

MEPs vote to speed up the freezing and confiscation of criminal assets

- Make seizing criminal assets across the EU faster and more efficient
- New rules to cover also nuclear material trafficking and crimes under jurisdiction of International Criminal Court
- Better identification of assets to ensure watertight sanctions against third countries
- In 2010–2014, only 2.2% of the proceeds of crime were frozen in the EU

The new legislation on seizing criminal assets would ensure fast and efficient freezing operations everywhere in the EU, and quicker compensation for victims.

To speed up asset freezing and confiscations and close loopholes, MEPs on the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee adopted on Tuesday a draft position on new rules with 50 votes in favour, 1 against, and 4 abstentions. Trilogue negotiations were authorised with 53 in favour, 0 against, and 2 abstentions.

Compared to existing legislation, the new directive would also cover trafficking in firearms, certain crimes committed as part of a criminal organisation and the violation of EU sanctions. In their position, MEPs propose to include also illegal trafficking of nuclear material, crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the illegal seizure of aircraft and ships, and sabotage.

The agreed text would close loopholes by ensuring assets can be frozen quickly, with temporary urgency measures where necessary. The proposal would also crack down on those evading confiscation with the help of a third person, and allow confiscation in certain cases where conviction is not possible, for example in cases of illness or death of a suspect.

To make cross-border investigations more efficient, the law would harmonise the powers of asset recovery offices set up by member states, ensuring that they get access to necessary information, such as beneficial ownership registries, securities and currency information, customs data and annual financial statements of companies. Finally, to prevent assets from degrading, member states would have to set up dedicated offices to manage confiscated assets.

MEPs also want to ensure that victims are compensated before confiscation, especially in cross-border cases, and allow confiscated assets to be used for social or public interest purposes.

Quote

After the vote, rapporteur [Loránt Vincze \(EPP, Romania\)](#) said: “It is of utmost importance that criminals are deprived of their gains, limit their capacity to reinvest them into the legal economy and to make sure that engaging in criminal activities does not pay. The report extends the directive’s scope to additional pertinent crimes, strengthens competent authorities in identifying, freezing and managing assets, widens the access asset recovery offices have to relevant databases, prioritises compensating victims and improves cooperation among relevant national authorities and EU agencies.”

Background

In 2010–2014, [only 2.2% of the proceeds of crime were frozen in the EU](#), and only 1.1% of these proceeds were confiscated. In December 2021, [the European Parliament called for](#) the EU’s regime on asset recovery and confiscation to be harmonised, and in the [EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime \(2021-2025\)](#), the Commission proposed strengthening these rules.

Recently, the EU’s comprehensive sanctions against Russia following its invasion of Ukraine have shown the need to implement sanctions more stringently and improve asset-tracing. Along with the present proposal, MEPs are also working on [a law harmonising the definitions and penalties of sanctions violations](#).

Further information

[Procedure file](#)

[Compromise text adopted in committee](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

Contacts

Janne OJAMO

Press Officer

☎ (+32) 2 284 12 50 (BXL)

📱 (+32) 470 89 21 92

✉ janne.ojamo@europarl.europa.eu

✉ libe-press@europarl.europa.eu

🐦 [@EP_Justice](https://twitter.com/EP_Justice)
