

# Guest Editorial eucrim 2-2025

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## Editorial

## EDITORIAL

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Dear Readers,

While internal and external security remain key priorities for the European Union, they require constant adaptation to the evolving crime situation and geopolitical context. As the April 2025 EU Security Strategy (ProtectEU) puts it, the current threat landscape is stark: the line between hybrid threats and open warfare is becoming increasingly blurred, and hostile states are waging hybrid campaigns against the EU across online and offline domains to disrupt our societal cohesion and democratic processes. As Europol outlines, powerful organised crime networks are proliferating in Europe, most with extra-EU connections, penetrating our economy and affecting our society. Cryptocurrencies and parallel financial systems still help criminals launder and hide their criminal proceeds, and the terrorist threat in Europe continues to loom large. Regional crises outside the EU create a ripple effect, providing new motivation for terrorist actors across the entire ideological spectrum to recruit, mobilise, and build up their capacities. They target radicalisation and recruitment efforts specifically towards the most vulnerable sections of our societies, in particular certain young persons. Cyberattacks and foreign information manipulation are also increasingly prevalent, exploiting emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.

Faced with such threats and their external dimension, the EU has no choice but to enhance its security through an ever-closer cooperation with countries outside the bloc, including via strategic partnerships, operational, and formal cooperation agreements. Stepping up such Union action was the clear objective of the June 2024 Council conclusions on strengthening judicial cooperation with third countries in the fight against organised crime. These conclusions call for the establishment of a European Judicial Organised Crime Network (EJO CN) and the identification of priority third countries for reinforced cooperation to combat organised crime. This should take into account the number of "high value targets" located in third countries and pending requests for judicial cooperation. Other measures include sharing expertise and best practices among experts experienced in judicial cooperation with priority third countries, including liaison officers, liaison magistrates, and diplomatic representations; seconding Eurojust liaison magistrates to third countries in select cases; and eliminating difficulties in judicial cooperation with third countries, in particular extradition.

As a follow-up, the Commission will develop and regularly update a briefing package to support engagement with priority third countries, including relevant data on the current level of law enforcement and judicial cooperation. In addition, the Commission and Member States will organise dedicated "*Team Europe*" dialogues with priority third countries to discuss judicial cooperation improvements on all sides. A first "*Team Europe*" dialogue took place earlier this year with the United Arab Emirates – and will hopefully yield concrete and sustainable improvements in judicial cooperation soon.

In addition, the Commission will continue to negotiate cooperation agreements between Union agencies (Europol and Eurojust) and third countries with a view to enhanced police and judicial cooperation, including information exchange, the posting of liaison officers or prosecutors, and joint investigation teams. New cooperation agreements are being finalised and concluded with countries in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. The EU's existing mutual assistance and extradition agreements remain under close scrutiny and will be updated as necessary, including to enable the exchange of electronic evidence.

All these efforts aim to strengthen the fight against cross-border crime by improving information exchange, joint investigations, and coordinated action, based on joint commitments to respecting the rule of law and fundamental rights, including data protection.

I encourage our readers to discover this eye-opening issue of *eucrim* and realize the importance of international police and judicial cooperation for Europe's security and, consequently, our freedoms.

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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.

All content is freely accessible at <https://eucrim.eu>, with four online and print issues published annually.

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