

Judicial response to terrorist attacks

1 June 2017

The images of the heinous terrorist attacks against the innocent people of Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Stockholm, Nice, Manchester and many more European cities were still fresh in the minds of the national correspondents for terrorism matters, who, yesterday and today, gathered at Eurojust for their annual meeting. The two-day meeting was chaired by Michèle Coninsx, President of Eurojust and Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Team.

The unprecedented threat to European citizens posed by international terrorism demands that Member States fight terrorism in a coordinated fashion to secure that those responsible for such atrocities are brought to justice in the quickest and most effective way. National judicial authorities increasingly rely on Eurojust's support to share the information needed to dismantle terrorist networks and coordinate their counter-terrorism investigations and prosecutions.

The meeting was devoted to exploring possibilities to enhance judicial responses and cooperation in the aftermath of terrorist attacks and to exchanging lessons learned from investigations and prosecutions, with a focus on the international dimension of the investigations and best practice in dealing with victims immediately after terrorist attacks. The national correspondents for terrorism matters also discussed mechanisms for the de-radicalisation of terrorist suspects and possible challenges in prosecution and conviction of foreign terrorist fighters for terrorist offences and/or war crimes. The possible added value of the specialised judicial counter-terrorism bridge-maker between Eurojust and the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) at Europol was also discussed during the meeting, to facilitate an early judicial follow-up of the work of Europol in countering terrorism.

In attendance, in addition to the national correspondents and Eurojust National Members, were counter-terrorism judicial experts from Norway, Switzerland and the USA, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, the Head of the ECTC and a representative from Frontex.

A special session was dedicated to challenges in collecting battlefield information that could be used as evidence for terrorism and/or war crimes proceedings, bringing to the discussion table experts at international level representing specialised organisations and networks dealing with core international crimes.

Ms Coninsx said: *'The international security situation has become more complex and unpredictable, but the fight against terrorism and all other heinous crimes must continue. The presence of national correspondents for terrorism matters is of absolute added value in this fight. Eurojust stands ready to assist the Member States and its cooperation partners, but good will is not enough. We need a constant exchange of ideas and best practice, as well as the human and financial resources necessary to respond rapidly and*

effectively to a constantly changing terrorist threat landscape.'