

Study visit on Observatory activities for IP offices in the Balkan region

December 12, 2019 [General](#)

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Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia participated in a study visit at EUIPO on 10-11 December 2019.

The event focused on providing an in-depth look at the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights and its procedures for **fighting piracy and counterfeiting**, as well as the EUIPO's [international cooperation](#) programme.

Non-EU enforcers and experts from the intellectual property offices in the Balkan region took part in the event, which included presentations on economic and enforcement studies, the [IP Enforcement Portal](#), IP awareness-raising, cooperation with customs authorities and international cooperation. A session on the front office tool also took place.

The study visit provided a multilateral and collaborative platform for non-EU partners to exchange information and experiences related to enforcement practices.

This activity falls under the SP2020 project 'Extension of tools and support to the Observatory for non-EU countries'.

Arrests for smuggling migrants by leisure boats on Adriatic Sea



12 December 2019

Greek and Italian authorities, with the active support of Eurojust and Europol, have arrested eight suspects for the organised smuggling of irregular migrants across the southern Adriatic Sea, using small leisure boats. Approximately 140 migrants were transported from November 2018 until recently from the west of Greece via the Strait of Corfu to the southern Italian coast between Otranto and Lecce. Migrants, including minors under 13 years old, paid up to EUR 6 000. The journeys took up to 12 hours in boats that were sometimes less than 10 metres long. The arrested suspects, of Italian, Greek and Middle Eastern origin, are suspected of the facilitation of migrant smuggling or attempts to smuggle migrants. During the operation, 13 searches took place, and nine migrants, including minors, were found, who were ready to be transported by the smugglers.

Vice-President of Eurojust and National Member for Italy Mr Filippo Spiezia said: *'Tackling migrant smuggling is one of the priorities for Eurojust to enable a good coordination of actions, as we have been able to do in this case. At a time when Greece faces a strong migratory pressure, we have to combine efforts and as EU agencies support the effort of national authorities to combat criminal organisations that exploit migrants.'*

National Member for Greece Mr Paris Adamis stated: *'Cross-border cooperation is essential to tackle migrant smuggling and exploitation of people, and I would like to thank everyone involved for this successful operation. We stand ready to support national authorities in their combined efforts to take on this type of organised crime.'*

The arrests took place during an action day coordinated by Eurojust. A joint investigation team (JIT), financially supported by Eurojust, was set up in March of this year at the request of the two Member States to help with the investigations. This JIT was the first between Greece and Italy to investigate a case of migrant smuggling. Eurojust earlier this year actively called on national authorities to set up JITs for this purpose. In addition, two coordination meetings to exchange information and evidence were held at Eurojust.

Representatives of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre and Joint Operations Team-MARE of Europol participated in the action day. Europol actively supported the operation by providing intelligence and the sharing of information.

✘ The operation was led on the ground and concluded in Italy by the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) of Lecce, the National Anti-Mafia and Counter Terrorism Directorate and the *Guardia di Finanza*, and in Greece by the PPO in Athens and the PPO of the Court of Appeal in Athens, the Greek judge for matters of Mutual Legal Assistance and the Hellenic Police and Hellenic Coast Guard.

Photo © Guardia di Finanza

For yesterday's press release on migrant smuggling, use [this link](#).

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Photo © Guardia di Finanza

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[African civil society is a key partner for the future, says EESC president Luca Jahier](#)



The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted a debate on development cooperation policy at its December plenary session, stressing that it was essential to upgrade relations between EU and African civil society in order to move from help to development to partnership.

Relations between European and African civil society must be at the heart of the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement, in which continued – and even increased – engagement by the EESC and its bodies should be acknowledged as a central element. Only in this way can EU civil society help African civil society to become a reliable and trustworthy partner for investors.

At the debate held in Brussels on 12 December 2019, the EESC made it clear that, after playing a major role in fostering civil society relationships under the current partnership framework – the Cotonou Agreement – relations with African countries needed to be upgraded so that it was possible to move from help to development to the next stage: building international partnerships.

EESC president **Luca Jahier** underlined that development and cooperation policy was undergoing structural changes, shifting from a donor-recipient relationship towards peer-to-peer cooperation and dialogue based on complementary interests and that this trend could already be perceived in the upcoming ACP-EU relations, as well as in the new ties developed between the EU and Africa. *The 2030 Agenda is the best example of this new approach in international cooperation, because, regardless of the geographical and*

cultural background, we are all facing the same challenges and we need to act together, leaving no one behind, he said.

He then indicated that this also meant making a stronger commitment to working together to address common issues. *It has become crucial to politically acknowledge the contribution of civil society to the new partnerships forged by the EU in the world, with the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement at the forefront, he pointed out. I hope the current negotiations will provide a stronger role for organised civil society and for the EESC. The future of Africa is the future of Europe. We need a new African Renaissance.*

The important work carried out by civil society organisations was highlighted by **Jutta Urpilainen**, European commissioner for international partnerships, who maintained that *The European development model must evolve with global realities. We all need to be involved in and committed to the Green Deal. Sustainable development and eradicating poverty in the world are a priority of my mandate. We should continue to leave no one behind but also to give a role to everyone, especially to civil society organisations, that are always on the frontline of the different issues.*

Isabelle A. J. Durant, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), mentioned that multilateral agreements could help countries that had difficulties in international trade and that they were the only way to achieve a win-win situation for all actors involved. EU and Africa face the same opportunities and challenges, such as digitalisation and climate change.

Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, permanent representative of the European Investment Bank (EIB) to the European institutions in Brussels, referred to the need to mobilise different financial institutions to bring in private investment and to the EIB's contributions to building infrastructure in Africa.

The debate was held in conjunction with the approval, by the EESC plenary session, of an own-initiative [opinion](#) on *External aid, investment and trade as instruments to reduce economic migration, with a special focus on Africa*, drafted by **Arno Metzler** and **Thomas Wagnsonner**.

Mr Metzler declared: *The challenges for turnaround in Africa are so big that they need all partners from civil society and everything available to tackle them in a successful and promising way.*

Mr Wagnsonner added: *External aid, investment and trade as instruments for development means more than eradicating extreme poverty. It means a decent life based on quality jobs. That is, nothing less than creating a middle class with clear perspectives for a better life. Involvement of organised civil society ensures the fight against poverty, not against the poor.*

For further information on the work and activities carried out by the [REX](#) section, please consult our website.

[EUIPO workshop on tools and practices in EAPO](#)

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EUIPO workshop on tools and practices in EAPO



A Technical Workshop on Tools and Practices is taking place at the headquarters of the Eurasian Patent Organization ([EAPO](#)) in Moscow, Russia on 11-12 December 2019, with the participation of the Industrial Property Offices of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Belarus, Russia and Tajikistan.

The workshop, which is part of the EUIPO's [international cooperation](#) activities, enables the exchange of information and experiences and reinforces the [cooperation between EAPO and the EUIPO](#). In particular, both offices will focus on extending the benefits of the tools and practices developed under the European Union Intellectual Property Network (EUIPN), in particular **DesignView**.

The agenda also includes a consultation process to **identify specific actions in assisting EAPO** in the implementation of their recently acquired competence on industrial designs. During the workshop, the EUIPO will also assist EAPO in the draft Guidelines of Examination.

The EUIPO's 2020 vision is to deliver high-quality products and services to trade mark and design users, which requires expanding its focus to the international arena. In particular, Line of Action 4 of the Strategic Plan 2020, supporting its Strategic Goal 3 'Building network convergence with global impact', includes the Office's strategy to extend the benefits of the

tools and practices developed by the EUIPN beyond the borders of the EU, in the interest of users, particularly SMEs.

As part of this strategy, since 2017, the EUIPO has hosted several technical workshops with non-EU IP offices across the world, thus increasing the outreach of the Network's tools and practices globally.