

RELATIONS OF THE EPPO WITH ITS PARTNERS

In 2024, the EPPO pursued the implementation of its external strategy to reinforce ties and foster cooperation with relevant counterparts, including institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the EU, authorities of non-EU countries and EU Member States not participating in the EPPO, as well as international organisations, expert networks and fora. **Raising awareness, around the globe, of the EPPO's mandate, unprecedented tools and jurisdiction where EU funds are involved, is key to increasing the reporting of crime, and to ensuring trust and effective cooperation from its partners in transnational investigations.**

RELATIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES OF THE EU

The EPPO participated in several meetings with the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

In particular, the European Chief Prosecutor was invited, in January, to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) to discuss the results of the study on the compatibility of national legislation with the EPPO Regulation, where she called for a **revision of the EPPO regulation** on this basis. In April, she presented the EPPO's 2023 Annual Report to a joint meeting of the LIBE and on Budgetary Control (CONT).

In the ECOFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs formation) Council meeting in April, the European Chief Prosecutor informed of the impact that EPPO has on the fight against VAT fraud. She also gave a state of play of EPPO's activity and **welcomed the accession of two new EPPO Member States** at the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council in June. In the framework of the Law Enforcement Working Party (Customs), an action with Spain and the EPPO in co-lead was launched on the cooperation with the Member States' Customs Authorities. Deputy European Chief Prosecutor, Mr Petr Klement, presented the EPPO's 2023 Annual Report to the Working Party on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters (COPEN).

In September, at the start of the new parliamentary term, the European Chief Prosecutor had an exchange of views in the LIBE Committee, to which CONT members were also invited. She informed that the analysis of the evidence collected in the EPPO's investigations proves that organised crime groups are active not only on VAT fraud, and that, with adequate funding and cooperation with Europol and national authorities, this can help

combat such serious crimes (human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, terrorism etc.). Deputy European Chief Prosecutor, Mr Andrés Ritter, presented the EPPO's activity on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in the relevant Working Group of the European Parliament. The acting Administrative Director, Ms Kristel Siitam-Nyiri, participated in exchanges of views with the CONT Committee on the discharge.



The third annual high-level review of the cooperation between the EPPO and the European Commission took place in October 2024 and confirmed the revision of the Working Agreement to improve the functioning of the EPPO notifications allowing the European Commission to take precautionary and corrective measures. The European Chief Prosecutor was invited to a meeting of the Director Generals in June 2024, which was an opportunity to discuss in particular the practical implications of the EPPO activity for different Commission services.



The EPPO also participated in the annual inter-institutional exchange of views with the Council of the EU, the European Commission, and the European Parliament on OLAF's performance, focusing on the impact of artificial intelligence in the fight against fraud.

Lastly, the EPPO concluded working arrangements with the European Parliament and the European External Action Service. It organised several trainings with EU institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, European Economic and Social Committee, and several EU agencies) to inform about the EPPO's activity, its added value, and the mechanisms to report suspicions of criminal conduct to the EPPO.



The EPPO has efficiently cooperated with Europol in various operational matters, under the aegis of the EPPO-Europol Steering Committee. In particular, Europol provided support (information exchange, analytical support, expertise, etc.) upon 83 requests from the EPPO. The EPPO is closely cooperating with the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) and is an associated party of the following Analysis Projects (APs): AP High Risk Organised Crime Groups, AP Corruption, AP Sustrans and AP MTIC, and is considering participation in additional APs. Through the specialised teams within its Operations unit, the EPPO has been actively contributing relevant operational experience and insight to these projects, enriching its own knowledge and capabilities in providing expertise. The EPPO has been since October a member of the EU Innovation Hub for internal security, hosted at Europol.



The EPPO had 149 exchanges of information for evidence collection purposes and 235 exchanges of information in the framework of the hit/no-hit system in order to avoid parallel investigations into the same facts. Moreover, OLAF concluded its complementary activities in relation to 21 EPPO cases and its support activities in relation to another 5 EPPO cases.



The EPPO and Eurojust implemented the indirect access to information in their respective case management systems, on the basis of a hit/no-hit system (Article 100(3) EPPO Regulation, Article 50(5) of the Eurojust Regulation). The EPPO and Eurojust liaison teams met once during the reporting period. By the year's end, there were 25 ongoing cases supported by the Eurojust National Desks. The EPPO participated in the launch of the European Judicial Network for Organised Crime Prosecutors, hosted by Eurojust.

INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES OF THE EU: CRIME REPORTING STATISTICS

IBOA	Competence Exercised	Competence Not Exercised	Competence Decision Pending	Total
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)	44	6	9	59
European Investment Bank	9	5	6	20
Executive Agencies	3	1	3	7
European Court of Auditors	6	n/a	1	7
European Commission	7	3	2	12
Europol	2	n/a	2	4
European Central Bank (ECB)	2	1	n/a	3
European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)	n/a	n/a	1	1

RELATIONS WITH NON-PARTICIPATING MEMBER STATES AND NON-EU COUNTRIES

As regards non-participating Member States, the year 2024 was marked by the **accession of Poland and Sweden to the EPPO**, as of 20 March and 19 July 2024, respectively.

As regards non-EU countries, the EPPO pursued strengthening cooperation with authorities from candidate countries to EU accession.

In particular, the EPPO organised a training with Ukrainian prosecutors at the Central Office, and formalised new partnerships outside the EPPO zone with working arrangements signed with: National

Anti-corruption Centre of the Republic of Moldova, Anti-Corruption Commission of Seychelles, and General Prosecutor's office of the Principality of Andorra.

To date, the EPPO has also signed working arrangements with competent authorities from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Ukraine, and United States of America.

In 2024, the EPPO became observer to the Network of Public Prosecutors or equivalent institutions at the Supreme Judicial Courts of the Member States of the European Union (NADAL Network).

EPPO'S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



HIGHLIGHTS:

THREE OF THE EPPO'S INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES DURING 2024

Laying a stronger foundation for the fight against organised crime

In February, the EPPO took part in the TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission) International Forum for Prosecutors on Fighting Cross-Border Organised Crime held in Brussels for the third time. The goal was to raise awareness among the participants and to further facilitate the cooperation with representatives from the enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

In March, the EPPO engaged with two partners, the Intra-European Organisation of Tax Administrations (IOTA) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) at the WCO Annual session of the Enforcement Committee in Brussels.

With regard to the cooperation with Latin American, the EPPO also developed a close partnership with the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP), attending the plenary meeting in February in Chile, as well as with EL PACCTO 2.0 program (Europe Latin-America Programme of Assistance against Transnational Organised Crime), and attended the First Meeting of Latin American Networks to Fight Transnational Organised Crime and Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) member countries in September in Brazil.

Contribute to the collective fight against corruption

Through new partnerships, awareness raising on EPPO's mandate and unique tools, and expertise sharing in key international formats gathering the best experts from countries around the globe, the EPPO contributed to the fight against corruption.

The EPPO attended the eighth Symposium of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, co-hosted by the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) in May. In June, the EPPO also participated in the 21st International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Vilnius. In September, the EPPO joined the fifth Plenary meeting of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) held in Beijing.

Additionally, the EPPO attended OECD meetings, in particular the regional meeting of the Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ACN) in Riga in October, and the plenary meeting of European Partners Against Corruption (EPAC) and the European Contact-Point Network Against Corruption (EACN) in Bucharest in November.

EUROPEAN INVESTIGATION ORDERS AND MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SENT IN 2024 BY THE EPPO

Create and strengthen strategic bilateral partnerships

Based on its operational needs, and observed trends in fraud and money laundering, the EPPO has engaged in new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, to ensure trust and effective cooperation with its partners in transnational investigations:

- ➡ The EPPO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Bank Integrity Vice Presidency;
- ➡ The EPPO held bilateral meetings with its counterparts from, among others, Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Colombia, Hong-Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Malaysia, Panama, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Serbia, South Africa, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Vietnam;
- ➡ The EPPO welcomed, in its premises, delegations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom to exchange expertise and address shared challenges in criminal cross-border investigations.

Non-participating Member States	EIOs and MLA requests 2024
Denmark	3
Hungary	30
Ireland	21
Total	54

Newly participating Member States	EIOs requests 2024
Poland	21
Sweden	3
Total	24

Disclaimer: Poland and Sweden joined the EPPO but remained non-operational throughout 2024.

Non-EU countries	MLA requests 2024
Albania	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3
Brazil	1
Chile	1
Costa Rica	1
Dominican Republic	1
Guinea-Bissau	1
Republic of Korea	5
Malaysia	1
Mauritius	1
Moldova	5
Monaco	3
Panama	1
Peru	1
San Marino	1
Serbia	3
Singapore	1
Switzerland	10
Tunisia	1
Türkiye	8
United Arab Emirates	4
United Kingdom	17
Ukraine	2
Uruguay	1
United States of America	7
Total	83

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN EPPO CASES

INVESTIGATION GOLIATH

<https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/media/news/investigation-goliath-...>

Suspected ringleaders of international crime group charged with €93 million VAT fraud¹⁰⁸

On 9 August 2024, three suspected leaders of an international criminal group were indicted at the Regional Court of Düsseldorf (Germany) for a €93 million VAT fraud, following an investigation by the EPPO in Hamburg, code-named Goliath.

Two of the suspects were put in pre-trial detention. One was arrested in November 2023, and another suspect, a Danish citizen located in Nairobi, was arrested and deported in June 2024, thanks to the cooperation between the EPPO and authorities from Denmark and Kenya.

The investigation, supported by Europol and several national agencies, spans multiple countries, including France and Germany, non-participating Member States (Denmark, Hungary and Sweden) and non-EU countries (Switzerland). Cooperation was also requested from Turkish authorities, in relation to the money flows.

The suspects were charged with criminal association and large-scale VAT fraud, primarily involving the international trade of consumer electronics, such as headphones. They were accused of using a VAT carousel fraud scheme to evade tax by exploiting EU cross-border transaction rules, resulting in significant financial losses to the EU and national budgets.

All persons concerned are presumed innocent until proven guilty in the competent courts of law.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(NETWORKS, COMMITTEES AND SIMILAR STRUCTURES, ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITIES)

EUROPEAN MULTIDISCIPLINARY PLATFORM AGAINST CRIMINAL THREATS (EMPACT)

The EPPO is participating in the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), and more specifically, in the Operational Action Plans (OAP) relevant to the EPPO's mandate: high-risk criminal networks, Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) fraud and excise fraud, as well as Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery (CFMLAR). For the first time in 2024, the EPPO is leader of an Operational Action (OA) under the EMPACT OAP targeting MTIC fraud.

CAMDEN ASSET RECOVERY INTER-AGENCY NETWORK (CARIN)

The EPPO, as an observer, attended the CARIN Annual General Meeting, which took place in Paris (France) in November 2024, bringing together more than 160 asset-recovery specialists from all over the world for the 20 years of the network. The EPPO's two contact points participated in several workshops and exchanged views on ways of improving the asset recovery process, especially when non-European Union countries are involved, and enhancing the international cooperation by relying on the support of CARIN, affiliated regional networks, and other international partners. In 2024, the EPPO Central Office sent five requests for information to the relevant CARIN contact points.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The EPPO, as an observer, participated in plenary meetings of the Committee of Experts on the Operation of the European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PC-OC) in Strasbourg.

EUROPEAN PARTNERS AGAINST CORRUPTION (EPAC) AND THE EUROPEAN CONTACT-POINT NETWORK AGAINST CORRUPTION (EACN)

The EPPO attended, as an observer, the General Assembly of the European Partners against Corruption (EPAC) and the European contact-point network against corruption (EACN) in Bucharest in November.

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

The EPPO, as an observer, attended the plenary meetings of the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions (WGB). Furthermore, the EPPO attended the meetings of the law enforcement officials (LEO) and the Global Network of Law Enforcement Practitioners against Transnational Bribery (GLEN) in June and December in Paris.

The EPPO participated in the 14th Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ACN) – Law Enforcement Network (LEN) regional meeting in Riga.

The EPPO also participated in OECD Taskforce on Tax and Crime (TFTC) plenary meetings.

EGMONT GROUP OF FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNITS (EGMONT GROUP)

The EPPO attended the Egmont Group annual working and regional group meetings and Information Exchange Working Group (IEWG) meeting in Malta in January 2024 and became an observer to the Egmont Group in June. The EPPO will contribute to operational and strategic activities aimed at strengthening cooperation and exchanges of information, particularly in the fight against money laundering.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL NETWORK OF ANTI-CORRUPTION LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES (GLOBE NETWORK)

The EPPO, as member of the GlobE Network, took part in the 5th plenary meeting in September in Beijing among anti-corruption law enforcement practitioners, with whom the EPPO cooperates notably on the basis of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

EUROPEAN JUDICIAL NETWORK (EJN)

Three European Judicial Network (EJN) contact points at the EPPO have been designated. The EPPO participated in the 62nd and 63rd Plenary Meeting of the EJN to share its expertise and facilitate cooperation with other EJN partners.

EPPO ACADEMY AND EXTERNAL TRAINING

In order to work on cross-border economic investigations, which are mainly connected to organised crime, the EPPO – as a transnational prosecution office – needs the support of highly skilled and dedicated investigators in every participating Member State.

As a result, in 2024, the EPPO funded, under the aegis of the EPPO Academy training programme, **two international on-site courses: 'EPPO Essentials: Cross-border policing and financial investigations'**. These courses were designed for **49 financial investigators** from law enforcement agencies across the 24 EPPO Member States. The participants were trained in an international environment on PIF crimes and the peculiarities of working on investigations for the EPPO.

Further dedicated training sessions were provided to law enforcement officers in the Member States on topics related to **MTIC Fraud** and the way EPPO conducts its investigations in Germany, Romania, France, and Luxembourg. Additional sessions included training on investigating **customs offenses** in Estonia and France, and **excise offenses** in Latvia, along with a session on **'Cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office'**, with a specific focus on customs authorities in Croatia.

In implementation of the working arrangement with European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the EPPO delivered part of a training for law enforcement from 27 Member States on **fighting organised crime, excise fraud investigations, MTIC fraud investigations and procurement/non-procurement fraud**, with a focus on **cross border judicial cooperation** and related **customs fraud**. Furthermore, the EPPO delivered part of a training for law enforcement in the Baltic region, focusing on the EPPO approaches to fight against **MTIC fraud** and a webinar on **'Investigation Admiral - A joint investigative approach to combat MTIC fraud'**.

In support of trainings for the judiciary, the EPPO staff gave specialised training courses on the EPPO,

its institution, regulation, mandate, and way of investigating for judges and prosecutors in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Romania, and Spain. The EPPO supported the training sessions with presentations on EPPO in various participating Member States. Trainings were delivered on the fight against expenditure frauds in France, designed for national authorities' agents, involved in the management of EU funds.

Additionally, the Central Office hosted delegations from the judiciary and prosecution services of several Member States to raise awareness about the EPPO and its operations.

The EPPO supported **five onsite trainings** of the **Academy of European Law (ERA)**. In implementation of the working arrangement with European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), trainers were deployed to their training sessions, as well as supported an online training on VAT investigations.

As already done in 2023, the EPPO welcomed a **study visit** from ERA of law enforcement officers and prosecutors in the context of one of their CEPOL and EJTN trainings.

The EPPO organised **three EJTN study visits**: two to the Central Office and one to the EPPO office in Hamburg, which gave judges and prosecutors from all over Europe the chance to learn more about the EPPO. One of them, being a specialised study visit on financial crimes, gave the opportunity to get an in-depth view into the mandate and work of the EPPO.

For the first time in 2024, the EPPO hosted **six EJTN Long-term trainees** for a period of six months, who joined the Operations unit and worked with the European Prosecutors, the Legal Service, or the Data Protection Office.

Finally, in terms of external training, the consortium of the ERA and the EJTN provided **14 online professional-development training courses** to European Delegated Prosecutors' and operational staff on different operational topics throughout the year.