

# Europol: deal on new powers to step up EU police cooperation and fight terrorism

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**The EU police agency Europol will be able to step up efforts to fight terrorism, cybercrime and other criminal offences and respond faster, thanks to a deal struck by Parliament and Council on new governance rules endorsed by Civil Liberties Committee MEPs on Monday. The new powers come with strong data protection safeguards and democratic oversight.**

The deal agreed by Parliament and Council on 26 November and backed by a broad majority of Civil Liberties Committee MEPs on Monday (43 to 5 with 4 abstentions), will enhance Europol's mandate to ensure that it is fully equipped to counter the increase in cross-border crimes and terrorist threats.

"The new Europol rules are the best answer that we can give to the terrorist threat. In the last month alone, 446 people have been killed. As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to face up to this challenge and act. We owe it to the citizens and to the victims", said Parliament's lead MEP Augustin Díaz de Mera (EPP, ES).

## **Rapid and effective responses to new threats**

The new EU regulation will make it easier for Europol to set up specialised units to respond immediately to emerging terrorist threats and other forms of serious and organised crime. It also includes clear rules for existing units or centres such as the Internet Referral Unit, which ensures the swift removal of websites praising terrorist acts or encouraging EU citizens to join terrorist organisations, and the European Counter Terrorism Centre, which officially starts work on 1 January 2016.

Europol will in some cases be able to exchange information directly with private entities such as firms or NGOs, which should enable it to work faster. For example, it will be able to contact social network service provider Facebook directly to ask it to delete a web page run by ISIS or request details of other pages that might be run by the same user, so as to prevent the spread of terrorist propaganda.

## **Closing information gaps**

In order to avoid information gaps in the fight against organised crime and terrorism, the new rules state that member states should provide Europol with the data necessary to fulfil its objectives.

To this end, Europol should also submit an annual report to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and national parliaments on the information provided by individual member states, with a view to encouraging further information sharing.

## **Data protection and democratic oversight**

MEPs have ensured that Europol's new powers will go hand in hand with increased data protection safeguards and parliamentary scrutiny. The European Data Protection

# Press release

Supervisor (EDPS) will be responsible for monitoring Europol's work and there will be a clear complaints procedure under EU law for citizens.

To ensure democratic control, Europol's work will be overseen by a Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group with members from both national parliaments and the European Parliament.

Parliaments' negotiators also ensured that all information exchange agreements between Europol and third countries will be assessed within 5 years after the entry into force of the new regulation, to ensure that they comply with data protection rules and EU standards for policing.

## Next steps

The draft regulation still needs to be formally approved by the Council of Ministers, probably at the 4 December Justice and Home Affairs meeting, and then by the full Parliament, in a vote currently scheduled for the April 2016 plenary session in Strasbourg.

The regulation will enter into force on the 20th day after its publication in the EU Official Journal of the EU, and take effect in all EU member states as of 1 May 2017.

## Note for editors

*The European Police Office (Europol) was established in 1995 and is located in The Hague. Its role is to provide support to national law enforcement services' action and their mutual cooperation in preventing and fighting serious crime and terrorism. Europol's main task is to collect, keep, manage, analyse and exchange information, including criminal intelligence.*

*The new rules align Europol with the Lisbon Treaty, which means that cooperation will be governed by the community method and that in future Parliament and Council will determine Europol's structure, procedures and tasks jointly.*

## Further information

- Link to the draft agreement between Parliament and Council (see item 18 on the agenda): [http://www.emeeting.europarl.europa.eu/committees/agenda/201511/LIBE/LIBE\(2015\)1130\\_1P/sitt-1448573](http://www.emeeting.europarl.europa.eu/committees/agenda/201511/LIBE/LIBE(2015)1130_1P/sitt-1448573)
- Europol: helping EU countries fight international crime and terrorism (background information): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20151130STO05256/html/Europol-helping-EU-countries-fight-international-crime-and-terrorism>
- Parliament's rapporteur Díaz de Mera (EPP, ES): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28397/AGUSTIN\\_DIAZ+DE+MERA+GARCIA+CONSUEGRA\\_home.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28397/AGUSTIN_DIAZ+DE+MERA+GARCIA+CONSUEGRA_home.html)
- Parliament's legislative database: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0091\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0091(COD)&l=en)
- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Website of Europol: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/>

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