EU Justice and Home Affairs Framework for Accession Cooperation

A Case Study of Albania

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ABSTRACT

At the core of every successful cross-border operation are robust legal foundations that facilitate cooperation between the parties. Along with multilateral, bilateral, and national instruments, the EU's major Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies – Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, and, more recently, the European Public Prosecutor's Office – have established and revised cooperation agreements and working arrangements over the years with aspiring third countries, in turn fostering a more enabling and cooperative environment for the latter. This article explores the relevant legal bases that constitute the multi-layered cooperation framework between JHA agencies, EU Member States, and accession countries, using official secondary data, with a particular focus on Albania's path to EU membership. Overall, the article indicates that the legal mechanisms for cooperation must be combined in order to accommodate jurisdictional complexities in practice. Accession countries benefit greatly from participating in bilateral cooperation agreements, notably through the opportunity to post their liaison officers at EU agencies' headquarters alongside those of Member States. These arrangements ultimately contribute to the shared objective of combatting cross-border crime.

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Introductory Remarks

As crime increasingly transcends national borders, the European Union (EU) has had to adapt its external action policy over the years. Direct cross-border cooperation with aspiring third countries, or at least its facilitation, has become a crucial strategy in combatting cross-border crime. This cooperation has developed into a symbiotic relationship: the EU can better safeguard financial interests previously outside its reach and strengthen internal security, while the third countries gain access to EU agencies and begin to operate like quasi-Member States in many respects. This dynamic is particularly important for accession countries from the Western Balkans, such as Albania, which are bound by international cooperation obligations arising from Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs) and the benchmarks set by EU accession Chapter 24 – the "Justice, Freedom and Security" chapter of the *acquis communitaire* which candidate countries must align with.

Mindful of the inapplicability of most traditional mutual legal assistance (MLA) instruments operating within the Union for accession countries, the EU agencies active in the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHAA) have found a legal solution to extend their application to the latter: bilateral agreements on cooperation and working arrangements. In the case of Albania, this cooperation was initiated with the 2007 Europol Strategic Cooperation Agreement, followed by the 2009 agreement for the placement of a Europol liaison officer in Albania, and subsequently replaced by an amended operational and strategic cooperation agreement in 2013. In addition, Albania has concluded further cooperation arrangements/agreements with Frontex, Eurojust, and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). Cooperation agreements combined with existing multilateral, bilateral, and national instruments have established a comprehensive yet adaptable cooperation framework between the EU and accession countries. This article analyses the key elements of this cooperation framework and assesses its practical effectiveness using Albania as a case study.

In Section II, the article outlines the main legal bases for establishing EU-third country cooperation, notably focusing on bilateral cooperation agreements and their implementation. As will be shown, cooperation in practice – under the framework of these cooperation agreements – has greatly facilitated the efforts of all stakeholders in combatting serious cross-border crime. Section III integrates theoretical with practical perspectives by examining the Albanian experience in the context of JHA cooperation: the section begins with an overview of the country's cooperation framework, then highlights existing challenges, and concludes with a presentation of prominent cases from practice. Some general considerations and recommendations on the matter are given in closing in Section IV.

II. Legal Bases for JHAA – EU Member State – Third Country Cooperation

Considering that the relevant EU acquis on MLA and judicial cooperation in criminal matters is not directly applicable to third countries, legal practitioners are tasked with identifying alternative legal instrument(s) to establish MLA in criminal matters and data exchange with these countries. Indeed, instruments, such as the European Investigation Order (EIO) and the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) are not available to third countries, including accession countries. Nevertheless, Eurojust plays a key role by facilitating coordination and supporting judicial cooperation, despite divergences in legal systems and procedures across jurisdictions.[1] For countries without access to EIO and EAW mechanisms, the main legal bases used in practice are:[2]

- Multilateral agreements;

- Bilateral agreements;
- National legislation.

The principle of reciprocity can also serve as a legal basis for MLA in criminal matters with third countries. Legal bases are oftentimes combined – a practical solution found by legal practitioners for cases in which a common legal basis is absent, especially when setting up Joint Investigation Teams (JITs).[3]

1. Multilateral agreements

Countries outside the European Union rely on conventional instruments of cooperation in the form of multilateral treaties from the UN and the Council of Europe (CoE). These include, in particular:

- The UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC);
- The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC);
- The 1988 Vienna Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances;
- The 1957 European Convention on Extradition and its additional protocols;
- The 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, and its additional protocols;
- The 1970 European Convention on the International Validity of Criminal Judgements;
- The 1983 Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons;
- The 2001 Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention).

Regional cooperation commitments are also made in the framework of SAAs with Western Balkans countries, under Title VII: Justice, Freedom and Security. It concerns areas of movement of persons, money laundering and illicit drugs, counter-terrorism, and cooperation in criminal matters.

2. Bilateral agreements

a) Scope and content of bilateral agreements

Several EU Member States have existing agreements with third countries on MLA in criminal matters, complementing the relevant multilateral conventions, in particular with regard to extradition and the transfer of sentenced persons. Apart from the classic bilateral agreements of judicial cooperation, third countries – especially accession countries – are brought closer to the EU via agreements and working arrangements on cooperation with the main EU JHA agencies. These instruments are part of the agencies' mandates as enshrined in their respective legal frameworks.

The number of third countries cooperating with the JHA agencies and the level of access[4] granted to them have increased significantly over the years. According to official EU websites, to date, Europol has concluded 39 such agreements and arrangements around the world, including with the six Western Balkan countries;[5] Frontex has concluded 19,[6] and Eurojust a total of 22.[7]The EPPO has concluded 22 working arrangements on cooperation with various judicial authorities in third countries.[8]

The EU legal framework specifies the nature and content of the cooperation agreements/working arrangements of the JHA agencies. Much of the "EU JHA agency acquis" is integrated into the recitals and the text

of the third-country agreements/arrangements, including direct references.[9] This provides for indirect applicability of the acquis. The agreements and arrangements typically include provisions on forms of operational and judicial cooperation, the posting of reciprocal liaison officers and contact points, as well as rules for the systematic exchange of information and personal data.[10] They are legally binding and may serve as an alternative legal framework in the absence of EU legislation that is only available to EU Member States (see above).[11]

b) Implementing cooperation agreements with JHA agencies

The EU and its JHA agencies conclude cooperation agreements and working arrangements pursuant to Art. 218 TFEU or their respective legal frameworks, with either the contracting third country or with their line ministries and other institutions. After conclusion, cooperation agreements typically undergo an internal ratification process, which enables them to enter into force for the third country and be implemented by the parties. Working arrangements, such as those with the EPPO, are applicable from the signature date.

A crucial factor in facilitating implementation lies in the secondment of liaison officers. Each agreement provides for the authorisation of the competent national authority responsible for appointing liaison officers to work alongside liaison officers of Member States. Notably, Europol currently hosts liaison officers from 53 countries (including the six Western Balkan countries) as well as Interpol.[12] Except for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, liaison prosecutors from each of the Western Balkan countries have been posted at Eurojust for years, actively exercising their duties. According to Eurojust, this enables "[...] a much smoother exchange of information and a considerable increase in cooperation".[13]

Overall implementation of the agreements may potentially be hindered, however, if their scope remains limited. Therefore, while having proven effective, some of the older agreements, e.g., those from Europol and Eurojust, should be revised to account for the changes to the legal framework governing the JHA agencies' activities.

3. National legislation

Where multilateral and bilateral instruments do not apply, the third country's domestic legislation (codes of criminal procedure or special laws on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters) could be examined as a potential legal basis for establishing cooperation with JHA agencies and EU Member States. The relevant national legislation of accession countries can aptly serve as a complementary legal basis for cooperation, due to the ongoing transposition of European standards and the EU acquis.

III. Albania as a Case Study in Multi-level JHA Cooperation

1. Legal bases for cooperation

MLA and operational cooperation with Albania, as an accession country, have their basis in Art. 78-85 of the 2006 SAA[14] and all relevant multilateral agreements to which Albania is also a party. With regard to multilateral judicial cooperation with EU Member States, the Second Additional Protocol to the 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters[15] plays a particularly important role, as some of its provisions are nearly identical to those of the 2000 EU MLA Convention.[16]

On the bilateral level, several agreements are in place with Albania's neighbouring and partner countries, including Italy, Greece, and Spain. They cover the simplification of extradition (including extradition of own

nationals), MLA in criminal matters, the mutual recognition of criminal judgements, and the transfer of sentenced persons.

As a third layer, the following agreements and arrangements between Albania and EU JHA agencies further reinforce bilateral cooperation:

- Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between the Republic of Albania and the European Police Office, 9 December 2013, ratified by Albania with Law No. 28, dated 20. March 2014, and amended with the letter from Albania and the 2017 Europol Note (terminating the 2007 and 2009 agreements);[17]
- Agreement between the Republic of Albania and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Co-operation on the deployment of a Europol Liaison Officer, 31 July 2018, ratified by Albania with Law No. 77/2018;[18]
- Working Arrangement on operational cooperation between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Albania (MoI), 17 March 2021;[19]
- Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Albania on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in the Republic of Albania, 15 September 2023 (repealing the 2018 Status Agreement),[20] ratified by Albania with Law No. 2/2024;
- Agreement on Cooperation between Eurojust and the Republic of Albania, 5 October 2018,[21] ratified by Albania with Law No. 113/2018;
- Working Arrangement on the cooperation between the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Albania and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), 4 July 2022;[22]
- Working Arrangement on the cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Structure of the Republic of Albania (SPAK), 29 June 2023.[23]

Despite the distinct mandates of the various JHA agencies, the bilateral agreements they concluded with Albania share a common structure. Typically, provisions cover the scope of cooperation, relevant definitions, and the applicable methods of collaboration (including mutual legal assistance). They also set out rules on confidentiality, the exchange and protection of personal data, the secondment of liaison officers and designation of contact points, as well as liability clauses and mechanisms for conflict resolution.

Albanian legislation also allows for establishing cooperation with Member States, JHA agencies, and other third countries. In line with multilateral agreements, Title X "Jurisdictional Affairs with Foreign Authorities" (Art. 448-523) of the 1995 Code of Criminal Procedure (as amended) provides a legal cooperation framework for both active and passive extradition, letters rogatory,[24] and the mutual recognition and enforcement of criminal judgements. Art. 294/a-294/c of the Code provide for special investigative techniques, such as sting and covert operations and controlled deliveries, which can be provided within the scope of MLA. This framework was further expanded by Law No. 10193, dated 3 December 2009, "On jurisdictional affairs with foreign authorities in criminal matters" (as amended), which elaborates the procedure on various MLA requests and, since 2021, also provides for the transfer of criminal proceedings and the establishment of JITs.

An important aspect of cooperation in criminal matters is the approach of combining legal bases for cooperation, such that the most facilitated way of cooperation can be followed. This also holds true in the case of

Albania. Both Art. 1(3) of the PGO-EPPO arrangement and the EPPO-SPAK arrangement, respectively, serve as instructive examples, which state:[25]

> For gathering evidence or obtaining extradition of persons sought, as well as for other forms of judicial cooperation between them, the Parties shall apply the relevant multilateral instruments for judicial cooperation in criminal matters, including, but not limited to, the European Convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters and its additional Protocols, as well the United Nations Convention against transnational organised crime and the United Nations Convention against corruption.[26]

In a similar vein, SPAK stated the following in its 2024 annual report:[27]

> During 2024, the Special Prosecution Office continued international cooperation with foreign authorities, based on the conventions of the Council of Europe and the United Nations Conventions, as well as on bilateral agreements to which the Republic of Albania is a party.

The "combination method" is particularly relevant when setting up multi-party JITs. JITs with Albania have often been established using the EU JIT Model Agreement.[28] The model agreement is preferred in practice because of its "inclusive legal bases": the parties indicate the applicable legal bases, which may be taken from various cooperation instruments.[29] Under this model, the cooperation framework could be stipulated as follows:[30]

> In accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime of 15.11.2000 for A, B, C, D and, for A, C and D, in accordance with Article 20 of the Second Additional Protocol to the European Convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters of 08.11.2001 and, for B and D, in accordance with Article 18 of their respective Europol Agreements, and as for the relations between A and C in accordance with Article 13 of the Convention of 29.05.2000 on mutual assistance in criminal matters between the Member States of the European Union.

Clearly, this example combines UN and CoE multilateral agreements, EU acquis, and bilateral JHAA cooperation agreements, while also applying specific instruments between specific partners.[31]

2. Institutional framework

With regard to the institutional framework, the main Albanian bodies involved, apart from the legal practitioners (i.e., police officers, investigators, prosecutors, judges), are:

- Ministry of Justice, Directorate on Jurisdictional Affairs and Judicial Cooperation;
- Ministry of the Interior, Directorate-General for Migration and Asylum Policies;
- Directorate-General of State Police, International Affairs Department, Border and Migration Department;
- Prosecutor General's Office, Directorate of Foreign Jurisdictional Affairs;
- Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organised Crime (part of SPAK), Sector for International Cooperation and Liaison in Joint Investigations.

The above are also contact points under bilateral agreements with the JHA agencies, including the National Correspondent for Terrorism Matters at Eurojust. Albania currently has two active liaison officers at Europol's Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands, with a potential third one to be deployed by the National Bureau of Investigations (part of SPAK). At Eurojust, Albania is represented by Liaison Prosecutor *Fatjona Memçaj*, who has been in office since January 2021 and is currently serving her second term. According to the 2024 country presentation by Eurojust,[32] the Albanian Liaison Prosecutor took part in 109 new cases, over half of which were initiated by the Albanian Desk. Furthermore, the Albanian Liaison Prosecutor participated in 24 JITs, 19 coordination meetings, and three coordination centres. Despite having respective arrangements in place, neither the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) nor SPAK has yet appointed liaison officers to the EPPO.

In the context of Albania's accelerated integration, the country currently holds observer status in the JIT Network and the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), as well as EU candidate country status in the European Judicial Network, with the potential to extend its participation in other, similar groups.

3. Practical challenges

The European Commission's 2024 Albania Report, which accompanied the Commission's communication on the state of play of enlargement, found, with regard to Chapter 24 that Albania is moderately prepared in aligning with the EU acquis in the area of justice, freedom and security. The Commission particularly recommended that Albania further strengthen its fight against organised crime, especially through continued cooperation with Member States and EU agencies (including with Europol, within the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), and with Eurojust).[33] The Commission is largely satisfied with Albania's increase in judicial cooperation in criminal matters, as regards both incoming and outgoing requests.[34] It also notes that cooperation with the EPPO is fully in place.[35]

In the previous year's Screening Report on Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, the Commission noted the positive results of Albania's active participation in international and regional law enforcement cooperation with Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, and Member States in the fight against organised crime, narcotics trafficking, and terrorism.[36] However, the Commission identified gaps related to surrender procedures and lack of transposition of the EAW framework, urging Albania to make further alignments regarding the mutual recognition of criminal judgements.[37]

A specific issue highlighted in Eurojust's practice, *inter alia*, involves the refusal of MLA requests due to a lack of dual criminality, pursuant to Art. 506 of the Albanian Code of Criminal Procedure.[38] Eurojust has also identified insufficient early cooperation and coordination between partners, resulting in parallel investigations and MLA delays, as another challenge.[39]

From the perspective of the domestic authorities, the pressing challenges highlighted by SPAK in its 2024 annual report include the status of staff and jurisdictional disputes. According to SPAK, the three liaison officers in the dedicated sector of the Special Prosecution Office hold only "civil servant" status, limiting them to performing administrative and auxiliary tasks. This restricts them from taking operational and procedural actions, as required by national and international frameworks. As SPAK points out, their counterparts at the Prosecutor General's Office perform the same work but hold the status of judicial police officer. For these reasons, and considering the increase in MLA and JIT requests, SPAK recommends that the necessary legal amendments be made so that the specialised liaison officers have the same competences as judicial police officers.[40] Regarding the issue of jurisdiction, SPAK highlights that, under the current legal framework, it lacks the competence to review or submit requests for the recognition and enforcement of criminal judgements regarding criminal offences within its specific jurisdiction and for cases of passive extradition of Albanian nationals. Since this competence currently falls under the general jurisdiction, SPAK recommends targeted revisions to the MLA law in order for it to acquire this inherent competence. [41]

4. Operational outcomes

Despite the aforementioned challenges, Albania has an impressive track record with regard to judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Coincidentally, the opening of accession negotiations seems to have been accompanied by more intensified efforts on the part of the Albanian authorities.

Albania benefits from Eurojust projects, such as the Western Balkans Criminal Justice (WBCJ) Project, which enhances cross-border cooperation in the fight against organised crime and terrorism within the region and in the EU. Within the framework of this project, Eurojust President *Michael Schmid* highlighted Albania's significant contributions in a speech on 12 March 2025. He also noted that, in the previous year, Albania was Eurojust's third most active partner country after the UK and Switzerland, a figure also reflected in Eurojust's Annual Report 2024.[42]

A review of operations supported by Europol and Frontex[43] reveals that the Albanian side has been successful in tackling organised drug trafficking, the trafficking of human beings, and even corruption detected by the analysis of encrypted communication platforms.[44] Eurojust data notably show that, between 2019 and 2023, Albania participated in 99 drug trafficking cases, 38 coordination meetings, and two centres, as well as in 17 JITs.[45] Among these were high-profile operations such as "Shpirti" and "Highway," [46] which targeted major cocaine and cannabis trafficking networks led by Albanian criminal groups.[47] An arms trafficking case in December 2024 was resolved by the cooperation between the Albanian and Kosovan specialised prosecution offices, with the assistance of Europol and Eurojust, utilising a JIT supported by the WBCJ Project.[48]

More recently, "Operation Stream", regarded as the largest international operation against child sexual exploitation, managed to shut down the illicit online platform "Kidflix" that had hosted over 91,000 items of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), together with Europol support and the participation of over 35 countries worldwide – including the help of Albania's State Police.[49]

From November 2022, Albania collaborated with EU Member States, Europol, Eurojust, and other countries on a major operation coded "FRIDA-REFOX", directed against internet fraud in call centres, with the number of victims estimated in the hundreds of thousands. A similarly major operation supported by Europol and Eurojust and carried out as part of EMPACT was brought to a close in May 2025, resulting in the dismantling of the global activity of an organised criminal group that had defrauded more than 100 victims of over €3 million through fake online investment platforms. In addition to SPAK's participation, Europol provided support by also deploying mobile offices in Albania during the operation.[50]

The partnership with the EPPO against PIF offences bore fruit last year in the Midas investigation. This was a large-scale operation involving the EPPO and 17 countries, including Albania's SPAK and a total of 680 investigators, to bring down a criminal organisation that had implemented a €195 million VAT carousel fraud scheme from the sale of cellphones, earbuds, and face masks.[51]

An examination of national data revealed that Albania's Prosecutor General's Office administered 599 letters rogatory and transmitted nearly the same amount (539) in 2024.[52] During the same year, SPAK administered 70 MLA requests and transmitted 163 MLA requests, mostly in relation to EU Member States. 41 active extradition requests were transmitted by SPAK to the Albanian Ministry of Justice. Lastly, 10 new JITs were established, bringing the total to an impressive 27 active JITs since SPAK's creation.[53]

IV. Concluding Remarks

The EU's external dimension is undoubtedly reliant on third and accession countries as reliable partners in achieving common goals, such as combating cross-border criminality. This article has demonstrated that

there are several elements of cooperation in place, ranging from multilateral and bilateral judicial cooperation agreements and bilateral arrangements with the EU's Justice and Home Affairs agencies (in particular, Europol, Frontex, and Eurojust) to national legislation enabling cooperation. As a result, these countries can participate in justice and home affairs matters as equals and even lead joint operations and investigations with EU counterparts. Considering its combination of elements, the cooperation framework has also established multi-level cooperation with fewer legal obstacles. Eurojust, without a doubt, plays an important role in the facilitation and coordination here.

Albania's long-standing cooperation with EU Member States, Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, and the EPPO is a testament to the effectiveness of this cooperation framework. While some shortcomings remain, the country has a proven track record of successful cooperation cases, as acknowledged by the European Commission in its regular enlargement policy reports and as exemplified in this article by highlighting several operations.

Moving forward, Albania should further its ambitious efforts by gaining access to more EU expert groups and by maintaining or increasing the level of cooperation, ultimately benefiting its accession journey.

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1. B. Škrlec, "Eurojust and External Dimension of EU Judicial Cooperation", (2019) *eucrim*, 188, 191.↩
2. M. Kullaj, "The Participation of Albania in Joint Investigation Teams with Law Enforcement Agencies of the European Union", (2024) 16(2), *OPTIME*, 371, 374.↩
3. See the 2022 Guidelines on Joint Investigation Teams Involving Third Countries by the JIT Network and Eurojust, available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2812/73766>. All hyperlinks in this article were last accessed on 16 October 2025.↩
4. S. Lavenex and P. Lutz, "Third Country Access to EU Agencies: Exploring Spaces for Influence", (2023) 61(6), *Journal of Common Market Studies (JCMS)*, 1563, 1569.↩
5. See: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/partners-collaboration/agreements>.↩
6. See: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/beyond-eu-borders/working-arrangements/>.↩
7. See: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/states-and-partners/third-countries>.↩
8. See: <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/about/international-cooperation#cooperation-between-the-eppo-and-non-eu-states-third-countries>. With regard to Albania, the EPPO concluded one agreement with the Prosecutor General's Office (which represents the general jurisdiction to prosecute crimes) and one agreement with a specialised anti-corruption authority. The same approach has been followed for Moldova and Ukraine. In addition to these agreements with third-country authorities, the EPPO concluded two agreements with authorities in Denmark and Hungary, i.e., non-participating EU countries.↩
9. For example, references to liaison officers.↩
10. See the Eurojust Strategy on Cooperation with International Partners 2024-2027 at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2812/053094>.↩
11. M. Kullaj, (2024) 16(2), *OPTIME*, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 371, 377.↩
12. See: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/partners-collaboration>.↩
13. Priority 1 of the Eurojust Strategy on Cooperation with International Partners 2024-2027, *op. cit.* (n. 10).↩
14. Consolidated text: Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part, OJ L 107, 28.4.2009, 166.↩
15. CETS No. 182.↩
16. Noted by Eurojust in the 2022 Guidelines on JITs, *op. cit.* (n. 3).↩
17. See: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/agreement_on_operational_and_strategic_co-operation_between_the_republic_of_albania_and_the_european_police_office.pdf>.↩
18. See: <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2018/11/01/77>.↩
19. See: <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/document/albania-working-arrangement/>. Art. 6 on the legal status of the working arrangement specifies that it does not constitute an international legally binding agreement.↩
20. OJ L 2023/2107, 5.10.2023.↩
21. See: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/document/agreement-cooperation-between-eurojust-and-albania>. This agreement was signed just one month before the adoption of the Eurojust Regulation (2018/1727), still making reference to Council Decision 2009/426/JHA. However, Art. 3(2) of the agreement had foreseen this and allows for Eurojust to propose extending the scope of the agreement to reflect changes to its mandate.↩
22. See: <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-07/Signed-WA-between-EPPO-and-PGO-of-Albania_EN.pdf>.↩
23. See: <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/WA%20between%20EPPO-SPAK%20Albania%20-%20EN.pdf>.↩
24. Instead of European Investigation Orders.↩
25. *Op. cit.* (n. 22 and 23).↩
26. See also Art. 5, Art. 6, and Art. 7 of the arrangements, which make reference to distinct multilateral agreements for the specific forms of cooperation, i.e., freezing of assets, JITs, and extradition. In cases where these forms of cooperation are combined, the legal bases likewise are combined.

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27. SPAK, *Raporti Vjetor 2024* [Annual Report 2024], <https://spak.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SPAK-Annual-Rep.-2024-Raporti-Vjetor-SPAK-2024.pdf>, p. 24.↩
28. See the contribution by Team Albania to the Themis 2019 Semi-Final A, "Mutual legal assistance in criminal proceedings of drug trafficking – *Challenges of a non-EU country*", pp. 14-15, available at: <https://portal.ejtn.eu/PageFiles/17913/TH-2019-01%20TEAM%20ALBANIA.pdf>.↩
29. Consolidated text of the model agreement on the establishment of a Joint Investigation Team, following the approval of the Council Resolution of 22 December 2021 on a revised Appendix I, 2022/C 44/02, OJ C 44, 28.1.2022, 1.↩
30. Eurojust 2022 Guidelines on JITs, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 6.↩
31. *Ibid.*↩
32. *See:* <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/states-and-partners/third-countries/liaison-prosecutors/albania>.↩
33. Commission Staff Working Document, "Albania 2024 Report", SWD (2024) 690 final, p. 8.↩
34. *Ibid*., p. 46.↩
35. *Ibid*.↩
36. European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, "Screening Report – Albania", 2023, p. 79.↩
37. *Ibid*., pp. 66-67, 88.↩
38. See the 2024 Eurojust paper on international cooperation in drug trafficking cases with third countries – Practical experiences of liaison prosecutors at Eurojust, 2024, available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2812/35988>. The same procedure was taken for Georgia and North Macedonia.↩
39. *Ibid*., p. 6.↩
40. SPAK, *Raporti Vjetor 2024*, *op. cit*. (n. 27), pp. 64-65.↩
41. *Ibid*., pp. 65-66.↩
42. See the Eurojust Annual Report 2024, available at: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/files/eurojust-annual-report-2024-en.pdf>.↩
43. See the Frontex news release "Three years of operation in Albania", available at: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/three-years-of-operation-in-albania-Uot4JP>.↩
44. See the Europol news article "Violent Albanian criminal group linked to corruption disrupted via SKY ECC analysis", available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/violent-albanian-criminal-group-linked-to-corruption-disrupted-sky-ecc-analysis>.↩
45. See information on Albania in the 2024 Eurojust paper on international cooperation in drug trafficking cases with third countries, *op. cit*. (n. 38).↩
46. *Ibid*.↩
47. See the 2024 Europol Report "Decoding the EU's most threatening criminal networks", available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2813/811566>.↩
48. See the Eurojust press release "Arms trafficking group uncovered in Albania and Kosovo*", available at: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/news/arms-trafficking-group-uncovered-albania-and-kosovo>.↩
49. See the Europol news article "Global crackdown on Kidflix, a major child sexual exploitation platform with almost two million users", available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/global-crackdown-kidflix-major-child-sexual-exploitation-platform-almost-two-million-users>.↩
50. See the Eurojust press release "International coalition uncovers EUR 3 million online investment fraud", available at: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/news/international-coalition-uncovers-eur-3-million-online-investment-fraud>.↩
51. See the EPPO news article "EPPO investigation cluster Midas: €195 million VAT fraud spread across 17 countries", available at: <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/media/news/eppo-investigation-cluster-midas-eu195-million-vat-fraud-spread-across-17-countries>.↩
52. [52] Report of the Prosecutor General on the state of criminality in Albania for 2024, p. 170.↩
53. SPAK, *Raporti Vjetor 2024*, (n. 27), pp. 11, 61.↩

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