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# Europol External Strategy

## 2017-2020

In order to strengthen Europol's contribution to consolidating the Security Union, in particular the fight against serious and organised crime and terrorism, Europol's activities in the external domain will focus on the following objectives:

- Optimising Europol's **partnerships**, operational and strategic;
- Strengthening Europol's role as the **preferred platform** for international law-enforcement cooperation against threats related to EU security;
- Reinforcing Europol's position within the **EU security architecture**;
- Promoting Europol's **successful cooperation model**.

### 1. Rationale

Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (hereinafter referred as Europol Regulation) explicitly stipulates the establishment of a strategy for relations with **third countries** and **international organisations**, which is also an element of the multiannual overall strategic programming.

Europol's External Strategy, reflecting the Europol Regulation, does not cover cooperation with EU agencies and other partners, such as the private sector.

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (hereinafter referred as the EU Global Strategy), the European Agenda on Security, followed by the Communication from the Commission delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and paving the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union and the European Agenda on Migration, represent the basis of Europol's External Strategy for the years 2017 to 2020.

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### 2. Goals

The goal of this External Strategy is to guide Europol's cooperation with third countries and thereby fulfilling the agency's objectives set by the Europol Regulation, which is to support the competent authorities of the Member States and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime affecting two or more Member States, terrorism and forms of crime which affect a common interest covered by a Union policy.

#### 2.1. Contributing to the implementation of the EU strategic framework

As stated in the EU Global Strategy, the internal and external security is ever more interlinked. The European Union is expected to play a major role in providing a global security. Europol is firmly embedded in this framework.

Europol's external cooperation with core partners from the third countries, like-minded countries and regional groups will be based on operational requirements and the recognised need for effective law enforcement cooperation based on the above mentioned strategic EU documents.

In accordance with the priorities set by the EU's strategic documents in the area of internal security, such as terrorism, hybrid threats, cyber and energy security, organised crime and external border management, **Europol's recognised operational priorities in the context of this strategy will be mainly in the area of serious organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism.** Hybrid threats are a new phenomenon which has to be further analysed in order to define Europol's role and the possible support it could provide in response to this global threat.

#### 2.2. Implementation of the Europol External Strategy

Europol's external relations should primarily focus on **strengthening Europol's contribution** to the fight against the three areas of crime identified in the European Agenda on Security: **Serious and Organised Crime, Cybercrime and Terrorism.** Among serious and organised crime challenges, **migrant smuggling** is of particular importance.

Europol's external activities are and will continue to be driven by **operational needs.** They should in particular serve the proper implementation of actions planned under the **Policy Cycle** and foster involvement and active participation of partners – third countries and organisations - in **EMPACT** activities.

Member States remain the leading participants of EMPACT and the mechanism itself primarily serves the internal security of the EU. However, its full and successful implementation, in particular at the operational level, is not possible without close partnership with third states and organisations. Europol will prioritise cooperation with partners that contribute to the implementation of the Policy Cycle.

At the same time, Europol will react flexibly to new or emerging security threats.

### 3. Objectives

Europol's objectives in the external relations are as follows:

#### 3.1. Optimising the **network of partnerships**, operational and strategic

Europol's primary objective is to ensure proper exchange of information and strengthening its role as the **EU criminal information hub.** This can be achieved

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through strategic and operational partnerships with external partners in accordance with the Art 23 and Art 25 of the Europol Regulation.

### 3.2. Strengthening Europol's role as the **preferred platform** for international law-enforcement cooperation against threats related to EU security

Europol should continue to offer its partners an **attractive environment for cooperation**, both bilateral and multilateral.

The community of **liaison officers** attached to Europol plays a crucial role in facilitating proactive and coordinated activities against the serious crime. It will remain **one of Europol's unique features**. Europol's partners that contribute to its activities, in particular to its operational tasks, should have the opportunity to benefit from this unique feature and second their officers to Europol. Partners already having their officers seconded should be encouraged to develop their liaison bureaus further, involving various services that might benefit from and contribute to Europol's work. Secondment of counterterrorism and cybercrime liaison officers should be particularly encouraged.

The development of the liaison officers' network should lead to better and more coordinated international police cooperation, bringing various states and regions closer together; the role of Europol in facilitating trans-Atlantic cooperation should be seen as an example in this regard.

Promoting **SIENA** and the **universal message format** will further contribute to secure and swift information exchange which, if necessary, might be combined with Europol's analytical capabilities.

**Europol's Platform for Experts** (EPE) should be promoted further in this context, as it offers a secure cooperation environment bringing together security experts. EPE should remain open to those partners with which Europol does not cooperate otherwise.

### 3.3. Reinforcing Europol's position within the EU security architecture , in order to address external threats to the security of the EU

Europol is one of the key actors of the EU internal security architecture and an important part of a coherent European response to external security challenges like terrorism or migrant smuggling. Europol will strive to further develop its contribution to EU security, especially in the field of external relations.

Europol will further **strengthen cooperation with the European Commission and the European External Action Service** in order to ensure the proper exchange of strategic information, to provide joint analysis of threats that have both an internal and external dimension and to facilitate contacts with third countries with which Europol doesn't cooperate yet.

Europol will further develop its cooperation with **EU operations and missions**, in particular those having executive functions and those operating in areas relevant for the internal security of the EU.

Europol will assess the potential of temporarily **deploying its staff outside of the EU, including to EU delegations, missions and operations**, which could contribute to gathering intelligence related to serious threats, such as migrant smuggling or terrorism.

Europol's role in **capacity building** in third countries will remain limited, focused on areas in which Europol has specific expertise and which are relevant for Europol's core business. Any capacity building activities should be carefully assessed and planned, with due consideration to available resources.

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### 3.4. Promoting Europol's **successful cooperation model**

Regional entities that facilitate international police cooperation might benefit from Europol's successful cooperation model. Subject to available resources, Europol will promote and explain its functioning, its successful cooperation mechanisms and the lessons learned. The objective is to facilitate future cooperation between those regional entities and Europol.

## 4. Partners

The Europol Regulation gives Europol possibilities for effective and mutually beneficial cooperation with third countries and organisations. It gives Europol a global reach to serve the European law enforcement community.

When choosing cooperation partners, geographical criteria need to be combined with others, as for certain types of crime the geographical proximity of a cooperation partner is not the only criterion.

### 4.1. Third countries

As foreseen in the Regulation, agreements concluded before 1 May 2017 will remain the basis for future cooperation. Europol will strive to maintain and further develop the **already existing relationships** with all partners that are parties to agreements already in force.

The Europol Strategy states that Europol will aim to further strengthen its partnership with third states. The United States, Mediterranean countries and the Western Balkans are explicitly mentioned.

**The United States of America** will remain Europol's key partner. Mutual support and operational cooperation should be further reinforced, in particular through the increased exchange of information and active involvement in operational activities. Terrorism and cybercrime will remain main areas of common interest, notwithstanding continued cooperation in other fields, such as organised crime and migrant smuggling.

The migratory crisis and present terrorist threat call for closer cooperation between Europol and **Middle East and North African** countries. Each country of the region has its own specificities and a unique position in the security environment. In developing Europol's cooperation in this region, close cooperation with the European Union Action Service is of particular importance.

The **Western Balkans** will remain a region of particular relevance for Europol. Europol has been prioritising cooperation with the region for many years, which led to the conclusion of numerous operational agreements and successful strategic and operational cooperation. Further implementation of the agreements and full use of the already available mechanisms remain crucial. Migrant smuggling, organised crime and terrorism will remain key areas of common interest.

Europol will continue supporting **regional initiatives in the Western Balkans**, as long as their activities supplement and enhance Europol's operational cooperation with the region.

The above mentioned areas will also require close cooperation with **Turkey**, the development of which depends on the general relations between the EU and Turkey.

Europol recognises the importance of cooperating with **Asian countries**, such as **India** and **Pakistan**, and will strive to strengthen cooperation with them.

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Given the impact of Chinese organised crime on the EU and the high international profile of Chinese criminal groups, building cooperative relations with **China** will be of particular importance.

**South- and Central American states** will be important partners, in particular as regards drug-related crime. Furthermore, options available for cooperation under the Europol Regulation will be explored for the bilateral relations with **Israel** and **the Russian Federation**.

### 4.2. International organisations

**Interpol** will remain Europol's key partner. Respective capabilities and tools are complimentary and Europol remains **focused on supporting EU Members States** and ensuring **EU-wide** law enforcement cooperation. In view of the global challenges the EU is facing, cooperation with Interpol will remain particularly relevant and will be enhanced through closer alignment, increasing joint participation in operational activities and setting of common strategic activities.

Europol will make efforts to enhance its cooperation with **other international organisations** that play a role in the field of security, such as United Nations/ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UN/UNODC), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), World Customs Organisation (WCO) or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Europol will strive to strengthen its cooperation in particular with the latter; counterterrorism and tackling migrant smuggling are detected to be the fields of common interest.

Europol is open for cooperation with **regional police cooperation organisations** such as Ameripol, Aseanapol and Afripol. Cooperation mechanisms should reflect operational needs as well as geographical and thematic priorities of Europol. Europol will strive to promote its successful cooperation model to foster regional cooperation.

## 5. Oversight mechanism – the role of the Management Board

Guidelines on the implementation of the External Strategy, including the involvement of the Management Board, will be discussed by the Working Group on Corporate Matters and then be submitted to the Management Board.

Information on the implementation of the External Strategy will be presented to the Management Board every six months. Moreover, Strategic Reviews concerning particular partners or regions will be submitted to the Management Board on regular basis in order to present the on-going cooperation and seek guidance on further actions.