

# Belgian Council Presidency: Better Fight against Organised Crime and Drug Trafficking

## News

**Thomas Wahl**

At the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council Meeting on 4/5 March 2024, the Belgian Council Presidency discussed steps forward with regard to the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking - one of the priorities of the Belgian Council Presidency in the first half of 2024 (→ [eucri](#)m 4/2023, 317).

As regards judicial aspects, Belgium pointed out its two strands of work: First, the plan to set up a network of prosecutors specialised in the fight against organised crime. The Presidency outlined the scope and tasks of this network and its link with Eurojust. Second, it is envisaged to strengthen judicial cooperation with third countries. Member states' resources in third countries should be better pooled and coordinated. The EU will also put stronger pressure on non-cooperative jurisdictions (safe haven countries).

In the area of home affairs, the execution of the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime of October 2023 (→ [eucri](#)m 3/2023, 257) is in progress. In this context, actions focus on mapping the criminal networks that pose the biggest threats to society, preventing criminal networks from recruiting children and young people, and boosting EU cooperation with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU Home Affairs Ministers agreed on recommendations regarding the implementation of best practices from Member States' capabilities to fight drug trafficking. Best practices include:

- Providing strategic means – such as offensive and defensive national drug strategies – to fight drug trafficking;
- Mapping illicit drug flows through the conclusion of information-sharing agreements;
- Disrupting criminal networks for instance by running automatic Schengen Information System checks for vehicles entries/exits in logistics hubs;
- Increasing the resilience of logistics hubs by reinforcing the maritime surveillance system.

Another key priority in the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking is the European Ports Alliance which was officially launched in January 2024 (→ separate news item).

### UPDATE:

At the JHA Council Meeting on 13/14 June 2024, the Belgian Presidency took stock of its actions against organised crime and drug trafficking during its term in the first half of 2024. The [Home Affairs Ministers approved conclusions](#) on the Europol report "Decoding the EU's most threatening criminal networks", which was presented in April 2024 (→ separate news item). Strengthening efforts in mapping high-risk criminal

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networks is seen as a fundamental step to further enhancing their dismantlement. The mapping exercise of high-risk criminal networks should also be conducted every two years.

As regards **justice matters**, the EU Justice Minister adopted conclusions on setting up a European Judicial Organised Crime Network and on strengthening judicial cooperation with third countries in the fight against organised crime (→ separate news items). The Presidency also informed about the cooperation that has taken place in the course of the past six months with countries from Latin America and the Caribbean to address transnational crime. A major outcome of this cooperation was the **La Paz Declaration** that was adopted on 22 February 2024 in the framework of the high-level meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs. The Declaration sets out five priorities for bi-regional cooperation and coordination in addressing the global narcotic drug situation.

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