



## MANAGEMENT BOARD

**Management Board activities – March to September 2021**

Written submission by Mr Oliver Rüb, Chairperson of the Europol Management Board (MB) on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol (JPSG)

Introduction:

With a view to the 9<sup>th</sup> JPSG meeting (25-26 October 2021), the JPSG Co-Chairs invited the MB Chairperson to submit a written contribution concerning the MB activities between March and September 2021.

In this context, the MB Chairperson is pleased to provide an overview of the outcome of the March and June 2021 MB meetings, and an update on next MB activities.

The MB Chairperson remains available for possible questions from the JPSG Members, which would be replied in writing within the shortest possible delay.

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## 1. 119<sup>th</sup> MB Meeting (9-10 March 2021)

The MB commended Europol for the positive results of the stakeholders' surveys 2020 amidst the difficulties created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents - the highest number ever - had confirmed the operational importance of the Agency's work in support to law enforcement authorities. The stakeholders' satisfaction rate had achieved high or very high scores in all areas of the Agency's work, and the performance of the Europol Centres (ESOCC, EC3, ECTC, EFECC)<sup>1</sup> had mostly exceeded set targets.

Another important item under the MB agenda on operational matters was the latest Europol Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA 2021). The Board considered the main findings of SOCTA, commended the collective analytical effort made by Europol and the Member States, and recommended the submission of the SOCTA 2021 to the Council and the Commission as a basis for defining the next EU strategic and operational priorities.

Further, the MB endorsed Europol's implementation plan for the Information Management Strategy adopted in December 2020, noting that this plan involved close coordination with the Member States for specific actions and tasks, and full alignment with Europol multiannual and annual programming. Besides, the Board welcomed Europol's structured approach to reporting on the implementation progress given the importance of the Strategy for the Agency and the users' community as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Respectively: the European Serious Organised Crime Centre; the European Cyber Crime Centre, the European Counter Terrorism Centre; and the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre.

The Board took note of the ongoing Europol activities stemming from opinions and recommendations issued by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) in various areas and commended the Agency's endeavour to continue ensuring a high level of data protection while retaining its ability to provide the best possible support to the law enforcement authorities.

The MB considered the proposals addressed by the JPSG Co-Chairs to the MB Chairperson and agreed to invite two Group members to its meetings, one from the European Parliament and one from the Presidency Parliament, with one of them addressing the Board on the JPSG's behalf.

Further, the MB praised the positive outcome of the latest auditing and discharge activities regarding Europol, and received the latest yearly reports by the Data Protection Officer and the Internal Audit Capability.

## 2. 120<sup>th</sup> MB Meeting (9-10 June 2021)

The MB welcomed Ms Isabel Oneto, Head of the Portuguese Parliamentary Delegation and JPSG Co-Chair, and Mr Francisco Javier Zarzalejos, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur for the Europol Regulation recast. In an observer capacity, Ms Oneto and Mr Zarzalejos took part in MB discussions on items of strategic importance, such as the latest Europol Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR 2020)<sup>2</sup> and the Europol Regulation recast.

Upon a proposal of the Executive Director, in accordance with Article 11(1)(s) of the Europol Regulation, the MB decided the establishment of new Europol internal structures, namely an Information Management Unit and a Corporate Security Department comprising the Security Operations and the Security Risk Management units.

Europol's Innovation-related activities were another important point of the June agenda. In particular, the Board took positive note of the activities carried out by the Europol Innovation Lab since its inception and endorsed the Lab future strategic orientations, subject to the availability of the required financial and staff resources, taking also into account the active role played by Europol in support to the EU Innovation Hub.

On data protection-related matters, the MB received an update on the implementation of the Agency's action plan on big data challenge and latest communications from the EDPS.

While commending Europol for its continued efforts to meet the EDPS recommendations, the MB members reiterated the absolute need to preserve the Agency's ability to fully carry out its tasks according to its mandate so as not to put at risk the work of the national law enforcement authorities and consequently the security of the EU as a whole.

The MB operational matters agenda included a presentation of the new EMPACT 2022-2025 crime priorities. The Board welcomed the new approach aimed to simplify the EMPACT mechanism and took note that Europol would continue to play a central role in relation to the EMPACT implementation and evaluation.

Further, the MB members congratulated Europol on the outstanding support provided in large and complex operations, and resumed discussions on new initiatives meant to further enhance collaboration between Europol and the national law enforcement authorities, namely the Guest Experts and the operational Trusted Expert Communities concepts.

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<sup>2</sup> The CAAR 2020 was adopted by the MB and transmitted after the meeting to the competent EU institutions, as well as to the JPSG, in accordance with the Europol Regulation.

In the presence of Mr Gilles de Kerchove, the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator, the Board took note of the important novelties introduced by the new Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online. In this context, the MB praised Europol for the progress achieved in the development of the EU Platform on addressing illegal content online (PERCI).

Pertaining to the Agency's external relations, the MB endorsed Europol's plan for the implementation of its strategy 2021-2024, and approved a memorandum of understanding with the Fundamental Rights Agency as well as working arrangements with a number of third countries, including the United Kingdom.

### 3. MB priority-setting and planning-related activities

Of all its responsibilities, those vested in the MB with regard to Europol multiannual and annual programming are at the core of the Board's strategic and guiding role towards the Agency.

By adopting each year the Europol Programming Document, the MB sets the strategic direction of Europol for the following three-year period, makes a forecast of the required financial and human resources, and determines the detailed objectives, expected results and performance indicators for the next calendar year.

In the context of a general review of related processes, the Board has identified the need to enable a more focused MB involvement in this area, from the beginning of the planning cycle until the final adoption of the Europol Programming Document.

Regarding the next cycle, the MB endorsed the draft Multiannual Programming 2022-2024 in January and transmitted it to the JPSG for consultation, in accordance with Article 12(1) of the Europol Regulation.

The exchange of views planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> JPSG meeting on this document is thus timely in preparation for the next important step to be undertaken by the MB, namely the adoption of the whole Europol Programming Document 2022-2024 by the end of November as foreseen in the Europol Regulation.

### 4. Next ordinary MB meetings 2021

The next ordinary MB meeting, scheduled on 5 and 6 October, will be the first 'in presence' one since the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, notwithstanding the necessary room occupancy limitations, namely no more than two persons per MB delegation, to guarantee a safe meeting.

The last MB meeting for 2021 will be held in Slovenia, on 14 – 15 December, at the kind invitation of the current EU Presidency.

*As customary, the MB Chairperson is pleased to invite the JPSG to be represented at the December MB meeting. An invitation letter and further practical information will be provided in due course.*