Guest Editorial

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Editorial

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Dear Reader,

It is a pleasure for me to address the readership of the eucrim journal.

This issue is focusing on evidence gathering and JITs (Joint Investigation Teams), a relatively new judicial cooperation instrument and a tool which will help us put many criminals behind bars. Cooperation is the key word in Europol's activities. As one of several institutions fighting international crime within and beyond the borders of the EU, Europol is committed to working together with other law enforcement agencies in a spirit of mutual support and shared responsibility.Europol's main goal in the coming years will be to use its unique capabilities and strengths to make a real difference to the internal security of the Member States and the safety of their citizens. Europol will strengthen its capabilities further by capitalising on the benefits brought by the European Council Decision which makes Europol an EU agency in 2010. The Council Decision will consolidate Europol's position at the centre of the new internal security arrangements and information pathways in the EU. This will enable Europol to become an even greater pioneer of change, identifying and responding to new threats, and developing new techniques.

The rapid development of society in general and, more specifically of technology, has transformed business as well as criminal opportunities. A truly global operating environment capable of transcending borders has been created. Organised crime groups take advantage of this and use, for example, the internet as a tool for communication, distribution and the direct targeting of victims in society. Criminal groups are evolving also, from their traditional monolithic business structures. They have turned into flexible, multinational, multi-ethnic enterprises which make use of professional facilitators often hidden in the legitimate economy. Such complex new challenges to law enforcement demand a smarter response particularly through more effective international cooperation. Some of the most capable answers to these criminal threats are the 'European Arrest Warrant' and 'Joint Investigation Teams'. To match the criminals we have to make better use of these and other cooperation instruments.

Similarly we have to use our common knowledge to identify the key vulnerabilities in organised crime in order to hit the criminals where it hurts them most. Recently Europol and Eurojust supported a successful JIT with the Bulgarian police and the Spanish Brigada Investigación del Banco de Espanã. This is a good example of the capabilities of Joint Investigation Teams. A criminal group of 17 people, behind the distribution of more than 82.000 counterfeit euro notes with a face value of more than 16 million euro, was disrupted. Our role was to deliver operational analysis, technical support and operational coordination.

Everyday our analysts are trying to turn high quality analysis into major operational successes by identifying and disrupting criminal networks.

When these are identified, the next step is to bring them to court and to stop their illegal activities. Ministers and EU citizens expect us to protect them and to produce results. The 'Stockholm Programme' foresees an internal security strategy for the EU which aims to strengthen cooperation in police and law enforcement matters. Exploiting the full potential of Europol is called for especially in regard to Europol involvement in major cross-border operations and Joint Investigation Teams. Synergies still have to be developed between national, European and international bodies. In the EU greater levels of cooperation should exist between relevant agencies, including Europol, Eurojust, Frontex and OLAF. We have to complement each other's strengths and avoid duplication of work. Furthermore, it is important to continue encouraging the use of JITs with both national prosecutors and investigators as part of the team. We have to make use of the ability to build mutual trust between practitioners from different jurisdictions working together and deciding on investigative and prosecution strategies. Together we are better.

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Editorially reviewed articles published in English, French, or German, are complemented by timely news and analysis of legal and policy developments across Europe.
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