

GDP main aggregates and employment estimates for second quarter 2019 – GDP up by 0.2% and employment up by 0.2% in the euro area – In the EU28, GDP up by 0.2% and employment by 0.3%

GDP growth in the euro area and EU28

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.2% in both the **euro area** (EA19) and the **EU28** during the second quarter of 2019, compared with the previous quarter, according to an estimate published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In the first quarter of 2019, GDP had grown by 0.4% in the **euro area** and by 0.5% in the **EU28**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

European Parliament recognises the progress made by EASO to reform its governance

In just one year EASO has implemented 79% of an ambitious Governance Action Plan.

On 4-5 September 2019, the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Ms. **Nina Gregori**, held meetings in Brussels with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) forming part of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT). She also presented to, and participated in, productive sessions with both of the Committees.

During the series of meetings, Ms. Gregori updated the MEPs on the latest developments in EASO's implementation of its **Governance Action Plan**, which was approved in the spring of 2018. The Plan established a series of actions aimed at dramatically reinforcing the Agency's internal governance, rebuilding internal capacity and restoring trust. In just over a year, 48 of the 61 (79%) actions within the Plan have been completed, while the remaining 13 actions – mostly relating to long-term targets – are ongoing.

In particular, EASO has established a robust internal control system and has

been undergoing a heavy recruitment drive to bring its capacity in line with the increased technical and operational support being requested by the asylum authorities of EU Member States. From a workforce of just over 200 in the summer of 2018, EASO now has 292 staff, with plans to reach 500 by the end of 2020.

MEPs across the board praised the hard work and improvements that have been carried out by the Agency and its new management over the past year, despite challenging circumstances. They repeatedly acknowledged the transformation that has taken place in a relatively short time span.

Ms. Gregori also spoke about EASO's commitment to remain fully engaged with the European Parliament in overcoming the legislative deadlock on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, so that the EU's asylum practices can be further bolstered in a fair and future-proof manner.

As part of this reform, the Executive Director stated that while EASO has turned the page and is now providing more support than ever before, the limitations within its current mandate are very clear. In this context, she stressed the need for the proposed new mandate and transformation into the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) to be approved as soon as possible, and thanked the European Parliament for its steadfast support on this file.

Watch the Executive Director's session at the LIBE Committee (5 September 2019) [here](#).

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

[Modern slavery case solved with Eurojust's support](#)

The Hague, 06 September 2019

□Eurojust helped national authorities from Slovakia, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands to bring down a Slovak organised crime group (OCG) involved in cross-border trafficking in human beings (THB) for labour exploitation and large-scale money laundering. During the action day, which was coordinated by Eurojust, the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit, 5 suspects were arrested, and several properties belonging to the criminals were searched. Thanks to Eurojust's active support, European Arrest Warrants (EAWs) and European Investigation Orders (EIOs) were swiftly issued and executed. The crimes of the gang were committed between 2008 and 2017 in the Slovakian regions of Prešov and Košice and on UK territory.

In 2015, the UK National Desk opened a case at Eurojust to investigate a

criminal group, consisting of 5 Slovak nationals, who lived in the UK until 2017 and then moved to Germany. The OCG maintained a hierarchical structure with strict distribution of tasks for the individual members, and systematically and meticulously planned and performed activities.



The Slovak victims of the gang, who were mostly underprivileged people, were recruited in Slovakia and brought to the UK for forced labour. They were permanently employed, with bogus work contracts, in Chinese restaurants and car wash facilities under harsh working conditions: 12 to 14 hours per day, 6 days per week. The victims allegedly received a salary of at least £400 per week. The criminals appropriated most of that amount, arbitrarily claiming reimbursement for transport, accommodation and food that were provided to the victims under dubious financial arrangements. The victims thus ended up receiving only a tiny fraction of their actual salary: approximately £20 per week. The members of the OCG subsequently transferred that illegally obtained income to Slovakia to disguise its origin.

Eurojust set up a joint investigation team (JIT) between Slovakia and the UK to share information on victims and suspects and decide on a common strategy. The JIT, which received funding from Eurojust, helped to speed up the investigations, culminating in the successful action day. The JIT also facilitated the issuance and execution of 2 EIOs before and during the action day on German and Dutch territory, as well as 5 EAWs. Europol also supported the operations by providing funding for two UK officers to travel during the action.

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[ESMA published responses to survey on short-termism in the financial sector](#)

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) has published the [responses](#) it received to its call for evidence on potential short-term pressures on corporations stemming from the financial sector.

Considering the impact of short-termism forms part of ESMA's work on sustainable finance and relates to the European Commission's Action Plan on 'Financing Sustainable Growth'.

Launch of Judicial Counter-Terrorism Register at Eurojust

Speeding up and strengthening the judicial response to terrorism

The Hague/Brussels, 5 September 2019

A Counter-Terrorism Register (CTR) has been launched at Eurojust to reinforce the judicial response in Member States to terrorist threats and to improve security for citizens. The CTR, which entered into force on 1 September, centralises key judicial information to establish links in proceedings against suspects of terrorist offences. The CTR is managed by Eurojust in The Hague on a 24-hour basis and provides proactive support to national judicial authorities. This centralised information will help prosecutors to coordinate more actively and to identify the suspects or networks that are being investigated in specific cases with potential cross-border implications.



Based on Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, a register has now been set up, with the support of the European Commission, the Special Committee on Terrorism of the European Parliament and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. The international and multilateral dimension of the fight against terrorism and the importance of information sharing have been demonstrated in the growing number of ongoing judicial proceedings of which Eurojust is informed, amounting to 580 in 2018.

Eurojust President Mr Ladislav Hamran said: *'The Counter-Terrorism Register is a major step forward in the fight against terrorism. Now that terrorists operate more and more in cross-border networks, the EU must do the same. By providing swift feedback on cross-border links between judicial proceedings, we can better coordinate and speed up actions against suspects of terrorist activities. Having the right information is of essential importance to combat terrorism and will reinforce the EU as an area of justice and security.'*

Mr Frédéric Baab, until recently French National Member at Eurojust and initiator of the Counter-Terrorism Register, stated: *'In fighting terrorism, we must avoid all blind spots. The experience that we have gained in the case related to the terrorist attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis on 13 November 2015 has shown the necessity of having a complete overview of all the ongoing judicial proceedings in the Member States. With the Counter-Terrorism Register at Eurojust, we will have the tool that we need at operational level to support the coordination of investigations in terrorism cases.'*

Following the terrorist attacks in France in Paris and Saint-Denis in November 2015, crossborder links between suspects were immediately detected. France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands subsequently took the initiative to set up a register at Eurojust to collect judicial information on terrorist activities and networks and identify

coordination needs.



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All Member States can use the CTR and are asked to register information on suspects and cases this month. A special template has been developed and common standards on the information that needs to be provided have been agreed upon, ensuring compliance with all existing data protection rules. The information for the register will be provided to Eurojust by the competent national authorities.

The CTR is a unique EU-wide database for all kinds of terrorist acts, also addressing the evolving threat from non-jihadist terrorism, including extreme right- and left-wing groups in Europe. The CTR focuses entirely on judicial proceedings and convictions and therefore will not overlap with the criminal analysis carried out by Europol.



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