

# [Intensified judicial response to serious cross-border crimes](#)

## **Eurojust Annual Report 2019**

The Hague, 14 April 2020



Judicial authorities across the EU increasingly turn to Eurojust, the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, to work together to tackle serious cross-border crime. [Eurojust's 2019 Annual Report](#), which was published today, shows that prosecutors from across the European Union and beyond turned to Eurojust for tailor-made support in nearly 8 000 cases, an increase of 17% compared with 2018.

About half of these cases were opened during 2019, while half were ongoing from previous years, reflecting a growing level of complexity in cross-border criminal investigations, which increasingly last more than one year.

Working together through Eurojust, national judicial authorities achieved impressive on-the-ground results across a wide range of crime areas, including the freezing of approximately EUR 2 billion in criminal assets, bringing illicit drug trafficking worth over EUR 2.8 billion to a halt, and the arrests of nearly 2 700 suspects.

Mr Ladislav Hamran, President of Eurojust, said: *'This Annual Report is a vivid testimony to what prosecutors from across the EU and beyond can achieve when they join forces in the fight against organised crime and terrorism. I am incredibly proud of the impressive results that the Member States and Eurojust jointly accomplished in the past year. At the same time, I am aware that this report will reach you in extraordinary times. Since the coronavirus outbreak, we have adapted quickly to make sure criminals do not take advantage of this global health crisis by escaping justice.'*

Mr Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice, said: *'The concrete results and the steady growth in Eurojust's casework in 2019 clearly show that the Agency provides the right type of practical, tailor-made support to judicial authorities across the EU, so that they can work together effectively to tackle many forms of serious cross-border crime. Eurojust has also quickly adapted its support to respond to judicial cooperation needs in the light of the current coronavirus pandemic, which further underlines the unwavering commitment of the Agency to make sure that criminals cannot hide behind national borders.'*



[Click [here](#) or on image to expand]

The National Desks at Eurojust responded to **over 1 100 urgent judicial cooperation** requests from their colleagues in national judicial authorities, for instance to locate suspects in another country, swiftly execute a European Arrest Warrant or arrange the freezing of bank accounts.

To assist major operations, the Agency supported the National Desks in the organisation of **430 coordination meetings** and **27 action days** from its coordination centre, allowing for real-time monitoring of action days, and provided operational and financial support to **270 joint investigation teams**.

The largest amount of cases concerned a wide range of **economic offences**, including swindling, fraud, tax evasion, money laundering and corruption, as well as environmental crime and intellectual property crime. The number of new Eurojust cases concerning investigations of **crimes prioritised in the European Agenda on Security** nearly doubled in 2019:

- **TERRORISM** – For example, coordination within 24 hours through the Hungarian and Belgian National Desks at Eurojust resulted in the *indictment of a suspected IS member for terrorism and mass murder*. In another case, 12 Member States and 9 online service providers succeeded in *disrupting terrorist online propaganda*.

On 1 September 2019, the [Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register](#) was established at Eurojust, which centralises links in proceedings against suspects of terrorist offences. In the first months of operation, the CTR spurred a sharp increase in information sharing on counterterrorism.

Eurojust was also an important platform for counterterrorism experts to discuss how to deal with *foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)* returning to Europe.

- **CYBERCRIME** – Nearly 250 cases focussed on cybercrime, such as Operation Cepheus, which culminated in the *successful takedown of an international infrastructure distributing spyware to more than 14 500 buyers* all over the world.
- **MIGRANT SMUGGLING** – The 187 cases of migrant smuggling concerned investigations tackling criminal activity *along all major migrant smuggling routes* to the European Union, with involvement of countries of origin and transit outside Europe. For example, a simultaneous action in December 2019 stopped the activities of an organised crime group smuggling migrants from the Middle East via Turkey and Greece to Romania. In another joint action, Greek and Italian authorities formed a joint investigation team to dismantle a criminal gang engaged in migrant smuggling by leisure boats on the Adriatic Sea.
- **DRUG TRAFFICKING** – More than 1 000 cases focussed on stopping drug trafficking. By working together in a joint investigation team, France, Poland and Ukraine successfully stopped the trafficking of a heroin substitute, including the planning and execution of a controlled delivery. Another major drug trafficking network was taken down through close cooperation between Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK. In this case, a Norwegian court sentenced one of the main suspects to 19 years' imprisonment and

confiscated more than EUR 4.5 million.

- **TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS** – 23% of all joint investigation teams supported by Eurojust in 2019 and nearly 400 cases focused on investigations of trafficking in human beings, with a steady increase in the participation of third States.

The 2019 Eurojust Annual Report also explains **key organisational developments** during the year:

- The [new Eurojust Regulation](#) entered into force on 12 December. Eurojust then became the European Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation. The new regulation makes Eurojust even more fit for the purpose of fighting increasing levels of cross-border crime, with an Executive Board dealing with administrative matters and giving the College of prosecutors from all Member States more leeway to focus on the continuously rising number of criminal cases. The Regulation also enhances the pro-active operational capacity of the Agency.
- Eurojust's cooperation with key institutional partners and Third States steadily increased, creating a **gateway to 52 jurisdictions** around the world. The network of Eurojust Contact Points grew during 2019 from 47 to 52 countries. Eurojust signed **cooperation agreements with Serbia and Georgia**, which unlock the possibility to systematically exchange operational information including personal data and post a Liaison Prosecutor to Eurojust.

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## Tackling COVID-19: Council adopts amended EU budget for 2020



The EU unlocks €3.1 billion from the 2020 budget to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak

The EU is making available almost all the remaining money from this year's budget to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council has today adopted by written procedure two proposals which amend the EU budget for 2020 in order to free up funds to respond to the COVID-19 crisis

Money is also being made available to help Greece deal with increased migratory pressures, and to support Albania's post-earthquake reconstruction.

Commitments have been increased overall by **€3.57 billion** and amount to €172.2 billion. Payments have been increased by **€1.6 billion**, reaching a total of €155.2 billion.

The revised EU budget for 2020 unlocks crucial resources to address the unprecedented challenges facing the EU and its member states. Our top priority is to help national health systems tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. This money will be used to fund medical supplies, to construct field hospitals, and to transfer patients for treatment in other member states.

*Zdravko Maric, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance*

**Draft amending budget No 1** increases commitments by €567 million and payments by €77 million.

- €115 million is earmarked for co-financing measures to address the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes helping member states repatriate stranded citizens as well as obtain personal protective equipment through joint procurements. A further €3.6 million is committed to strengthening the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).
- €350 million will be made available to support Greece as the country faces increasing migratory pressures. The funds will be used to develop reception facilities, enhance the asylum systems and procedures, and improve the protection of the external borders of Greece and Bulgaria.

Some of these measures will also help combat COVID-19, as migrants and refugees represent a highly vulnerable group.

- €100 million is allocated to supporting reconstruction in Albania in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit the country on 26 November 2019.
- Other minor adjustments are implemented for the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the European Court of Auditors and the Ombudsman.

**Draft amending budget No 2** earmarks an additional €3 billion in commitments and €1.53 billion in payments to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

€2.7 billion will be used to fund the provision of emergency healthcare support such as the stockpiling and distribution of essential resources, the creation of temporary hospitals, and the cross-border transportation of patients.

These actions will be channelled through the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI), which was created in 2016 to deal with the massive influx of refugees in Greece. To this end, the Council has in parallel adopted a regulation to reactivate the ESI and broaden its scope.

The remaining €300 million will be used to increase capacities for stockpiling, coordinating and distributing essential medical supplies, such as protective gear and ventilators. Such measures will be financed through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism/rescEU.

Headings	Amended 2020 EU budget (in € billion)	
	Commitments	Payments
1. Smart and inclusive growth	83 930 597 837	72 353 828 442
1a Competitiveness for growth and jobs	25 284 773 982	22 308 071 592
1b Economic social and territorial cohesion	58 645 823 855	50 045 756 850
2. Sustainable growth: natural resources	59 907 021 051	57 904 492 439
3. Security and citizenship	7 152 374 489	5 278 527 141
4. Global Europe	10 406 572 239	8 944 061 191
5. Administration	10 271 193 494	10 274 196 704
Other special Instruments	587 763 000	418 500 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>172 255 522 110</b>	<b>155 173 605 917</b>

## Financing

The amended budget increases by €3.4 billion the commitments under **heading 3** (security and citizenship) of the multiannual financial framework (MFF). This amount will be financed through existing special instruments which the EU can mobilise to respond to unforeseen events, namely:

- the Global Margin for Commitments for an amount of €2.4 billion
- the Flexibility Instrument for an amount of €316 million

- the Contingency Margin for the balance of €714.6 million

Commitments under **heading 4** (global Europe) have been increased by €145 million in the revised budget. This amount is financed from the unallocated margin available under this heading (€248 million).

As a result of this, the Global Margin for Commitments and the Flexibility Instrument are completely exhausted. To enable this, the Council adopted an amendment to the MFF regulation removing the limitations on the scope of the Global Margin for Commitments. The Council also adopted a proposal to adjust the amounts used from the Flexibility Instrument as well as a proposal to use the Contingency Margin.

## **Next steps**

During its plenary on 16-17 April 2020, the European Parliament is expected to agree its position on the two draft amending budget proposals. Once there is an agreement, the budget will be adopted. The European Parliament will also agree its position on the three proposals on the special financial instruments.

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## **[EIB to launch new report on digitalisation in the EU and US – Monday 20 April 2020](#)**

In the fight against the Coronavirus, digital technology is playing an unprecedented role in the maintenance of daily life and economic and social activities, as well as in the recovery of industry and business. The Coronavirus pandemic could become a tipping point for digitalisation – the dawn of a new era – by accelerating the maturity of digital technology: what was once a ‘nice to have’ could now become a ‘crucial to have’.

In this context, a new EIB report, **“Who is prepared for the new digital age? Evidence from the EIB Investment Survey”**, will be published at 10.30 a.m. Brussels time on Monday 20 April 2020.

It analyses investment in, and adoption of, digital technologies by firms in the EU and the United States and provides evidence of better performance of digital firms compared to non-digital ones. By providing country-level analytics the report helps countries to assess areas in which their firms perform well and the ones in which they might need policy reforms to better promote digitalisation. The report draws from two unique sets of data: the European Investment Bank Survey (EIBIS) 2019, and the EIBIS Start-up and Scale-up Survey 2019.

The report, together with the EU country-level analytics, will be available under embargo on Thursday 16 April. Requests should be sent by email to [press@eib.org](mailto:press@eib.org). In asking to receive it under embargo, journalists undertake to respect the publication time of 10.30 a.m. on Monday 20 April 2020.

The report will be available on the EIB's website on Monday 20 April at 10.30 a.m. for immediate release:

<https://www.eib.org/en/publications/who-is-prepared-for-the-new-digital-age>

## **Background information**

### **About the Economics Department of the EIB**

The EIB Economics Department provides economic research and studies, as well as unique analysis of investment activities in the EU and beyond, and supports the Bank in its operations and in the definition of its positioning, strategy and policy. Chief Economist Debora Revoltella heads the Department, a team of 40 economists.

### **About the EIB Investment Survey (EIBIS)**

The EIB Group Survey on Investment and Investment Finance is a unique, annual survey of some 13,500 firms. It comprises firms in all EU Member States, as well as a sample of US firms which serves as a benchmark. It collects data on firm characteristics and performance, past investment activities and future plans, sources of finance, financing issues and other challenges that businesses face. Using a stratified sampling methodology, EIBIS is representative across all Member States of the EU and for the US, as well as for firm size classes (micro to large) and four main sectors. It is designed to build a panel of observations to support time series analysis, observations that can also be linked to firm balance sheet and profit and loss data. EIBIS has been developed and is managed by the Economics Department of the EIB, with support for development and implementation by Ipsos MORI.

For more information see: <http://www.eib.org/eibis>.

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**[Press release – MEPs to discuss how to better protect consumers in times of COVID-19](#)**



MEPs will assess how EU and member states' authorities are [tackling coronavirus-related scams on consumers](#), for instance when misleading claims are made about products in high demand or products are sold at unreasonably high prices. Members have called on the Commission and national authorities to proactively monitor the market to prevent consumers from being harmed and to stop rogue traders' practices, in particular of those selling false medical equipment online.

The problems faced by travellers who have [bought tickets or made bookings](#), or other relevant purchases concerning future events, as well as the [use of telecom data](#) in the fight against the pandemic, are also likely to be addressed in the meeting.

**Debate:** EU response to the COVID-19 outbreak

**When:** Tuesday, 14 April 2020, 17.05 – 18.30

**Where:** European Parliament, Spinelli building, room 5G-3, Brussels

Members of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee will be able to participate remotely and can ask for the floor and intervene. Committee Chair [Petra De Sutter](#) (Greens/EFA, BE), as well as a few other MEPs, will be present in the meeting room. Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders will participate remotely.

The meeting will be [web-streamed here](#) (Parliament's Multimedia Centre).

## **Background**

In a letter addressed on 23 March to Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager (Europe Fit for the Digital Age), Commissioners Thierry Breton (Internal Market) and Didier Reynders (Justice), as well as to the Croatian Presidency of the Council, the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee called for [further action to tackle the COVID-19 crisis](#).

In a meeting on 2 April, Internal Market [MEPs also discussed with Commissioner Breton](#) the EU response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Information to the media**

Journalists are advised not to attend in person unless absolutely necessary. If you do, you are requested to respect the standard recommended guidelines on social distancing and hygiene. Please refrain from coming to EP premises if you present any symptoms of a respiratory infection, if you have knowingly been in contact with an infected person in the last 14 days or if you have been to regions with very high transmission rates.