secure Connection
EJTN	European Judicial Training Network
EMJ	EuroMed Justice
EMJNet	EuroMed Judicial Network
ENVR	European Network of Victims' Rights
EPPO	European Public Prosecutor's Office
EU	European Union
Eurojust	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
EuroMed	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
Europol	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FD	Framework Decision
FRA	EU Fundamental Rights Agency
Genocide Network	European Network of Contact Points in respect of the investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes
IberRed	Ibero-American Network for International Legal Cooperation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
JITs	Joint Investigation Teams
JITs Network	Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams
TCA	Mutual recognition in Europe through InterVision Studies

MLA	mutual legal assistance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS(s)	Member State(s)
PC-OC	Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters
SEAJust	South East Asia Justice Network
SEEPAG	South Eastern European Prosecutors Advisory Group
SELEC	South Eastern European Law Enforcement Center EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

Introduction by the Secretary to the European Judicial Network



Hugh Dockry, Secretary to the EJM

Dear Reader,

As Secretary to the European Judicial Network (EJM) and Head of the EJM Secretariat, it is my privilege to present the 8th Biennial Report on the European Judicial Network activities and management. This report provides an overview of the Network's activities during 2023 and 2024. I am particularly proud of the Network's achievements over the last two years, our lasting contribution to the area of judicial cooperation and the support we provide to judicial practitioners in their daily work.

During the reporting period, in 2023, we celebrated the EJM's 25th anniversary. This milestone provided an opportunity to re-

fect on our incredible journey. Starting as a small group of Contact Points in 15 Member States in 1998, the EJM has grown into a vast network with many Contact Points in every Member State, EU candidate and associated countries, as well as partner networks worldwide. During its 25th year, the Network made significant contributions to successful judicial cooperation, fighting impunity and supporting the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. The Network's continued success in fighting cross-border crime now extends beyond the borders of the EU. In particular, we made significant progress in integrating the judicial authorities of the Western Balkans further into the Network, and we dedicated ourselves to building lasting partnerships with judicial authorities, institutions and partners in other regions. This ensures that the path of cooperation is available whenever there is an operational need.

During the 2023-24 reporting period, the EJM, through its Contact Points, continued to be a reliable channel for facilitating judicial cooperation between national authorities in EU Member States by helping them establish direct contact, draft cooperation requests and resolve legal issues in their investigation and prosecution of cross-border crimes. Furthermore, the Network was instrumental in providing timely information to the Contact Points and national authorities on changes in the legal frameworks and procedures. The EJM supported practitioners in EU Member States regarding the application of the various legal instruments for judicial cooperation, such as the European Investigation Order (EIO), the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) and other EU mutual recognition instruments by facilitating discussions on recent CJEU case law, exploring challenges, providing solutions and identifying best practices. As you will see in the body of the report, this includes daily support from EJM Contact Points to national judicial authorities on ongoing

cases, as well as the Network's role in providing a forum for discussing practical issues regarding the interpretation and application of these instruments.

I am happy to note that the EU Commission and the Council of the EU also value the Network's wealth of practical experience. On several occasions, we were asked to share the practitioner's experience and point of view regarding the instruments for judicial cooperation. In this way the Network also fulfils its obligations to bring to the EU institutions any relevant topics and practical experiences from the application of the EU judicial cooperation instruments.

Over the past two years, the EJM has continued to improve the EJM website and its tools to effectively support judicial authorities in their daily work involving judicial cooperation in criminal matters. During the reporting period, the EJM online tools for judicial cooperation – Atlas, Fiches Belges and the EJM Reporting Tool for EJM Contact Points – were renewed. Most of the information on the website was also reviewed and updated. With well over two million yearly visits to the website, I am pleased to see that the EJM website continues to be a reliable support mechanism for all judicial practitioners in their daily work, helping them to find relevant information. To better serve practitioners, we are already looking into future development stages for the EJM website, including the integration of new technology, such as AI. I am excited to see the developments of the website.

I am pleased to present the EJM's achievements, as outlined in this report. On behalf of the EJM Secretariat, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the EJM Contact Points, EJM National Correspondents and EJM Tools Correspondents for their dedication, expertise and professionalism in carrying out their responsibilities. This would not be possible without their efforts.

On behalf of the EJM Secretariat, let me express our continuous commitment to supporting the activities of the EJM.

Hugh Dockry

EJN OPERATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO EU JUDICIAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS

1.1 Overview

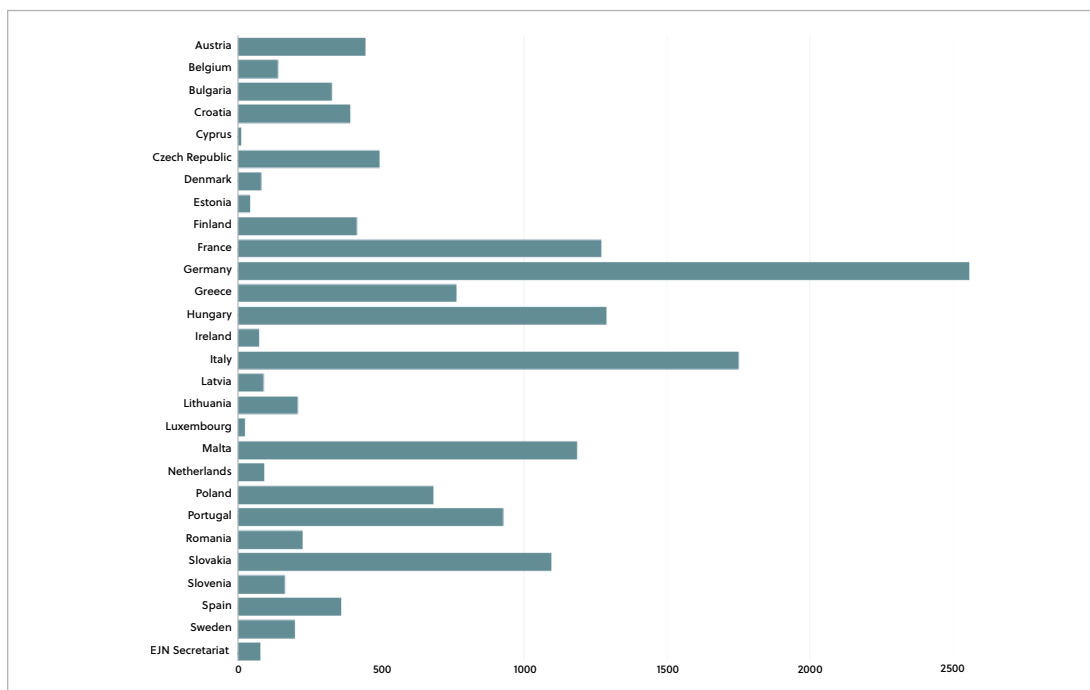
Facilitating judicial cooperation in criminal matters is the core task of the EJN and its Contact Points. In accordance with the legal basis of the EJN, Council Decision 2008/976/JHA on the European Judicial Network¹ (EJN Decision), the Contact Points are active intermediaries and their role is to facilitate judicial cooperation with respect to executing requests and assist in establishing direct contacts between competent national judicial authorities. Crucially, the EJN Contact Points support the judicial authorities during the drafting stages of the requests for legal assistance and provide assistance in urgent cases and cases involving delayed execution of requests. They also assist by providing information about national law and legal systems to address any national prerequisites for the execution of requests.

During the 2023-24 reporting period, the EJN Contact Points continued to facilitate the execution of requests for legal assistance and support national judicial authorities in applying the various judicial cooperation instruments, such as the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), the European Investigation Order (EIO), mutual legal assistance (MLA) requests, freezing and confiscation orders, and less commonly used mutual recognition instruments, such as financial penalties, probation and supervision measures. The EJN remains one of the central channels for facilitating judicial cooperation in the EU.

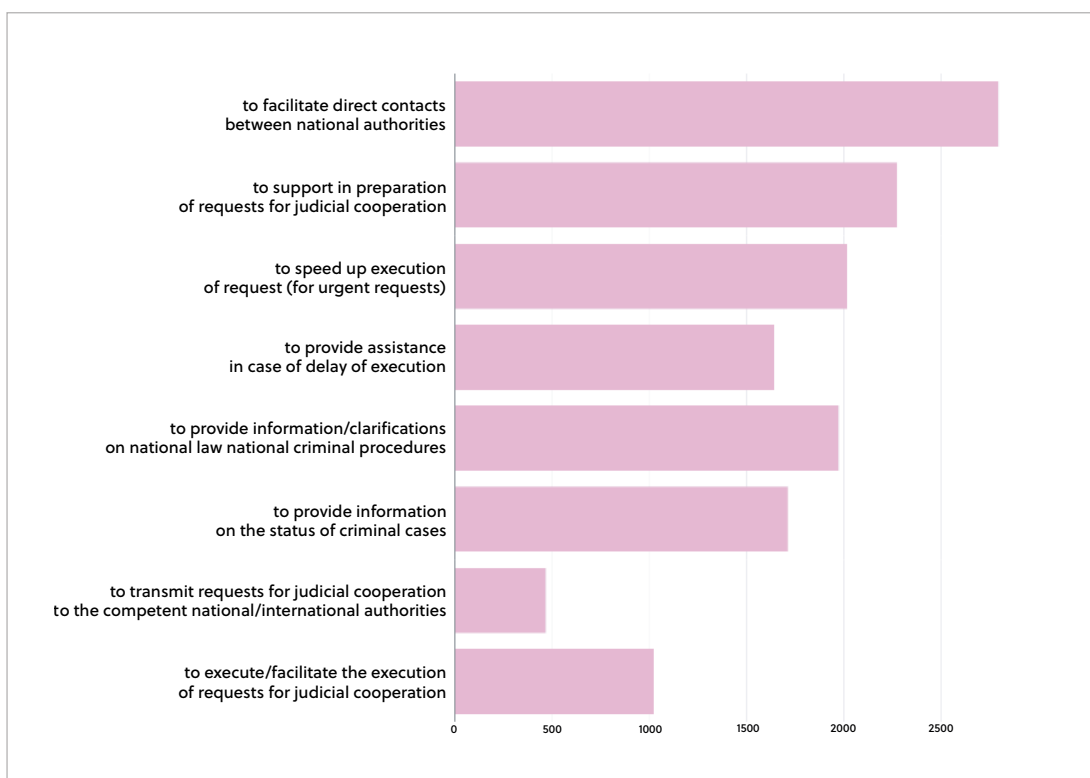
In addition to the EJN's support regarding the application of the EU legal framework on judicial cooperation, the EJN Contact Points continued to help national authorities by providing information and assistance on applying the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and the United Nations in cases involving non-EU countries. In addition, as national judicial authorities, they also have extensive experience applying and negotiating bilateral extradition and MLA agreements.

The following graphs visually represent the cases supported by the EJN per country and per type of assistance provided by the EJN Contact Points. In the period 2023-24, the EJN facilitated a total of **15 376 reported** cases/ requests for judicial cooperation. Based on these figures, it can be inferred that the Network and its Contact Points are experts in EU judicial cooperation, and that the judicial authorities in the Member States heavily rely on the Network's expertise to resolve judicial cooperation issues. However, the total number and types of cases reported does not necessarily reflect all cases in which the EJN were involved as, due to competing priorities and limited resources of CPs, we are aware that many cases are not reported in time and so are not reflected in the final tally. It is also important to remember that the website is also an important and often-used resource for non-Contact Point stakeholders, that is all practitioners involved in the investigation and prosecution of cross-border crimes, as all areas are available to professionals and the public apart from the areas necessitating restricted access for security and data protection reasons.

¹ Council Decision 2008/976/JHA of 16 December 2008 on the European Judicial Network (OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, pp. 130–134). Available here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2008.348.01.0130.01.EN-G&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2008%3A348%3ATOC_



Total number of EJM cases 2023-24



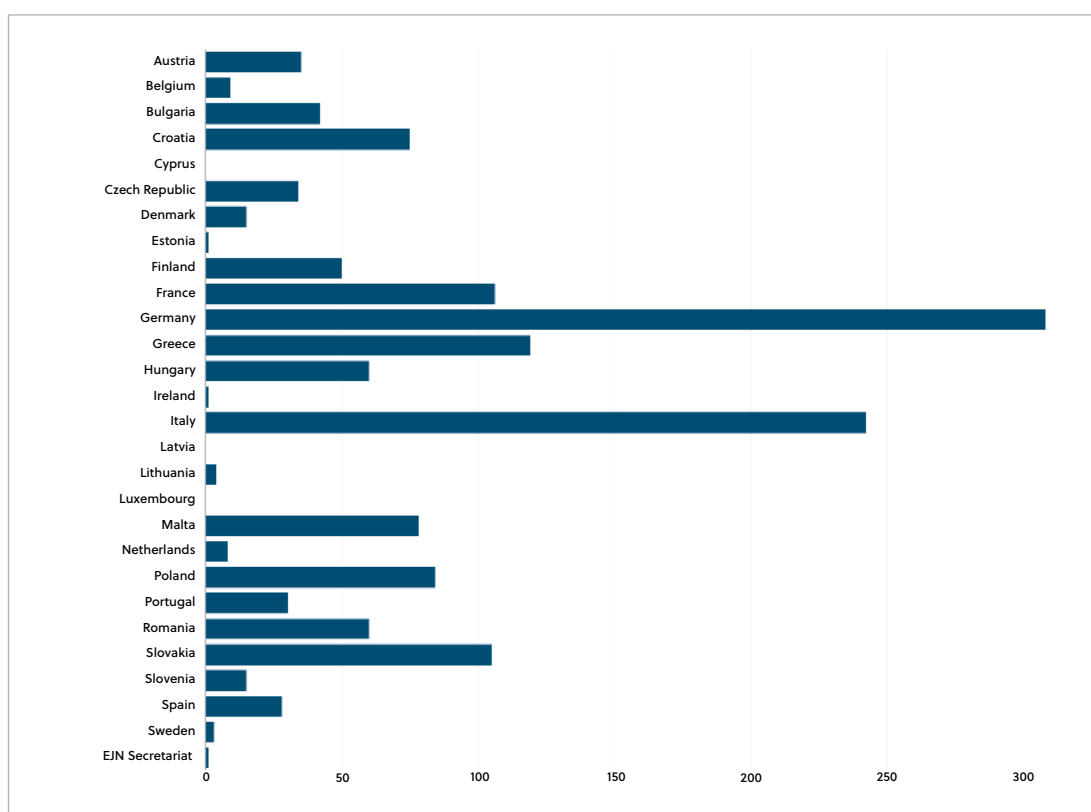
EJM cases by type of assistance provided by the Contact Points²

² In some cases, more than one type of assistance was provided by the EJM Contact Points

1.2 European Arrest Warrant

Adopted in 2002, the Framework Decision on the European Arrest Warrant³ (EAW FD) remains one of the most frequently used EU legal instruments for judicial cooperation in criminal matters. In the period 2023-24, the EAW was discussed numerous times at EJM meetings due to practical matters, such as the filling in the EAW form, translations, transmission of documents and substantive rights in EAW proceedings, which remain relevant. In addition, in light of the existing jurisprudence of the CJEU regarding the extradition of EU citizens, the matter was discussed at several of the EJM meetings, such as the 44th EJM Regular meeting and 61st EJM Plenary Meeting. Readers may also be aware that the Commission has addressed the Member States' transposition of the instrument, identifying gaps, weaknesses and inconsistencies. At present, several infringement proceedings are in progress.

The EJM remains one of the central channels for facilitating the execution of the EAWs. The EJM Contact Points play an important role in fostering cooperation and communication between the national judicial authorities. The graph below provides an overview of the total number of EJM EAW cases per country and reflects the central role of EJM Contact Points in assisting the practical application of the EAW. During the reporting period, the EJM Contact Points facilitated 1 513 EAW proceedings by providing information on national procedures and establishing direct contact between national authorities. They also facilitated the exchange of information on EAW cases:



2023-24 EJM EAW cases

³ Council Framework Decision 2002/584/JHA of 13 June 2002 on the European Arrest Warrant and the surrender procedures between Member States (OJ L 190, 18.7.2002, pp 1-20). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32002F0584>.

The case example below illustrates the added value that the EJP provides by swiftly facilitating cooperation and communication between the national judicial authorities to resolve issues and uncertainties related to the execution of EAWs.

EAW cooperation case: Bulgaria and Germany

In the context of a German investigation into the trafficking of human beings for labour exploitation, during which the victims were deprived of their documents and kept in inhumane living conditions, the German authorities issued an EAW for the prosecution of a Bulgarian national for recruitment and trafficking purposes. Due to substantive and procedural differences in national legislation, the EJP Contact Points for Bulgaria and Germany facilitated the swift execution of the EAW by directly supporting the consultations between the German and Bulgarian judicial authorities. They helped clarify legal questions on double criminality and the legal qualification of criminal acts, and also facilitated the transmission of additional information to the Bulgarian authorities, resulting in the successful execution of the EAW.

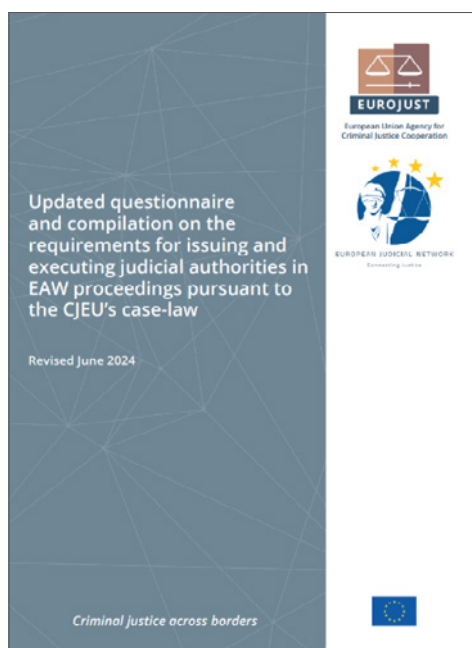
In addition to the operational work on cases involving the execution of EAWs, the EJP and the EJP Contact Points closely monitored developments in the area of EAW and its practical application. In this respect, the EJP observed and analysed in detail CJEU jurisprudence on the topic and held timely discussions on its impact on the EAW proceedings at EJP meetings. Additionally, due to the extensive experience of the EJP Contact Points, the EJP was invited to contribute to several EAW-related projects and to provide the judicial practitioner perspective.

EAW Portal on the EJP website

In December 2020, the Council of the EU adopted its conclusions on 'The European arrest warrant and extradition procedures – current challenges and the way forward' (Council document 13684/20)⁴. The conclusions anticipated that a centralised EAW portal on the EJP website would greatly benefit the work of judicial practitioners across the EU, as the website already contained a wide range of information and materials on the EAW. Throughout the 2023-24 reporting period, the EJP Secretariat continued developing the EAW Portal, including an additional section dedicated to the jurisprudence of the CJEU and ECtHR on the application of the EAW.

⁴ Council conclusions 'The European arrest warrant and extradition procedures – current challenges and the way forward', 2020/C 419/09 (OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, pp. 23-30). Available here: <https://www.ejp-crimjust.europa.eu/ejnpupload/News/st13684.en20-18-12-2020.pdf>.

Updated Joint EJM-Eurojust Compilation on Issuing and Executing authorities in EAW proceedings



In June 2024, the EJM and Eurojust issued a revised version of the Joint EJM-Eurojust Compilation on Issuing and Executing authorities in EAW proceedings⁵, available on the [EAW Section of the EJM website](#).

This compilation is based on the 2019 CJEU jurisprudence requirements regarding the independence of prosecutors in relation to the concepts of 'issuing judicial authority', as referred to in Article 6(1) EAW FD, and 'executing judicial authority', as referred to in Article 6(2) EAW FD, as well as the requirements of effective judicial protection.

This is the fourth revision of the compilation. The compilation is updated whenever there are changes in the national EAW legislation. The EJM Contact Points are invited to inform the EJM Secretariat whenever there are changes in their national EAW legislation that need to be reflected in the compilation.

Contribution to the FRA report 'European Arrest Warrant proceedings – room for improvement to guarantee rights in practice'

The EJM contributed to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) project related to substantive rights in the context of EAW proceedings. This project aimed to gather experiences and opinions about the challenges and good practices related to the procedural rights of persons requested by the EAW, as well as the grounds for refusal and the relationship with other instruments concerning cross-border cooperation in criminal matters. Based on this project, the FRA published the report, 'European Arrest Warrant proceedings – room for improvement to guarantee rights in practice'⁶.

1.3 European Investigation Order

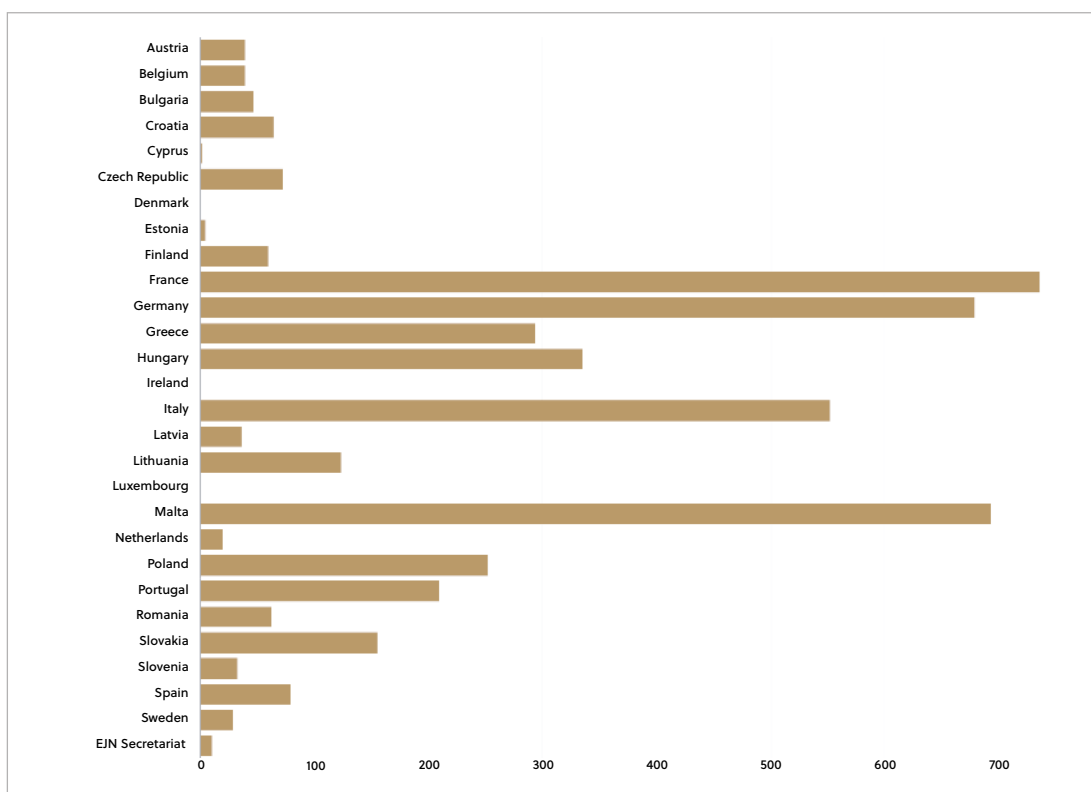
Since its implementation in 2017, the European Investigation Order (EIO)⁷ has become a central instrument for cross-border cooperation in criminal matters, largely replacing traditional mutual legal assistance (MLA) requests. Designed to enhance the protection of fundamental rights and build on practical experience – particularly through direct communication between judicial authorities – the EIO strikes a balance between mutual recognition and MLA approaches.

From 2023 to 2024, the EJM Contact Points reported more than 4 612 cases in which they assisted with EIO-related requests. These cases constituted nearly one-third of all cases where EJM assistance was required. Most of these cases involved requests for hearings, either via standard procedure or via videoconference.

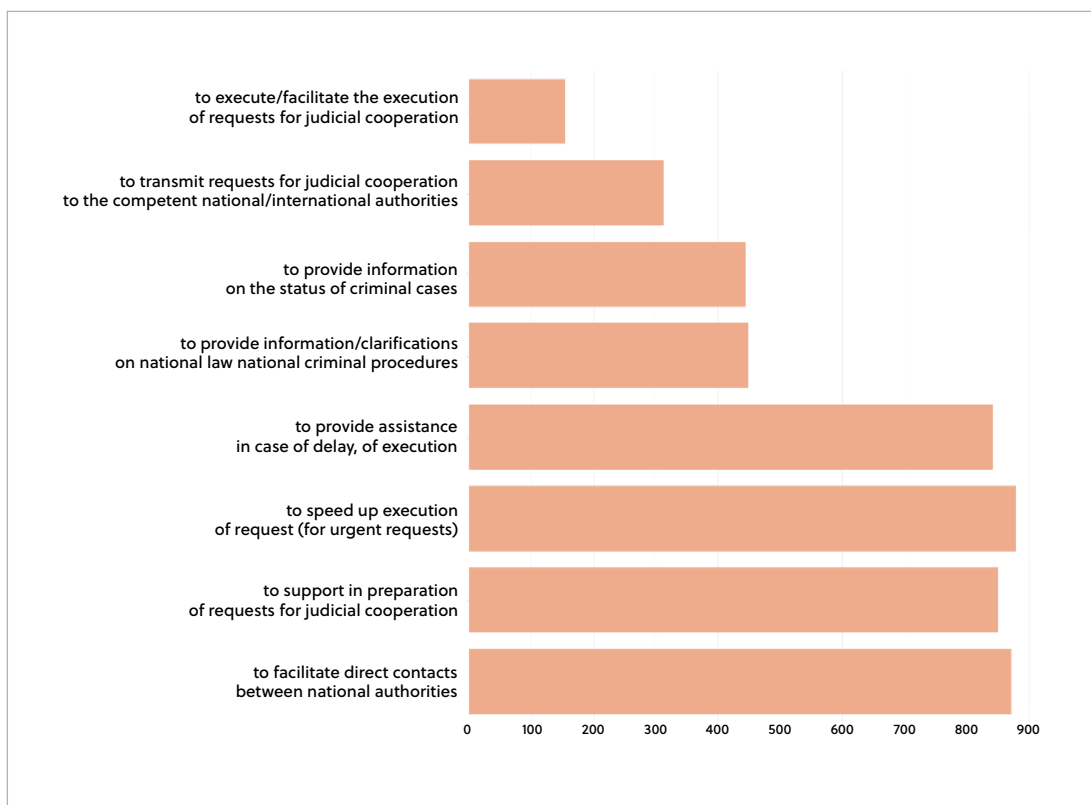
⁵ Available here: <https://www.ejm-crimjust.europa.eu/ejm/libdocumentproperties/EN/3389>

⁶ Available here: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/european-arrest-warrant-proceedings>

⁷ Directive 2014/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 regarding the European Investigation Order in criminal matters (OJ L 130, 1.5.2014, pp. 1–36). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014L0041>



2023-2024 EJO EIOs cases



Types of assistance requested for EIO cases, 2023-2024

The graph shows that nearly two-thirds of EIJ cases related to the European Investigation Order (EIO) in 2023-24 were initiated either to facilitate direct contact between national authorities or to assist in cases where the execution of an EIO was delayed or needed to be expedited. Other forms of support provided through the EIJ channel during this period included the transmission of requests to the competent authorities, as well as the provision of information on:

- applicable law and criminal procedures; and
- the status of the criminal cases concerned.

While initial challenges have been successfully addressed, notably with the support of the EIJ, certain aspects of the EIO's application remain unresolved. Over the last two years, discussions within the EIJ – during duly organised plenary and regional meetings (see below) – have focused on the Directive's scope, its interaction with other legal instruments, and identifying areas for improvement. These efforts aim to promote a more effective and coherent application of mutual recognition across all stages of criminal proceedings within the EU.

The following case illustrates the crucial assistance provided by the EIJ Contact Points urgent EIO requests.

Cooperation on an EIO case: Belgium and Germany

The EIJ Contact Points (CPs) in Belgium and Germany facilitated an urgent request for authorisation to continue observing and tracking a vehicle via GPS. It was believed that the vehicle would cross the German-Belgian border in the middle of the night. Given the urgency of the request, the issuing authority sent an EIO to Belgium via the EIJ Contact Points in Germany and Belgium. Upon analysing the EIO, the Belgian Contact Point realised there was no clear territorial link with the province of East Flanders, and consequently, their prosecutors lacked competence to authorise such a measure. The CP contacted another Belgian CP at the federal prosecutor's office, given its national competence and role as the central point of contact for EIOs that could not be territorially linked. The EIO was then transferred to this Contact Point, who proceeded with the execution.

1.3.1 Scope of the EIO Directive and coordination with the European Arrest Warrant

The EIO is designed to apply throughout all phases of criminal proceedings. However, under Articles 1 and 3 of the EIO Directive, its scope is restricted to evidence gathering. For instance, an EIO should be issued to obtain a copy of a judicial decision in money laundering investigations. However, its use becomes less clear in post-trial phases, such as gathering legal information to assess double criminality or evaluating the behaviour of a convicted person on parole.

At the 61st EIJ Plenary Meeting in Madrid in November 2023, most Contact Points indicated that they would execute an EIO even when some of the requested measures fall outside of the Directive's scope. Ultimately, the primary goal is to assist investigations – regardless of the form of the request, whether EIO or MLA – provided that all necessary information is submitted and fundamental rights are upheld.

However, the participants at the plenary emphasised that issuing authorities should not rely solely on the flexibility of executing authorities. They must carefully assess the legal basis and purpose of each request, selecting the most appropriate instrument and form, even if multiple instruments are needed.

In summary, EIJ Contact Points agreed that, as issuing authorities, they should maintain a strict stance on using the EIO solely for evidence gathering, while taking a flexible approach as executing authorities.

Regarding prioritisation, there is generally no distinction between requests based on form. EIOs and MLAs are treated equally, with prioritisation depending on urgency, the nature of the crime and the workload of the executing authority. Communication channels may differ, however, with direct communication being more common for EIOs than MLAs, which can affect execution times.

Discussions at the Plenary Meeting also explored the relationship between the EAW and the EIO. Most Contact Points agreed that an EAW is sufficient for executing authorities to locate and arrest a wanted person, whereas an EIO/MLA is only required if additional evidence is needed beyond the arrest and surrender.

In certain countries, an EIO/MLA may be necessary to locate a wanted person. In these cases, it may be more appropriate to use the EU 2000 Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, as its scope extends beyond evidence gathering. Coordination between the EAW and MLA/EIO is crucial, particularly when different authorities are involved in executing these instruments.

The temporary transfer of a person also highlights the interoperability between the EAW and EIO/MLA. Although videoconferencing is considered a less intrusive alternative to temporary surrender, it poses challenges:

- Some countries do not allow defendant hearings via videoconference.
- A representative from the executing authority is typically required during videoconferencing, but there may not be sufficient personnel to meet this need.
- Technical incompatibilities often hinder the successful implementation of videoconferencing.

1.3.2 Key challenges in applying the EIO Directive: Reflections in light of the 10th Round of Mutual Evaluations

The 10th Round of Mutual Evaluations aimed to examine not only the legal issues but also the practical and operational aspects of the implementation of the EIO Directive. At the 63rd EIJ Plenary Meeting held in Budapest, 6-8 November 2024, our Contact Points held in-depth discussions on the EIO in relation to other legal instruments, as well as some key practical aspects of implementing the EIO framework.

Videoconferencing

Participants discussed whether it is possible to hear an accused/defendant in a trial via videoconference through an EIO. Some countries accept using an EIO for this purpose, while others argue that such hearings should be requested via MLA. The reasoning behind this is that attending a court session is not evidence gathering and thus outside the EIO's scope.

Some participants suggested executing the EIO as an MLA request, as MLA is generally form-free.

Even if the accused prefers to attend via video, some jurisdictions would deny this request. Regarding the accused's presence at trial, the participants referred to the European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence, which clarifies that 'in person' can mean either physically present or via videoconference.

Practical concerns were raised, including how to verify the identity of the defendant and the location from which they connect, how to address perjury and how to determine applicable jurisdiction. It was emphasised that a judge must be present with the accused throughout the trial. In long or complex cases, this is time-consuming and burdensome, which argues against video attendance in such cases. However, videoconferencing may be an efficient way to ensure attendance in simpler cases.

Overall, due to the many issues involved, most participants favoured creating a new instrument rather than amending the EIO Directive.

Rule of speciality

The rule of speciality was discussed, especially regarding the use of police cooperation information as evidence. Is consent needed from the country that shared the information, and can such consent be requested via an EIO?

Opinions varied on applying the rule of speciality to the EIO. Many countries require consent to use police-to-police information in court. It was acknowledged that clarifications are needed on the rule's applicability to the EIO to facilitate judicial cooperation and avoid the proliferation of conditions.

Use of languages

The discussion covered countries accepting the EIO in multiple languages versus only their own. Translating documents before sending them was considered time-consuming and costly. A proposed solution was to generally allow the use of a 'widely used language'. Practical suggestions included accepting English, at least in urgent cases, as some countries already do. Experience has shown that translations from widely spoken languages into national languages often produce better quality results. It was highlighted that practitioners in international judicial cooperation generally communicate in English, though this does not always apply to other professionals involved in executing the EIO.

In conclusion, EIJN practitioners generally communicate in English, which is acknowledged as a widely spoken language.

1.3.3 EIJN regional meeting in Malmö, Sweden

On 28-29 September 2023, the Swedish Prosecution Authority hosted an EIJN meeting focused on MLA/EIO situations involving secret coercive measures, such as audio recording or GPS tracking, carried out in a suspect's vehicle that unexpectedly crosses a border. Prosecutors from Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Poland and Sweden participated in the meeting.

The discussion centred on situations where no technical assistance is required from the receiving state. Key questions included: What happens if the executing state does not have time to submit an MLA/EIO request in advance to seek permission for these measures? Can the receiving state authorise them afterwards? Is evidence already collected admissible in court?

The meeting also highlighted the differences in procedures across the participating countries. From the issuing state's perspective, understanding the receiving state's procedural and substantive rules is often critical. The phrasing of the request can be key to obtaining a positive response.

The limited number of participants fostered a productive and open dialogue, enabling practical solutions to be found. It was also noted that Annex C of the EIO, as well as Article 20 of the MLA Convention of 29 May 2000, might require a broader scope of applicability.

1.3.4 MEIOR Project

The MEIOR Project⁸, coordinated by KU Leuven with academic and expert partners, including the EJP, examined judicial scrutiny under the EIO to identify common standards and address challenges.

The findings show that the EIO generally functions well, though improvements are needed. A key proposal is the introduction of a new Annex E to help issuing authorities assess the lawfulness and admissibility of evidence received from abroad.

Other recommendations include:

1. Clarifying proportionality control at the point of issuance and distinguishing between domestic and cross-border dimensions.
2. Revisiting the categories of investigative measures, especially interceptions, and harmonising the definitions of digital evidence tools.
3. Amending Annex A to reflect the CJEU's *Gavanozov II* judgment, ensuring issuing states confirm the availability of legal remedies.
4. Clarifying the relationship between EIO execution, legal challenges and the secrecy of investigations.
5. Addressing the admissibility conditions (e.g. the principle of speciality) in the receiving state.

A professor from KU Leuven presented the project and its conclusions at the 63rd EJP Plenary Meeting following its closure in September 2024.

⁸ EU Justice Programme, ID 101046446.

1.3.5 Note on National Case Law regarding the EIO

This document, published in October 2024⁹, provides an updated overview of national case law related to the EIO, building on the Informal Note on EIO Case Law published in February 2022. The original Note was divided into two main sections: case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and national case law. Recognising the continued significance of national EIO-related case law, this updated Note focuses exclusively on developments in this area.

Eurojust and the EIJ Secretariat collaborated to compile relevant judgments, with contributions from Eurojust's National Desks and EIJ National Correspondents. These contributors were invited to:

- search their national databases for relevant EIO-related judgments issued by Supreme Courts;
- provide additional material from lower courts if deemed significant for the project, such as cases published or annotated in legal reviews; and
- verify whether the summaries of judgments included in the February 2022 Note should be retained in the updated version.

A total of 21 responses were received from the following Member States: BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI and SK. Eight of these Member States (BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, PL, PT and SK) provided relevant national judgments and/or summaries of their decisions. Where available, the full texts of these decisions have been uploaded to the EIJ Restricted Area.

The Secretariat carried out an exercise identifying all instances of recommendations made during the 10th RME relevant to the EIJ and will soon post the analysis on our website for the benefit of our Contact Points.

1.4 Mutual legal assistance

Beyond the European Investigation Order, EIJ Contact Points continued to support cooperation in MLA based on other legal instruments. In the 2023–2024 period, they reported 5 011 cases in which they assisted national authorities with MLA requests.

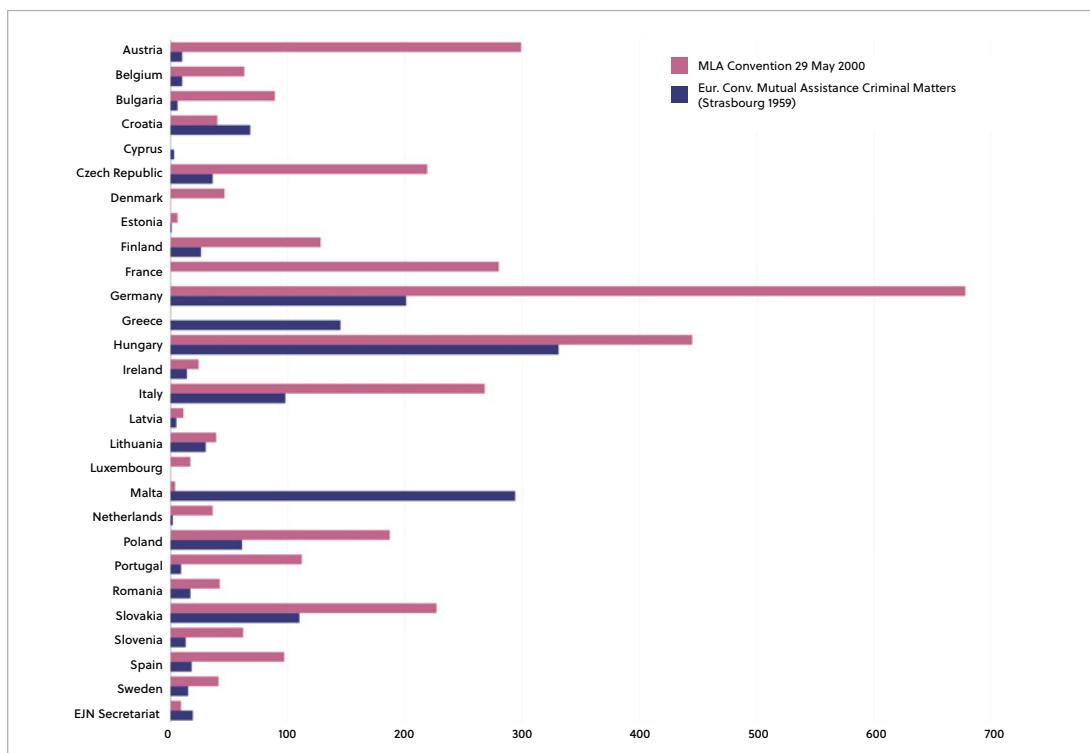
The most frequently used instrument was the EU Convention of 29 May 2000 on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters¹⁰, which remains applicable for cooperation with Denmark and Ireland, as these countries have not opted into the EIO Directive. Another widely used tool was the 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters¹¹, which was particularly important for cooperation with the United Kingdom and other non-EU countries.

The graph below provides an overview of the MLA requests handled by the EIJ in the 2023–2024 reporting period.

⁹ Note on National Case Law regarding the EIO – Eurojust and EIJ, October 2024 (Eurojust Limited)

¹⁰ Convention established by the Council in accordance with Article 34 of the Treaty on European Union, on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Member States of the European Union (OJ C 197, 12.7.2000, pp. 3–23). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A42000A0712%2801%29>.

¹¹ Council of Europe, European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (ETS 30, 20.4.1959). Available here: <https://rm.coe.int/16800656ce>.



EJM cases 2023-24 (MLA 2000 and CoE 1959 Convention)

1.6 e-Evidence

Acquiring and preserving electronic evidence is becoming increasingly crucial for criminal investigations and prosecutions across the European Union. Effective mechanisms for obtaining electronic evidence are essential for combating crime and ensuring full compliance with the fundamental rights and principles set out in Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.¹² These include the principles of necessity and proportionality, due process, the protection of privacy and personal data, and the confidentiality of communications.

Given the nature of network-based services, judicial cooperation requests are frequently directed to states that host numerous service providers. The increased use of these services has led to a surge in requests. Directive 2014/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council provides for issuing European Investigation Orders (EIO) to gather evidence in another Member State. The 2000 Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Member States of the European Union also enables evidence to be requested from another Member State. However, the procedures and timelines set out in both the EIO Directive and the 2000 Convention require the involvement of judicial and/or governmental authorities of the executing state, which may not be suited to the volatile nature of electronic evidence that can be deleted quickly. Consequently, obtaining electronic evidence through judicial cooperation channels often takes too long, potentially rendering leads obsolete. Moreover, the lack of a harmonised framework for cooperation with service providers results in a reliance on voluntary direct cooperation channels and varying national tools, conditions and procedures.

¹² Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012 O.J. (C 326), 391, Article 6. Available here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/char_2012/oj/eng.

This fragmented legal framework poses challenges for law enforcement authorities, judicial authorities and service providers, creating legal uncertainty and potential conflicts of law and jurisdiction. To address these issues, the European Union has introduced a new legislative framework for cross-border access to electronic evidence in judicial proceedings. The 'e-evidence package' includes:

1. Regulation (EU) 2023/1543¹³, which establishes rules and safeguards on European Production Orders and European Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal proceedings, applicable from 18 August 2026.
2. Directive (EU) 2023/1544¹⁴, which sets out harmonised rules for designating establishments and appointing legal representatives to gather electronic evidence in criminal proceedings, applicable from 18 February 2026.

These legislative acts provide specific rules for cross-border judicial cooperation and oblige service providers to respond directly to requests from authorities in another Member State. This Regulation complements existing Union law, clarifying rules for law enforcement, judicial authorities and service providers, while ensuring compliance with fundamental rights.

The EJM Secretariat is currently working to provide the necessary information to support the implementation of these instruments. Regarding the Regulation, the focus is on identifying the issuing, validating and transmitting authorities; the receiving and enforcing authorities; the authorities competent to handle reasoned objections raised by addressees; and the languages accepted for notifying and transmitting European Production and Preservation Orders (EPOC and EPOC-PR) for enforcement purposes. In relation to the Directive, the Secretariat will soon start collecting data on the Member States, in which the designated service provider establishments or legal representatives are located or reside, the languages in which these entities may be addressed, and the precise territorial scope of the designation or appointment of such establishments or legal representatives.

In parallel, the EJM Secretariat actively participates in the e-Evidence Regulation Expert Group meetings led by the European Commission's e-Evidence Team and contributes to discussions addressing the 'unresolved issues' identified by the Implementation Expert Group.

1.7 Freezing and confiscation

Freezing and confiscating instrumentalities and proceeds of crime are among the most effective tools for combating serious and organised crime. In line with the objectives of the Stockholm Programme – an open and secure Europe serving and protecting its citizens – the European Union is committed to enhancing the identification, confiscation and re-use of criminal assets. Due to the transnational nature of many crimes, effective cross-border cooperation is essential to ensure the swift and successful execution of freezing and confiscation measures.

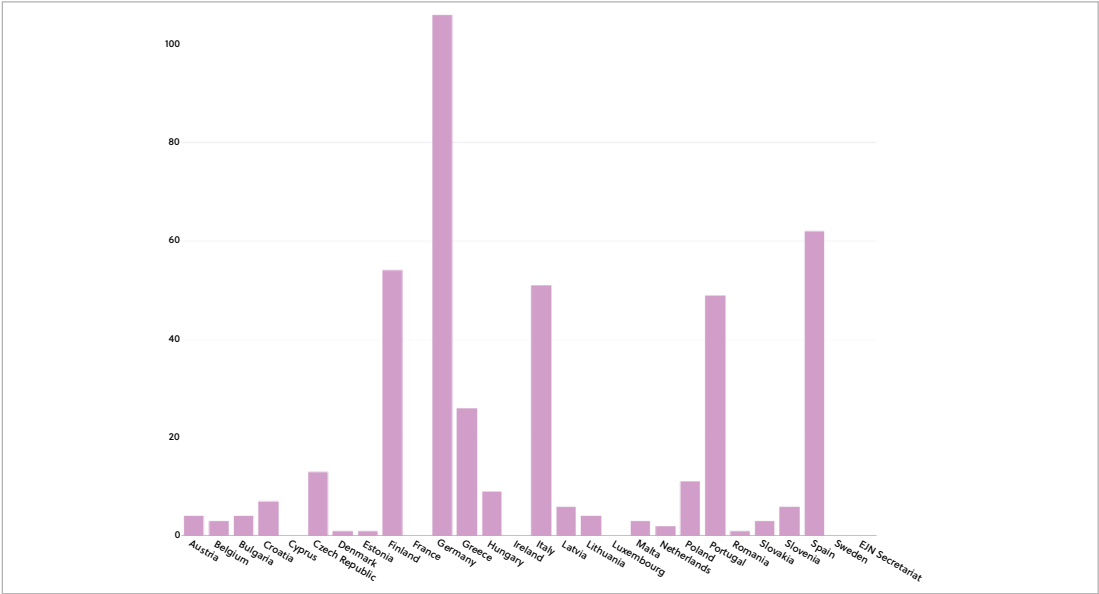
Since 2005, legal instruments have supported such cooperation, initially through Council Framework Decisions 2003/577/JHA (on freezing orders) and 2006/783/JHA (on confiscation

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2023/1543 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2023 on European Production Orders and European Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal proceedings and for the execution of custodial sentences following criminal proceedings. The Regulation is available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1543/oj/eng>.

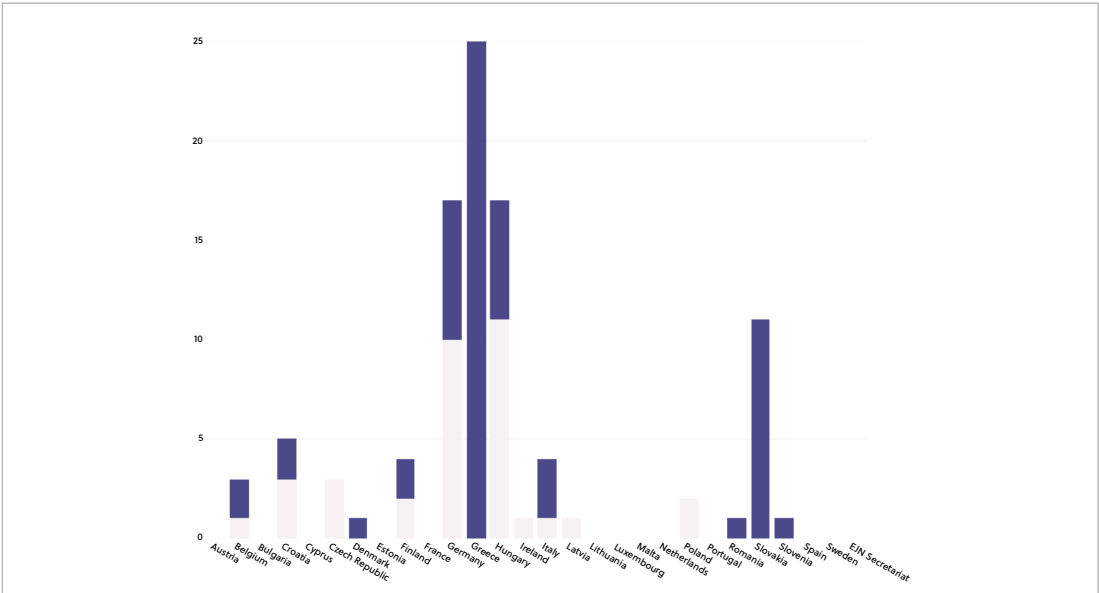
¹⁴ Directive (EU) 2023/1544 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2023 laying down harmonised rules on the designation of designated establishments and the appointment of legal representatives for the purpose of gathering electronic evidence in criminal proceedings. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/1544/oj/eng>.

orders).¹⁵ However, the European Commission later concluded that these instruments were not fully effective, largely due to inconsistent implementation across Member States. To address these shortcomings, these instruments have been replaced, except in Denmark and Ireland, by Regulation (EU) 2018/1805¹⁶ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the mutual recognition of freezing orders and confiscation orders. This Regulation came into effect on 19 December 2020.

Over the last two years, the EIJ Contact Points have reported 521 cases concerning freezing and confiscation; 425 of these cases were based on the Regulation.



EIJ Cooperation on cases Regulation 2018/1805, 2023-24



EIJ Cooperation on cases – Framework Decisions on freezing and confiscation (IE and DK) 2023-24

15 Council Framework Decision 2003/577/JHA of 22 July 2003 on the execution in the European Union of orders freezing property or evidence, OJ L 196, 2.8.2003, p. 45. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02003F0577-20030802> .

16 Regulation (EU) 2018/1805 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the mutual recognition of freezing orders and confiscation orders (OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 1-38). Available here: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1805/oj> .

The following conclusions are based on a dedicated workshop held in the framework of the 60th Plenary Meeting of the EJM, which took place from 12 to 14 June 2023 in Stockholm, Sweden. The workshop brought together EJM Contact Points from across the EU to examine ways to improve cooperation and identify current challenges in issuing and executing freezing and confiscation orders in cross-border cases.

A key point raised concerned the non-execution of orders due to missing or unclear information about the assets. Although the legal framework permits non-recognition in such cases, the majority of Contact Points agreed that executing authorities should consult issuing authorities before deciding not to execute a request, as encouraged by Recital 35. Most Contact Points confirmed that their national authorities adopt a flexible and cooperative stance, often seeking clarification on unclear or incomplete information, such as formatting issues or translation discrepancies, before refusing a request. This proactive and solution-oriented approach was widely endorsed.

Issuing authorities, on the other hand, were encouraged to submit accurate and detailed requests, particularly regarding asset descriptions and identifying information. The quality of information can significantly affect the ability of the executing authority to act swiftly, especially under time constraints.

The Contact Points identified a divide among Member States: some executing authorities actively search for assets despite vague information, while others require precise identifying details. Participants highlighted the importance of using existing channels, such as Asset Recovery Offices (AROs), the CARIN network and police cooperation platforms, for asset tracing. However, many Contact Points acknowledged limited awareness among practitioners about the support these networks can offer. To address this, several Contact Points suggested intensified cooperation between the EJM and ARO/CARIN, alongside training and awareness-raising initiatives.

Regarding restitution, the Contact Points noted that although Article 29 provides a clear legal basis, practical issues persist. Most agreed that victims' rights to restitution should be prioritised – even at the pre-trial stage, when ownership is not contested. Some Contact Points noted that in their countries, restitution is permitted prior to a final judgment. Nevertheless, challenges remain regarding compensation for victims due to national limitations on issuing freezing orders for this purpose and concerns over civil law liabilities. Additionally, the ability of non-judicial authorities to act post-trial varies among Member States, though their competence is generally recognised when formally notified under the Regulation.

Translation and urgency were also identified as major concerns. Contact Points stressed that the requirement for national language translations significantly delays execution, increasing the risk of assets vanishing. In response, several Contact Points shared good practices, such as the pre-arranged acceptance of English translations or the use of national measures, such as anti-money laundering legislation or the powers of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to secure assets temporarily. These alternatives were viewed as viable interim solutions for urgent cases.

The critical role of the EJM itself was widely acknowledged. The EJM website and the updated Fiches Belges tool provide foundational information on national procedures. However, many Contact Points admitted that the Fiches Belges format cannot fully capture the complexity of national rules on freezing and confiscation. As a result, practitioners often rely directly on Contact Points for clarification. This reaffirms the EJM's essential function as a bridge between authorities, helping to overcome practical obstacles through informal consultations.

Several Contact Points proposed strengthening ties between the EJM and the ARO/CARIN networks to improve operational effectiveness and information flow. Broader practitioner awareness of these networks was seen as vital to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-border asset recovery and confiscation efforts.

1.8 Transfer of proceedings

During Workshop II of the 63rd EJM Plenary Meeting in Budapest, the EJM Contact Points examined the evolving framework for the transfer of criminal proceedings. The discussions focused on the forthcoming EU Regulation, its expected impact and the practical concerns regarding its implementation. This mechanism has long been considered essential for judicial cooperation as it enables proceedings to be transferred to the most appropriate jurisdiction, thereby promoting efficiency, avoiding conflicts and ensuring the protection of fundamental rights by providing the most appropriate tribunal. However, its effectiveness has been hampered by divergent national systems, slow procedures and poor communication.

The proposed Regulation, part of the EU Strategy to Combat Organised Crime (2021–2025)¹⁷, seeks to replace the patchwork of existing legal instruments and establish clear, harmonised rules. The European Commission presented the proposal in April 2023, and a provisional political agreement was reached by the European Parliament and the Council in March 2024. Its adoption was expected shortly after the 63rd EJM Meeting, with application foreseen two years after the Regulation's entry into force. This initiative follows long-standing calls from EU institutions and responds to concerns voiced over the limitations of existing instruments, such as the 1959¹⁸ and 1972¹⁹ Council of Europe Conventions and the 2000 EU Convention.²⁰

The Hungarian Contact Points shared recent experiences in handling requests. Only around half of incoming requests for transfers were accepted, typically due to incomplete files, a lack of translation or the requesting authority's failure to conduct key investigative measures in its own jurisdiction. Outgoing requests were frequently rejected as well, often without justification, and in some cases, responses took more than six months. Identifying documents for translation was also cited as a recurring difficulty.

The Regulation aims to address these challenges by introducing new rules on coordination, communication, and deadlines. However, despite broad support for reform, practitioners voiced concerns that the new framework could increase administrative burdens, prolong proceedings and create additional costs. These concerns were reinforced by the broadened rights of suspects and victims, which, while an improvement in principle, could complicate and delay procedures. Translation requirements were identified as a key issue, particularly in cases involving large files or multiple languages. Similarly, the absence of clear, enforceable deadlines and procedural steps could lead to bottlenecks, and the expanded procedural obligations could place a particular strain on smaller or less-resourced Member States.

Another point of concern was the introduction of the principle of proportionality as a condition for initiating a transfer. While its inclusion aims to ensure that transfers are reasonable and justified, the lack of clear guidance could lead to inconsistent interpretations. Some feared that this could either exclude minor offences or result in an increase in discretionary refusals. Others noted that proportionality might require practitioners to assess whether another legal instrument, such as a European Arrest Warrant or a European Investigation Order, would be more suitable for the case at hand.

17 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025, Brussels, 14.4.2021, COM (2021) 170 final. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0170>

18 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 20 April 1959. Available here: <https://rm.coe.int/16800656ce>.

19 Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, ETS No. 99, 17 March, 1978. Available here: <https://rm.coe.int/1680077975>.

20 Council of the European Union. 'Convention of 29 May 2000 on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Member States of the European Union.' Official Journal of the European Communities, C 197, July 12, 2000, pp. 1-23. Available here: <https://www.ejm-crimjust.europa.eu/ejm/libshowdocument/EN/16/EN>.

Regarding the obligation to inform suspects and victims, the phrase ‘where appropriate’, which was previously supported by the EJM, was removed from the final text. The Regulation now requires that suspects be informed of the intended transfer and given the opportunity to express their opinion if they are in the requested state, unless doing so would endanger the investigation or they cannot be reached. A standard form to support this process has been introduced, but without a clear deadline for its execution. Some Contact Points questioned the practical value of this obligation, warning that it could discourage the use of the Regulation in favour of other tools perceived as simpler or more effective.

Workshop participants also discussed the role of central authorities, which, under the Regulation, may be designated to handle the administrative aspects of transfer requests. It was emphasised that, while these authorities can facilitate communication and coordination, decision-making power should remain strictly within the judiciary. The role of the EJM itself was noted as particularly important. The Regulation explicitly refers to the Network in several provisions, recognising its role in helping to identify competent authorities and facilitating communication across jurisdictions, particularly in situations where language or structural differences create barriers.

In light of the legislative developments and practical implications discussed, the EJM Contact Points welcomed the Regulation’s objectives but stressed the need for clarity, proportional application and strong coordination mechanisms to ensure the new system can deliver on its promise of more effective judicial cooperation in the EU.

1.9 Other mutual recognition instruments

The graph below shows EJM cases involving the application of mutual recognition instruments in operational terms. It is obvious that EJM Contact Points have experience with the application of all mutual recognition instruments. The graph shows that Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA on mutual recognition of judgments in criminal matters imposing custodial sentences²¹ is the most commonly used instrument by the EJM Contact Points in this respect, while the Directive 2011/99/EU on the European Protection Order²² is the least known and used one.

In the context of mutual recognition instruments, the EJM channel was primarily used to facilitate direct contact with the competent authorities. Additionally, EJM Contact Points provided assistance in several other forms of cooperation, including:

- the provision of information to prepare judicial cooperation;
- legal information and guidance on applicable national law;
- updates on the status of criminal proceedings; and
- support to expedite cooperation procedures.

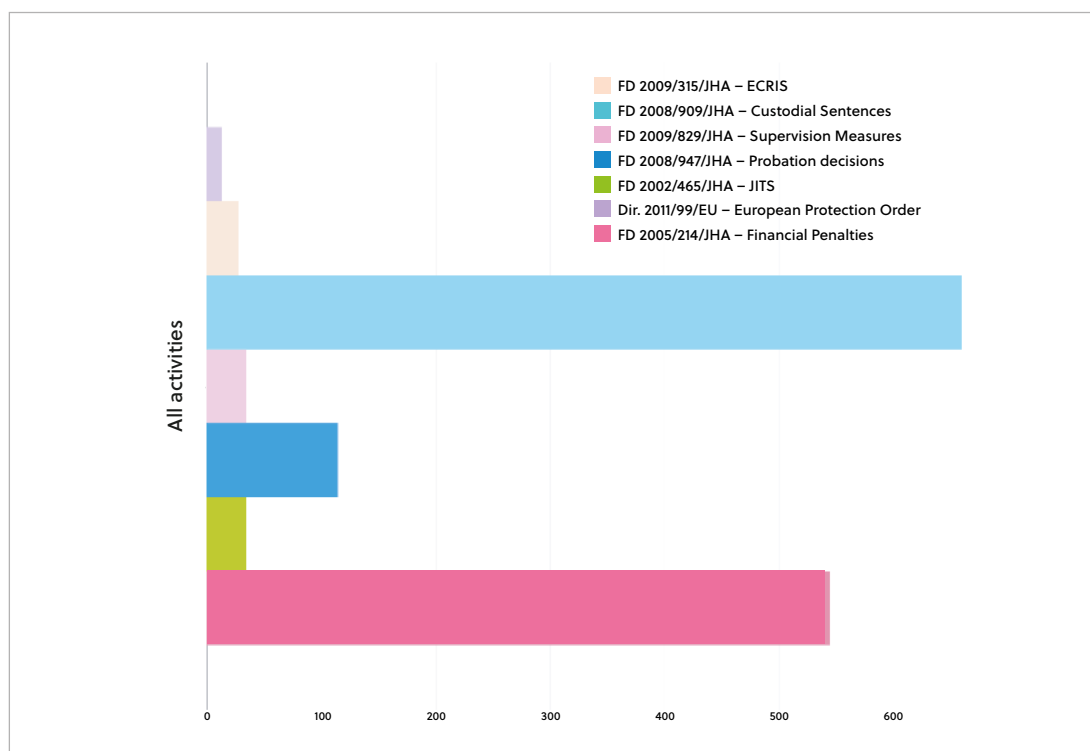
Notably, the EJM’s assistance was not limited to the implementation of Framework Decisions 2008/909/JHA and 2005/214/JHA²³. It also extended to Framework Decisions 2011/99/EU, 2008/947/JHA and 2009/829/JHA, despite their more limited application across the EU²⁴.

²¹ Council Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA of 27 November 2008 on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to judgments in criminal matters imposing custodial sentences or measures involving deprivation of liberty for the purpose of their enforcement in the European Union (OJ L 327, 5.12.2008, pp. 27-46). Available here: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2008/909/oj.

²² Directive 2011/99/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the European protection order (OJ L 338, 21.12.2011, pp. 2-18). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0099>

²³ Council Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA of 24 February 2005 on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to financial penalties. Available here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2005/214/oj/eng.

²⁴ Final report on the 9th round of mutual evaluations on Mutual recognition legal instruments in the field of deprivation or restriction of



EJN cases involving mutual recognition instruments 2023-24

1.9.1 Framework Decision 909/2008

Since its entry into force in 2008, Framework Decision 909/2008 (FD 909) on the transfer of custodial sentences has become one of the most frequently applied EU instruments in criminal matters. It serves as an alternative to the EAW, reducing unnecessary procedures and costs while safeguarding the rights of sentenced persons. FD 909 was evaluated alongside the EAW in the Council's 9th Round of Mutual Evaluations, after which the EJM collected related recommendations.

Despite its broad use, the procedure outlined in FD 909 continues to present legal and practical challenges that hinder its effective application. As a result, national judicial authorities often seek the assistance of EJM Contact Points. The 61st EJM Plenary Meeting in Madrid in November 2023 offered an opportunity to discuss these challenges, including execution deadlines, the consent of sentenced persons and the identification of competent authorities. The discussions aimed to promote consistent application, share best practices and explore how the EJM can support practitioners in this area.

Contact Points identified several obstacles encountered when acting as both issuing and executing authorities. On the executing side, common problems included missing or insufficient information in certificates, translation issues and a lack of details on sentences or provisional arrests. On the issuing side, delays in proceedings, requests for non-mandatory documents and difficulties related to subsequent short-term sentences were noted. Some jurisdictions also face internal procedural issues, such as the need to obtain deportation orders that are not issued together with the judgment. Participants acknowledged the value of online resources such as the EJM website, EuroPris²⁵, and the FRA database in supporting their work.

liberty, Council doc. 6741/23 (1 March 2023). Available here: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6741-2023-INIT/en/pdf>.
 25 The European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services. Available here: <https://www.europris.org/>.

EJN Contact Points play a key role in facilitating the use of FD 909, including helping authorities draft requests and advising them on the required information. They are also encouraged to raise awareness of available tools on the EJN website and to support training initiatives. Improved communication between the issuing and executing authorities is essential, especially in cases where the sentenced person consents to transfer. Contact Points often help to identify the competent authorities, particularly in light of the different organisational structures across Member States. Although the EJN Atlas provides this information, further training is needed to ensure practitioners use it effectively.

It was emphasised during the plenary workshop that the sentenced person's consent must be informed and based on a clear understanding of the legal consequences of transfer. Best practices include early-stage notification and multilingual information sheets, as well as cooperation with diplomatic missions to ensure consular support.

Social rehabilitation remains the guiding objective of FD 909, even though its interpretation varies across Member States. Relevant criteria include nationality, family ties, language skills, property and access to work. While the sentenced person is usually the primary source of such information, additional checks are often carried out by the issuing and executing authorities. The nature of these checks varies from administrative to judicial procedures, depending on national frameworks.

Translation requirements also vary. Under Article 23(1), only the certificate must be translated; judgments only need to be translated if essential information is missing. However, divergent practices persist regarding what constitutes 'essential parts' of a judgment, leading to delays due to additional consultations. Including national translation requirements in the EJN Fiches Belges was suggested as a way to streamline practice.

The relationship between FD 909 and other EU instruments poses further challenges. In particular, its interaction with Directive 2012/29/EU on victims' rights is unclear, as FD 909 predates the Directive and its implementation varies. While some Member States inform victims of a transfer or conditional release, others do not. The lack of uniform practice, especially regarding victim identification, was noted. Moreover, there are still unresolved legal questions regarding the relationship between FD 909 and the EAW Framework Decision, especially regarding Articles 4(6) EAW and 25 FD 909. Some Member States allow sentence recognition within the EAW procedure, while others require a separate certificate. A pending CJEU ruling is expected to clarify this.²⁶

1.10 Victims' rights

In recent years, the EJN has become increasingly involved in topics related to victims' rights, already under the Finnish and German Presidencies of the Council of the EU. In 2019, on the initiative of the Finnish Presidency, the EJN was mentioned in the Council Conclusions on Victims' Rights (adopted in December 2019), complementing the 2018 Council Conclusions on Victims of Terrorism adopted under the Bulgarian Presidency.

In the **Council Conclusions on Victims' Rights of 2019**, the Council emphasises that the 'cooperation between the European Network on Victims' Rights (hereinafter 'ENVR') and other relevant EU networks, such as the European Judicial Network', could be considered. The EJN had already been mentioned in the 2018 **Council Conclusions on victims of terrorism**. In these conclusions, the Council encouraged 'cooperation and synergies with ex-

²⁶ Request for a preliminary ruling from the Curtea de Apel București (Romania) 6 May 2022 – criminal proceedings against C.J., Case C-305/22.

isting EU structures such as the European Network on Victims' Rights, the European Judicial Network (EJN), EUROJUST and EU police- and crisis management networks'.

During the reporting period, the EJN has been closely observing developments in the legislation related to victims' rights, in particular the proposal by the European Commission to amend the Victims' Rights Directive²⁷ (VRD). The amendments proposed by the Commission aimed to help ensure that victims can fully benefit from their rights. The matter was discussed during the 62nd Plenary meeting of the EJN under the Belgian EU Presidency, which focused on the rights of victims in relation to the current legislation and the proposed changes.

In particular, the Contact Points observed that despite the harmonisation of the legislation, certain substantial differences remain in national legislation. One such highlighted aspect is the definition of 'victims'. Many EU Member States give victims formal legal status with a set of rights in proceedings. However, some Member States classify victims as 'injured parties' rather than victims. Certain Member States allow victims to participate as a party to the case, granting them rights similar to those of the prosecution and defence. Other Member States allow no such status or involvement. The EJN Contact Points observed that such differences in determining the legal status often cause inconsistencies when it comes to ensuring the procedural rights of the victims. The EJN Contact Points emphasised their willingness to support the full application of procedural rights for the victims of crime by facilitating the exchange of information between national judicial authorities in cross-border cases.

The importance of the respective roles of the EJN and Eurojust was discussed. The EJN was said to facilitate communication in relation to informing the victim. Eurojust was said to be in a position to assist in larger, more complex cases, such as terrorist attacks. The participants also stated that the EJN could be used to transmit the initial information or facilitate subsequent contacts. The potential role for the EJN in the proceedings could be different: for example, the EJN could facilitate the timely and proper exchange of information when a victim has returned to their state of residence, ensuring that the victim is informed about the process of making a complaint or a decision to terminate the criminal proceedings; the EJN could assist when a victim is exercising their right to a review of a decision not to prosecute; the EJN may also help when facilitating any communication regarding victims' compensation rights. Another suggestion was that the role of the EJN could potentially be mentioned in the revised directive during the revision of the VRD, namely in Article 17 concerning cross-border cases.

The full report²⁸ on victims' rights from this meeting was presented at the Working Party on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters (COPEN) in March 2025.

In addition, the EJN was invited to take part in the Symposium on Victims' Rights organised by Eurojust in 2024. The event brought together practitioners and representatives from national and other EU bodies to exchange best practices and discuss the challenges associated with the cross-border nature of cases.

27 Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

28 Available here: <https://www.ejn-crimjust.europa.eu/ejn/libdocumentproperties/EN/3984>.

1.11 International cooperation in the execution phase and the application of investigative measures in tracing and confiscating assets

The 62nd plenary meeting of the European Judicial Network, held in Antwerp from 10 to 12 June 2024 under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, brought together EJM Contact Points from all Member States and associated jurisdictions. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on persistent challenges and needs in the execution phase of judicial cooperation and asset recovery. The meeting was structured around two dedicated workshops: **Workshop I: 'Defining the framework for intensified cooperation in the execution phase'** and **Workshop II: 'Tracing assets: Tools & Network needs'**²⁹. These workshops provided a practical forum for Contact Points to exchange experiences and identify solutions rooted in daily operational realities.

Participants noted that, although significant progress has been achieved through mutual recognition instruments, their practical implementation remains inconsistent. Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA has not yet been fully utilised due to divergences in national implementation, a lack of familiarity with it and procedural burdens. Similarly, Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA continues to face challenges in its application, particularly with regard to court costs, asset-sharing and the enforcement of financial penalties where the executing state is not entitled to retain the recovered amount. Although Regulation 2018/1805 has introduced important improvements to the recognition of confiscation and freezing orders, in practice, it is still occasionally supplemented or substituted by other tools, such as the EIO or MLA, even in cases where the Regulation should apply exclusively.

Based on these exchanges, the EJM Contact Points formulated five formal recommendations aimed at improving practical cooperation, strengthening the legal framework and enhancing the tools available to judicial practitioners across the EU:

- a. The EJM recommends that when drafting the scope of future instruments and legislation, consideration be given to extending their application beyond the execution of custodial sentences to also cover the tracing of assets, the execution of confiscation orders and the enforcement of financial penalties. The Contact Points stressed that a more comprehensive legal basis is required to effectively tackle the financial dimensions of cross-border crime.
- b. The EJM recommends expanding the EJM Fiches Belges to include detailed, structured information on post-conviction asset tracing, including each Member State's national requirements for the recognition and execution of confiscation orders and financial penalties. Such an expansion would enable judicial authorities and practitioners to act more swiftly and in a legally sound manner, thereby contributing to the consistency and predictability of cross-border enforcement procedures.
- c. The EJM recommends that the European Commission establish an expert working group tasked with improving the exchange of information in the execution phase, as well as the tracing of criminal assets. In doing so, the group should consider using Privacy-Enhancing Technologies to facilitate secure and compliant data sharing between authorities. The group should also explore the possibilities offered by the Schengen Informa-

²⁹ Conclusions of Workshop I and II of the 62nd plenary meeting of the European Judicial Network (EJM) (Antwerp, 10-12 June 2024): international cooperation in the execution phase, applying investigative measures when tracing and confiscating assets, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 23 June 2025, 9682/25, COPEN 153.

tion System (SIS II) to support the swift and coordinated recognition and execution of judicial decisions.

- d. The EJM recommends that the Commission consider creating a new legal instrument that would enable the application of investigative measures during the execution phase, in order to effectively identify and trace criminal assets. This instrument should streamline procedures and reduce administrative burdens by providing practitioners with a single, comprehensive tool for identifying, tracing, freezing and confiscating assets, rather than requiring them to use separate mechanisms at each stage.
- e. Finally, the EJM urges the Commission to initiate a review of Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA, with particular attention to issues such as asset-sharing arrangements, the treatment of court costs and the alignment of its provisions with the principles and structure of Regulation 2018/1805. The aim should be to enhance the legal coherence and operational clarity between the two instruments and align the enforcement of financial penalties with modern standards of judicial cooperation.

In addition to these formal recommendations, the Antwerp plenary also highlighted the continued value of the EJM's practical tools, such as the Atlas, Judicial Library and Fiches Belges, as well as the essential role played by Contact Points in facilitating informal communication, resolving procedural misunderstandings and bridging gaps between national systems. The importance of consultation and early contact was underlined repeatedly, particularly in light of the delays or refusals that can occur when requests are transmitted without prior dialogue.

Discussions further revealed that in some Member States, freezing and confiscation measures are initiated too late in the proceedings or treated as secondary to the main criminal case. In other cases, the EIO is used in ways that go beyond its intended scope, often leading to confusion about the applicable procedure. The plenary, therefore, reaffirmed the need for clearer guidance and improved training for practitioners, especially regarding the selection of the appropriate instrument according to the procedural stage and legal objective. Greater consistency and familiarity with SIS II alerts for freezing and confiscation were also deemed necessary.

In conclusion, the 62nd Plenary Meeting in Antwerp reaffirmed the EJM's essential contribution to the development of a coherent and effective system of judicial cooperation in criminal matters. The five recommendations presented by the Contact Points provide a forward-looking and concrete roadmap for addressing the legal and operational gaps in the execution phase and in cross-border asset recovery. They also demonstrate the EJM's ability to not only identify practical shortcomings, but also to offer constructive, practitioner-driven solutions that promote mutual trust and improve the functioning of the European Area of Justice.

EJN COOPERATION BEYOND THE EU BORDERS

The EJN continues to strengthen judicial cooperation around the world by maintaining existing partnerships and building new professional ties with representatives from different continents and judicial systems. These efforts have been instrumental in improving operational cooperation on cases and creating mutual trust between judicial authorities in the EU and non-EU countries. The EJN maintains close relationships with regional judicial networks and their Contact Points. This enables direct contact with an even wider range of countries.

The intensified operational cooperation between the EJN and third countries is also reflected in the statistical overview shown below. During the reporting period 2023-24, the EJN facilitated more than 1 000 cases with over 75 third countries.

The example below is a good illustration of the EJN's operational efficiency in facilitating judicial cooperation with countries outside the EU.

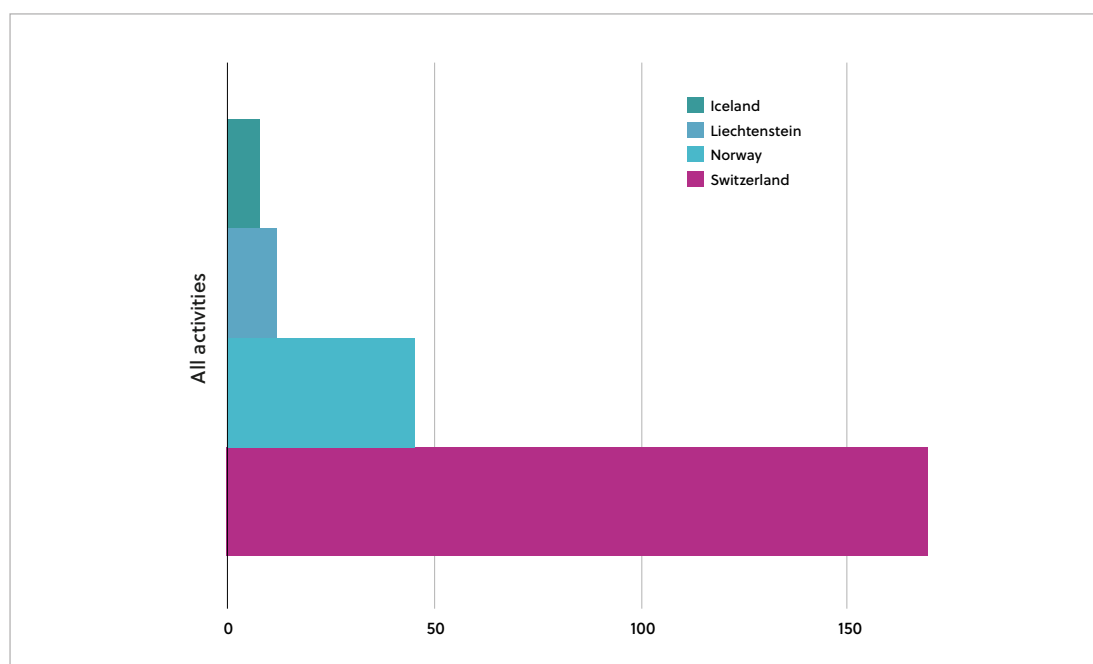
Cooperation outside the EU: Germany–Colombia

In the context of a drug trafficking prosecution, the German court had sentenced the perpetrator to 10 years and 3 months imprisonment and ordered the confiscation of EUR 430 000. The German investigating authorities suspected that the perpetrator was hiding the proceeds of his criminal activities in various banks in Colombia, where he had previously been detained. Before sending an MLA request to Colombia asking for the perpetrator's banking information, the German prosecutor contacted a German EJN Contact Point to ask whether such a request might be successful, whether there were any special legal requirements to be followed and how long the execution might take.

The German Contact Point approached a Chilean colleague met at the EJN Plenary Meeting in Madrid, who provided the contact details of a colleague at the Central Authority in Colombia. The CP was able to contact this Colombian colleague and received the requested information within a short period.

2.1 Cooperation with the EJN's associated countries

Over the years, the EJN has established and maintained close working relationships with its associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). Due to their territorial and historical proximity to the EU, there has always been intense cross-border activity between these countries and EU Member States. Such cross-border activities include criminality. The graph below illustrates the importance of judicial cooperation with these countries, showing the high volume of cases supported by the EJN Contact Points in these countries.



EJN Cooperation on cases with EJN Associated countries 2023-24

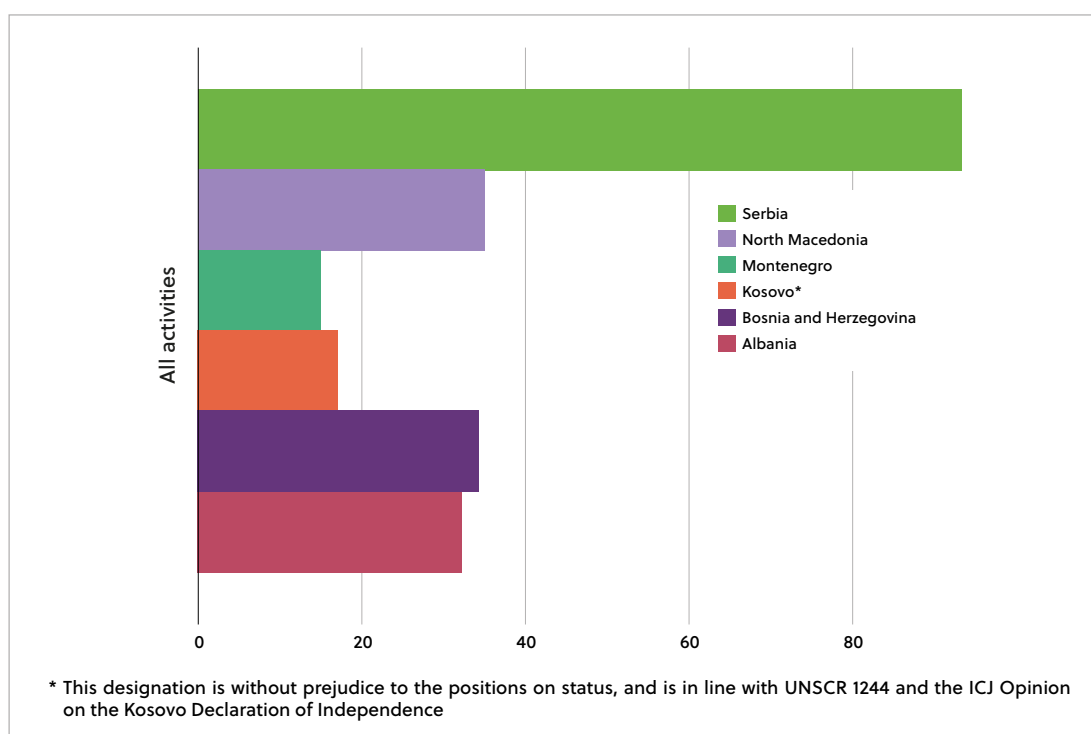
The following case illustrates the role of EJN Contact Points in facilitating communication between judicial authorities in EU Member States and EU associate countries to resolve issues arising from requests for judicial assistance.

Case of cooperation: Norway and Poland

The case concerned an arrest warrant issued by the Kingdom of Norway to be executed by Poland for charges of theft. The executing authority in Poland contacted the EJN Contact Point to request information about missing details regarding the acts described in the warrant, which are required in Poland. The descriptions did not indicate the value of the stolen property or the names of the victims, nor did they include a description of the perpetrator's modus operandi. With the help of the EJN Contact Points in Poland and Norway, the request for information was forwarded to the competent case officer in Norway, who provided the required information, along with a translation, for the Polish executing authority.

2.2 Cooperation with EU candidate countries: Western Balkans

The EJM continued to work closely with the Western Balkans region to strengthen cooperation and build mutual trust. Judicial authorities in the region have appointed EJM Contact Points in all branches of the judiciary. To ensure that the EJM Contact Points are fully integrated into the work of the Network, National Correspondents were also appointed in these countries. This closer cooperation has resulted in an increasing number of cases supported by the EJM Contact Points in the Western Balkans and the EU. During the 2023-24 reporting period, the EJM supported more than 220 cases involving the Western Balkans, as illustrated in the graph below.



EJM Cooperation on cases with the Western Balkans 2023-24

To foster cooperation and promote mutual trust, in 2023-24, the EJM continued to organise the annual meeting between the EJM Contact Points in the European Union and the Western Balkans. The meetings were of great importance to the EJM Contact Points, as they provided an opportunity to discuss and resolve outstanding legal issues in judicial cooperation, such as extradition and the exchange of evidence. The meetings were also an opportunity to foster mutual trust between judicial institutions in the EU and the Western Balkans, resulting in closer cooperation.



7th EJM meeting EU-WB Contact Points, Skopje 2024

On 12 April 2023, the 6th annual meeting dedicated to the cooperation with the Western Balkans, co-organised by the IPA2019 project, was organised in Budva, Montenegro. The meeting was opened by the Ministers of Justice of Montenegro and Serbia and focused on the challenges and solutions in human trafficking investigations between the EU and Western Balkan countries and on obtaining evidence from encrypted channels of communication.

On 12 September 2024, the EJM Secretariat organised the **7th annual meeting dedicated to cooperation with the Western Balkans** in Skopje, North Macedonia. The meeting brought together 45 EJM Contact Points from the Western Balkans and the EU (including CPs from 17 EU Member States), as well as representatives from the Ministry of Justice of North Macedonia. Discussions during the meeting centred on operational topics in judicial cooperation, with a specific focus on money laundering investigations. The Contact Points discussed the difficulties and legal obstacles to effectively investigating cross-border money laundering and asset tracing across borders, as well as the best practices adopted in their respective countries.

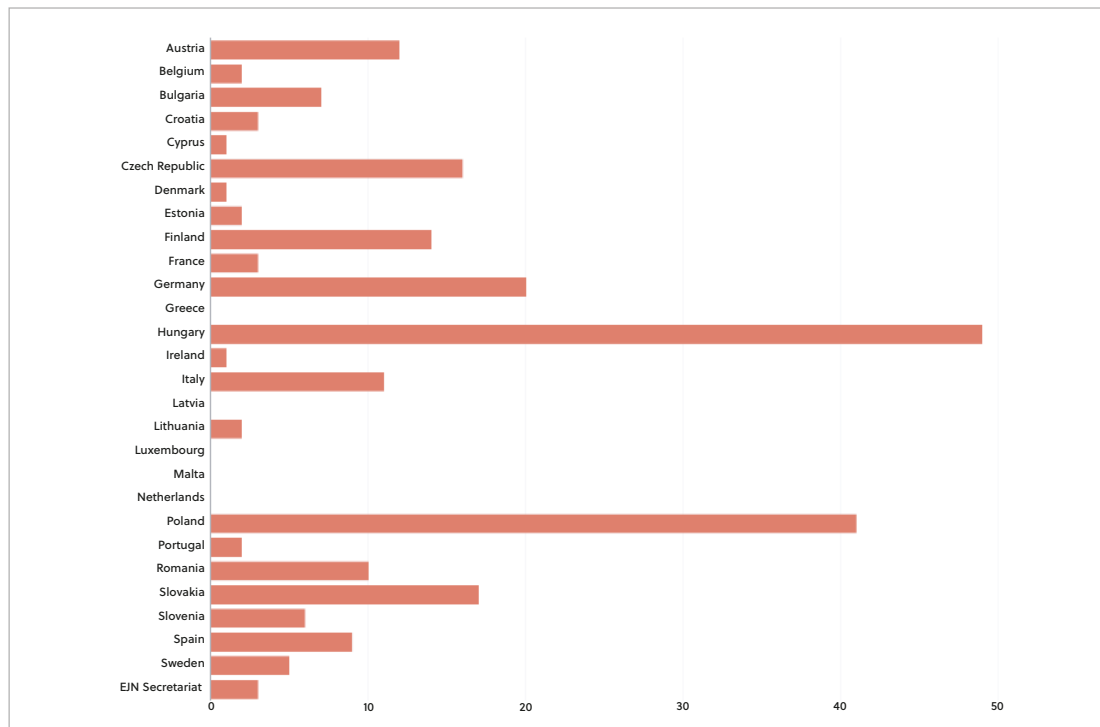
Alongside its efforts to develop the Network in the region, the EJM is continuously working on integrating the information on the legal systems of Western Balkan countries into the EJM website to facilitate the work of judicial practitioners. In particular, the EJM Fiches Belges for Montenegro and Serbia were launched on the EJM website in 2024. The project is ongoing in 2025.

Integrating the information on the legal systems of the Western Balkans on the website is one of the EJM's key initiatives in the region. The initiative is supported by one of the key EJM partners in the region – the Western Balkans CrimJust project.

2.2.1 United Kingdom and United States

The EJM continues to recognise the importance of maintaining close relationships with the judicial authorities in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). The EJM retains active Contact Points in both countries to facilitate cooperation on cases and to facilitate the establishment of direct contacts between the judicial authorities of the EU and those in the UK and the US.

Following Brexit, the Judicial Library of the EJM website has a dedicated [section for the UK](#) where judicial practitioners can find relevant documents, such as a summary table of UK competent authorities, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement³⁰ in all official EU languages, and the arrest warrant form, freezing and confiscation forms and the new standard form for requests for mutual assistance³¹. In addition, the EJM Secretariat has compiled notifications from the Member States regarding competent authorities and other useful documents for the work of judicial practitioners. The section also includes reports and practical guidance on cooperation with the UK.



EJM Cooperation on cases with the UK 2023-24

In addition to providing operational support on cases, members of the EJM participated in two high-level hybrid meetings hosted by Eurojust in November 2024. These meetings focused on surrender and extradition procedures with key third-country partners, namely the United Kingdom and the United States.

³⁰ Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, December 30, 2020. Available here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689\(1\)/oj/eng](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689(1)/oj/eng).

³¹ Decision No 1/2023 of 19 June 2023 establishing a standard form for requests for mutual assistance [2023/1621]. Available here: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/1621/oj>.

The first meeting (6–7 November) addressed the practical application of surrender procedures between EU Member States and the UK. UK representatives provided an overview of their country's legal framework on surrender, highlighted common legal and procedural challenges, and shared best practices to enhance cooperation. The event brought together participants from 29 countries, facilitating direct exchanges between practitioners.

The second meeting (7–8 November), organised in cooperation with US partners, focused on extradition. The US delegation presented best practices and led an interactive drafting exercise for an extradition request. The session was attended by representatives from 26 EU Member States and 7 third countries, reflecting strong international engagement.

The active involvement of EJM Contact Points in both meetings helped to strengthen mutual understanding, promote practical solutions, and improve the daily application of surrender and extradition procedures. These events provided EJM members with a valuable opportunity to share expertise, establish operational connections, and reinforce the Network's supporting role in facilitating cooperation between the EU and third countries on criminal matters. They also served as a valuable reminder to other practitioners of the EJM's role in international judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

2.2.2 Latin America and partnerships with Europe Latin America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime (EL PACCTO)) and the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP)

The judicial authorities in EU Member States have emphasised the importance of maintaining close operational relationships and partnerships with the authorities in Latin America, as well as with the regional structures in the region. The EJM has been requested on multiple occasions to support requests for judicial cooperation between the EU and Latin America due to the growing need for close cooperation. Most commonly, the EJM was requested to facilitate direct contact between the judicial authorities.

Cooperation with Latin America was also one of the main topics discussed by the Network during the 63rd EJM Plenary meeting that took place under the Spanish EU Presidency. In particular, the EJM Contact Points discussed the common threats and challenges faced by both regions in tackling serious and organised criminal groups, and how cooperation between the two regions can be improved, taking into account legal, procedural and cultural barriers.

One of the issues identified by participants was the need for improved channels of communication. Much communication continues to be conducted through diplomatic channels. However, based on the treaties, it is often possible to address the request directly to the competent authority, and those direct channels should be used where applicable. Even when central authorities are involved, direct communication and direct contacts ensure a better understanding of the request and its requirements, and provide any necessary information or clarification during execution. Direct communication and direct contacts can speed up the execution of requests. In this respect, the support and central importance of the EJM and the regional partners were emphasised.

AIAMP

Over the reporting period, the EJM maintained a close operational relationship with the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP). The AIAMP aims to strengthen ties of solidarity and professional development, and promote international cooperation among its member public prosecutor offices. AIAMP has been an instrumental partner in establishing direct contacts between the judicial authorities in the EU and Latin America.

From 25 to 27 June, the EJM attended the AIAMP Annual General Meeting, which was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The meeting was organised in cooperation with REDCOOP (Red de Cooperación Penal), AIAMP's network for cooperation in criminal matters. Sponsored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the conference brought together delegates from Europe, South America and Central America to discuss the optimisation of REDCOOP and to agree on its future development. Following this meeting, the EJM and the AIAMP began drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration and foster closer contacts between the two entities, thereby enhancing operational cooperation. The Memorandum was signed in 2025.

Europe Latin America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime

The Europe Latin America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime (EL PACCTO) is an international cooperation programme funded by the European Union. It seeks to promote security and justice in Latin America by supporting the fight against transnational organised crime. EL PACCTO addresses the entire criminal chain from a comprehensive perspective through its work in three components: police, justice and penitentiary. During the reporting period, the new EL PACCTO 2.0 was launched, and both the EJM and the programme expressed their mutual interest in sharing best practices in judicial cooperation as well as in participation in projects of mutual relevance.

In 2024, the EJM took part in the launching event of EL PACCTO in Panama, and later received a delegation from the programme's management. The two entities have directly supported the establishment of direct contacts between the judicial authorities of the EU and Latin America on several occasions. This successful cooperation continued with a number of events in 2025.



Visit of EL PACCTO delegation

Another EL PAcCTO initiative involving the EJM aimed to foster judicial cooperation in the Caribbean region. Several online interactions have taken place with Caribbean colleagues, culminating in the First Strategic Caribbean Focal Point Meeting, which took place in person in July 2024. It is anticipated that the EJM will work closely with EL PAcCTO and Caribbean practitioners to explore ways to increase cooperation, trust and best practices. The benefits to the region and the EU are significant, and the EJM is honoured to take on this role.

2.2.3 South East Asia

In October 2023, the EJM and Eurojust hosted a study visit in The Hague for Contact Points of the South East Asia Justice Network (SEAJust). Representatives of the EJM Presidency Board and the EJM Secretariat presented the Network's structure and operations, the role of EJM Contact Points, and how to use the EJM website and operational tools in practice. Participants from SEAJust expressed their appreciation for the EJM's support and reported a number of successful past interactions with EJM Contact Points, confirming their commitment to deepening cooperation.

Building on this positive engagement, the EJM took part in the 2023 SEAJust Plenary meeting, held in Seoul, South Korea and the 2024 SEAJust Plenary Meeting, held from 27 to 29 August in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Organised by the UNODC and the Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor of Lao PDR, the meeting brought together practitioners from across the region to discuss international cooperation in criminal matters.

The EJM was represented by the Head of the EJM Secretariat, who contributed as a speaker and panellist.

During the event, bilateral meetings were held with counterparts from Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Vietnam, reaffirming their commitment to operational collaboration. These engagements reflect the longstanding relationship between the EJM and SEAJust, which was further strengthened in May 2023 with the launch of the electronic evidence fiches developed jointly by SEAJust and the EJM Secretariat.

Together, these activities demonstrate the EJM's continued support to global judicial cooperation and its pivotal role in promoting dialogue and knowledge exchange beyond EU borders.

EJN MEETINGS

EJN meetings³² remain of central importance to the functioning of the Network. The EJN Contact Points have emphasised their value on numerous occasions. These meetings are essential to the Network as they facilitate the development of mutual trust and lasting professional ties, which contribute significantly to the successful resolution of pending cases referred to the EJN Contact Points. These meetings also provide an opportunity for Contact Points to discuss practical and legal issues and exchange their experiences of applying mutual recognition instruments. Such opportunities for open exchanges and discussions with fellow practitioners can help Contact Points to overcome legal and practical issues that arise in their daily work.

Crucially, the EJN's meetings offer a forum for discussion not only among EU practitioners, but also those from EU candidate countries, EJN associated countries and other non-EU countries. Their involvement in our meetings fosters judicial cooperation beyond the EU's borders. Other participants include the institutions, agencies (such as Eurojust, European Public Prosecutor's Office, OLAF, FRA), EU funded projects, the UNODC and non-Contact Point practitioners. The political and strategic relevance of the Network's meetings is also highlighted by the attendance of the Ministers of Justice and the Prosecutors General at the meetings.

As set out in the EJN Decision, practical experience gathered from discussions at EJN meetings is shared with the EU institutions, providing an invaluable insight into the practical application of the EU instruments in the field of judicial cooperation and highlighting difficulties in the interpretation of the provisions. Agendas are carefully created to address the most pertinent and pressing issues regarding the implementation of legislation, identifying best practices and forming a consensus on the best approaches to the many challenges arising from investigating and prosecuting serious cross-border criminal acts. The format of the various meetings has evolved over many years and depends on the particular type of meeting and the invited audience.

In 2023-24, over 20 EJN meetings took place, including two Plenary Meetings in 2023 under the Swedish and Spanish Presidencies and two Plenary Meetings in 2024 under the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies. The EJN has also organised smaller meetings of working groups as well as training sessions for the EJN Contact Points.

The EJN Secretariat continuously strives to ensure that meetings contribute to the EJN's collective knowledge base and seek improvements through event evaluation, while continuously raising awareness of the Network and its various e-tools for practitioners. This includes raising awareness among relevant officials who are not EJN Contact Points, but who work in the field and contribute significantly to our shared goal of facilitating judicial cooperation in criminal matters across borders and fighting impunity.

32 Art 5, Council Decision 2008/976/JHA on the European Judicial Network, 16 December 2008.

3.1. EJM presidencies 2023:

3.1.1 Swedish Presidency

60TH PLENARY MEETING, 12-14 JUNE 2023, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN



The **60th Plenary Meeting of the European Judicial Network**, held under the Swedish Presidency, took place in Stockholm from 12-14 June 2023. This occasion marked the 25th anniversary of the Network. Approximately 130 EJM Contact Points and partners participated in discussions on the latest issues relating to judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Discussions and panels focused on topics such as:

- obtaining evidence from encrypted channels;
- transfer of proceedings;
- aspects of the application of the EAW and freezing orders.

The meeting also included a panel discussion on EU-US judicial cooperation, addressing relevant practical challenges and best practices.

The Plenary conclusions were presented at COPEN on 21 September 2023 by the Secretary of the EJM.



60th EJM Plenary Meeting, 12-14 June 2023, Stockholm, Sweden

OTHER EJM MEETINGS UNDER THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY:

The **44th Regular Meeting** of the European Judicial Network took place at Eurojust's premises in The Hague on 16 February 2023. The event was attended by 60 participants who discussed the following topics:

- Application of the EIO in light of recent CJEU case law (*Gavanozov II*, *Encrochat*);
- Extradition of EU citizens to third countries (*Petruhhin*);
- Potential difficulties regarding in absentia judgments;
- Regulation (EU) 2018/1805 on mutual recognition of freezing and confiscation orders;

The **22nd Tool Correspondents Meeting** of the European Judicial Network took place on 30 March 2023 at Eurojust's premises. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss matters relating to the EJM website:

- Improvements to the Contact Points Tool and Reporting Tool, the EJM Secure Connection and the connection with the e-Evidence Digital Exchange System (e-EDES);
- Integrating non-EU countries and networks into the redesigned website;

3.1.2 Spanish Presidency



61st PLENARY MEETING, 7-9 NOVEMBER 2023, MADRID, SPAIN

The **61st Plenary Meeting** of the EJM took place in Madrid on 7-9 November 2023. Approximately 130 EJM Contact Points attended to discuss developments in judicial cooperation. The topics central to this meeting's discussions were as follows:

- Challenges and opportunities posed by digitalisation in relation to the EIO and other instruments;
- Practical problems and best practices for cooperation between the EU and Latin America;
- Custodial sentences and measures involving deprivation of liberty.

At the end of the meeting, solutions, best practices and proposals for improvement were formulated for each topic. EJM Contact Points were also informed about the Spanish Judicial Cooperation system, as well as cooperation with IberRed and EL PACCTO.



61st EJN Plenary Meeting, 7-9 November 2023, Madrid, Spain

The Plenary conclusions were presented to COPEN on 20 November 2024.

OTHER EJN MEETINGS UNDER THE SPANISH PRESIDENCY

On 4 October 2023, the **15th National Correspondents Meeting** of the EJN took place at Eurojust's premises under the Spanish Presidency. Updates were exchanged on matters such as:

- The EJN's activities in 2023 and plans for 2024-25;
- The state of play on the EJN Working Groups;
- The state of play on the EJN cooperation with the Western Balkans.

Other items addressed included the nomination of an EJN Contact Point within the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), as well as updates on the EJN Reporting Tool and the EJN website.

3.2. EJM Presidencies 2024:

3.2.1 Belgian Presidency



62nd PLENARY MEETING, 10-12 JUNE 2024, ANTWERP, BELGIUM

The 62nd Plenary Meeting of the European Judicial Network took place in Antwerp, Belgium, from 10 to 12 June 2024. This meeting primarily focused on the following topics:

- International cooperation in the execution phase, alongside the application of investigative measures for tracing and confiscating;
- Victims' rights in the EU;
- Cooperation with EL PACTO, the EPPO and the FRA.

In preparation for the meeting, the Belgian Presidency circulated a questionnaire to the Member States to gather information for the post-execution tracing and freezing workshop, which was then used to inform the conclusions.

The conclusions were presented to COPEN on 30 June 2025.³³



62nd EJM Plenary Meeting, Antwerp, Belgium

³³ Available here: <https://www.ejn-crimjust.europa.eu/ejn/libdocumentproperties/EN/3987>.

OTHER EJM MEETINGS UNDER THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY:

On 29 February 2024, the **45th Regular Meeting** of the European Judicial Network, chaired by the Belgian EJM Presidency, took place in The Hague. Approximately 50 EJM Contact Points from the EU and EU candidate/associated countries attended the meeting and exchanged information on the latest developments in their national legal framework and case-law related to international judicial cooperation. The EJM Secretariat provided an update on various matters, including:

- Projects related to the EAW, victims' rights and e-evidence;
- New developments on the EJM website and upcoming website-related projects;
- The EJM's involvement in the legislative process in relation to transfer proceedings and victims' rights.

Prior to the meeting, the EJM Presidency Board met, followed by the kick-off meeting of the EJM Working Group on the Future of the EJM.

On 4 April 2024, the **23rd Tool Correspondents' Meeting** took place at Eurojust's premises in The Hague. The EJM Secretariat presented the state of play on the EJM website developments, and the following matters were discussed:

- A roadmap of the projects planned for implementation in 2024-25;
- The new EJM Reporting Tool, which facilitates the collection of data and the reporting of EJM cases;
- Amendments to the website's e-tools (Atlas, Fiches Belges and Compendium) regarding participants' respective countries;
- Issues encountered in the back office of the EJM website were addressed and resolved.

The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for the Tool Correspondents to give useful feedback to the EJM Secretariat.



23rd Tool Correspondents Meeting, 4 April 2024

3.2.2 Hungarian Presidency



63rd PLENARY MEETING, 6-8 NOVEMBER 2024, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

The **63rd Plenary Meeting** of the European Judicial Network took place in Budapest, Hungary, on 6-8 November. Approximately 130 participants attended the meeting, which facilitated discussions on international judicial cooperation and continuous assistance between national judicial authorities. Various discussions took place on matters such as:

- The implementation of the EIO;
- Practical issues and experiences regarding the transfer of criminal proceedings and extradition with third countries.

A panel discussion on the implementation of the European Investigation Order (EIO) was held with representatives of the EJM Contact Points and the Council of the EU, following the 10th Round of Mutual Evaluations. The EJM Contact Points, EJM Partners, EU Institutions and EU Agencies were also given the opportunity to share updates on international judicial cooperation. The conclusions were presented at COPEN on 30 June 2025.



63rd EJM Plenary Meeting, Budapest, Hungary

OTHER EJM MEETINGS UNDER THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

On 2 October 2024, the **16th National Correspondents Meeting** of the EJM took place at Eurojust's premises in The Hague, the Netherlands. National Correspondents from Member States gathered for a productive discussion on matters related to the management of the Network and ongoing EJM projects. Among the matters addressed were:

- Updates on the EJM Unit Plan and developments on the website;
- The extension of the mandate of the EJM Presidency Board's elected members, which was adopted unanimously;
- Amendments to the rules of membership of the Presidency Board, under which two additional members may now be elected;
- Amendments to the Guidelines on the EJM Meetings, relating to the financing of plenary meetings.

Cooperation of the EJM with third countries, partners and other judicial networks.



16th National Correspondents Meeting, 2 October 2024

3.3. EJN judicial training

In 2023 and 2024, the EJN Secretariat continued to organise the annual EJN Legal English Language Training course for EJN Contact Points:

- The **13th Legal English Language Training** for EJN Contact Points took place on 22-24 February 2023 in Rome, Italy. The training was organised in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Justice. The main theme of the event was trafficking in human beings and the application of the EIO. EJN Contact Points from 17 EU Member States took part in the training.
- The **14th Legal English Language Training** for EJN Contact Points took place on 10-11 April 2024 in Lublin, Poland. The training was organised in cooperation with the Polish National Prosecutor's Office. Particular focus was given to legal terminology in English and substantive legal topics such as cybercrime, the EAW and the EIO, as well as the legal and funding aspects of joint investigation teams (JITs). EJN Contact Points from 18 EU Member States took part in the training.

The Legal English Language Training Course is tailored to the needs of the EJN Contact Points and provides instruction on legal English vocabulary to assist with EJN case work, as well as presentations and discussions on substantive legal topics surrounding judicial cooperation.



TOOL CORRESPONDENTS' TRAINING

The EJN Secretariat, together with the colleagues from Eurojust's web team, hosts annual training sessions for the EJN's Tools Correspondents. These training sessions are essential for keeping Tool Correspondents up to date with the relevant functions and operations of the website's back office and e-Tools. The EJN website is widely recognised for its practical and informational value among practitioners in the European Union and far beyond. The contribution of the Tool Correspondents is essential for ensuring that the website content for each Member State is reliable and up to date.

On 14 December 2023 and 3-4 December 2024, the Tool Correspondents' training took place at Eurojust's premises. Led by the web team and Bilbomatica, participants engaged in the following training sessions:

- Creating and updating information on new authorities in the Atlas;
- Updating information in the Fiches Belges and in the Contact Points tool;
- Insights on new tools, such as the Reporting Tool;
- Specialised training for newly appointed Tool Correspondents was also provided to give them basic knowledge of the back office and the EJN.

3.4. EJM Regional and National Meetings in 2023-24

The EJM Secretariat provides funds for Contact Points in the Member States to organise national or regional EJM meetings, fostering engagement, strengthening the Network at the national and regional levels, providing opportunities to discuss judicial cooperation issues. These meetings also raise awareness among relevant national stakeholders and practitioners of the work of the EJM and the e-tools. As the EJM Contact Points have emphasised on numerous occasions, regional meetings have proven to be one of the most popular formats for meeting, exchanging experiences and finding solutions to problems in the field of judicial cooperation.

EJM Regional and National Meetings in 2023-24

DATE AND PLACE	MEETING	COUNTRIES INVOLVED	TOPICS DISCUSSED
26-28 April 2023 Linz, Austria	EJM Regional Meeting	Austria, Germany	Digitalisation of justice and its consequences for international cooperation and the role of the EJM
9 May 2023 Berlin, Germany	The 23rd Annual Meeting of the German EJM Contact Points and the 11th Annual Berlin Regional Meeting	Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland	Enforcement of foreign judgments – sanctions involving the deprivation of liberty, apart from prison regime
31 May-1 June 2023 Madrid, Spain	EJM Regional Meeting	Andorra, Portugal, Spain	Best practices for improving international cooperation instruments, such as the EIO, and practical issues regarding asset recovery and confiscation
18-20 September 2023 Martuljek, Slovenia	EJM Regional Meeting	Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia	Digitalisation within judicial cooperation, e-evidence and data retention, obtaining evidence on the basis of an EIO, integrity in international judicial cooperation
28-29 September 2023 Malmö, Sweden	EJM Regional Meeting	Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden	Practical handling of some secret cross-border coercive measures
9-10 October 2023 Warsaw, Poland	3rd Regional Meeting of EJM Contact Points	Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Slovak Republic, Sweden, United Kingdom	Victims' rights in light of Regulation 2018/1805 on the mutual recognition of freezing and confiscation orders – role of the EJM Contact Points in solving practical problems in connection with the implementation of the right to compensation and restitution in cross-border cases

9 April 2024 Paris, France	EJN National Meeting	France	Roles of different actors in judicial cooperation in cross-border criminal matters, best practices and possible improvements
21 April 2024 Berlin, Germany	24th Annual Meeting of the German EJN Contact Points and the 12th Annual Berlin Regional Meeting	Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland	Transfer of proceedings in criminal matters
6-7 June 2024 Vukovar, Croatia	EJN Regional Meeting	Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia	International judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance with a focus on organised crime, money laundering and migrant smuggling
7-8 October 2024 Warsaw, Poland	4th Regional Meeting of EJN Contact Points	Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, United Kingdom	The role of the EPPO and the potential for enhanced cooperation with the EJN. The support provided by the EJN in relation to the conclusions from the 10th Round of Peer Reviews on the European Investigation Order



EJN Regional Meeting 2023, Linz, Austria



23rd Annual Meeting of the German EJN Contact Points and 11th Annual Berlin Regional Meeting, 9 May 2023, Berlin, Germany



EJN Regional Meeting, 31 May-1 June 2023, Madrid, Spain



3rd Regional Meeting of EJN Contact Points, 9-10 October 2023, Warsaw, Poland



24th Annual Meeting of the German EJN Contact Points and the 12th Annual Berlin Regional Meeting, 21 April 2024, Berlin, Germany



EJN Regional Meeting, 6-7 June 2024, Vukovar, Croatia



4th Regional Meeting of EJM Contact Points, 7-8 October 2024, Warsaw, Poland

3.5 Welcome meeting for newly appointed EJM Contact Points

To ensure a smooth introduction for newly appointed EJM Contact Points, the EJM Secretariat organises an annual induction meeting where participants learn more about their role, the EJM e-tools and EJM cooperation on cases in practice. The EJM Secretariat uses the opportunity to share information on the EJM Reporting Tool and the resources available on the EJM website.

EJN WEBSITE AND DIGITALISATION OF JUSTICE

According to Articles 7-9 of the EJM Decision, the administration and maintenance of the EJM website is a core task of the EJM Secretariat. According to the Decision, the EJM Secretariat will ensure the website's overall functionality and security, as well as the proper functioning of existing tools. This is to be achieved through support and technical management by the website contractor, in collaboration with relevant Eurojust units.

The EJM Secretariat is responsible for updating certain sections of the website on a permanent basis, including the Judicial Library (status of implementation of EU legal instruments) and other information, such as the News section, About EJM, Info to Contact Points (CPs), EJM Meetings, Registry, Funding for EJM meetings and the Partners section. The EJM Tool Correspondents, who are nominated by each Member State, are responsible for keeping the information about their country and the content in the EJM Tools up to date.

Over the last two years, the EJM Secretariat has continued to prioritise the permanent updating of the e-tools, as well as assessing the need for further developments in view of new legal instruments regarding judicial cooperation in criminal matters. In addition, the redesign project for the EJM website continued. The redesign of the EJM website began in June 2019, when the EJM Secretariat presented the EJM with a list of necessary improvements, such as replacing outdated technical solutions and addressing security concerns, and carried out a survey among the stakeholders to assess their needs. The project, therefore, involves redesigning the front-end and back-office of the EJM website. In addition, the project aimed to ensure a consistent look and feel across the entire site. The EJM website redesign project was necessitated by outdated security and technical standards, as well as the needs of users.

In 2023, considerable effort was devoted to updating the security standards of the website, which were to be applied horizontally by Eurojust to all its IT projects. As a result, part of the budget allocated to the EJM website was used to implement this task.

Against this background, the following developments were implemented in 2023-24:

- 1. Fiches Belges:** The redesigned Fiches Belges was launched in March 2023. In addition, over the course of 2023-24, Fiches Belges for Western Balkan partners were also composed in cooperation with these partners. By the end of the reporting period, Fiches Belges had been launched for Montenegro and Serbia; those for other partners will follow in 2025.
- 2. Judicial Atlas:** The redesigned Atlas, which was launched in March 2023, includes information on multiple measures in EIOs/MLAs. The new Atlas was also based on the updated list of investigative measures in the Fiches Belges tool.
- 3. Compendium:** The redesigned Compendium, which matches the new look and feel, was launched in March 2023.
- 4. The My EJM page for the EJM CPs:** The 'My EJM page' was launched on the EJM website in December 2023. Apart from providing information about the EJM Contact Points, it also has functionalities to fulfil data protection requirements that were previously handled through paper 'consent forms'. These associated functionalities enable the EJM CPs to update their own profile information directly, for example, without having to request

an update from a Tool Correspondent in their country or the EJM Secretariat. They also allow the EJM CPs to express or withdraw consent regarding their personal data and how it is used for specified purposes.

5. **Cooperation with partners and networks:** The page was deployed in December 2023. The development of the non-EU countries and partner networks resulted in the migration of the external domain to the EJM website and fulfilled the data protection requirements in providing to the EJM Contact Points the contact details of judicial authorities/Contact Points outside the EU. The second phase of the development of the tool is ongoing.
6. **Reporting tool:** A completely renewed reporting tool was launched in 2024, offering an enhanced user experience and meeting technical requirements.
7. **Section on Judicial Training:** The EJM Secretariat has introduced a new dedicated section on judicial training, where training opportunities in the field of judicial cooperation, as well as our partners' training catalogues, are to be published.

The screenshot displays the 'FICHES BELGES' web application. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME / FICHES BELGES / FICHES BELGES DETAIL'. Below this, the main header reads 'FICHES BELGES'. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Left Sidebar:** Contains a back arrow, 'Judicial cooperation measure', and a dropdown menu 'Select another measure'. Below this, it lists 'C. EAW', 'European Arrest Warrant (C.1)', and 'C.1 European Arrest Warrant (for transit please see F.1)'.
- Right Section:** Shows flags for 'HUNGARY' and 'LUXEMBOURG'.
- Main Content Area:**
 - Measure Implementation:** A list of links: 'Legal Framework', 'Competent Authority', 'Accepted languages', 'Execution deadline', and 'Concise legal practical information'.
 - MEASURE IMPLEMENTATION:** A section titled 'Is this measure possible in your Member State under International Judicial Cooperation?'. It contains text about the Budapest Capital Regional Court making the decision on the execution of the EAW, with an appeal possible within 3 days, and the Budapest-Capital Appeal Court making the final decision.
 - Yes:** A note stating: 'Yes. Judicial decisions issued by a judicial authority with a view to the arrest and surrender of a requested person, for the purposes of conducting a criminal prosecution or executing a custodial sentence or detention order.'

New EJM Fiches Belges

With regard to the **digitalisation of justice** in the EU, the Council's e-Justice Strategy emphasises the importance of promoting the exchange of innovative experiences among Member States as a means to realise mutual benefits at both the national and European levels³⁴.

On 13 December 2023, the European Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) 2023/2844 on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice in cross-border civil, commercial and criminal matters (Digitalisation Regulation), which entered into force on 16 January 2024.³⁵ The Digitalisation Regulation is accompanied by Directive (EU) 2023/2843, which amends certain legal acts with respect to the digitalisation of judicial cooperation. The Digitalisation Regulation stipulates that communications between competent national authorities, or between national authorities and EU bodies/agencies, must be carried out via a decentralised IT system. Member States will be able to use this software developed by the Commission (currently known as JUDEX and previously known as e-EDES³⁶) or develop their own IT system to integrate with e-CODEX³⁷.

³⁴ C/2025/437, point 71.

³⁵ Regulation (EU) 2022/850 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2022 on a computerised system for the cross-border electronic exchange of data in the area of judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters (e-CODEX system).

³⁶ JUDEX was previously referred to as e-EDES: Electronic Evidence Digital Exchange System.

³⁷ e-CODEX: digital infrastructure for secure cross-border communication in the EU in the field of justice.

Furthermore, in its conclusions on artificial intelligence in justice, the Council also supports the sharing of information and collaboration among Member States on its use in the judicial field³⁸.

The EJN's involvement in related topics has remained modest. Regarding JUDEX/e-EDES, by the end of the reporting period, it was agreed that the EJN itself would not be integrated into the architecture and deployment setup, and that EJN data would be imported into the Central Database (CDB) on a 'one-off' basis. In addition, by the end of the reporting period, there had been no updates on the e-Justice platform and no follow-up on implementing the Council Conclusions regarding cooperation between the EJN website in criminal matters and e-Justice (13407/13).

³⁸ ST 16933 2024 INIT, point 20.

FUNCTIONING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EJNI

5.1 EJI Presidency Board – extension of the Presidency Board

The EJI Presidency Board plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective functioning of the European Judicial Network. Its responsibilities include maintaining continuity, setting priorities and providing strategic guidance to the EJI Secretariat in managing the Network's activities.

In line with the principle that the EJI is governed by its Presidency Board, the EJI Secretariat proposed, and the National Correspondents approved, during the 16th National Correspondents Meeting of the EJI (The Hague, 2 October 2024) the election of two additional members to the Presidency Board. These new members will serve a two-year term, concluding on 31 December 2026.

The election of the two additional Presidency Board members took place in January 2025, in accordance with the rules initially established for the 2022 extension of the Presidency Board, as amended to reflect the recent decisions of the National Correspondents regarding the further extension of the Board. The newly elected Presidency Board members are the National Correspondents from Sweden and Spain.

It was also decided to extend the tenure of the two members who joined the Presidency Board following the 2022 extension (National Correspondents from Germany and Finland). Their term will now continue for an additional two years, also concluding on 31 December 2026. This extension ensures continuity and enables these members to continue to contribute their valuable expertise and experience.

Together, the perspectives of the extended and newly elected members will strengthen the EJI's role in fostering judicial cooperation, reinforcing cross-border legal frameworks, and upholding the rule of law across Europe and beyond.

5.2 EJI Secretariat

The EJI Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the EJI.³⁹ The Secretariat forms part of the Eurojust staff, but functions as a separate unit⁴⁰ that enjoys autonomy⁴¹.

³⁹ Article 2 (8) of the EJI Decision.

⁴⁰ Article 25a (b) of Council Decision 2002/187/JHA of 28 February 2002 setting up of Eurojust with a view to reinforcing the fight against serious crime, as amended by the Council Decision 2003/659/JHA and by Council Decision 2008/426/JHA of 16 December 2008 on the strengthening of Eurojust (OJ L 63, 6.3.2002, pp. 1-13). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32002D0187>.

Article 48 (1) (b) of regulation (EU) 2018/1727 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and replacing and repealing Council Decision 2002/187/JHA (OJ L 295, 22.11.2018, pp. 138-183.) Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1727>.

⁴¹ Recital 20 of the Council Decision 2009/426/JHA of 16 December 2008 on the strengthening of Eurojust and amending Decision 2002/187/JHA setting up Eurojust with a view to reinforcing the fight against serious crime (OJ L 138, 4.6.2009, pp. 14-32). Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009D0426>.

In practical terms, the tasks of the EJM Secretariat, as the administrative body of the EJM, include:

- ensuring the proper administration of the EJM with a view to enabling the EJM Contact Points to fulfil their tasks and maintain the EJM identity;
- supporting the EJM Presidency Board;
- setting up, maintaining and improving the EJM website;
- coordinating information from the EU Member States to ensure the EJM e-tools include the most up-to-date information, such as the EJM Atlas, Fiches Belges, the EJM Judicial Library, the Compendium, the status of the implementation of EU instruments and information about national systems;
- drafting documents related to the activities of the EJM (including reports referred to in Article 13 of the EJM Decision);
- organising and supporting EJM meetings to build the Network and improve judicial co-operation;
- keeping a general up-to-date record of projects and decisions taken within the EJM;
- providing support to the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council in relation to the organisation of the meetings;
- collecting and analysing the EJM Contact Points' practical experience of applying EU judicial cooperation instruments and providing feedback to the EU institutions;
- sharing information on the challenges, achievements, difficulties and any other issues of general interest to the EJM with the EJM Contact Points on a permanent consultation basis (e. g. through a newsletter);
- preparing action plans for new and ongoing EJM projects after consulting with national correspondents;
- maintaining a close partnership with Eurojust in the spirit of complementarity;
- establishing and maintaining relations with other bodies and structures in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, both within and outside the European Union;
- organising Legal English Language Training for EJM Contact Points;
- training judicial authorities, EJM Contact Points and EJM Tool Correspondents on the resources on the EJM website; and
- promoting the EJM, including presenting the EJM in meetings, conferences and other events organised by partners in third countries or international organisations, both within and outside the European Union.

In the 2023-24 period, the Secretariat consisted of six staff members: a Secretary to the EJM, an EJM Secretariat Coordinator, a Legal Specialist, a Seconded National Expert, a Legal Assistant and an Administrative Assistant.

5.3 EJM budget

The total budget for the EJM activities in 2023 and 2024 was set at EUR 435 000 per year. As part of the savings for 2020, the Eurojust College decided in June 2019 to limit the contribution from the EJM budget from EUR 50 000 to EUR 35 000 per meeting. This remained in place until amended. At the end of 2024, the budget for the EJM Plenary Meetings was brought back to EUR 50 000 per meeting as of 2025; hence the reporting period was not affected.

2023:

ANNEX: EJM SECRETARIAT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023 – BUDGET FORECAST/REQUESTED	
OBJECTIVES & ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES	BUDGET
Objective 1: EJM meetings	
1.1 Organisation of the 60 th and 61 th Plenary meetings	70,000.-
1.2 Organisation of the 44 th Regular meeting	29,000.-
1.3 Organisation of the 15 th National Correspondents meeting	17,000.-
1.4 Organisation of the 22 nd Tool Correspondents meeting	17,000.-
1.5 Organisation of Presidency board meetings and EJM Working Group meetings	10,000.-*
Objective 3: Functioning of the EJM contact points	
3.2 Providing support for the organisation of EJM meetings in the Member States	40,000.-
3.3 Language training for the EJM Contact Points	30,000.-
3.4 Report on the EJM activities	4,000.-
Objective 4: Administration and enhancement of the EJM website	
4.1 Maintenance and enhancements and updates of the EJM website	167,000.-**
4.5 Provide direct and regular support to the EJM Tools Correspondents	6,000.-
Objective 5: Increasing awareness of the EJM	
5.1 Activities to increase awareness of the EJM	3,000.-
5.3 Publication regarding the EJM 25 th Anniversary	2,000.-
Objective 6: Cooperation with other actors in the field of judicial cooperation	25,000.-
Support EJM Contact Points to participate in activities with other Networks/partners	10,000.-
Ensuring the proper administration of the EJM	
Various administrative costs	5,000.-
GRAND TOTAL	435,000.-

2024:

ANNEX: EJM SECRETARIAT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024 – BUDGET FORECAST/REQUESTED	
OBJECTIVES & ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES	BUDGET
Objective 1: EJM meetings	
1.1 Organisation of the 62 nd and 63 rd Plenary meetings	70,000.-*
1.2 Organisation of the 45 th Regular meeting	29,000.-
1.3 Organisation of the 16 th National Correspondents meeting	17,000.-
1.4 Organisation of the 23 rd Tool Correspondents meeting	17,000.-
1.5 Organisation of Presidency board meetings and EJM Working Group meetings	12,000.-**
Objective 3: Functioning of the EJM contact points	
3.2 Providing support for the organisation of EJM meetings in the Member States	40,000.-
3.3 Language training for the EJM Contact Points	30,000.-
3.4 Report on the EJM activities	4,000.-
Objective 4: Administration and enhancement of the EJM website	
4.1 Maintenance and enhancements and updates of the EJM website	167,000.-***
4.5 Provide direct and regular support to the EJM Tools Correspondents	6,000.-
Objective 5: Increasing awareness of the EJM	
5.1 Activities to increase awareness of the EJM	3,000.-
Objective 6: Cooperation with other actors in the field of judicial cooperation	25,000.-
Support EJM Contact Points to participate in activities with other Networks/partners	10,000.-
Ensuring the proper administration of the EJM	0
Various administrative costs	5,000.-
GRAND TOTAL	435,000.-

5.4 EJN Working Group on the Future of the EJN

In response to recommendations from the EJN Peer Evaluation Action Plan⁴² and discussions held during the 60th EJN Plenary Meeting, the EJN established the Working Group on the Future of the EJN in 2023. The aim of the Working Group (WG) is to strengthen the EJN's position in judicial cooperation by exploring the Network's further development and its cooperation with partners. The WG also seeks to analyse the functions and governance of the EJN. The WG is tasked with evaluating key areas critical to the future of the EJN, structured around five core categories:

1. **Governance** – examining decision-making processes, the role and composition of the Presidency Board, and engagement with non-EU countries and networks.
2. **Legislation** – reviewing the EJN's legal basis, its involvement in the Eurojust Regulation and its role in national legislative processes.
3. **EJN-Eurojust cooperation** – improving the methodology for case allocation and joint reporting, including potential updates to existing cooperation agreements.
4. **Judicial training** – identifying training needs for Contact Points and strengthening partnerships with institutions such as the Academy of European Law (ERA), the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and national judicial schools.
5. **Functioning of the EJN** – enhancing national-level engagement, reviewing the appointment of Contact Points, and updating awareness and communications strategies, including the EJN website.

Each category is explored by a dedicated sub-group working in parallel, with deliverables such as revised policy documents, analytical reports and new strategic proposals developed for collective review and adoption by the full WG. The sub-groups can meet virtually to discuss and draft proposals, which are then validated at in-person WG meetings and subject to final approval through written consultation with National Correspondents. Priority topics for each sub-group are determined at the outset, with timelines coordinated by the EJN Secretariat.

In 2025, as a follow-up to the EU Commission initiative on the Future of EU Criminal Justice, the EJN Working Group was extended to include a sub-group on the Future of EU Criminal Justice.

⁴² The report is accessible here: https://www.ejn-crimjust.europa.eu/ejnupload/CMT/DynamicPages/EJN_Peer_Evaluations_FinalReport.pdf.

COOPERATION WITH EU INSTITUTIONS AND PARTNERS

6.1. Cooperation with EU institutions

In 2023-24, the EJM continued its close cooperation with EU institutions, aiming to contribute to their initiatives in the field of judicial cooperation by providing input on judicial practitioners' practical experience of applying the EU legal framework. The EJM has appointed Contact Points in the EU institutions to ensure the smooth exchange of information. Officials from the EU institutions take part in the EJM Plenary Meetings, presenting the EU legislative updates and focus areas in the field of judicial cooperation.

6.1.1 The European Commission

Survey: Lisbonisation in the area of mutual recognition in criminal matters

The EJM was invited to contribute to a survey in support of an exploratory study on the possible 'Lisbonisation' of former third pillar acquis in the area of mutual recognition in criminal matters, conducted on behalf of the European Commission Directorate General for Justice and Consumers. This study had two objectives: 1. To assess the legal transposition and practical implementation of seven existing Framework Decisions in the area of mutual recognition in criminal matters, focusing on problem areas and best practices. 2. To explore, based on these findings, the potential need and feasibility of further EU action in this area, including the possibility of new legislative initiatives. The survey was distributed to EJM Contact Points, who provided input as judicial practitioners applying these instruments on a daily basis.

Evaluation of the Eurojust Regulation

The EJM was invited to take part in the evaluation of the implementation and impact of the Eurojust Regulation (EU) 2018/1727 (EJR)⁴³, and of the effectiveness and efficiency of Eurojust and its working practices. There was an extraordinary response to the survey from the Contact Points, which was noted by the Project Managers. The Secretary to the EJM was interviewed by the evaluators, while some of the EJM Contact Points were involved in a more in-depth analysis (Focus Groups) related to their practical experience with operational work on cases, as well as their cooperation with Eurojust National Desks.

Overview of bilateral MLA/extradition treaties

At the request of the European Commission, the EJM Secretariat has taken responsibility for regularly updating the overview of bilateral MLA and extradition treaties between EU Member States and non-EU countries. This overview is now available on the EJM website⁴⁴. It allows the national authorities, judicial practitioners and EU institutions to have a comprehensive overview of bilateral cooperation and possibilities for judicial cooperation outside the EU.

⁴³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1727 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and replacing and repealing Council Decision 2002/187/JHA

⁴⁴ Available here: <https://www.ejm-crimjust.europa.eu/ejm/libdocumentproperties/EN/3868>.

6.1.2 The Council of the European Union

Council Conclusions on the Cooperation with non-EU countries

In June 2024, the Council of the EU adopted *Council Conclusions on strengthening judicial cooperation with third countries in the fight against organised crime*⁴⁵. In its Conclusions, the Council acknowledges the efforts of Eurojust, the EPPO and the EJM to expand engagement and partnerships with third countries to facilitate judicial cooperation, and finds that additional measures are needed to further improve judicial cooperation with third countries in the fight against organised crime. To complement the measures taken by Member States at the bilateral level in their engagements with third countries, the Council has invited Eurojust, 'in consultation where appropriate with the EJM, Europol and the EPPO, to collect and assess information on the countries with which reinforced cooperation is of particular importance for the fight against organised crime, and to transmit the results to the Council and the Commission for discussion'. To ensure follow-up of the Council Conclusions and the identification of third countries where reinforced cooperation is needed, the EJM Secretariat, Eurojust and the EU Commission worked together to compile a questionnaire for the national judicial authorities. The questionnaire aimed to collect information on the cooperation with third countries in the Member States and was disseminated via the Eurojust National Desks to the central authorities in the Member States.

Furthermore, in its Conclusions, the Council invites the EJM, as a second step, to organise exchanges of experience and best practices between experts from the Member States regarding judicial cooperation with priority third countries. Work on this is ongoing in 2025.

10th Round of Mutual Evaluations

In preparation for the 10th round of Mutual Evaluations, which are dedicated to the EIO, the EJM Secretariat provided comments on the questionnaire at the request of the COM in November 2021. The Council Secretariat presented the final report⁴⁶ and Conclusions from the evaluations during the 63rd EJM Plenary meeting under the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The EJM Secretariat has compiled the recommendations related to the EJM.

11th Round of Mutual Evaluations

In preparation for the 11th Round of Mutual Evaluations, the EU Council's Mutual Evaluations Unit compiled a draft questionnaire to address the operational and legal challenges faced by judicial and law enforcement authorities in combating illicit drug trafficking in the European Union. The EJM was invited to submit comments and remarks on the proposed questions to the General Secretariat of the Council and was later formally included in the evaluations as an observer. The evaluations are ongoing in 2025 and 2026.

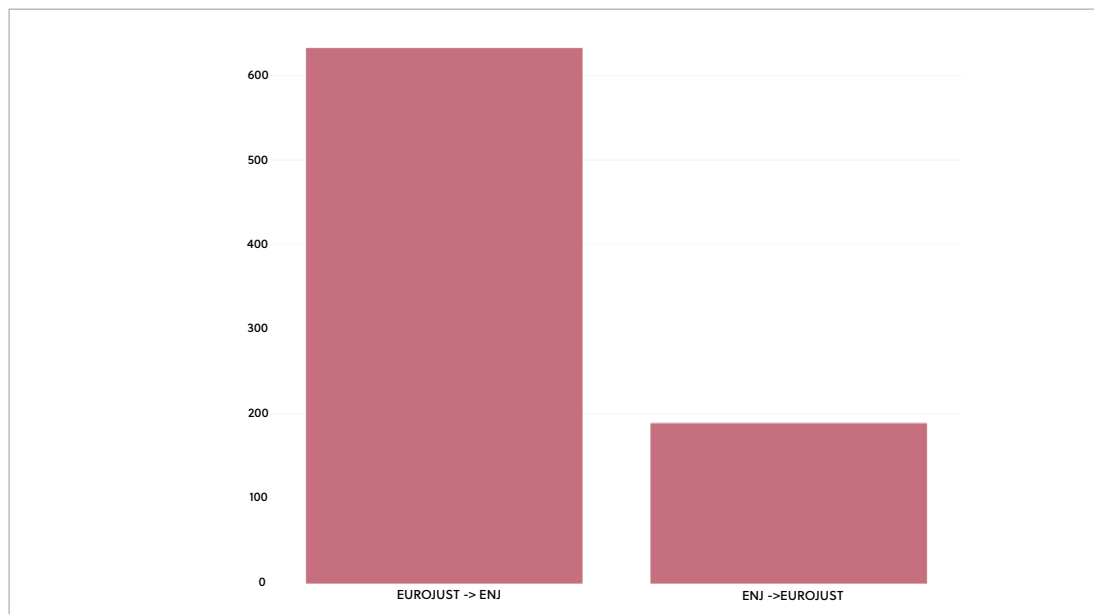
6.2. Cooperation with Eurojust

As provided for in Article 10 of the EJM Decision and Article 48 of the Eurojust Regulation, the EJM and Eurojust maintain privileged relations. These are based on consultation and complementarity, which have been the main principles of cooperation since Eurojust's establishment in 2002. The complementarity encompasses both operational support for cross-border cases, as well as strategic support.

⁴⁵ Available here: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11333-2024-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁴⁶ Available here: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15834-2024-REV-1/en/pdf>.

The graph below shows the direct cooperation and coordination between the EJN Contact Points and the Eurojust National Desks in more than 800 cases, which demonstrates the complementarity of the two bodies. The graph particularly illustrates the number of cases in which the Eurojust National Desks determined that a request sent to them fell within the competence of the EJN and vice versa:



EJN - Eurojust cooperation on cases, 2023-24



In 2024, the EJN and Eurojust published an updated version of the joint paper 'Assistance in International Cooperation in Criminal Matters for Practitioners. European Judicial Network and Eurojust: *What can we do for you?*⁴⁷. This joint paper was developed to inform judicial practitioners in the Member States of the services and assistance in international cooperation in criminal matters that the EJN and Eurojust can provide. The document aims to help practitioners decide whether to deal with cases through the EJN or Eurojust. It also ensures that both organisations will deal with cases falling within their respective mandates, using time and resources efficiently and effectively, and preventing duplication of work.

In the period 2023–24, the EJN and Eurojust collaborated to gather the experiences, knowledge, challenges and best practices of practitioners in applying various legal instruments, such as the EAW and the EIO. Examples of such joint initiatives include the *Joint Compilation on the Requirements for Issuing and Executing Judicial Authorities in EAW Proceedings pursuant to the CJEU's Case-Law*⁴⁸ and also the *Joint Note on national case law regarding the EIO*⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ The report is accessible here: <https://www.ejn-crimjust.europa.eu/ejn/libdocumentproperties/EN/3521>

⁴⁸ Available here: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5607-2021-REV-2/en/pdf>.

⁴⁹ Available here: <https://www.ejn-crimjust.europa.eu/ejn/libshowdocument/EN/3948/EN>.

Furthermore, to strengthen cooperation and maintain privileged relations, the EJM Presidency Board, the Eurojust Presidency Team and the EJM Secretariat meet annually in The Hague to discuss cooperation between Eurojust and the EJM, joint projects, as well as the EJM Secretariat’s budget and staffing.

6.3. Cooperation with the secretariats of other networks based at Eurojust

Eurojust currently hosts two other secretariats for networks: the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams (JITs Network) and the European Network of Contact Points for the investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (the Genocide Network). Eurojust also provides administrative support to the European Judicial Cybercrime Network (EJCN).

The EJM has maintained successful collaboration with these networks since their establishment. In previous years, all three networks shared an updated list of contact persons with the EJM Secretariat, which was subsequently uploaded to the EJM website with restricted access for EJM Contact Points.

The EJM Secretariat participated in the following meetings:

	2023	2024
Genocide Network	19–20 April	16–17 April
	14–15 November	13–14 November
EJCN	27–28 November	3–4 June
JIT’s Network	11–12 October	

6.4. Cooperation with EUROPOL – SIRIUS and CARIN

SIRIUS Project

In 2023–24, the EJM continued its close cooperation with Europol on the SIRIUS project, which aims to improve cross-border access to electronic evidence. The project facilitates the exchange of best practices and training for EU practitioners on cooperation with US-based service providers and on applicable US mutual legal assistance procedures.

The EJM contributes to the SIRIUS project by providing a comparative analysis of procedural regulations across the EU and providing judicial practitioners’ perspectives on electronic evidence. In collaboration with Europol and Eurojust, the EJM contributed to the fifth and sixth annual editions of the SIRIUS EU Digital Evidence Situation Report.

The EJN's 2023 contribution⁵⁰, titled 'The European Judicial Network Perspective: The Practical Application of EIO/MLA Procedures to Obtain Encrypted Information', highlights encryption as a vital means of protecting user privacy, while also presenting challenges to law enforcement. While encryption safeguards communications and devices, criminal organisations increasingly exploit this technology to conceal illicit activities. The millions of messages exchanged across borders underscore the high level of organisation among criminal groups and the severity of their crimes. Investigations have required a significant number of EIOs and MLA requests, leading to various judicial challenges. In this context, EJN Contact Points within and beyond the EU, along with key partners, have examined issues such as the type of investigative measures used, the spontaneous exchange of information, the role of issuing authorities and the admissibility of evidence.

In November 2024, Eurojust, Europol and the EJN jointly published the latest SIRIUS EU Electronic Evidence Situation Report⁵¹. The report analyses the evolving legislative framework and the growing reliance on electronic data in criminal investigations, while also addressing the ongoing challenges in cross-border cooperation to access electronic evidence. Eurojust gathered input from judicial authorities in 25 EU Member States, based on a survey conducted between April and May 2024. The survey targeted judicial professionals on the SIRIUS Platform, as well as Contact Points from the EJN and the EJCNC, collecting 46 detailed responses. These form the basis of the report's analysis and recommendations. Additionally, the report features a significant contribution from the EJN Secretariat on the transmission of electronic evidence via the e-EDES platform. This section draws on discussions held during the 61st EJN Plenary Meeting in November 2023, under the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The EJN Secretariat was also represented at the annual SIRIUS Conferences in December 2023 and November 2024.

Camden Asset Recovery Inter-agency Network

The Camden Asset Recovery Inter-agency Network (CARIN) is an informal network of law enforcement and judicial practitioners who specialise in tracing, freezing, seizing and confiscating assets. It operates as an inter-agency network, with each Member State represented by a law enforcement officer and a judicial expert, such as a prosecutor or investigating judge, depending on the legal system.

The primary goal of CARIN is to enhance the effectiveness of its members' efforts, on a multi-agency basis, to deprive criminals of illicit profits. CARIN contacts support the entire asset recovery process, from initial investigations and tracing assets to freezing, seizing, managing and ultimately forfeiting or confiscating them, including any necessary sharing of assets between jurisdictions. Member State representatives, known as National Contact Points, communicate in English, as it is the network's working language. CARIN contacts can be reached directly by phone or email.

CARIN currently comprises 61 member jurisdictions, including 27 EU Member States and 13 international organisations. It is also linked to seven other regional asset recovery inter-agency networks (ARINs) worldwide.

The EJN has developed a strong partnership with the CARIN Network and frequently participates in and contributes to its meetings.

⁵⁰ Available here: [SIRIUS EU Electronic Evidence Situation Report 2023 | Eurojust | European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation](#)

⁵¹ Available here: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/publication/sirius-eu-electronic-evidence-situation-report-2024>

6.5. Cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European Anti-Fraud Office

The EJM is celebrating enhanced cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) following the appointment of a Contact Point at the EPPO for institutional matters, and a Contact Point and a Deputy Contact Point for operational matters. The contact details of these newly appointed representatives are available on the EJM website for all registered users, including EJM Contact Points and other legal practitioners.

The partnership between the EJM and the EPPO has been further strengthened by the designation of three EJM Contact Points for institutional and operational matters. These new EJM Contact Points were officially introduced during the 62nd EJM Plenary Meeting on 12 June 2024 in Antwerp, Belgium. During this meeting, an EPPO representative delivered a presentation on the EPPO's role as a new Contact Point to the EJM, particularly in relation to non-participating EU Member States and third countries.

During the EJM Regional Meeting on 7–8 October 2024 in Warsaw, Poland, a representative from the EJM Secretariat elaborated on the EJM-EPPO partnership, highlighting their synergies, cooperation modalities and the EPPO's dedicated section on the EJM website (in the Judicial Library and EJM Partners and Networks section). It was emphasised that the EJM is a natural partner to the EPPO by:

- a. providing information and assistance in cross-border cases involving financial crimes, fraud and corruption;
- b. ensuring that investigations are conducted efficiently and effectively;
- c. facilitating the preparation, follow-up and execution of orders, requests and cross-border measures;
- d. linking cases of cross-border and organised crime; and
- e. creating synergies with national investigations.

Additionally, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has nominated two EJM Contact Points who have been regularly attending EJM Plenary Meetings. OLAF's EJM Contact Points contribute to the EJM as needed and assist other EJM Contact Points upon request. Their contact details are also available on the EJM website.

6.6. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

The EJM continued its cooperation with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) over the period 2023-24 by contributing to and promoting the FRA's database on criminal detention in the EU⁵² and projects related to detention conditions. Notably, the EJM Secretariat raised awareness of the Criminal Detention Database by incorporating it into the EJM website in the EAW Section, as well as in the Judicial Library. The EJM also invited the FRA to present the database during an EJM workshop in Lublin, Poland, in April 2024.

In addition, the EJM contributed to an FRA project related to substantive rights in the context of EAW proceedings. This project aimed to gather experiences and opinions on the challenges and good practices relating to the procedural rights of individuals subject to an EAW, as well as the grounds for refusal and the relationship with other instruments concerning cross-border cooperation in criminal matters. Based on this project, the FRA published a report titled 'European Arrest Warrant proceedings – room for improvement to guarantee rights in practice'⁵³.

Another topic of joint interest to the FRA and the EJM was the protection of victims' rights. The FRA was represented in the 62nd EJM Plenary Meeting under the Belgian Presidency, where victims' rights were discussed.

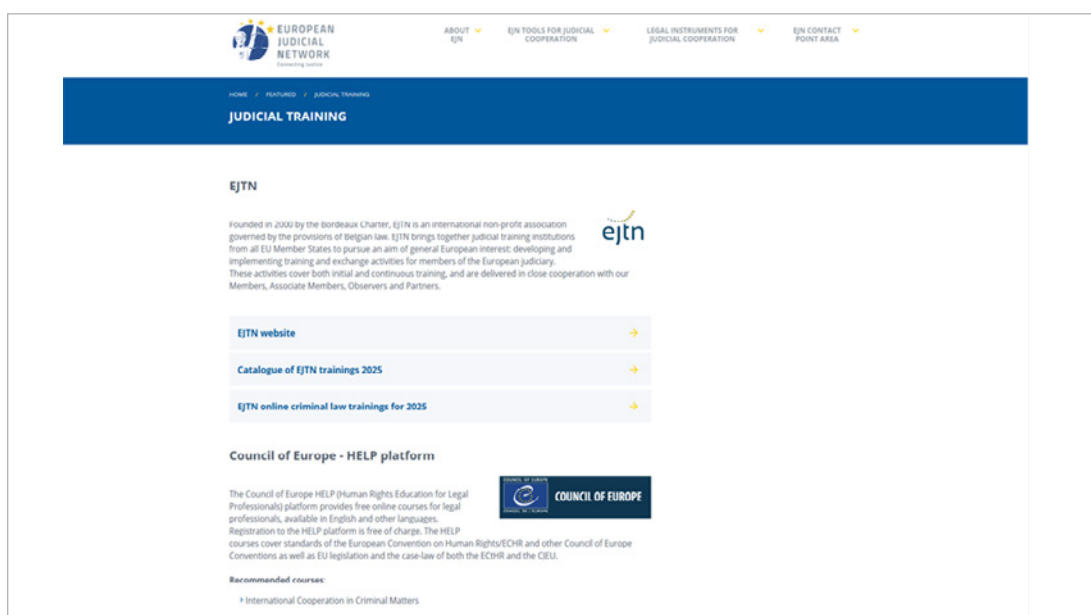
⁵² Available here: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/criminal-detention/>.

⁵³ Available here: <https://www.ejm-crimjust.europa.eu/ejm/libdocumentproperties/EN/3883>

COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTNERS

7.1. Judicial training partners

At the end of 2020, European Commission's new EU Strategy on Judicial Training underlined the importance of this area, setting ambitious objectives for the training of judicial practitioners. In the period of 2023-2024, the EJM has made a conscious effort to reinforce relations with partners in the judicial training sector. In early 2024, the section on Judicial Training was introduced to the EJM website, providing an outline of the relevant training on judicial cooperation from trusted institutions. The EJM has collaborated closely with the EJTJN, the ERA and the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) platform, and is constantly exploring opportunities for initiatives with new partners.



7.1.1 European Judicial Training Network



The EJTJN provides an invaluable service to the EJM's Contact Points through its extensive catalogue of annual judicial training events, which are available both online and in person. These training sessions allow participants to enhance their knowledge and skills in the field of judicial cooperation, which can be used in cross-border cases. The EJM and the EJTJN have maintained close cooperation since 2014, which continued throughout the period of 2023-24. The EJM has supported the work of the EJTJN by directing Contact Points to the EJTJN's most recent catalogues of judicial training via the website, and by providing experts and training materials for training events where needed.

7.1.2 Academy of European Law



Links to the ERA's website and updated training catalogues have also been made available in the judicial training section of the EJM website. The EJM has collaborated with the ERA on many important initiatives. Notably, in 2024, the EJM Secretariat took part in the ERA Summer Course Programme, in which participants could attend courses on various topics of European law conducted by experts in the field. The Secretariat also attended ERA's Annual Conference on EU Criminal Justice in 2024. This conference facilitated an exchange among practitioners on future initiatives and current developments in EU criminal justice, with a particular focus on the impact of artificial intelligence on the criminal justice system.

7.1.3 Council of Europe – HELP Platform



The Council of Europe HELP platform provides free online courses for legal professionals in English and other languages. The EJM website directs Contact Points to the HELP platform course catalogue. In particular, the EJM has recommended the courses on International Cooperation in Criminal Matters and Procedural Safeguards in Criminal Proceedings and Victims' Rights as being particularly valuable to Contact Points.

7.2. UNODC

During the 2023-2024 reporting period, the EJM maintained its close ties with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), particularly with its regional judicial networks: the Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors of West Africa (WACAP); the Great Lakes Network (Central Africa); the Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and Southern Caucasus (CASC); and the South East Asia Justice Network (SEAJust). These regional judicial networks are reliable partners for the EJM in facilitating judicial cooperation outside the EU.

In addition to cooperating on operational matters, the EJM is regularly invited to the meetings of the regional judicial networks, and their representatives also regularly attend EJM Plenary Meetings. This has proved to be a highly important practice for maintaining good operational contacts and for exchanging best practices on how the networks function.

The EJM and the CASC continue to strengthen and expand their partnership, fostering closer relationships with CASC members (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

As part of this ongoing collaboration, the CASC Secretariat was invited to reach out to its members on behalf of the EJM Secretariat to request nomination letters from those interested in appointing Contact Points to the EJM. These nomination letters should be addressed to the EJM Secretariat and submitted through the CASC Secretariat. Eligible candidates for designation as EJM Contact Points include public officials from local authorities who are competent in international judicial cooperation and have a good command of English, the EJM's working language.

In addition to the nomination process, the EJM continues to engage actively with CASC members through specialised training and knowledge-sharing opportunities. From 4 to 6 June 2024, the EJM Secretariat participated in a workshop on joint investigation teams (JITs) and EJM Cooperation Tools, co-organised by UNODC-CASC and EUROJUST and held at the UN headquarters in Vienna.

The workshop brought together representatives from the Central Authorities responsible for international cooperation in criminal matters from Central Asian countries, including Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the role, significance and benefits of JITs in tackling cross-border crime;
- Enhance participants' knowledge and skills in the field of the EJM mission and judicial cooperation tools; and
- Provide practical training on the deployment of available EJM tools.

The EJM Secretariat moderated four sessions on the role, operation and funding of JITs and also delivered two presentations on the EJM's mission, tasks, activities and practical tools – such as Atlas, the Library, Fiches Belges and the Compendium – which contribute to the effectiveness of international judicial cooperation.

Furthermore, the EJM Secretariat hosted delegations from the following countries, with the aim of strengthening relations, enhancing judicial cooperation in criminal matters and providing updates on the EJM:

- UNODC-Vietnam (11 September 2024)
- UNODC-CASC (10 October 2024)

In October 2023, the EJM and Eurojust hosted a study visit for the Contact Points of the SEAJust Network. The EJM Secretariat and the EJM Presidency Board representatives presented the work of the EJM, the functions of the EJM Contact Points and the EJM website. During the visit, the Contact Points from the SEAJust Network shared that they had already achieved some success working with EJM Contact Points and expressed their readiness for future cooperation.



SEAJust Study Visit, October 2023

7.3. EuroMed Justice

The EuroMed Justice project aims to develop sustainable mechanisms for cross-border judicial cooperation in criminal matters between European Union Member States and the South Partner Countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. The project brings together key stakeholders in criminal justice, including representatives from South Partner Countries, participating EU Member States, European Union bodies and international organisations involved in justice and security.

Currently in its sixth phase (2024–27), the EuroMed Justice project is funded by the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA) of the European Commission and has been implemented by Eurojust since phase V (2020–23).

The overarching goal of phase VI is to strengthen both strategic and operational cooperation in judicial criminal matters, thereby protecting citizens in the European Union and South Partner Countries from criminal activities, while upholding the rule of law and human rights.

Building on the successes of previous phases, this phase places greater emphasis on practical, operational cooperation. It facilitates cooperation in cross-border cases and provides ad hoc technical assistance at the request of South Partner Countries and EU Member States.

The EJM Secretariat participated in the 18th Crimex and 2nd EMJNet meetings in September 2023, as well as the 19th Crimex meeting in May 2024 and the 20th Crimex meeting in December 2024.

7.4. Cooperation with other partners



The EJM continued its' close cooperation with one of the most long-lasting partners in the Western Balkans regions, namely the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG). SEEPAG is a judicial mechanism for international cooperation. Its objective is to support the fight against serious and organised crime in Southeast Europe through the judicial system and to help the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) facilitate the rapid exchange of information and evidence in cross-border investigations. SEEPAG is always represented at EJM Plenary Meetings, where it shares updates on its activities. The EJM is also invited to SEEPAG meetings where relevant discussions on matters of judicial cooperation are held.



The EJM also cooperates with the Western Balkans Criminal Justice project, which supports judicial cooperation in the Western Balkans. The project provides financial support to EJM Contact Points in the region to enable them to participate in EJM meetings and to advance the development of the EJM Fiches Belges for the regions' legal systems.

7.5. Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters

The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PC-OC) has served as a key forum since 1981, bringing together experts from member and observer states, as well as international organisations, to enhance international cooperation in criminal matters and address practical challenges in applying Council of Europe Conventions in this field.

In the second half of 2023 (14-16 November), the EJM Secretariat re-established its successful cooperation with the Council of Europe, having been invited to participate in the PC-OC meeting again after a period of absence. The new Secretary to the PC-OC now acts as an EJM Contact Point within the PC-OC.

From 14 to 16 May 2024, the EJM Secretariat participated in the 85th PC-OC meeting in Strasbourg. Discussions included a draft Third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, as well as the potential accession of Thailand and Kazakhstan to the Convention. The agenda also covered the PC-OC's future work plan, along with concrete cases and experiences related to the practical implementation of Council of Europe conventions on judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Following the meeting, PC-OC members exchanged views with a delegation from the International Legal Cooperation Department of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

This meeting was particularly relevant for the EJM, given its pivotal role in facilitating the practical implementation of Council of Europe conventions. These conventions aim to enhance and streamline judicial cooperation in criminal matters between EU Member States and third countries, aligning closely with the EJM's mission.



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