Editorial: 20 Years of eucrim

Ulrich Sieber

eucrim
European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

Editorial

EDITORIAL

AUTHOR

Ulrich Sieber

Director emeritus (2003 – 2019), eucrim Editor-in-Chief
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law (formerly Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law)

CITATION SUGGESTION

U. Sieber, "Editorial: 20 Years of eucrim", 2026, Vol. 21(1), eucrim, pp1–3. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30709/eucrim-2026-001

Published in
2026, Vol. 21(1) eucrim pp 1 – 3
ISSN: 1862-6947
https://eucrim.eu

CC BY ND

The first issue of *eucrim* was published in September 2006. With the present issue, *eucrim* celebrates a 20-year success story. This anniversary provides an opportunity to look back, take stock, and look ahead.

I.

The history of *eucrim* is closely linked to the protection of the European Communities' financial interests in the early 1990s. The growing budgets of the Communities led to a significant rise in fraud. In particular, the spectacular "Greek maize" case in the late 1980s showed that some Member States had little interest in prosecuting these offences against the Community at the *national level*, particularly since any losses uncovered were charged to the respective Member States. The creation of criminal law at the *supranational level* was blocked by the governments of the states in the Council. National courts were also sceptical. The German Federal Constitutional Court, for example, unlike the European Court of Justice later on, rejected the idea of the EC having ancillary competence in criminal matters. It grounded its reasoning, above all, in the close links between criminal law and national culture, as well as in the necessary democratic legitimacy underpinning criminal law.

To remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, from the late 1980s onwards, the European Commission pursued a wise policy, focusing heavily on European civil society and fostering direct contacts with the staff in national administrations responsible for the allocation of European funds: It funded studies by legal scholars, training courses for national practitioners, and activities by civil society associations campaigning for more effective sanctions legislation and better protection of the Communities' financial interests. The key initiators of this network of associations were *Francesco de Angelis* from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Financial Control, *Dr h.c. Diemut Theato* as Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control in the European Parliament, and *Lothar Kuhl* from the anti-fraud body UCLAF/OLAF, all of whom rendered outstanding services in this regard.

In collaboration with national partners, a network of 32 European Lawyers' Associations was established within a short space of time across 30 European countries. These Associations cooperated closely with one another and organised joint seminars and studies on European criminal law and the protection of the European Union's financial interests. During the Associations' heyday, hardly a month went by without a major seminar, attended by numerous representatives from all Member States and the European Union. From 1993 to 2002, the exchange of information between the Associations was supported by the bulletin *Agon*, which was a precursor to *eucrim*. This collaboration within the Associations proved to be extremely unifying and productive. For instance, at that time, I was not only President of the German Association for European Criminal Law, but also a special adviser to two Commissioners; my professional contacts within the Association, including regular collaboration with representatives of German authorities, also allowed access to files held by the German Customs Investigation Bureau, which proved to be a treasure trove of ideas for reform proposals aimed at combating subsidy fraud.

These activities of the associations and the broader context in which they took place gave rise to important new ideas concerning the development of European criminal law and the protection of the EU's financial interests. These included, in particular, the idea of a European Public Prosecutor's Office within the *Corpus Juris*, the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions, the expansion of severe administrative sanctions as a substitute for the EU's lack of criminal law competence, and the increased incorporation of non-criminal preventive measures. The working group set up by the European Commission to develop the Corpus Juris was chaired by the President of the French Association for European Criminal Law Research, *Prof. Dr Mireille Delmas-Marty*, and most members of this group, as well as the research group tasked with the follow-up study also came from the European Lawyers' Associations. As a result, these Associations became a strong counterbalance to national voices resisting the Europeanisation of criminal law, which argued that criminal

https://doi.org/10.30709/eucrim-2026-001

law was deeply rooted in "national culture". Given the lack of information amongst many European legal scholars and practitioners at that time, the advocates of more extensive Europeanisation did not have it easy.

II.

In this context, from 2004 onwards, I developed the concept for *eucrim* at the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law, together with the head of my unit for European criminal law, *Thomas Wahl*. The intention of this project has been to raise awareness and to improve knowledge of the Europeanisation of criminal and "criministrative" law. The impetus for this initiative was the criticism – often unfounded – of emerging European criminal law voiced at the extraordinary criminal law scholars' conference on European criminal law held in Dresden, Germany, in 2003. The discussion at this conference highlighted the need for better information on current European developments and prompted me to spontaneously announce the launch of a newsletter dedicated to this purpose.

The primary aim of *eucrim* was, and remains, to provide a fact-based, systematically organised, and concise summary of news and events relating to European criminal law and the protection of European financial interests: The news items in *eucrim* contain links that direct the reader to the respective source documents, thereby creating an objective basis for information and discussion. Additional "Spotlights" (visually highlighted) provide more detailed coverage of particularly important developments. The articles in the journal, usually revolving around a focal topic, complement this news reporting and, crucially, enable a critical discussion of the issues at hand.

From the very conception of *eucrim*, the use of information technology was a central concern of mine in achieving this objective. Consequently, from the outset, the journal was not only distributed in print but also made available online free of charge (Diamond Open Access). In addition, each issue is promoted through an email newsletter (to which users can subscribe) that summarises the most important contents and provides practical information.

A significant leap forward in digitalisation took place in 2018 with the redesign of the *eucrim* website, technically implemented by *Thomas Breitner* from the IT-department of the Max Planck Institute. The website's new features now also allow direct online access to *individual* contents of the *eucrim* issues – such as the specific news, articles, and events. This enables individual items to be published on the website as pre-prints immediately after editing and proofreading – making them publicly available in advance of the quarterly issue's finalisation. As a result, *eucrim* now offers a much more up-to-date and more valuable service to its users: This is particularly important when contributions relate to current developments, e.g., in the case of legal policy statements. Users can opt to receive automatically immediate notifications of new website content via a news feed – integrable with email clients like Outlook – whenever new content is published on the website (see "Staying Up-to-Date" in the *eucrim* website footer). In addition, the *eucrim* editorial team uses social media (particularly LinkedIn) to share important content – such as the "Spotlights", pre-prints of articles, news, and the publication of the journal itself.

As a further tool, databases have also been set up for relevant CJEU proceedings and for ratifications of relevant Council of Europe conventions. In the future, digitalisation will be taken even further: A specific AI chatbot has been developed that accesses all published *eucrim* content, providing a reliable and more independent basis for research into European criminal law and the protection of the EU´s financial interests. It will be launched during this anniversary year.

Thanks to these developments, *eucrim*'s impact and reach is now considerable: since its foundation, *eucrim* has published a total of 72 issues containing 368 articles by 393 authors. Since 2018, 2715 news items have

been published online. The printed edition of *eucrim* is sent to over 680 individuals, institutions, and libraries worldwide. The email newsletter currently has more than 2100 subscribers. Visits to the *eucrim* website have grown steadily since the 2018 revamp, reaching 328,000 visits in 2025. Individual *eucrim* items have also achieved considerable reach. Notably, *Drago Kos's article* on 'War and Corruption in Ukraine' (*eucrim* 2022, Issue 2) has been accessed 11,505 times since publication. Among the news, the *Spotlight* on the EU's anti-money laundering package has been viewed over 14,500 times to date. In addition, statistics on the users indicate that *eucrim* is intensively read not only across Europe but also in countries outside Europe, such as the USA.

To achieve these goals and results, an entire team is behind the editorial and technical success of *eucrim*, with each member responsible for a specific area. These include, first and foremost, the members of the Editorial Board listed on the *eucrim* homepage. At its annual meetings, the Board provides guidance on the focus of upcoming issues and supports the acquisition of articles, often in collaboration with staff from OLAF and other European institutions. Subject-matter editors are responsible for identifying, analysing, and summarising the news. They include *eucrim*'s Managing Editor, *Thomas Wahl*, *Cornelia Riehle,* and *Dr Anna Pingen*, along with *Prof. Els de Busser* and *Dr András Csúri,* who have contributed in the past.

The indispensable support of other staff members at the Max Planck Institute in Freiburg also contributes to *eucrim*'s achievements – particularly in the areas of IT, language editing, typesetting and design, public relations, distribution, budget management, and accounting. Financial support from the EU's Anti-Fraud Programme, administered by OLAF, and from the Department of Public Law at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law in Freiburg, headed by *Prof. Dr Ralf Poscher*, is also key to the success of *eucrim*. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to them all!

III.

Perhaps the most important reason for *eucrim*'s present and future progress, alongside the outstanding commitment in terms of personnel and technology, is its thematic and content-based concept. This is primarily characterised by its broad international, interdisciplinary, and cross-regime orientation, which must continue to shape and drive European criminal policy – now and in the future. Four catalysts have emerged to propel this initiative:

- First, the comprehensive integration of Europe's various national legal systems, supranational EU law, and the law of the Council of Europe have long been underway. *Eucrim* takes equal account of the approaches adopted by both small and large Member States, from which best practices and key insights emerge. This broad perspective fosters the development of new, innovative models of cooperation and responses.

- Secondly, close cooperation between academia and legal practice is central to *eucrim*. This foundational principle also stems from the activities of the European Criminal Law Associations. In *eucrim*, the convergence of academia *and* legal practice is evident not only in the contributions of individual authors but also in the composition of the Editorial Board, which includes leading European legal scholars and practitioners.

- Thirdly, for *eucrim*'s continued success, it is important to devote space to alternative legal regimes and non-legal preventive measures, because the protection of European values cannot be achieved through criminal law alone. Their protection must also take into account *other legal regimes*, such as administrative law, administrative *penal* law, money laundering law, confiscation law, and civil law. *Non-legal* means, such as technical or organisational measures, are also highly relevant.

- Fourthly, particularly when developing such alternative systems, the protection of civil liberties – generally well-established in traditional criminal law in Europe – must be incorporated and taken into consideration

from the outset. Criminal law safeguards can provide important impetus for the other legal regimes in this regard.

The focal topics that *eucrim* features on its website (under "issues") demonstrate that the journal is very much committed to the protection of human rights and to the aforementioned international, interdisciplinary, and cross-regime approach. This is also evident from the four focal topics for the 2026 anniversary year, which cover important pillars of European criminal law and the protection of the EU´s financial interests: procedural safeguards (Issue 1/2026), the harmonisation of substantive criminal law (Issue 2/2026), the law on cooperation (Issue 3/2026), and the relevant supranational institutions (Issue 4/2026).

IV.

This illustrates: *Eucrim* continues to be a timely, high-calibre, and highly influential information platform and forum for discussion on European criminal law and security law, as well as the protection of the European Union's financial interests. It transcends the scope of a traditional journal by far.

The *eucrim* concept can therefore also serve as a reference point for strengthening the justification of European approaches in other key policy areas – such as European defence and economic policy. The current geopolitical challenges in Ukraine, in the Middle East, and in the USA, as well as the rise of anti-European right-wing parties in Europe, make *eucrim*'s European approach more important than ever for the future.

In this spirit, *eucrim* will place even greater future emphasis on how the prevention and prosecution of European crime and the protection of European financial interests can be improved through close cooperation between EU institutions, Member States, and civil society. Contributions on this topic are welcome!

COPYRIGHT/DISCLAIMER
© 2026 The Author(s). Published by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law. This is an open access article published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) licence. This permits users to share (copy and redistribute) the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially, provided that appropriate credit is given, a link to the license is provided, and changes are indicated. If users remix, transform, or build upon the material, they may not distribute the modified material. For details, see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/.
Views and opinions expressed in the material contained in eucrim are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the editorial board, the publisher, the European Union, the European Commission, or other contributors. Sole responsibility lies with the author of the contribution. The publisher and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

About eucrim

eucrim is the leading journal serving as a European forum for insight and debate on criminal and "criministrative" law. For over 20 years, it has brought together practitioners, academics, and policymakers to exchange ideas and shape the future of European justice. From its inception, eucrim has placed focus on the protection of the EU's financial interests – a key driver of European integration in "criministrative" justice policy.
Editorially reviewed articles published in English, French, or German, are complemented by timely news and analysis of legal and policy developments across Europe.
All content is freely accessible at https://eucrim.eu, with four online and print issues published annually.

Stay informed by emailing to eucrim-subscribe@csl.mpg.de to receive alerts for new releases.
The project is co-financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP), managed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Co-funded by
the European Union

https://doi.org/10.30709/eucrim-2026-001