



EUROPOL 2005

A N N U A L R E P O R T

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Director's foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2005.

A major milestone was achieved in October 2005 when the Europol Information System was made available to authorised law enforcement staff in the European Union Member States. This IT tool will ensure a fast exchange of information within law enforcement agencies and will make it harder for criminals to operate when fully implemented throughout the Member State's Europol National Units.

By recruiting more analysts we have improved the quality of our intelligence reports and the level of support to the benefit of our cooperation partners. Assistance from Europol was given to the UK authorities after the abhorrent London bombings on 7 and 21 July and a lot of efforts were put into the area of counter terrorism throughout the year.

Special focus has also been given to the preparation of Europol's first Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) report. This is a new product to be presented in the second quarter of 2006. The aim is to identify trends to prevent crime and to give decision makers a better basis for prioritisation. Also in 2005 we started to prepare a new Europol vision with the involvement of our staff and primary stakeholders and shareholders.

The trust in Europol from political levels was emphasised via our participation in several important meetings in Brussels where we were asked for advice. This confidence in our organisation was also seen when Europol was designated as the Central Office for combating Euro counterfeiting in terms of the Geneva Convention of 1929. Consequently, Europol is required to correspond directly with the central offices of third countries.

Europol assisted the Member States in many successful operations by helping with information exchange, coordination and intelligence analysis. Several of these operations resulted in the dismantling of a high number of criminal networks as well as many successful arrests and imprisonment.

The flow of information through Europol was the highest ever. 180,920 operational messages were exchanged. This is a good result, but of course it is of importance that the information exchanged is of high value.

Also in 2005 further developments in the area of operational agreements with Third States and strategic relationships with key partners were made. Both the United States Secret Service (USSS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have stationed a liaison officer within Europol. Following the signature of an operational agreement with Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has tasked their two liaison officers in The Hague to work additionally as contact points with Europol.

All of these successes are impressive and mark a truly dynamic year for Europol. However, whilst the systems are there to combat organised crime, we have to use them to underline the reason why they were implemented. Consequently, the year ahead should see closer working of the Member States to bring about not only greater successes in their own countries, but also a safer and more joined-up European Union.

Max Peter-Ratzel
Director of Europol



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1. Introduction

1.1 Crime priority areas in 2005

The priorities for Europol are determined on a yearly basis by the Member States through the drafting of the Work Programme. The five priority crime areas identified in the Work Programme 2005 for Europol were based on the dominant trends identified within organised crime at the time of planning and within the framework of Europol's mandate according to the Europol Convention.

The specific priority crime areas for 2005:

- Counter terrorism
- Crimes against persons and facilitated illegal immigration
- Drug trafficking
- Euro counterfeiting
- Financial and property crime (focusing on money laundering)



2. Serious crime and analysis

2. Serious crime and analysis

2.1 General Performance

According to Europol's Annual Client Survey, the Member States are satisfied with Europol products and services. Good performance was achieved in each of the crime areas. In relation to organised crime groups, work in the Western Balkans has been particularly successful where analytical reports have shown high levels of satisfaction.

Synthetic drugs

Projects in this area are recognised as being instrumental in European-wide cooperation including the expertise and analytical support provided to operations and investigations.

Crimes against persons

In addition to supporting investigations in facilitated illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings, substantial contributions were also made to the European Commission at both working group and high political level. This was in connection to the development and implementation of an EU Action Plan on combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Counter terrorism

Europol has, owing to the increase in analytical staff, greater capacity to support Member States in this area.

Forgery of money

Due to the close co-operation with the European Central Bank (ECB) and reporting system through national contact points, Europol is able to effectively follow trends in this area on a European-wide level. Initiatives led to focused action for example, in the Balkan area.

Financial and property crime

Positive results were obtained in combating money laundering and cash border carriers. Work in this area, together with asset seizure is creating a more efficient network for the detection and seizure of assets and subsequent criminal network interruption.

2.2 Organised Crime Groups

In 2005, organised crime groups were seen to have expanded their fields of activity across crime types and international borders. These groups make use of expertise in specialised fields, exploit commercial structures to operate in the legitimate business world and employ the latest communication technologies to maintain and expand their national and international links.

Structures of groups vary. A more modern development is for the organisation to be a loose association of cells held together by key individuals, although the traditional hierarchical structure is also still in place.



More recently, organised crime groups have demonstrated improved communications amongst themselves. This development has extended to the way they not only send information to each other, but also the way they cooperate with other organised crime groups. Ethnically, the groups are increasingly heterogeneous.

Successful joint operation against international criminal network

The Hague — The Netherlands — 06.10.05

15 suspected members of a well established criminal network have been arrested. This network mainly operating from Bulgaria to the European Union, with the main focus on Austria, has been involved in various crime areas. The operation was carried out by Austrian and Bulgarian authorities in coordination with and assistance from Europol. Advice and assistance was also provided by Eurojust.

30 locations were searched in Bulgaria and Austria. Forged ID documents including passports, debit and credit cards as well as counterfeited Bulgarian ministerial documents have been seized. In addition, firearms, synthetic drugs, counterfeit Euro banknotes, large amounts of cash and documents related to money laundering have been recovered.

As a result of 5 months of investigations, the Austrian and Bulgarian competent law enforcement authorities together with the involvement of their respective judicial authorities and the coordination of Europol, initiated a simultaneous action on Wednesday morning, at 06:00 AM in Austria and at 07:00 AM in Bulgaria (local times). The target for the operation was a criminal network composed of Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Serbian individuals. This investigation is still ongoing and several international arrest warrants have been issued by the Austrian authorities.

The Director of the National Service Combating Organised Crime, General-Major Vanyo Tanov, expressed his satisfaction and pleasure with the result and highlighted the efforts made by the Bulgarian Supreme Cassation Prosecutor Office in achieving the successful outcome.

Mr. Herwig Haidinger, the Director of the Austrian Bundeskriminalamt was quoted as saying, "This is an excellent result, which was only achieved because of the close cooperation between Europol, the Bulgarian Police and the Austrian Bundeskriminalamt. This case is an example of professional and successful European police work."

Europol's operational support was highlighted by its Director Max-Peter Ratzel: "We are proud to have assisted our partners with the coordination of this successful operation. This shows not only the importance and strengths of international cooperation, it also underlines the necessity to share criminal intelligence, in order to find the international links between organised crime networks".

Some goals for the year ahead

- Target organised crime groups in the Mediterranean
- Widen networks of 'special investigation' experts
- EU manual on handling informants.

2. Serious crime and analysis

2.3 Drugs

With a variety of entry points, there is widespread trafficking throughout the European Union (EU) of all types of drugs. Cannabis from Morocco, for instance, is transported along the South–North axis, from Spain all the way up to Denmark and Sweden.

Major production and trafficking of synthetic drugs remains controlled by Belgian and Dutch criminal groups. The production process i.e. chemical acquisition, synthesis, tableting, packaging and waste dumping is invariably divided between different locations. An example of this process is the trafficking, from Belgium and the Netherlands, of ‘ecstasy’ powder to Portugal for tableting and of amphetamine powder to the United Kingdom for cutting and re–packing with a logo. Seizure levels in some Adriatic and Mediterranean countries have increased and large–scale exportation of ‘ecstasy’ from the Union to other regions in the world continues.

Cocaine mainly enters the European Union via Spain, the Netherlands or Belgium.

The majority of heroin entering the European Union originates from the opium poppy fields in Afghanistan. Trafficking of the drug towards the European Union continues to be dominated by Turkish and associated criminal groups. These groups make use of contacts in Southwest Asia to liaise with domestic criminals or brokers who can purchase large quantities of heroin directly from source countries. Criminal groups and networks located in The Netherlands, and to a lesser degree Belgium, play an important secondary role in the distribution of the drug throughout the EU.

Fishing boat boarded in open water and 8 tonnes of cannabis confiscated

International police cooperation made it possible to dismantle network of drugs traffickers

The Hague — The Netherlands 07.06.05.

Close cooperation between British and Spanish authorities have resulted in the seizure of 8 tonnes cannabis destined for the British market.

The crew on board the fishing boat “Squilla”, 2 Britons, one Estonian and one Spaniard, were taken by surprise when they were confronted and arrested by police officers in open waters off the coast of Spain. The police officers belong to “Grupo de Respuesta Especial contra el Crimen Organizado” (GRECO) and the “Unidad Central de Drogas y Crimen Organizado” (UDYCO).

The drugs traffickers had been under investigation for a longer period and the arrests made on early Sunday morning were the culmination of several months of analysis, investigation, expertise and liaison between the involved Member States and Europol.

At the same time three more persons, suspected of having arranged the shipment of cannabis from Morocco, were arrested in Glasgow, Scotland.

“As a law enforcement officer it is always a pleasure when seizures and arrests such as this one are successful, since they prove the value of a close and trustful cooperation between several different law enforcement entities,” says Europol Director, Max–Peter Ratzel.

The investigation is ongoing and more arrests are expected.



Some goals for the year ahead

- Support joint customs operations and joint investigation teams
- On-the-spot assistance for operational teams in the Member States
- Deliver training in dismantling illegal drug production sites.

2.4 Crimes against persons



Illegal immigration is a service provided to 'customers' by individuals or networks who are paid to transport a person or persons from one country to another avoiding immigration control procedures.

Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime and an abuse of an individual's human rights. It is the exploitation of vulnerable individuals by criminals who deal with people as commodities to be traded.

Whilst it is inevitable that some victims of trafficking will enter a country as illegal immigrants, due to the methods used by the traffickers, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings are two very different crime areas. Importantly, when considering the issue of illegal entry, more and more examples of 'internal trafficking' within countries are being seen where no border crossing is required.

Trafficking inevitably results in the sustained physical and psychological abuse of the victim solely for financial gain. It starts the moment the individual is deceived, persuaded, abducted or otherwise forced into the hands of the traffickers and can continue long after the victim escapes. It is often and more likely to be repeated when the victims are 'sold on' or re-trafficked.

Europol's mandate is to support the work of the Member States in combating and preventing trafficking of human beings. All of Europol's current activity in the field of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings is in relation to trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.

In 2005 meetings were held with Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. These were initiated to agree on tasks and responsibilities within this area. Europol's role is to gather intelligence and conduct analysis. Frontex coordinates the activities of the national border guards in ensuring the security of the EU borders with non-Member States.

2. Serious crime and analysis

Coordinated action in 5 countries against a major people smuggling network

The Hague — The Netherlands — 15.12.05

More than 30 addresses of a wide range of people, suspected of being involved in the clandestine smuggling of thousands of illegal immigrants into the EU, were searched yesterday morning. In total, 53 main suspects were arrested in France (22), Italy (18) the United Kingdom (7), Greece (3) and Turkey (3). Subsequently, 56 illegal immigrants were arrested in France, mainly in the region of Calais but also in Paris.

The police operation, which was explained today in a press conference in Paris, was the largest international police operation ever supported by Europol within this crime area. Raids were carried out and arrests were made simultaneously across 5 countries and suspected members of an international criminal network responsible for the facilitation of the illegal entry of immigrants into a variety of EU member states were successfully targeted. The immigrants smuggled by the network were spread all over Europe. The United Kingdom was the main destination country, although immigrants were also smuggled to the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany.

This long planned operation, codenamed "PACHTOU", was led by the French Central Office for the Repression of Illegal Immigration and Employment of Foreigners without Residence Permits (Office Central pour la Répression de l'Immigration Irrégulière et de l'Emploi d'Etrangers Sans Titre [OCRIEST]). This organisation has provided the majority of the evidence focusing on dismantling a criminal network facilitating illegal immigrants, mainly from Iraq and Afghanistan, into the EU.

Due to the fact that the actions of this criminal organisation had ramifications in a variety of countries and also that there were certain constraints in multilateral operational cooperation, OCRIEST requested support from Europol in this matter. Europol supported the exchange of information, provided intelligence analysis and assisted with operational support at OCRIEST in Paris, France during this day of action.

Eurojust was also involved in this investigation. The French leading magistrate (an investigation judge) issued a European Arrest Warrant to request help from Greece for the surrender of a person arrested in Greece.



Child pornography

It is clear that crimes related to the sexual abuse of children needs a special approach. This is because the nature of the criminality behind this crime exhibits different dynamics and characteristics from those seen in other forms of abuse of and trafficking in human beings.

The internet features prominently in the distribution of child pornography. The evolution of payment systems through the internet is now providing a much more secure anonymity for both users/customers and the webmasters. This makes the web an attractive area for organised crime groups.

Coordinated action in 13 countries against child pornography

The Hague — The Netherlands — 14.06.05

Around 150 different addresses of a wide range of people suspected of being involved with child pornography were searched this morning. Most of the suspects are subject to further investigation as large quantities of equipment including computers, laptops, videos and other material containing images of child abuse were seized.

Today's police operation is the largest international police operation ever coordinated and supported by Europol within this area of crime. Raids were carried out simultaneously across 13 countries and successfully targeted suspected members of internet child abuse networks who download and exchange pictures of molested children.

The long planned action is named "Icebreaker", and the operation has Reparto Operativo Carabinieri Roma (Italy) as the leading service, since this service has provided most of the evidence focused on various internet boards whose members' activities include possession and distribution of child abuse material. The networks' modus operandi consisted of sophisticated techniques to hide members' electronic identities and to encrypt their communication. Europol supported the exchange of information providing intelligence analysis and assisting law enforcement authorities to identify suspects at a national level.

Europol Director Max-Peter Ratzel says: "Operation Icebreaker is part of a criminal investigation following similar operations also supported by Europol with impressive results against internet child abuse networks. I find it of utmost importance to focus on this extremely terrible kind of crime, which involves the abuse of children, so it is my hope that today's operation will lead the investigators to some of the producers behind these evil deeds."

Substantial contributions were made to the European Commission in relation to the development and implementation of a European Union Action Plan on combating trafficking in human beings.

In early 2005, Europol advised the UK government on European crime issues. This supported the decision to prioritise the issue of trafficking of human beings during the UK EU Presidency.

Some goals for the year ahead

- Focus on the Western Balkans regarding the trafficking of human beings
- Identify emerging crime patterns and trends
- Enhance close cooperation with internet service providers.

2. Serious crime and analysis

2.5 Financial Crime

After drug trafficking, financial crime is the favoured crime for organised crime groups within the EU. The main types of financial crimes range from V.A.T. and excise fraud, usually connected with the smuggling of highly taxed commodities such as tobacco, alcohol and fuel, to money laundering and forgery when related to organised criminal structures. Organised financial crimes infiltrate all levels of EU society, damaging governments' budgets, companies' profits and individuals' assets.

The primary focus in the area of financial and property crime is to support international operational money laundering investigations dealing with identifying, tracing and seizing the profits of crime.

The general increase of fraud from organised crime groups highlights a move from more traditional crimes towards sophisticated offences, where the potential gains outweigh the risks. No sign of any decrease in this criminal activity has been noted.

Europol is active in the combat of organised vehicle crime. In cooperation with Member States Law Enforcement Agencies the European Vehicle Identification Database (EuVID) has been developed. This is an advanced operational tool assisting investigators of vehicle crime in the identification of vehicles and related documents. However, whilst the number of stolen cars within the European Union has decreased, more high value cars are stolen.

Network of fraudsters on insurance vehicle companies exposed

Spanish and Italian authorities identify a large number of expensive stolen vehicles.

The Hague — The Netherlands — 02.06.05

A joint operation between the Spanish Guardia Civil and Italian authorities supported by Interpol and Europol against trafficking in stolen vehicles has resulted in more than 60 cases involving over 125 suspects. The figures are provisional and are expected to rise once all the investigations have been completed.

The close cooperation between Spain and Italy began when the Spanish Guardia Civil detected a significant increase in expensive cars with the correct documentation being shipped across the Mediterranean from Spanish seaports to countries in North Africa. Some of these vehicles were subsequently reported stolen in Italy so that their owners could make insurance claims for their loss. The Spanish Guardia Civil suspected that insurance fraud was systematically being committed by international organised crime groups. Therefore, an operation led by the Spanish Guardia Civil was carried out in several Spanish seaports over a period of 6 months last year. During this operation, the Fiscal Service of the Guardia Civil checked a large number of suspicious vehicles and more than 1100 individuals. This information was forwarded to Italy for cross-checking, and it turned out that 12 per cent of the vehicles, checked in Spain first were reported stolen in Italy after they had crossed the Mediterranean. In many cases the same driver crossed the Mediterranean several times driving different cars and with written authorisation from the owner of the car. In many cases these authorisations bore the stamp of the same office, which was a pointer to this being the work of an organised group.



Some goals for the year ahead

- Link suspicious transactions reported in other Member States with offences committed in separate countries
- Organise meetings on the latest fraud trends
- Identify and localise criminal assets.

2.6 Terrorism



The fight against terrorism has been given top priority at the highest political levels of the European Union (EU). The ruthlessness of terrorist networks combined with their ability to operate across international borders demands a serious response from law enforcement authorities and a high level of cooperation between Member States. Europol's Counter Terrorism Unit focuses its services according to the needs of the EU and its Member States.

Member States noted that there was an increase in the quality of analytical reports. And the greater number of analysts working in this area had led to a better level of support.

Terrorism and in particular Islamic extremist terrorism will remain a major threat to Europe's security for the foreseeable future. It is key that other forms of terrorism and extremism are taken into account and monitored.

Europol's support to UK– London bombings

During 2005 Europol supported 20 ongoing terrorist investigations. Support was also given to Scotland Yard after the London bombings on 7 July 2005. A Europol liaison officer helped intelligence gathering after the event by working closely with the investigation team. The liaison officer also helped speeding up data exchange between Europol and the Anti-Terrorist Branch of Scotland Yard. Europol involvement was appreciated by UK authorities.

Another liaison officer was sent to the Joint Situation Centre (SitCen) — an EU body, based in Brussels, that deals with terrorism. This was to help avoid duplication of efforts surrounding the investigation of the London bombings. An initiative highly appreciated by Gijs de Vries, the EU's counter-terrorism coordinator.

Some goals for the year ahead

- Assist Member States in identifying terrorist networks
- Analyse interaction between international terrorism and organised crime
- Develop cooperation with relevant international organisations.

2. Serious crime and analysis

2.7 Forgery of Money

The Euro has become the second most important global currency after the US dollar and is the legal tender in 12 of the EU Member States. That makes the Euro very attractive for counterfeiters and international criminal groups. Since the introduction of the Euro on 1 January 2002, the financial loss for the Member States due to forgeries has steadily increased. The quality of the counterfeits has improved to such an extent that they are difficult to detect.

Cooperation among the Member States and between the Member States and Europol needs to be improved. This is essential for the protection of the Euro both inside and outside the European Union.

In May 2005 Europol was designated as the Central Office for combating Euro counterfeiting in accordance with Article 12 of the Geneva Convention by the Council of the Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs. This extended legal status clarifies Europol as the contact point for Euro counterfeiting.

Euro counterfeiters arrested and illegal print shop dismantled in Hungary

The Hague — The Netherlands — 22.12.05

The Hungarian National Bureau of Investigations has successfully dismantled a criminal organisation in the North Eastern part of Hungary which was producing forged 50 euro banknotes.

Four Hungarian citizens have been arrested and during house searches in Heves and Nyíregyháza police seized about 2000 banknotes of 50 euro denomination. Also technical equipment such as computers, printers and a device used to check security features were also confiscated as well as foil for the production of the hologram and material for detecting UV rays.

In a press conference today at the headquarters of the Hungarian National Police the Deputy Director of the National Bureau of Investigations, Attila Petöfi, expressed his satisfaction with the cooperation and assistance given by experts from Europol.

Europol's Director Mr. Max-Peter Ratzel says: "I congratulate the Hungarian authorities with the successful operation, which we are pleased to be part of. We are also pleased for the invitation to have an expert from Europol on the spot in these raids, which again has shown to be of benefit".

The role of the experts from Europol's "Forgery of Money Unit" is in general to obtain, collate and analyse information from the individual EU Member States and the results are then made available for all Member States. Furthermore Europol facilitates the exchange of information, identifies links between different investigations, produce situation reports and also provides specialised training to national experts is also given.

"The fight against Euro counterfeiting is one of our main priorities. Unfortunately the temptation for criminals to produce forged banknotes seems to be quite big. But it is my hope that the criminals based on the authorities successful dismantling of illegal print shops realise that this is a very bad idea," says Max-Peter Ratzel.



Some goals for the year ahead

- Coordinate efforts to fight Euro counterfeiting
- Host operational meetings
- Prepare technical evaluation reports on Euro banknotes.

2.8 Analysis

Analysis focuses on providing timely and accurate intelligence and intelligence products and services in all areas Europol deals with. Europol provides analytical support to investigations within the Member States by the use of Analysis Work Files (AWFs).

An AWF can be initiated by Europol, by the Management Board or by a Member State. The requirements are that the subject matter must be:

- A mandated crime area
- Affecting two or more Member States
- With the involvement of organised crime, and
- Be in line with the Europol work programme/priorities.

At the end of 2005 Europol dealt with 18 AWFs in total. All analytical projects focus on priority crime areas that were identified for 2005.



Crime area	Number of AWFs 2005
Drugs Trafficking	3
Crimes against Persons	3
Financial and Property Crime	5
Organised Crime Groups	4
Terrorism	2
Forgery of Money	1
Total	18

In 2005, an increase in the volume of data provided to AWFs by the Member States was observed. Additionally, an increasing number of contributions were provided to the AWFs in national languages; 30% of the received contributions were in a language other than English.

This development was a challenge for the analysts, since they also had to obtain the necessary translations to process information.

In accordance with the Work Programme 2005, 80% of all human resources within the analytical work were concentrated on supporting operational projects.

2. Serious crime and analysis

Major hit against an ethnic Albanian organised crime group involved in drug trafficking

The Hague — The Netherlands — 29.10.05

A closely coordinated operation between the law enforcement authorities in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands has led to the simultaneous arrest of 28 persons. The arrests were based on extensive observations against an ethnic Albanian organised crime group, exchange and subsequent analysis of investigative details and coordination both at police and judicial level. The arrests were carried out on 23 and 24 October in execution of arrest warrants issued by the Prosecutors Office of Brescia (Italy).

It was the analysis of information related to a number of, at first sight, separate drug seizures and arrests of couriers which set the Italian investigators on the track of a vast network of ethnic Albanians who organised the transportation of cocaine from the Netherlands and Belgium towards Italy. The frequency of the transports and the number of seizures carried out since May 2003 might indicate that this organisation was responsible for the trafficking of hundreds of kilos of drugs within the European Union. To dismantle this vast crime group, with key members operating from and in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, the Italian judicial and law enforcement authorities requested their Belgium and Dutch counterparts, Europol and Eurojust to assist in the investigation. When the first steps of this investigation were taken in 2003 the operation was named ASTOR. It was initiated by the Guardia di Finanza of Novara, coordinated by the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services in Rome and actively supported by Belgian and Dutch police and judiciary. Since 2003 the joint cooperation has resulted in the arrest of 53 individuals, the seizure of over 57 kg of cocaine. In addition weapons, vehicles, communication devices, packing equipment and a significant amount of cash were confiscated.

The involvement of Europol and the national Liaison Bureaux based at its premises in The Hague facilitated the exchange of operational information and the coordination of the police activities in the countries concerned. Eurojust has acted as a platform for the judicial authorities concerned by the execution of the European arrest warrants.

Some goals for the year ahead

- Strengthen analytical and intelligence capabilities of the organisation
- Ensure usage of information/intelligence from the Information System
- Transparent and efficient allocation of analytical resources.

3. Information Management and Technology

3.1 Information System

In October 2005, after a year in development, the final part of the Europol Computer System was made available to all 25 Member States. The main objective of this part of the Computer System — the Information System — is to support Europol and Europol National Units with discovering cross-border crime.

The System gives Member States the ability to store and share basic types of criminal data such as, 'offence', 'person', 'means of communication', 'means of transportation', etc. This facility automatically detects identical information and merges this data after confirmation of a potential match.

For example:

The German authorities might have information on a suspect they have been investigating for trafficking in human beings. The German authorities would then feed in the data they have about their suspect in a query. Some fields in the data may then match a record that has been initiated in Sweden about a known counterfeiter. The Swedish authorities would then be contacted by the German authorities so that the two can work closely to further their investigation into this suspect's various activities.

From November 2005, three of the 25 member states — France, Germany and Sweden — started using the data.

3.2 Information exchange

There was an increase of 19.7% in the overall Info-Ex traffic in 2005.

Year	Number of messages
2004	151.150
2005	180.920

This represented a 5.7% increase in initiated cases between 2004 and 2005.

Year	Initiated cases
2004	6.345
2005	6.705

Despite a decrease of 13.6% between 2004 and 2005, Drugs remains the main crime area with 29.7% initiated cases.

3.3 Knowledge Management Centre

The Knowledge Management Centre (KMC) provides detailed information on persons and organisations, which are specialised in law enforcement competencies, skills and expertise using:



3. Information Management and Technology

- Expertise available among the experts in the various mandated areas
- Experts and expertise obtained and stored in the KMC
- Information retrieved via media accessible to the general public such as the internet.

Furthermore, the aim is to give Member States an opportunity to identify expertise within the Member States to initiate cooperation on a bilateral basis.

Here are some examples of the expertise and information available at the Knowledge Management Centre:

- A central registration of tattoos in the member states (a tattoo can indicate a suspect's membership of a criminal organisation, their status and crime they have committed)
- Training models in strategies for operational investigation and management of crime
- Reliable and professional interpreters in dialects such as, Sinti, Crimean-Tatar and Fujian dialect.

3.4 Liaison Bureaux Logistics

The Liaison Bureaux Logistics Unit was created to provide Liaison Bureau support services. To deliver a more structured and formal basis for the link between the Liaison Officer community and Information Management, the Liaison Bureaux Logistics Unit was fully implemented in August 2005 and delivers logistic support to all Liaison Bureaux.

3.5 Information integrity

The three official functions of the Data Protection Officer, Confidentiality Officer and IT Security Advisor were integrated into a single group to leverage expertise and horizontal working.

The role of this unit was developed in 2005 and its purpose is to provide a fast and competent one-stop service for Europol staff seeking advice, best practice and guidance on correct data handling. It also has to invigilate on data processing standards within Europol to safeguard against liability arising from improper usage.



Information System made available for all EU Member States

The Hague — The Netherlands — 10.10.05

From today the Europol Information System is available to authorised law enforcement staff in all 25 Member States.

The decision of the final structure of the system, as it looks today, was made by the Europol Management Board in December 2004. The system complies with the criteria listed in the Europol Convention and it allows the rapid reference of the information available to the Member States and Europol. Member States will be able to input data directly into the system in compliance with their national procedures, and Europol can directly input data supplied by non EU Member States and third bodies.

"A fast exchange of information is essential in the fight against serious organised crime. The Information System will be an important tool, together with other IT systems, to speed up the exchange relevant information within law enforcement agencies. This will make it harder for criminals to operate within the European Union," says Europol Director, Max-Peter Ratzel.

4. Corporate Governance

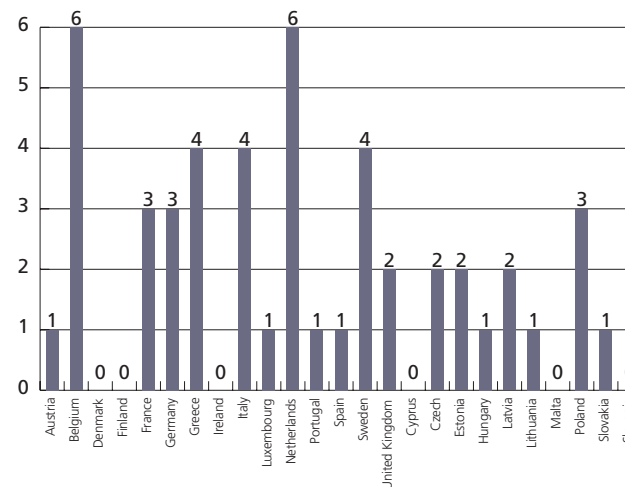
4.1 Budget

Europol is funded by the Host State and contributions from the Member States according to their GNP. The budget for 2005 was € 65.8 M. Of this amount € 63.5 M was included for the Common Budget and € 2.3 M for the Host State Budget.

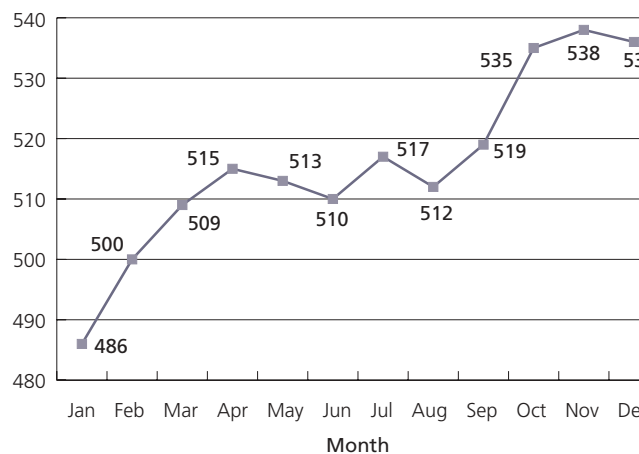
4.2 Personnel

The total number of staff working at Europol in December 2005 was 536. Of these, 93 are Europol Liaison Officers, representing a variety of law enforcement agencies, and 28 security officers.

Selected candidates in 2005 (by countries)



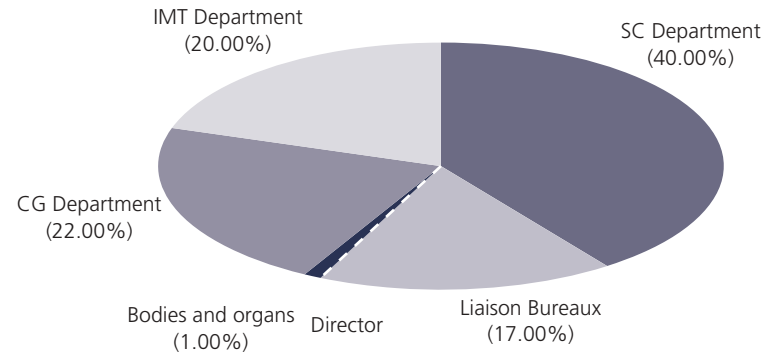
Number of Europol Personnel Jan-Dec 2005



4. Corporate Governance

The distribution of posts across the departments is almost the same as in previous years with nearly half of all posts contained in the Serious Crime Department (SCD) of Europol. There are slightly more posts in the Information Management and Technology Department (IMT) than the Corporate Governance Department (CG) as in previous years (the percentage of CG is higher due to the presence of 28 security officers who are taking care of the security within the Europol premises).

**Europol Personnel
(incl. Europol Liaison Officers)
in December 2005**



Thirty-four percent of all Europol staff were female thereby exceeding the performance target in this area. This is a marked increase from 2004 when the amount stood at 24%.

4.3 Cooperation agreements**OPERATIONAL AGREEMENTS SIGNED**

Bulgaria	Norway
Canada	Romania
Eurojust	USA
Iceland	Switzerland
Interpol	

STRATEGIC AGREEMENTS SIGNED

Colombia	Russia
European Commission	Turkey
ECB ¹	UNODC ²
EMCDDA ³	WCO ⁴
OLAF ⁵	

AGREEMENTS IN PROGRESS

Albania	Moldova
Australia	Monaco
Bosnia Herzegovina	Serbia & Montenegro
Croatia	Ukraine
FYROM	
Israel	



EU Commissioner Frattini (right)
visiting Europol in October 2005

Europol's proposal for an EU strategy towards the South– Eastern European region and the Western Balkans including the SECI Centre was endorsed by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in October 2005. Preliminary work has begun on the implementation of the strategy with the terms of reference for the EU Western Balkans.

¹ ECB= European Central Bank

² UNODC= United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

³ EMCDDA= European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

⁴ WCO= World Customs Organisation

⁵ OLAF= Office Européen de Lutte Anti-Fraude (European Anti-Fraud Office)

Administrative arrangement under the Agreement with the Commission

4. Corporate Governance

4.4 Public Relations

There has been a remarkable amount of interest in Europol and its activities from the public and the media. In 2005, 25 press releases were issued and more than 1000 requests from media and public were handled.

More than 350 visits from law enforcement agencies and others were organised at Europol. During these visits various presentations were given on the services and products of Europol, the mandated areas, and the cooperation with the Member States.

To promote its activities and inform about its role within European law enforcement, Europol participated at expos in Berlin, Brussels, Paris and The Hague.

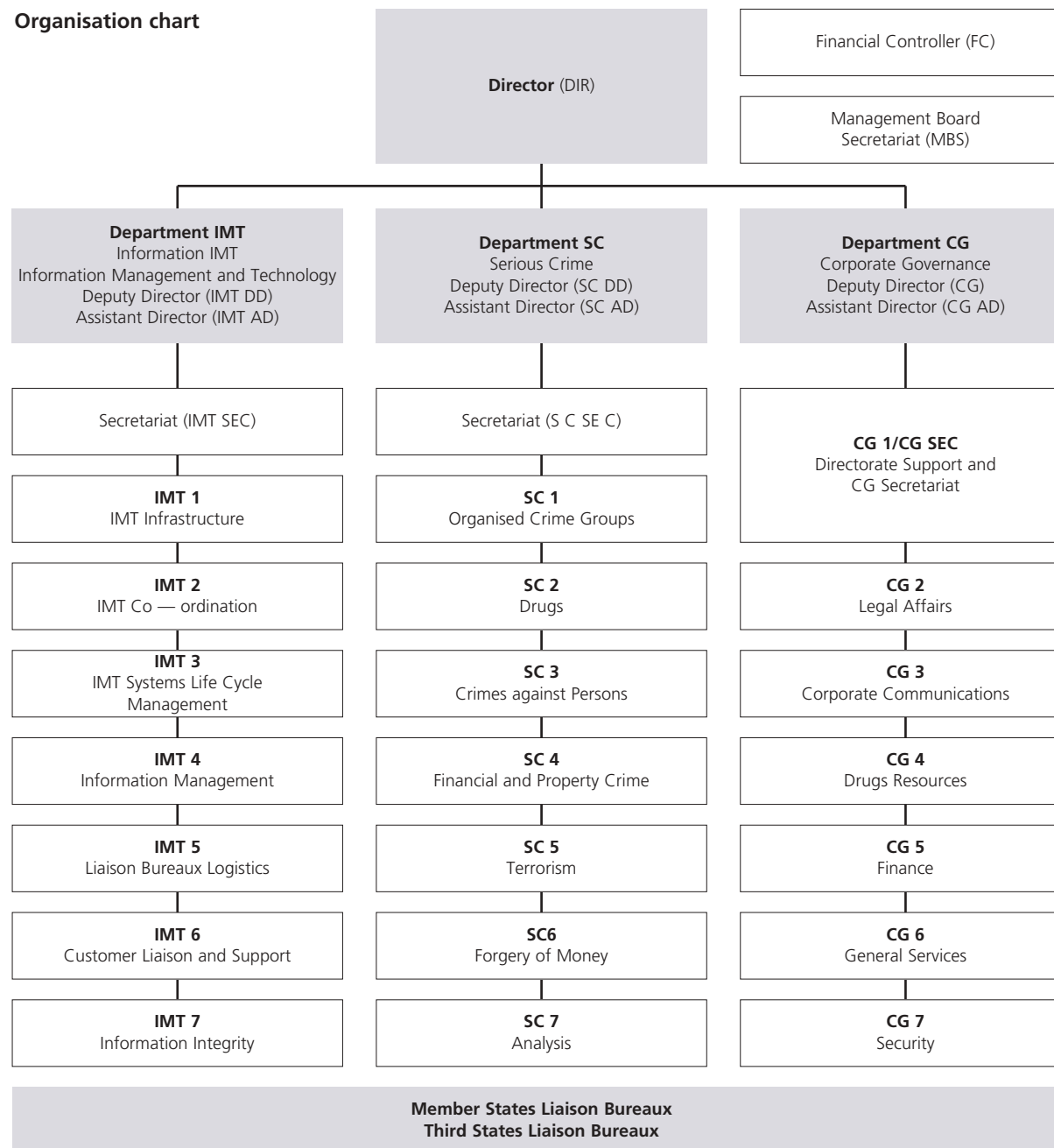
In 2005 a conference on public relations was arranged in Europol's headquarters with participants from most Member States and cooperation partners. The initiative was appreciated by the PR experts attending because it afforded them a chance to discuss public relations with colleagues from all over Europe.

A new corporate design was selected in 2005 which will be implemented in 2006. The aim is to give the organisation a more modern look and to bring about greater continuity in Europol's communications.

4.5 Europol's new headquarters

Negotiations and planning for the Europol Headquarters continued throughout 2005 with the Dutch Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Host State. To address the more short-term accommodation needs, Europol in cooperation with the Host State has begun a project to ensure that there will be sufficient work space available within the current Europol premises until the move to the new headquarters. The move is expected to take place at the end of 2009.

4.6 Organisation chart



5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

5.1 Introduction by the HENU chairman

The Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs) met five times during 2005 to advise Europol on strategic and operational matters and to discuss other issues of interest to the HENUs, Member States and Europol.

Throughout 2005, the HENUs concentrated to a great extent on operational activities, putting an emphasis on review and evaluation of all Analytical Work Files (AWF).

Special attention was also given to Europol's activities carried out in cooperation with Member States in the field of counteracting Illegal Migration and Illicit Production and Trafficking in Drugs.

In the context of operational issues, the HENUs followed the development of the European Criminal Intelligence Model and assisted Europol in the preparatory phase of the production of the Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) in 2006. The HENUs, in cooperation with Europol also directed their attention to the multi-agency approach and the involvement of Member States Customs authorities in Europol's activities.

Another subject of interest to the HENUs was the cooperation between Europol and the Member States Liaison Bureaux. The HENUs emphasized the crucial role the Liaison Bureaux fulfil in the effective exchange of information between Member States and Europol and amongst the Member States themselves.

The implementation of the Europol Information System (IS) in 2005 was another high priority issue for the HENUs.

Following on from 2004, the HENUs continued with the implementation of the Rhodes Vision for Europol, approving the recommendations of several HENUs sub-groups which were set up for that purpose.

In the second half of 2005, the HENUs took an active part in discussions concerning the new Europol Vision 2006, providing their input in its development.

5.2 Liaison Bureaux Activities — EU Member States

Austria

The main results achieved from the viewpoint of the Austrian national unit and the Austrian Liaison Bureau were very successful in 2005.

The level of new cases initiated via the Europol channel was approximately the same as in 2004 (471 cases in 2004 in comparison to 467 cases in 2005). The Liaison Bureau improved the quality of contributions. Primarily this was achieved via the increased number of in-depth awareness sessions that were called this year. The introduction and presentation of the Europol manual in Austria also enhanced the awareness. Investigation officers from central and regional forces have now an "easy reading compilation" about Europol. It clarifies Europol's tasks and objectives and the ways the Austrian Liaison Bureau and the Europol National Units support Europol.

An anticipated increase of bilateral and multilateral exchanges between the Austrian Liaison Bureau and other Member States and third States was realised.

The number and quality of requests has increased in comparison to previous years, particularly in the areas of fraud, robbery and burglary the quality.

The Austrian Liaison Bureau was involved in a task-force that was set up between Austria, Europol and Bulgaria to combat an OC group. This group of criminals originating from Bulgaria and the Ukraine, were involved in activities including forgery of money, forgery of documents, drugs trafficking and several other criminal activities. The successful cooperation and excellent working relationship of the task-force led to the arrest of the main targets.

In cooperation with the Dutch authorities and supported by the Austrian and the Dutch Liaison Bureaux, the Austrian drugs unit disrupted a criminal network operating in drugs trafficking from Nigeria via Amsterdam to Austria.

Austrian analysts have followed training in the Analyst department of Europol; however this training will cease in 2006. Nevertheless, Europol provided operational training course in Austria, which was very well received by officers of regional forces recruited to implement the analysis concept in the regional criminal investigation offices. The planning of the Austrian Liaison Bureau foresees an in-depth feasibility study to establish a training programme for officers of regional analysis departments at Europol at the latest beginning 2007.

Through the excellent cooperation between the Liaison Bureau and the Austrian member at Eurojust a common Eurojust and Europol flyer was produced. This contact to Eurojust led also to a successful informal and quick support in a spectacular kidnapping case in one Member State.

In 2005, for the first time the Europol National Unit invited the officers working in the Ministry of Finance to an awareness session on combating tobacco and alcohol smuggling. Many other meetings between the investigators in the OC unit of the criminal intelligence service and the officers from Ministry of Finance have since been established. This collaboration is ongoing to raise awareness about Europol in the regional branches of the Ministry of Finance.

Belgium

The activities of the Belgian Intelligence Service and the Belgian Police focused mainly on the fight against the terrorism threat, uniting their efforts in a joint approach. This evolution resulted in an enhanced cooperation in terrorism matters. The placement of a Liaison Officer from the Intelligence Service at the Belgian Liaison Bureau clearly demonstrated their willingness to fully cooperate with Europol.

It also reflects the integrated approach towards terrorism as applied in Belgium.

The number of information requests sent by the Belgian Liaison Bureau to the other Liaison Bureaux reflects the priorities of the Belgian National Security Plan, which corresponds

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

to a large extent with Europol's priorities and mandate. Although the overall amount of information requests grew less spectacularly than in 2004, increases are observed in the field of forgery of money, credit card fraud, robbery and terrorism. The latter showed an increase of 126% in comparison to last year.

The Belgian Liaison Bureau was involved in the coordination of actions in Operation Icebreaker, which resulted in the arrest of suspects across 13 countries who were involved in downloading and exchanging child pornography material. The Bureau also cooperated in other operations, investigating the dismantling of OC groups that are known for suspicious financial transactions, Albanian organised crime, producing synthetic drugs and related to Islamic terrorism.

Belgium has been particularly active in the HENU's contribution to the realisation of the Rhodes vision of Europol. Noteworthy are the implementation of a tool assessing the value of Member States contributions to the AWF's; the final report proposing a common data load model for Europol's Information System, and the (expected) final report reviewing the working processes of the AWF's.

The Liaison Bureau has additionally been actively involved in contributing relevant input with regards to a new Europol vision. Therefore a preparatory meeting was held in Belgium involving all Belgian stakeholders of Europol.

Moreover, the Liaison Bureau is in the final stage of its preparations for the automatic data load⁶ from the Belgian Central Criminal Intelligence Police database to Europol, which will cover all organised crime phenomena within Europol's mandate area.

Cyprus

Excellent cooperation was accomplished and the quality of information requested between the Cypriot Liaison Bureau and the other EU and non-EU Liaison Bureaux has been much improved during 2005.

The mandated areas of the Liaison Bureau fall within the Europol mandate, and include the following: forgery of money and other means of payment, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, terrorism, money laundering, trafficking in human beings and vehicle trafficking.

The same amount of information exchange was performed as last year; approximately 3000 transactions have passed the Liaison Bureau.

The Cypriot Liaison Bureau was actively involved in a couple of Europol Analysis Work Files. The Bureau is fully active in the investigation of the dismantling of illicit synthetic drug laboratories and also focusing in the fight against Islamic terrorism. The Bureau is also involved in dismantling the network of illicit tobacco traders.

The Liaison Bureau has participated in a variety of experts meetings and initiated training course possibilities for Cypriot police officers and officers from other law enforcement agencies to learn about Europol's Information System.

Czech Republic

Awareness promotion of international police cooperation between the Czech law enforcement agency and the Member States resulted in a closer cooperation of these units with the Europol Czech Liaison Bureau. Also, a closer cooperation with the Czech Customs is under negotiation and one Customs Officer will be positioned in the Liaison Bureau from 2006.

This year the information exchanged with other Member States focused primarily on drugs, forgery of money and other means of payment, fraud and swindling.

The information exchange increased remarkably, and a trend towards receiving new operational data from ongoing investigations was noted.

The law enforcement units that are specialised and responsible for running criminal analysis on organised crime

appreciated the fast responses to requests and the cooperation with their Europol experts. The Liaison Bureau is involved in several AWFs, which resulted in the additional appointment of an ELO in beginning of this year. This way the Bureau ensured that their office has enough manpower to fulfil their tasks in operational matters.

Due to promoting the awareness of Europol activities, the Czech law enforcement authorities are better aware of Europol products and services, but improvements can still be made.

Comparing the activities of the Czech Liaison Bureau with last year's there was significant increase: the activity of the Czech Europol National Unit has evolved to a wider cooperation with national LEA authorities during 2005 and the volume of the Czech information requests has increased considerably (by 70 %).

The main priorities during this year were the preparations for the ENU accession to Europol, the consistent quality improvement of the Czech contributions to AWFs and raising awareness among specialised law enforcement agencies towards the services that Europol is offering.

The Bureau was involved in a successful operation, which prevented the Hells Angels conducting a successful World Run from being held in Prague and in discussions related to the closure of illegal cigarette production facilities and smuggling in the Czech territory.

Denmark

In 2005 the number of cases initiated by the Danish Liaison Bureau showed a minor decrease. Drugs are still one of the main areas where contributions are exchanged, although there has been a decrease in the number of initiated cases in this area.

Fraud and swindling is still second on the list of new cases initiated.

While illegal immigration has usually been high on the list as

well, in 2005 there has been a decrease of more than 50% in the number of initiated cases in this area.

In 2005, the Danish Liaison Bureau handled a number of major cases initiated by Denmark. These cases covered some large areas and resulted in a large number of requests, answers and rogatory letters. The requests related mainly to drugs, but areas such as credit card fraud and forgery of money were also involved. One case involved large amounts of drugs, money laundering and homicide.

The trend in Denmark is a new approach towards intelligence-led policing. The targets for the Danish investigations are identified through analysis of the intelligence. This approach has been considered fruitful in 2005, since the analysis and investigation in Denmark has been able to identify a number of internationally related criminals active in international organised crime organisations.

It is assumed that this new approach will lead to a decrease in the number of initiated cases. At the same time it can be foreseen that although there is a decrease in single cases the number of requests for each case will rise. This trend has already been observed during this year.

Estonia

The Estonian Europol liaison officer (ELO) plays an extremely interactive role in information exchange. He is the first line of contact in all the info exchange and will make background checks of all the requests received from Europol and Member States. ELO is also checking that the requests are answered punctually and is coordinating activities between authorities in international operations.

It has been a long-standing observation that it was not possible to run a Liaison Bureau at Europol with only one Liaison Officer in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore another Liaison Officer was appointed to the Estonian Liaison Bureau. As Europol is a multi agency organisation, Estonia decided to appoint another ELO from Customs so there are Liaison Officers from two main agencies of Estonia who are

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

dealing with international investigations. The following law enforcement agencies have a competence for the Europol mandated areas: Police Board, Central Criminal Police, Tax and Customs Board, The Security Police Board and Board of Border Guard. All bodies are civil nature except Board of Border Guard. There are no coordinating bodies between them. But as far as it concerns cross-border cooperation with or through Europol the coordinating body is ENU which again is Central Criminal Police.

Consequently, the Liaison Bureau has been involved in several multinational operations this year.

The information exchanged has significantly increased during 2005 compared with previous years.

In 2003: 625 messages were exchanged;
In 2004: 1332 messages were exchanged;
In 2005: 1814 messages were exchanged.

It has been observed that Estonian authorities are becoming more and more familiar with Europol and thus information is exchanged more freely.

Within Central Criminal Police there is a Criminal Intelligence Department (CID) which is the national contact point for international communication and information exchange using both Europol and Interpol as well within bi- or more lateral projects. This unit is known as ENU. Our ENU has the right and possibilities to actively seek information and intelligence for itself in case it is not available in the respective unit or organisation. In ENU we have one contact officer from the Tax and Customs Board and one from the Board of the Border Guard. ENU is responsible for providing all relevant information produced by Europol all itself to and respective authorities.

Finland

In the late half of 2004 a comprehensive Internal Security Program (ISP) was published in Finland. The ISP is primarily a national intersectional long term programme to improve cooperation among different authorities, outlining the goals

for future internal security as well as the measures and resources on how to achieve them. Not surprisingly the programme identifies several forms of organised cross border crime to be reduced and tackled. These goals have not only been recognised but have also been adopted into the daily work of the Finnish Liaison Bureau.

The growing impact of organised or serious crime led from abroad is of a major concern. Criminals committing crimes in Finland, but living abroad — in their home country or elsewhere — should be made liable for their committed or planned offences. To achieve these objectives different forms of international cooperation is needed. The cooperation with Europol and the use of the Europol Liaison Officer's network has proved to be of great importance in achieving these goals.

In 2005, the Finnish Liaison Bureau invested a substantial amount of time in promoting and increasing the information exchanged, especially early sharing of information. Investigative and intelligence units representing national law enforcement authorities were actively contacted in order to get relevant and live data to be forwarded to Europol or countries which might have been affected by criminals apprehended or investigated in Finland. Surplus information from completed investigations was gathered and pre-processed for further use by the cooperation partners.

The efforts have not been in vain as the awareness of criminals, their networks or their organisations operating not only in Finland but also elsewhere has risen. The proactive sharing of information provided other co-operating partners with some added-value whilst investigating committed crimes or preventing future crimes.

The volume of information exchanged has also grown in 2005 by a few per cent compared to the previous year. The total number of information exchange messages was around 4000. The number of new cases has also slightly increased. Up until 2004 around 80% of the information from Finland was related to drug crime. The volume of drug crime related information is still the same but its share of the total volume

has decreased to around 50%. In addition to drugs trafficking, information concerning crimes such as forgery of money, illegal immigration, robberies and credit card fraud are the most frequently exchanged.

The Finnish Liaison Bureau is developing on a regular basis towards the "Ideal Model". In connection to the previously mentioned ISP, the demands to meet the needs of users and to provide quality answers swiftly are very important for the Bureau's target aim. New challenges lie ahead as Finland will take over EU Presidency in the second part of 2006. A fourth person is expected to be nominated to the Finnish Liaison Bureau for a fixed period of time to support the PCTF Presidency.

France

In order to enhance operational feedback in internal security, the National Police, National Gendarmerie and Customs reinforced and consolidated their cooperation with Europol in their fight against organised crime and terrorism.

Consequently, the policy of the French Liaison Bureau and the French Europol National Unit promoted and disseminated the wide range of Europol products and services to French field investigators and central units.

One of the services provided is the quick response to information requests, as well as giving input, consulting and exchanging information with regards to AWFs.

The French Liaison Bureau is also very active in the systematic cross-checking of the internal Europol databases, such as the Index system and the IS. Furthermore, the community of the Liaison Bureaux provides the benefit of Europol's multi-agency approach to the French law enforcement agencies.

One positive outcome is that the Liaison Bureau is one of the most active of all Bureaux at the moment, dealing with around 1100 information requests on a monthly basis. An additional liaison officer from Immigration Police was also

assigned to the Liaison Bureau, which is now staffed by 7 law-enforcement officers.

A number of successful outcomes for French investigating services have been achieved this year, including the detention of suspects and seizure of two million euros in cash linked to the seizure of a drug-related money laundering scheme. The intelligence provided by Europol proved to be invaluable for the French investigators.

A series of rapid information exchanges carried out via the French Liaison Bureau ended in the arrest of drug traffickers and the subsequent seizure of 70 kilograms of heroine in the keel of a sailboat coming from the Caribbean.

Another successful operation where intelligence was exchanged through the Liaison Bureau led to the dismantling of a criminal network specialising in credit card fraud. Input from one AWF quickly revealed that this group was already involved in criminal activities in another European country. The analytical work that has been performed led to the discovery of other links with an additional OC network in a neighbouring Member State.

The Liaison Bureau took part in a number of internal Europol working groups, particularly with regard to the Rhodes vision.

The Liaison Bureau and the French Europol National Unit personnel also dedicated a substantial amount of their working time to awareness programmes that were held in the Europol headquarters or directly on site with French investigators. In cooperation with Europol, the EU Justice and Home Affairs' framework programme AGIS a seminar was held in France. On this occasion more than a hundred investigators and heads of units from seven EU Member States participated.

Germany

The fight against international terrorism has become the focal point of police security police throughout the world. In Germany, the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) as well as its Liaison Bureau within Europol does not make any exception. Besides

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

the focus on the fight against terrorism, the Bureau dealt also with the growing areas of organised crime and particularly of international drug trafficking.

In the past five years a growing trend was observed in the quantity and quality of cases that were tackled. This trend was again confirmed in 2005. The overall number of all transactions that passed the German Liaison Bureau exceeded the 12.000 mark.

Most of the requests are related to drugs, however a steep increase was observed in the field of criminal activities concerning other means of payment. The requests in that field were on the second highest position in 2005. In both crime areas of THB and terrorism, the figures have tripled since 2003.

The Europol Information System a powerful tool to improve the international cooperation of the law enforcement agencies in Europe and Europol was implemented in all relevant police quarters in Germany reflecting good cooperation with Europol

The priority in the German Liaison Bureau was the further development of the cooperation in the framework of the Europol Analysis Projects. Several operational meetings have been organised as a result of the complexity of the cases.

Germany is participating in almost all Analysis Work Files. On a regular basis, German experts and Liaison Officers have acted and supported Europol in working group meetings where their knowledge and support was required. The most successful operational results of Analysis Work Files have been in the field of child pornography, synthetic drugs, counterfeited currency and THB.

In 2005 a lot of successful cases were conducted in cooperation with Europol and the Liaison Bureaux.

In July 2005 the Liaison Bureau organised and coordinated surveillance measures in the Netherlands and in Germany related to a German murder investigation. The close cooper-

ation and swift exchange of information resulted in the arrest of the suspect in Cologne.

In March 2005 a British commission rogatory letter led to a controlled delivery of cocaine in a British truck from the Netherlands to Germany. The close cooperation of the involved Member States via the Europol Liaison Bureaux yielded a seizure of 3,3 kg cocaine in Germany and several imprisonments in Great Britain and Germany.

In the same month, a Lithuanian investigation revealed that unidentified perpetrators, using falsified Dutch and Belgian documents misappropriated four different loads of goods in a fraudulent way, shipping them to Germany. The result of this international cooperation was the arrest of two suspects.

In another case, a network of already known traffickers of stolen vehicles has been dismantled during a cooperation with Lithuania.

The special aspect of this case is that the offenders used GPS blockers to conceal the placement of the stolen luxury car. The cooperation with the Lithuanian police revealed the placement of the car and apprehension of the offenders. In this same context another stolen luxury vehicle from Sweden has been seized.

These seizures yielded a suspect who was already the subject of another ongoing investigation against an organised criminals group who deals in thefts of luxury cars in Germany.

Greece

The activities of the Greek Liaison Bureau expanded in 2005, since the needs of the Greek national law enforcement authorities significantly increased with regards to collaboration with Europol and the Member States.

In this context, the Liaison Bureau has readjusted its activities and seconded more staff to the Liaison Bureau. The good cooperation with the other Liaison Officers was reflected in

the effective and immediate responses to operational requests whenever needed.

The direct access to the Europol Information System as well as to the Europol Index System substantially contributed to the efficiency of the Greek Liaison Officers with expectations in accurately supporting the Hellenic National Authorities' needs at the tactical level now being met.

The increases of national contributions to various Analytical Work Files (AWFs) as well as the improvement of awareness of Europol products and its added-value, were the main priorities of the Greek Liaison Bureau.

In addition to supporting our National Law Enforcement Services in their criminal investigations and reinforcing their link with Europol's operational units and the Member States, the Liaison Bureau has assisted the Hellenic Europol National Unit in the implementation of its future operational and strategic plans and their further progress.

The active participation in several internal working groups and meetings as well as in the AWFs and other related projects, strengthened the role, the responsibilities and the efficiency of the Greek Liaison Bureau in their daily work.

The official visit of the Hellenic Coast Guard Commandant highlighted the mutual interests and the necessity to maintain close contact with the Europol headquarters.

In terms of information exchanged, the overall number of transactions in the mandated areas that passed the Liaison Bureau surpassed 3365.

Over 100 cases were initiated in 2005 covering a wide range of serious forms of organised crime such as drugs, fraud and swindling.

Additionally, three controlled delivery operations were successfully carried out and a joint customs operation was also successfully supported.

The involvement of the Hellenic Liaison Officers in the joint

operation against a network of traffickers of human beings facilitated the investigators work in dismantling an active criminal network.

The Liaison Bureau has additionally been involved in the development of effective cooperation with the Hellenic National Member at Eurojust in matters of common interest.

Hungary

In 2005 the Hungarian Liaison Bureau at Europol further increased its activities in providing assistance to both national and foreign colleagues against organised crime. The Hungarian law enforcement authorities initiated the cooperation through Europol in many cases, especially in the fields of illegal immigration, drugs and illegal cigarette trade. The overall volume of operational information exchange has continued to rise, and compared to the previous year 37% more cases were handled by the Europol Hungarian Liaison Officers. An average 90 new operational cases per month were recorded at the Liaison Bureau in 2005.

The majority of the operational cooperation between Hungary and Europol concentrated on the areas of euro counterfeiting, terrorism, illegal immigration and trafficking of drugs. Especially with regards to the latter, the Hungarian police authorities became more involved in the activities of Europol Analytical Work Files. In total, Hungarian law enforcement authorities took part in 11 AWFs during 2005.

Hungary has significantly increased its cooperation via Europol against cigarette smuggling, which is also a reflection of the national priority to tackle this type of organised crime. One of the successful cases completed by the Liaison Bureau relates to cigarette smuggling, when the criminal activities of an international OC group was disrupted through the joint efforts of Europol, EU member states and Hungarian Customs law enforcement authorities.

Another operational success included the dismantling of a clandestine mint shop in Hungary, with the expert assistance of Europol.

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

Visits of the Chairman of the Law Enforcement Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, the General Prosecutor and the Chief Commissioner of the Hungarian National Police at Europol organised by the Liaison Bureau indicate the importance of the cooperation.

The Hungarian Liaison Bureau organised several awareness sessions for national law enforcement managers to promote the added-value of Europol services and products. The high level participation of all three Hungarian law enforcement authorities in the work of the Europol Management Board shows the country's commitment to the future development of the cooperation with Europol.

Ireland

The Irish Liaison Bureau continued to work with two officers, both from An Garda Síochána (the National Police force). We also have one Liaison officer attached to the National Unit dealing specifically with Counter-Terrorism issues.

The year 2005 saw another substantial increase in the number of requests and answers dealt with by the Bureau, showing an overall increase of approximately 16%. A notable trend in the increase is the greater number of transactions which are linked to the mandated crime areas of terrorism and fraud & swindling. These two represent the greatest growth in communication and reflects patterns at home.

The predominance of drugs (representing approximately 70% of all transactions a few years ago) is no longer the case. Despite this, the number of drugs transactions has itself increased ca. 34% this year.

Contributions to the various Analytical Work Files also remained steady during the year with Ireland participating in ten work files

Overall 2005 has been another progressive year with operational successes, particularly in the area of drug smuggling where we had a number of successful controlled deliveries.

One example was the case of an international gang of drug smugglers which was intercepted with a substantial seizure of ecstasy tablets and a number of significant arrests following intelligence received via the Europol Liaison network.

There were also successful operations against international organised crime gangs in the area of fraud and swindling also emanating from intelligence received via the Europol Liaison network.

Italy

The activities of the Italian Liaison Bureau have been in line with Europol mandate areas. Also, the criminal trends that have been observed in 2005 matched the trends that Europol dealt with throughout the year, such as the fight against terrorism.

The problematic areas the Liaison Bureau had to deal with from a law enforcement's point of view is the substantial impact brought into the criminal areas, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, illegal immigration, fraud of different kind by organised criminal ethnic groups.

The Bureau has observed a considerable increase in the exchange of information with regard to terrorism. The Liaison Bureau liaised with the new Member States particularly on the topic of organised criminal ethnic groups. In 2005 the Italian Liaison Bureau was actively involved in a couple of cases. To start with, the Bureau contributed in an operation where a child pornography ring was dismantled in a Europe-wide police action. The main cases dealt by the Bureau, were also in the fields of outlaw motorcycle gangs, drugs and credit card fraud.

Due to the enlargement process the Europol mandate is involving more countries in the fight against organised crime. Therefore the Liaison Bureau sees a need to establish priorities without delay.

With that approach in mind, the appointment of Liaison Bureau staff towards critical criminal areas needs to be

taken actively into consideration especially in order to avoid any waste of intelligence and information exchanges which are not in the above mentioned crucial criminal sectors.

It is also important to stress that, according to the Europol requirements, the Italian Liaison Bureau was provided with a connection to the Italian Law Enforcement Database. This technical solution will optimise the performance in the replies of queries leading to a benefit for all.

Latvia

During 2005, the information exchanged between the Latvian Liaison Bureau and other Member States, third States with cooperational agreement with Europol, and Europol itself has been continuously increasing. The main areas of information exchanged were drugs trafficking, trafficking in human beings, illegal immigration, cigarettes trafficking and its illegal production and non-cash payment fraud. In 2005 Latvia officially joined two AWF and for now Latvia is a member of six AWFs.

In 2005 the Latvian Europol National Unit continued to improve its administrative capacity. Officially appointed were Liaison Officers from the Customs Criminal Board, the Finance Police, the State Border Guard, the Security Police and the FIU. This had a significantly improved impact on the quality of the information exchange between the Latvian LEA and Europol via the Europol National Unit. Currently Latvia is represented at Europol with one Liaison Officer from the Central Criminal Police Department. It is envisaged that the second Liaison Officer from the Customs Criminal Board will be appointed in 2006.

With the support of Europol an introduction seminar on criminal intelligence and information analysis was organised in Riga, where all Latvian LEA participated.

The Latvian Europol National Unit has played the central role in drafting the first Latvian contribution to the EU OCTA. At the end of 2005, the Unit started the project of implementing the National Criminal Intelligence Model in Latvia.

Lithuania

The main priorities of the Lithuanian Liaison Bureau were trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking, counterfeiting euro, fraud of other means of payments, illegal immigration and vehicle crime.

In terms of volume and quality, the exchange of criminal intelligence has increased significantly and resulted therefore in the secondment of one more Liaison Officer.

The Bureau co-operated and exchanged intelligence mainly with the UK, France and the Nordic countries. A great number of information has been exchanged promptly and resulted in a substantial number of successfully accomplished results, prosecutions and discovery of stolen property. Timely exchange of intelligence has also resulted in a great number of successful investigations in other Member States with concrete results including the release of victims who potentially could have become victims of trafficking in human beings.

Based on intelligence collected by Lithuanian and UK authorities and analysed by the Europol Analysis Unit, a joint investigative team from Lithuania and United Kingdom has been established and already achieved successful operational results in drugs trafficking.

In October 2005 the Lithuanian Prime Minister visited Europol and various important cooperation issues were discussed at that meeting.

One of the outcomes of the discussions was the agreement that the Lithuanian law enforcement agencies should take more advantage of the expertise that Europol is offering in terms of analytical support for investigators, providing training etc.

It is planned to raise awareness among Lithuanian law enforcement agencies and to promote Europol's products and services in an even wider scale.

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

Luxembourg

In 2005 the Luxembourg Liaison Bureau faced an important decrease in processing requests related to new cases that were initiated by the Luxembourg National Unit. This mainly concerns the areas of drug trafficking and the forgery of money. The activities in the other crime areas have been about the same as in 2004. No controlled deliveries were initiated by the Luxembourg National Unit in 2005.

Although a small increase in the area of drug trafficking was noted in 2005, the Luxembourg Liaison Bureau faced in general a decrease in relation to requests received from other Liaison Bureaux, mainly due to a small decrease in the areas of forgery of money and a significant decrease in the area of terrorism. The requests received in the other crime areas remained steady.

The cooperation with Europol improved and the Liaison Bureau noted an increase of Europol requests originating from AWF's and the Serious Crime Department. Contributions to the various AWFs have remained steady during 2005, with Luxembourg currently being an active participant in a variety of work files. Luxembourg made especially significant contributions to an AWF dealing with the dismantling of a criminal network that is active worldwide with trafficking of arms, drugs, robbery, fraud and murder.

Luxembourg held the EU Presidency for the first half of the year and therefore the Liaison Bureau participated in more meetings than usual.

The Netherlands

In 2005, the first formal Joint Investigation team (JIT), as described in the EU framework decision, achieved various successes. The Netherlands and United Kingdom Liaison Bureaux were responsible for the exchange of intelligence for the benefit of this team, in which law enforcement agencies from the UK and The Netherlands co-operated. Europol provided support to the team in the form of analyses. The JIT's investigation led, among other things, to the arrest of sever-

al people belonging to a criminal organisation active in the UK and in The Netherlands, and to the seizure of a large amount of money and a substantial quantity of heroine.

In 2005 the exchange of intelligence increased considerably. The number of exchanges through The Netherlands liaison bureau has almost doubled in the past few years. Compared to 2004, the number of exchanges involving The Netherlands Liaison Bureau increased by 9%. The number of cases initiated by The Netherlands and handled by the staff of The Netherlands Liaison Bureau rose by 19.9%. The majority of these cases (ca. 70%) were bilateral investigations. This increase was mainly the result of a better understanding and awareness of Europol and the existence of a unique bilateral and multilateral liaison network of all law enforcement agencies in the European Union.

The Netherlands most frequently approached Spain (23%), Germany (19%), Italy (19%) and the United Kingdom (17.3%). The main subject areas were drugs (39.8%), trafficking in human beings (10.6%), terrorism (7.1%) and fraud and swindle (6.6%).

The UK accessed the services of The Netherlands Liaison Bureau most often (12.9%), followed by Germany (10.5%), France (7.7%) and Denmark (6%).

More than 50% of all requests entailed the exchange of information on drugs investigations.

The involvement of The Netherlands Liaison Bureau in controlled deliveries and secret surveillances grew to more than two dozens in 2005.

In general terms it can be said that the United Kingdom used The Netherlands Liaison Bureau the most in order to get assistance in investigations which required the use of special investigation powers; in the majority of these cases a successful follow-up was provided.

The promotion of Europol, its products and its services is constantly ongoing. The staff of the Liaison Bureau actively

participated in Europol awareness programmes in The Netherlands. The number of awareness programmes will most probably grow further in 2006.

Malta

In January 2005, the Maltese Liaison Bureau commenced its activities, with the posting of the first ever Maltese overseas Liaison Officer. This was perceived as a positive development in Malta, due to the increased exposure and access to foreign law enforcement entities.

Over the last year, information exchanges with other Member States have increased considerably. The possibility to tap into an extensive liaison network at Europol has been seen as a definitive advantage for Maltese law enforcement. The secure modes of communication provided by Europol, together with the possibility to join the liaison officer network have greatly facilitated information exchanges.

Collaboration with specialist units within Europol has also increased, and the quality of the exchanges can also be deemed to have improved. This is due to the fact that a better understanding of Europol now exists within law enforcement circles in Malta.

Since this was the first year of operation within Europol for Malta, the focus has been on gaining a better understanding of the functioning of the organisation. The Liaison Bureau in conjunction with the national unit has also been embarking on numerous initiatives to increase awareness of Europol's added value, among law enforcement players in Malta.

There have been numerous information exchanges which have resulted in successful outcomes and in useful feedback from and to various member states, whilst a number of other cases are still under investigation. Cases dealt with have been in various crime areas, but the most frequent exchanges have been related to drugs trafficking.

Poland

During 2005, the total number of national and international requests processed by the Polish Liaison Bureau increased significantly in comparison with the previous year.

The number of requests and information provided by the Polish National Police as well as the Polish Border Guard is constantly increasing.

The main areas of information exchange were related to forgery of money and fraud connected to other means of payment.

The Polish Liaison Bureau was involved in coordinating the participation of the Polish Police in the European wide Operation Icebreaker, related to child pornography.

Furthermore, Polish Liaison Bureau was involved in the works of various HENU working groups and chaired one of such working groups, which created a mechanism of sharing good practices and experiences among Liaison Bureaus and the Europol National Units.

The Polish Liaison Bureau is also involved in the consultations initiated by Europol concerning the new Europol vision.

The Bureau was also coordinating Poland's participation in projects initiated by the European Police Chiefs Task Force.

Over 40 Polish Officers visiting Liaison Bureau Poland during the year, received Europol awareness briefings.

Continuous working contacts were maintained between Liaison Bureau Poland and Poland's National Member at Eurojust.

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

Portugal

During 2005 no significant changes in the national crime patterns and trends were detected in Portugal. The Portuguese Liaison Bureau exchanged the following information between the other Member States and the Europol Serious Crime and Analysis Departments: drug trafficking (21%), forgery of money (11%) vehicle trafficking (10%), money laundering (6%) and forgery of documents (5%). These crime areas continue to be the major ones (as they were last year).

In 2005 there was a significant improvement in the quality of the intelligence requests that were channelled through the Portuguese Liaison Bureau and of those requests that were sent from other Portuguese law enforcement bodies throughout the country.

This indicates that the actions carried out by the Portuguese National Unit to increase the awareness among law enforcement bodies in relation to the use of this channel to cooperate with Europol and the law enforcement authorities of other Member States were effective.

The Portuguese Liaison Officers posted at Europol were engaged more actively in 2005 in several of the analysis work files in which Portugal participates with national experts.

There was also a significant cooperation with Europol's Forgery of Money Unit. This Unit has provided the Portuguese Liaison Bureau with complete and timely replies to several requests with regards to identifying printing machines from their bitmap codes that were detected in several forgery investigations carried out in Portugal by the Judicial Police.

Portugal was also one of the major contributors to the new Information System especially in relation to cases of forgery of money. The flow of information exchanged between the Portuguese law enforcement authorities, Europol and the other Member States was maintained at a high level.

The Portuguese Liaison Bureau has participated in a couple of very successful cases. One of these involved excellent coop-

eration with the United Kingdom and led to the seizure of 50kg of cocaine and the arrest of five British suspects in Portugal during a Portuguese investigation.

Also, the Portuguese Liaison Bureau exchanged information with the Spanish Liaison Bureau that allowed the Spanish authorities to identify and arrest the suspect of an attempted murder of a prostitute in Spain within a short period of time.

The dismantling of a criminal network trafficking stolen vehicles operating from Portugal was achieved through the support given by the German Liaison Bureau and is another positive example of Europol's effective cooperation between the EU Liaison Bureaux.

Slovak Republic

During 2005 the Slovakian ENU has continued to establish and implement the Twining Project in cooperation with the Austrian Liaison Bureau and Eurojust. Last year this awareness project started and focused on informing Slovak law enforcement authorities about Europol's objectives, tasks, operations and data protection policies. Altogether 40 police officers took part within six study visits held in The Hague and in Brussels.

The Liaison Bureau is actively taking part in operational investigation in the fields of combating criminal networks of Albanian gangs and networks of illicit drug traffickers from Turkish descend.

The Bureau was involved in one of the most successful actions this year that resulted in the dismantling of a Europe-wide child pornography network.

The information exchanged from the Liaison Bureau to other Member States was mainly data dealing with forgery of money, drugs, illegal immigration and fraud. During the same time period, the requests sent from other Member States to the Slovak Liaison Bureau dealt mainly with the same crime areas: drugs, forgery of money, terrorism, illegal immigration and other means of payment.

The approximate total number of information exchange data received was 1175, of which 61% were new requests. The Liaison Bureau sent out 945 information exchanges of which 12% were new requests.

Slovenia

In 2005 the workload of the Liaison Bureau showed a steady increase. Nevertheless, the Slovenian Liaison Bureau was staffed only by one officer and for this reason it was not always possible to meet all expectations of clients and partners.

In spite of that, the volume of the operational exchange of information in both directions increased by 20%. In total, more than 3400 information exchange messages were processed in 2005, 41% more than in the previous year. The number of Slovenian requests increased substantially due to intense awareness activities within the national law enforcement agencies. The number of requests doubled in 2005. The quality of work performed improved significantly with more focused and targeted exchange of intelligence. This indicates a significant shift in the approach of the Slovenian agencies towards the use of the Europol network.

The main areas of involvement were drug related cases, financial and property crime, terrorism, weapons and explosives, illegal immigration, cigarette smuggling, and money forgery. The structure of initiated cases reflects the situation and main characteristics of organised crime in Slovenia and shows an increased involvement of criminal groups from Slovenia connected with criminal groups from former Yugoslav republics. In these countries there are logistic points for the transports of weapons, explosives, drugs and illegal migrants transiting Slovenia by land route to other European countries. In this respect Slovenia exchanges information mostly with its neighbouring countries, Austria, and Italy.

Slovenia also intensified the exchange of information concerning ethnic Albanian crime, providing some valuable information to other partners. The result of Europol's analysis helped our investigators and experts to tackle this prob-

lem successfully in Slovenia. The Slovenian law enforcement agencies also provided some valuable information for other AWFs, especially on cigarette smuggling cases, terrorism and smuggling of weapons and explosives.

In 2005, various familiarisation programmes were organised for the Slovenian operational staff, experts, and students including their visits to Europol and Eurojust and also the visits of Europol's experts to Slovenia. The cooperation with the Slovenian representative at Eurojust was strengthened by means of joint actions concerning investigations of drug related cases, a murder case and cigarette smuggling.

Spain

A continuous increase of initiated cases by Spain was observed during this year. This is the result of promoting awareness by the Spanish Liaison Bureau in the different Spanish law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, remarkable efforts were made in order to promote the highest participation in the meetings, internal and experts meetings, held at Europol, where now Spain is represented by a very high number of participants.

As in previous years the volume of investigation exchanges has increased, in fact doubled since 2004. The operational and multilateral use of the information exchange that Europol offers facilitated the effective growth and complexity of requests.

There was a fundamental increase observed in relation to the requests of risk assessments for important events, like the Euro-Mediterranean summit that took place in Barcelona in 2005. The collaboration with Europol and the attached Liaison Bureaux of EU and non-EU Member States in their support of information and intelligence exchange was well appreciated by the Spanish authorities.

The main priorities of the Spanish Liaison Bureau were to focus on reducing the responding time to requests, the qualitative improvement of answers, and a greater involvement in Analytical Work Files and the activities connected to those.

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

The Spanish Liaison Bureau and its National Units were involved in a variety of cases which have been successfully resolved for example, the successful outcome of a kidnaping in July. The Liaison Bureau had the invaluable support from the Italian Liaison Bureau in this case.

Furthermore, numerous controlled narcotic deliveries have been undertaken successfully, mainly in collaboration with the colleagues in France and The Netherlands and several investigations have been coordinated, mainly with the United Kingdom. The outcomes in these cases were the arrest of the delinquents and the seizure of drugs and counterfeited money.

Sweden

This year, the number of initiated cases by our office has decreased by 6%. This however does not mean that our workload has decreased, but it rather indicates that the cases are more complex and time-consuming. The Swedish Liaison Bureau believes that this trend is an effect of the extended awareness seminars given by them and Europol to hundreds of police officers and prosecutors during the year.

Looking at the overall information flow that passed through the Liaison Bureau, the same level as last year was achieved. The most common mandated crime area is still drugs followed by terrorism and illegal immigration which had the biggest increase last year.

The Swedish Liaison Bureau initiated a drug related operation involving some other Member States resulting in the seizure of 50 kilos of cannabis in Sweden and the arrest of 15 suspects. The investigation revealed that several hundred kilos had been transported to Sweden between 2004 and 2005. Four of the suspects have been convicted and 11 are still in custody awaiting their trial. The main organiser of the trafficking is identified and preparations have been conducted to issue a European Arrest Warrant.

The Bureau has monthly meetings with a Eurojust representative where ongoing and upcoming cases are discussed. The

cooperation was very successful during the year and substantial legal and operational support was received regardless the time of the day.

The number of staff has increased in the office and at the beginning of the year the Liaison Bureau established an online connection to access the national police files and databases. This provides the possibility to be a one-stop-shop for non-complicated requests, which cuts the time-frame for responding considerably.

United Kingdom

The fight against serious and organised crime and terrorism was one of the key priorities for the UK this year during our presidency of the EU. This was brought sharply into focus by the events in London in July and the assistance provided by Europol and European partners in the aftermath of the incidents demonstrated the benefits of a coordinated EU-wide approach.

Our objectives of encouraging EU-wide use of intelligence led enforcement aided by a European Criminal Intelligence Model and of assisting Europol in its plans to prepare the first EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) as a key element of that model have been achieved. We look forward to the first OCTA being published by Europol during the Austrian presidency. This will not only enable ministers to set clear priorities in the fight against serious and organised crime but will also guide law enforcement towards the areas which are likely to have the greatest benefit for ordinary European citizens.

The European Police Chiefs Task Force has a key role in our fight. This year has seen the UK representation at Europol being boosted by extra staff acting as a support unit for the Police Chiefs.

The level of overall work at Europol has remained more or less constant compared with 2004, although there has been a notable 18% increase in the number of requests received. Interestingly, we have seen an increase in the quality and

complexity of cases being handled through the Europol channel. One such example was the Joint Investigation Team with The Netherlands. This came to a successful conclusion earlier in the year with the conviction of the principal targets in both countries.

The coming year sees the introduction of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) in the UK. This will impact on our relationship with Europol, as our National Unit and Liaison Bureau will be part of the new agency. SOCA will bring together expertise from several precursor organisations and will be the UK's premier agency in the fight against worldwide serious and organised crime. Its innovative new approach aims to make the UK a difficult place for criminals to operate and to significantly reduce the harm they cause to the UK and to the European Union as a whole.

5.3 Liaison Bureaux Activities — Other Liaison Bureaux

Bulgaria

In 2005 the joint efforts made on some mutually beneficial areas of work have further brought the cooperation between Europol and Bulgaria to an enhanced and sophisticated stage of development. Significant results have been achieved through the operational information exchanged, in the areas of Euro counterfeiting, trafficking in human beings and in the area of stolen vehicles.

With regards to trafficking in human beings — as defined by the Bulgaria Action Plan on THB, the Ministry of Interior and the Bulgarian Liaison Bureau were actively contributing to every EU and Europol initiative in this field, providing real time operational assistance and interaction with the police and judicial authorities of several EU Member States.

This successful police cooperation, jointly held with the Germany's BKA and the Ministry of Interior's National Service Combating Organised Crime (NSCOC) and coordinated via the different stakeholders involved, resulted in the uncover-

ing and neutralisation of an organised crime group that smuggled people from Bulgaria to Germany, France and other EU countries. In Bulgaria seven perpetrators were arrested and sentenced on THB charges.

With regards to Euro counterfeiting the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior and the Bulgarian Liaison Bureau have intensively supported Europol's Forgery of Money Unit and contributed to efforts to thwart criminal attempts to undermine one of the Europe's common values — the Euro;

Due to the joint Europol and Member States efforts, actively guided and coordinated by joint police operations, at least four illegal print shops have been dismantled in Bulgaria.

In June 2005 a joint operation with the Dutch Police and judicial authorities on a Euro counterfeiting organised crime group, consisting of Bulgarian and other suspects led to the total arrest of 51 suspects, among which were 13 Bulgarian perpetrators. In September 2005 a specialised police operation in Bulgaria was conducted in collaboration with Austria's BKA. This operation led to the uncovering and dismantling of one major international organised crime group which was involved in Euro counterfeiting. After the operation 12 people have been arrested. The main suspect, a foreign national, is yet pending extradition to Austria.

In the area of stolen vehicles, the Bulgarian Liaison Bureau supported Europol effectively with contributing to the update on databases on Bulgarian suspects by providing structured personal data.

Following the Accession Treaty to the EU, signed on April 26, 2005 and the thereby granted "observer status" to Republic of Bulgaria, representatives of the Bulgarian MOI have been able to attend the Europol Management Board meetings, as of 1 July 2005;

Preparations began in 2005 for Bulgaria's Enlargement Process towards full Europol membership, which is expected to be set in place on 1 May 2007.

5. Liaison Bureaux Activities

In a nutshell, the work, performed in 2005, is believed to have laid a solid basis for meeting developments and challenges that may arise in the future. Some valuable expertise has been gathered; to further assist in furthering initiatives related to the cooperation and interaction between the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior and Europol.

Colombia

The Colombian Liaison Bureau has increasingly been involved in the cooperation and exchange of strategic and technical information between the Member States and Third States in areas of the Europol mandate.

Through the cooperation with Europol the Liaison Bureau also has access to knowledge, the valuable exchange of experiences, threat assessments and to criminal situation reports. Furthermore, the Bureau has developed training programmes on mutual interest areas and promoted those to allies of the Europol cooperation agreement.

The Colombian Liaison Bureau has been supporting some of the Europol projects, and has been sharing information on drugs, terrorism, crime against persons, forgery of money and financial crime. Also follow-up and progress has been achieved through its support in the bilateral cooperation with Member States.

An aspect to be highlighted is the participation of the Colombian Liaison Bureau in matters of crime related to drug trafficking. The Bureau has actively contributed to the development of the Europol Cocaine Logo Catalogue and the knowledge provided on identifying drug traffic routes and traffic methods and links with Colombia and South America was seen as very valuable in the fight against drug trafficking.

The Liaison Officers of the Bureau have participated in numerous international expert meetings, gave presentations on the trends in illicit drug trafficking and provided support in the knowledge exchange and information sharing in this field. The Bureau also had contributed to the Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) in 2005.

The o-operation agreement with Europol is highly important to the Colombian government, demonstrated by the designation of two Liaison Officers from Colombia by the Colombian authorities.

Colombia, as a non-EU Member State efficiently fulfilled their collaboration as agreed in the Europol Agreement and is working on a way forward to sign the Operational Agreement with Europol.

Norway

Both the liaison officers from the Norwegian Customs and the National Police were replaced during the summer of 2005. The office now has online access to National Police Registers which proves to be of great advantage to the Bureau.

The National Criminal Investigation Service has been re-organised since 1.1.2005 and is now both, an intelligence and investigative body with integrated judicial authority to initiate and investigate serious organised crime. This unit reflects the national threat assessment and priorities, and has been the major user of the services at Europol, such as the Analysis Work Files and the expertise of the Liaison Officers at Europol.

Due to a change in the Norwegian illegal immigration and THB legislation, there has been an increase in cases initiated in Norway where Europol was consulted to exchange information. Information in this respect has also been forwarded and used by the Analysis Work Files (AWFs).

One of the main priorities that the Bureau dealt with this year is the increase in OMP (other means of payment) — skimming. This has been a new trend that began in 2004 and continued throughout 2005.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of cases, and also in direction of information exchanged at an early stage of new initiated serious organised crime cases.

Several successful cases were initiated from Norway; these cases related to the areas of money laundering, drugs, THB and illegal immigration.

Two major cases of drug seizures have been brought to a successful end as a result of quick and effective information exchange from the Member States to the Norwegian ELO.

Romania

The year 2005 marked the first full year in which the Romanian National Unit and Liaison Bureau exercised its function at Europol headquarters.

The overall objective of European integration has stimulated a series of comprehensive reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs field in Romania. During 2005, the positive and significant developments of the Romanian context have been translated in an ever increasing level of European police cooperation.

The strategic priority of the Romanian National Unit and the Liaison Bureau has been related to the active participation in the Europol Enlargement Project II. The aim of the Enlargement Project is for Romania to achieve full integration into Europol by 1st May 2007, which is the earliest possible date after the planned EU accession. In 2006, the Romanian and Europol-designated project teams will continue to work together in order to achieve the common tasks.

From an operational perspective, the level of cooperation has consistently increased, both in quality and volume. Throughout 2005, approximately 2500 InfoEx messages have been exchanged between Romania and Europol and the Member States. The valuable information and intelligence exchanged has proved critical in securing successful outcomes for numerous investigations, especially in the fields of non-cash payment fraud, trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking.