



## **Europol Annual Report 2006**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Priority crime areas in 2006

The priorities for Europol are determined, in addition to the input from the Member States, through the Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA). The priority crime areas for Europol in the OCTA 2006 were based on the dominant trends in organised crime at the time of planning that fall within the framework of Europol's mandate according to the Europol Convention.

The specific priority crime areas for 2006:

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

## 2. Serious crime and analysis

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. This was proven by the high level of satisfaction reported by Europol partners.

In terms of assisting the Member States in preventing and combating serious crimes, Europol achieved several improvements.

Most importantly, Europol published, for the first time, the Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) 2006. This new tool's objective is to implement intelligence-led law enforcement and to assist EU Member States in setting new priorities.

New initiatives in the framework of the Police Chiefs Task Force (PCTF) increased the number of projects in the area of comprehensive operational strategic planning for police (COSPOL) from five to nine during 2006.

In the area of training and awareness raising, Europol provided presentations and training courses in various Member States. Furthermore, Europol developed a curriculum on intelligence-led law enforcement.

### 2.1 Organised crime groups

In 2006, organised crime groups continued to increase their level of specialisation as well as the use that they make of legitimate business structures. Their internal structure allows them to expand their fields of activity across crime types and international borders. As expected, globalisation is heavily influencing the way organised crime groups communicate and cooperate among themselves. They employ the latest communication technologies to maintain and expand their national and international links.

The continuous collection of intelligence has enabled Europol to identify the major criminal groups and individuals acting within, or impacting upon, the Member States of the European Union in all serious crime areas.

Europol provided analysis and support to live investigations within 18 specific operational projects (analysis work files) for use against those indigenous and non-EU criminal groups which were assessed as most dangerous and thereby given priority.

Compared with the recent past, an increasing involvement of organised criminal networks in counterfeiting and smuggling of cigarettes has been detected. The illicit proceeds from these activities amount to several billions of euros which are also used for financing other forms of organised crime including illicit drugs trafficking and terrorism. The loss of revenues is directly effecting and harming public financial interests of the European Union.

At the request of custom services in almost all the Member States, a specific and prioritised project was set up with the purpose of cracking down on criminal groups involved in counterfeited and smuggled cigarettes. The aim was to deprive criminals of their illicit proceeds. The project achieved several important results, such as the arrest and successful conviction of the leaders of organised crime groups and the seizure of tonnes of smuggled tobacco and millions of cigarettes.

In the field of high-tech crime and specific investigation techniques, efforts have been made to build and maintain platforms for sharing expertise and training. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Europol undertook initiatives to establish closer cooperation with the private sector in order to identify new crime trends.

## 2.2 Drugs

Europol projects, which included expert and analytical support, in the area of synthetic drugs have been recognised as pivotal in the EU police cooperation.

Production and trafficking of drugs remain the prime activities of criminal groups in the European Union. In maximising their profits, many organised crime groups no longer limit their activities to one type of drug. This is reflected in the increasing number of 'poly-drug' seizures and the rise in 'poly-drug' consumption.

With a variety of European Union drug production and entry points, there is a large-scale intra-European Union trafficking of all types of drugs.

A relatively recent phenomenon in the European Union is the exportation, transshipment and diversion of ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine which are the principal precursors used globally for methamphetamine production.

Europol has also been active in supporting the overall policies on the practical implementation of preventive measures to fight drugs trafficking and abuse in the context of related EU action plans and the work of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in Portugal.

## 2.3 Crimes against persons

In addition to supporting investigations in facilitated illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings (THB), Europol provided substantial contributions to the European Commission at both working group and political levels. In the field of THB, the EU Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was implemented. Moreover, a threat assessment focused on Western Balkans organised crime involvement in THB for sexual exploitation was disseminated.

### 2.3.1 Facilitated illegal immigration

Facilitated illegal immigration is a serious crime committed by individuals or criminal networks which provide assistance (e.g. in avoiding immigration control

procedures) for financial gain to their 'customers'. These individuals or criminal networks assist their customers in entering illegally an EU Member State. Generally speaking, the risks taken by the facilitators are relatively low, while profits are high compared to, for example, drug smuggling. Although the illegal immigrants become involved with these criminal crime groups on a voluntary basis, they usually turn into their victims. They have to pay a lot of money for being transported from one place to another in dangerous and often deadly conditions. It is estimated that around 3,000 people drowned during their journeys from Africa to Europe in 2006.

In 2006, Europol strengthened its cooperation with Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. There is an agreement that Europol's role is to gather intelligence and conduct analysis, while Frontex coordinates the activities of the national border guards in ensuring the security of the EU borders with non-Member States.

### 2.3.2 Trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings (THB) remains one of the most lucrative organised crime activities in the EU. As well as being a serious crime, it remains above all an abuse of the human rights of vulnerable individuals, particularly children, by criminals who deal with the victims of trafficking as commodities. The motive for the trafficker and trafficking networks is the profit that can be made from the exploitation of human beings compelled into prostitution or forced labour.

With the methods used by some traffickers, it is inevitable that some victims of trafficking will enter a country as illegal immigrants. Facilitated illegal immigration (people smuggling) and THB are two very different crime areas and should not be confused.

In 2006, for the first time, Europol provided support for a Member State investigation targeting trafficking for the exploitation of labour. Although the



support was limited to expert advice and guidance, this crime area will receive greater attention as part of Member State initiatives to target labour exploitation.

As in the previous years, Europol has maintained a commitment to providing Member States and EU border states with expert training and advice, primarily through participation in THB training and awareness programmes organised by international organisations working to prevent THB. During 2006, Europol provided support and assistance to the International Organisation for Migration, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Labour Office and International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

Additionally, and crucially, Europol works hard to maintain good working relationships and high levels of cooperation with many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that make significant contributions in the fight against THB.

### 2.3.3 Child abuse (including child pornography on the Internet)

It is clear that crimes related to the sexual abuse of children need a special approach. This is because the nature of the criminality has different dynamics and characteristics to other forms of THB – particularly the vulnerability of its victims.

The internet features prominently in the distribution of child pornography. The evolution of payment systems through the internet is now providing greater anonymity for both users (customers) and the webmasters. This makes the web an attractive area for organised crime groups – and for that reason, Europol will be enhancing its already close cooperation with Internet service providers.

## 2.4 Financial and property crime

Europol produced good results in combating money laundering and cash border carriers. Work in this area, has created a more efficient network for detecting and seizing assets and interrupting criminal networks.

After drugs trafficking, financial crime is the favoured crime for organised crime groups within the EU. The main types of financial crimes range from VAT and excise fraud (usually connected with the smuggling of highly taxed commodities such as tobacco, alcohol and fuel) to money laundering. Organised financial crimes infiltrate all levels of EU society, damaging governments' budgets, companies' profits and individuals' assets.

The primary focus in tackling financial crime is to support cross-border money laundering investigations; the recovery of the proceeds of crime; the fight against missing trader intra-community fraud; and linking suspicious transactions reported in other Member States with offences committed in separate countries.

The Asset Seizure Centre project assists in identifying, tracing and seizing criminal assets during major investigations carried out by Member States. The Europol Criminal Assets Bureau (ECAB) is the proposed further development of the Centre aimed at improving the provision of in-house operational support all Europol operational projects. The result should be even more effective seizure of criminal assets.

Europol also continues to support the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-agency Network (CARIN) as its secretariat. This informal network consists of judicial and law enforcement experts from over 44 states, jurisdictions and international organisations.

Europol is also active in improving customs cooperation in the field of organised criminal networks involved in product piracy and intellectual property rights infringements (IPR). The findings of the survey on IPR and counterfeiting were released to Member States in October 2006.

Europol annually updates and disseminates the European Vehicle Identification Database (EUVID) which was developed in cooperation with Member States' law enforcement agencies. This is an advanced operational tool assisting investigators in identifying vehicles and related documents.

## 2.5 Terrorism

The fight against terrorism remains a top priority for the European Union. In order to combat the cross-border activities of terrorist networks, Europol's counter-terrorism unit supported numerous law enforcement investigations by providing operational and strategic analysis as well as operational support. On an international level, Europol contributed to various initiatives and forums and enhanced its network of partners. All this resulted in an increased level of cooperation and contributed towards focusing Europol's services to the needs of its partners, in particular the EU and its Member States.

Furthermore, Europol assisted Member States in ensuring the security of major international events by providing threat assessments or even seconding Liaison Officers during the events.

EU institutions and Member States appreciated Europol's efforts and noted the increased quality of its products and services. Products are mainly related to ongoing investigations in the Member States, e.g. by providing them analytical support and cross-matches, based on the contributions of other Member States or analysis and expertise in areas such as the financing of terrorism. Services provided to the Member States include the monthly review of terrorist activities and analytical products related to open source information.

Since October 2004, Europol has hosted the Counter-Terrorism Task Force 2 (CTTF2), consisting of anti-terror experts from Member States. CTTF2 has carried out several projects, initially in support of the investigations into the Madrid attacks and, later on, to assist the Member States on several topics, such as investigating the financing of terrorism and terrorist recruitment.

As a result of the lessons learnt from the response to recent terrorist attacks, Europol launched the so-called First Response Network in 2006. This network, constituted by Europol staff and Member State experts, will provide fast and

flexible support to investigations in the Member States immediately after a terrorist incident occurred.

## **2.6 Forgery of money and other means of payment**

Europol cooperates closely with the EU Member States, Europol partners and with the European Central Bank (ECB) and as a result is able to effectively follow trends in euro counterfeiting worldwide.

The euro has become the second most important global currency after the US dollar and is the legal tender in 13 of the EU Member States. That makes the euro very attractive for counterfeiters and international criminal groups.

Several operational initiatives led to focus operational action inside and outside of the European Union and the euro area. During several operations more than 5.5 million counterfeit euro were seized with the support provided by Europol.

In July 2005 Europol was designated as the central office for the suppression of euro counterfeiting. This extended legal status nominates Europol as the worldwide contact point for euro counterfeiting.

Europol successfully continued the cooperation with the private sector in combating non-cash payment fraud. Impressive results were also obtained in training law enforcement officers from various Member States in tackling card fraud.

Payment card fraud, and especially its connections with other types of serious crime, is still an underestimated problem. The team working on payment card fraud will continue the current projects on skimming and carding.

## **2.7 Analysis**

Analysis has contributed to many Europol successes.

Europol employs 100 intelligence analysts. Almost all of them were involved in analytical support to investigations within the Member States by analysis work files (AWFs). An AWF can be initiated by Member States or by Europol. The

analytical activities generate accurate intelligence and intelligence products in all areas Europol deals with.

In 2006 Europol dealt with a total of 18 AWFs. All analytical projects focus on priority crime areas that were identified for 2006. The projects deal with specific operational targets to support live investigations in the Member States or focus on issues that were brought in the framework of the Police Chiefs Task Force.

Crime area	Number of AWFs in 2006
Drugs trafficking	3
Crimes against persons	3
Financial and property crime	4
Organised crime groups	4
Terrorism	2
Forgery of money	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

Europol analysts were responsible for writing the OCTA 2006 on which Europol's priorities are based. In addition, they are responsible for the further development of the OCTA 2007 methodology and production.

In 2006 a new innovative tool for analysis, Overall Analysis System for Intelligence and Support (OASIS), was developed. Certain elements were successfully implemented in 2006 and other parts will be implemented during the first part of 2007. OASIS is an information repository that includes text and data mining facilities, workflow management, and interface possibilities. It will further enhance Europol's support to Member States.

Europol analysts provided courses on analysis which were delivered to the Member States and other EU institutions such as OLAF, Eurojust, or the European Commission.

## 2.8 General achievements

Europol did its utmost to be recognised and promoted as the joint EU intelligence service responsible for supporting Member States' competent authorities and its partners in preventing and combating organised crime and terrorism from a multi-disciplinary and global perspective. To this end Europol had to provide relevant information of strategic, operational or technical nature. In the process of the information acquisition and processing Europol continued to:

- Assist Member States in identifying emerging crime patterns and trends
- Identify and disrupt international crime networks in cooperation with the Member States of the EU as well as Europol partners
- Initiate joint investigation teams in cooperation with Eurojust and Member States
- Provide on-the-spot assistance for operational teams in the Member States whenever requested
- Develop and support special investigation techniques and best practice
- Develop cooperation with relevant external partners and the private sector, including relevant NGOs
- Host and facilitate operational ad-hoc meetings and deliver training
- Strengthen analytical and intelligence capabilities of the organisation
- Improve the data collection process and reporting instruments.

These outcomes will be reflected in Europol's goals for the forthcoming year.

### 3. Information integrity, technology and management

#### 3.1 Strategy

All developments across the Europol organisation have been supported by reinforcing the roles and responsibilities associated with information integrity.

The strategic efforts in relation to information technology have been in the direction of clarifying the business vision for technology and improving Europol's ability to execute the implementation plans.

Firstly, after a prolonged effort, Europol introduced an 'enterprise architecture' function that has produced the first iteration of the Europol Business, Information, and Application Architecture. This framework will allow Europol to detail how it intends to add value to other law enforcement activities in the EU area of freedom, security and justice. It also raised questions about using the latest collaboration tools to improve communication between EU Member States.

Secondly, by establishing a set of professional standards, a number of technological products and services were stabilised. This applied to Europol's organisational framework, data protection requirements, industry best practice and business needs. The result has also been an increase in levels of transparency flowing from greater confidence in admitting capability deficiencies where they have occurred.

Efforts in the field of information management and exchange have taken similar directions.

The information management strategy was further developed by placing Europol's information activities within the wider EU information exchange context. In particular, it became clear that there was a need for Europol to mirror future EU security architecture and intelligence models.

The ability to execute EU-wide information exchange was consolidated by the stabilisation of the business processes used in the Information System and by improving the efficiency of procedures for exchanging data with third parties. In particular, Europol's ability to keep up with developments in the exchange of biometric information was enhanced by the recruitment of a forensic scientist and a criminologist.

### **3.2 Information integrity**

The official functions of the Data Protection Officer, Confidentiality Officer and Information Technology Security Advisor are integrated and assure consistency and horizontal working.

In 2006, the values of information integrity were reinforced by a series of inspections and investigations that brought the spotlight on managerial ownership of security objectives.

The size of the Information Integrity unit was doubled and numerous activities carried out to ensure recommendations from the Joint Supervisory Body of Europol and the Europol Security Committee were followed.

### **3.3 ICT infrastructure improvements**

The quality of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) maintenance has been improved by automating the application of security fixes and patches.

Europol participated in the European Commission-led procurement of wide area network (WAN) connectivity services from a single supplier in order to replace its current supplier and become better integrated into the EU-level network. This will bring significant financial savings.



There has been a fundamental review of the Europol network infrastructure to improve quality, flexibility and manageability while maintaining high standards of security.

### **3.4 ICT systems improvements**

Europol's administrative needs have been addressed with the delivery of an architecture for collaboration, document management and portal-based services. A new payroll system was also introduced.

A pilot project to provide secure video-conferencing capabilities among Member States and Europol was successfully completed and led to plans to roll out the full solution to Member States in early 2007.

A mobile office solution to give remote access to Europol's operational systems in a secure way has been tested and deployed.

An enhanced version of the Index System was delivered.

Functional and security improvements were made to the operational e-mail system.

A new functionality on the Europol Intranet Portal was developed.

A solution for accessing the Schengen Information System was developed.

A new release of the Information System was deployed that included an upgrade of the software, improved usability and a new module covering drugs crime.

Europol assisted several Member States in developing data loaders for automated or semi-automated uploading to the Information System. In 2006 the German and Dutch data loaders began operation and Spain and Denmark started development and testing of their data loaders. Four other countries plan to implement data loaders in 2007.

Europol plans to add a number of enhancements to the Information System, including an audit tool as well as upgrades requested by users.

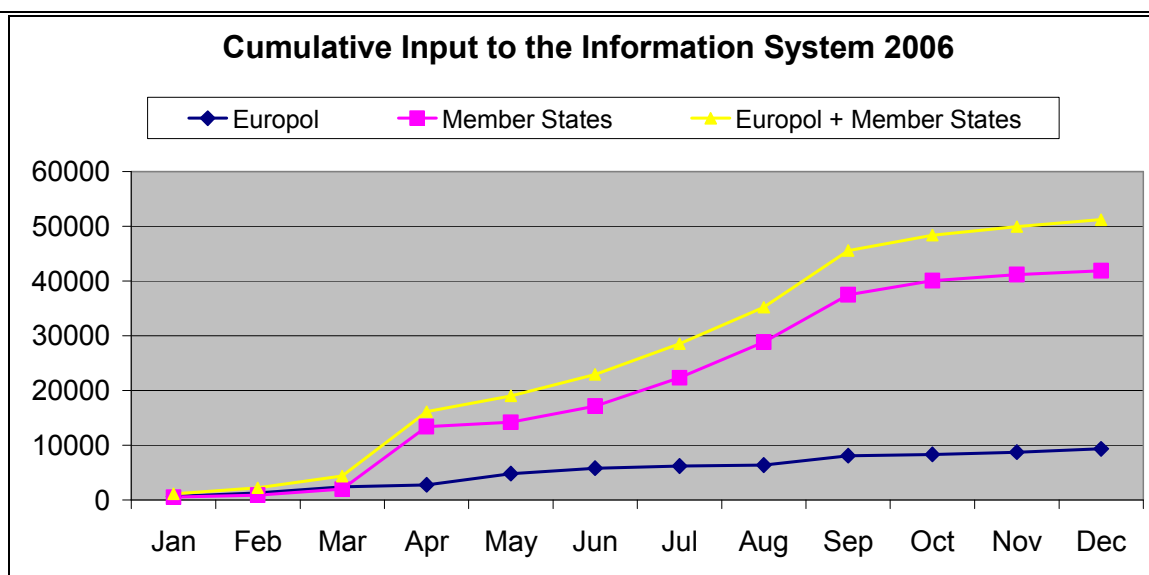
### **3.5 Automated information exchange**

The Europol Information System (IS) provided information exchange services to Europol and Europol National Units effectively and efficiently throughout 2006. The system was available to all Member States through their Liaison Officers, and 15 countries used the system at Member State level.

Europol developed and rolled out a product management process for the Information System to ensure the systematic involvement of Member States in the evolution of the system. This was a gradual clarification of the benefits to be gained from the system. In 2006, the usage of the Information System showed a steady increase. On 18 December 2006, the Information System contained 4,311 offences.

The increase in additions to the Information System is shown in the following cumulative chart. These figures only show inputs to describe positive activity on the system.

Figure I: Cumulative Input to the Europol Information System in 2006



Strong increases in Member States' inputs were noticeable after Germany (November 2005) and the Netherlands (September 2006) started to upload data automatically. The Europol figures show the inputs made by Europol on behalf of third parties.

### 3.6 Third party information exchange

The following statistics show the overall activity and the operational cases initiated by Member States, Europol units and non-European Union States and international organisations, between January and December 2006 (an increase of 14.57%).

Year	Number of messages
2005	183,528
2006	210,272

The number of cases initiated showed a 7.16% increase.

Year	Initiated cases
2005	6,761
2006	7,246

Illicit drugs trafficking remains the crime area with most initiated cases, i.e. 26.8%.

### 3.7 Europol Knowledge Management Centre

The Europol Knowledge Management Centre is an international search facility which stores uncommon and rarely used forms of investigative expertise and provides easy access to law enforcement agencies in the Member States. It continued to expand its database in 2006.

### 3.8 Liaison bureaux logistics

The liaison bureaux logistics unit continued to provide support to Europol Liaison Officers based at The Hague Europol headquarters as well as to Europol Liaison Officers stationed in Washington D.C. and at Interpol, in Lyon.

In 2006, Europol welcomed thirty-one new Liaison Officers, opened three liaison bureaux (Switzerland, US Drugs Enforcement Agency and Interpol) and made preparations to open three additional ones in early 2007 (Canada, Iceland and US Postal Inspection Services).

The integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Europol community was successfully supported by means of a comprehensive implementation project. This and future projects in the Balkans area will benefit from the best practice in project management – especially in terms of the integrity of the ICT project and life-cycle management.

## **4. Corporate governance**

### **4.1 Budget**

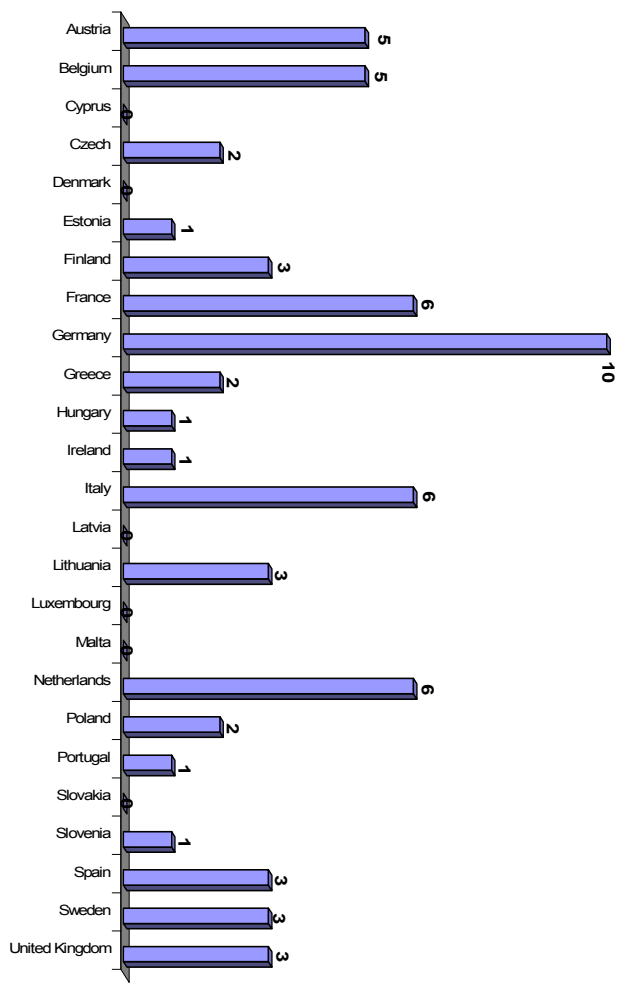
Europol is funded by contributions from the Member States according to their Gross National Product (GNP) and by the Host State. The Host State covers certain security related costs.

The budget for 2006 was €66.01 million. The amount of €63.55 million was included for the common budget. Approximately €2.46 million was included for the Host State budget.

### **4.2 Personnel**

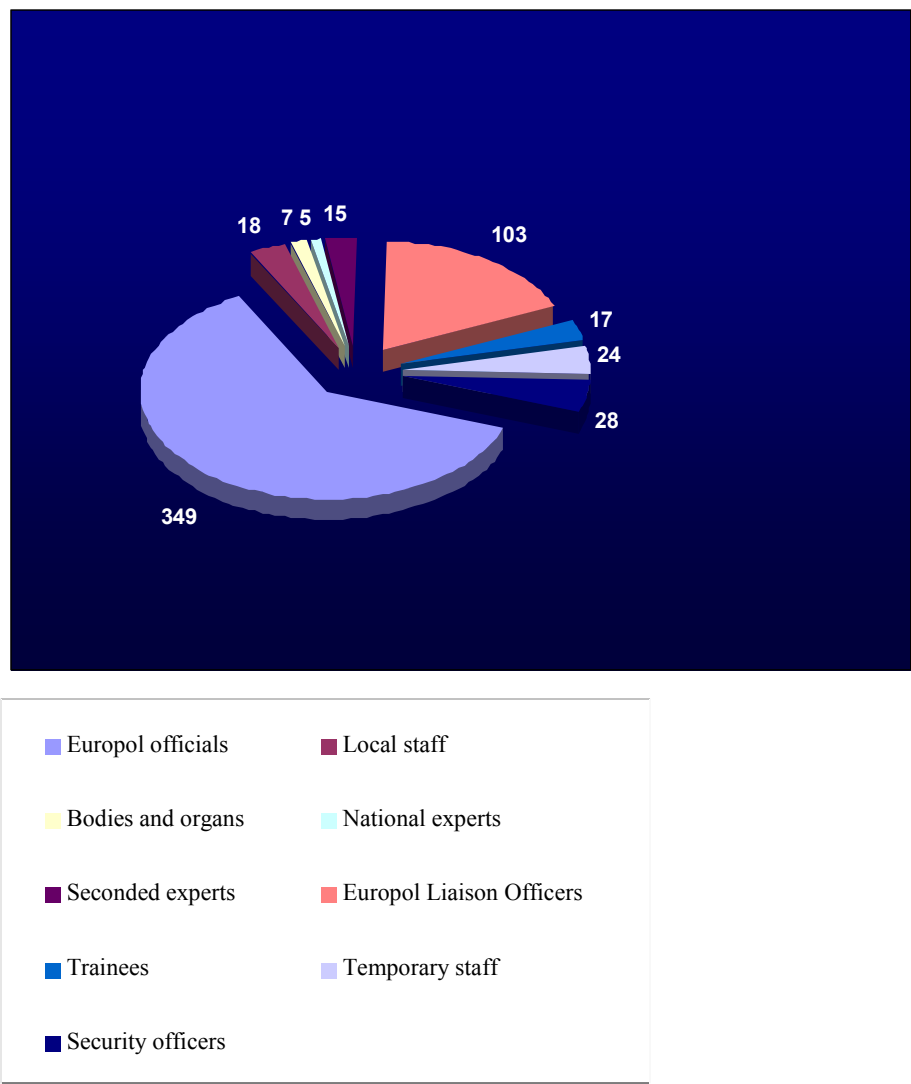
In 2006, recruitment increased significantly. This was caused primarily by the creation of twenty new posts and the replacement of staff whose contracts had come to an end. Altogether there were 61 recruitment procedures organized in 2006.

Figure I: Selected candidates in 2006 (by countries)



The total number of staff working at Europol in December 2006 was 566. This included the 105 Europol Liaison Officers who work for and under the national authority of the Member States and partner states at Europol.

Figure II: Breakdown of Europol personnel, December 2006



The distribution of posts across departments did not change with the Serious Crime Department holding the majority of posts. The Information Management and Technology Department was the second largest department, leaving the Corporate Governance Department with the fewest officials employed.

Thirty-five percent of all Europol officials were female, thereby exceeding the performance target in this area. This is an increase from 2004 when the number of female employees constituted 24% of Europol staff.

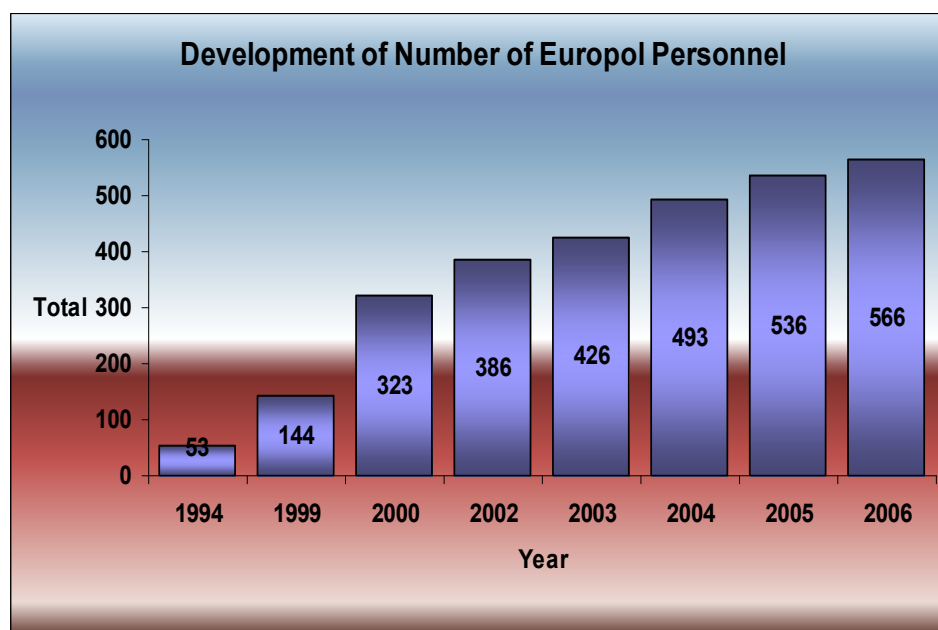


Figure III: Europol personnel in categories and nationalities, December 2006

	Europol Officials	Local Staff	Bodies and Organs	National Experts	Seconded Experts	Europol Liaison Officers	Trainees	Temporary Staff	Security Officers	Total
Austria	10			2	2	4	1	1		20
Belgium	37		1	1		5	1	2		47
Cyprus						2				2
Czech Republic	5					2				7
Denmark	7					4				11
Estonia	3					2				5
Spain	14		1		3	5	1			24
Finland	12	1				4				17
France	30	1			1	7	2			41
Germany	36	1	1	1	5	9	6			59
Greece	14					4				18
Hungary	2					5				7
Ireland	7	1				2				10
Italy	31		1		2	5	1			40
Latvia	1		1			1				3
Lithuania	3	1				3				7
Luxembourg	1	1	1			1				4
Malta						1				1
Netherlands	67	10	1	1	1	9	1	18	28	136
Poland	10	1				2	1			14
Portugal	7					1				8
Slovakia	1					2				3
Slovenia	1					1				2
Sweden	16					4	1			21
United Kingdom	34	1			1	8		3		47
Bulgaria						1				1
Colombia						2				2
Norway						3				3
Romania						1				1
Switzerland						2				2
USA						3				3
<b>Total</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>566</b>

The categories include Europol officials, local staff employed on the basis of local contracts, staff employed to assist Europol bodies and organs (i.e. the Management Board and the Financial Controller), national experts (working within the framework of the European Joint Unit on Precursors), seconded experts (working side by side with Europol officials in Europol departments but delegated by the Member States), Europol Liaison Officers (working for and under the authority of the Member States or third states), trainees, temporary staff (i.e. consultants employed on temporary contracts) and security officers.

Figure IV: Development of Europol staff from 1994 to 2006



Europol did not only recruit new personnel but also made sure that its new as well as current staff received adequate trainings in house. As a result, in 2006 ten new courses were developed which focused on computer training as well as project management and project governance. Altogether 126 training sessions were provided to the total number of 1,068 participants including officials from the Member States.

Europol also provided an opportunity for internships to 37 people: 20 law enforcement officers and 17 non-law enforcement interns.

### 4.3 Cooperation agreements

In order to fight international organised crime effectively, Europol cooperates with a number of third countries and organisations. This is done on the basis of cooperation agreements and in accordance with the Europol Convention.

There are two types of agreements that determine the nature of cooperation with third parties. Operational agreements allow for the exchange of personal data with a cooperation partner. Strategic agreements make it possible for the two involved parties to exchange strategic and technical information and provide training. They do not allow for the exchange of personal data.

Third parties which cooperate with Europol on the basis of operational agreements, state of 31 December 2006

Operational agreements	
States	Organisations
Bulgaria*	Eurojust
Canada	Interpol*
Croatia	
Iceland	
Norway	
Romania*	
Switzerland*	
USA*	

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\* Countries and organisations which stationed Liaison Officers at the Europol headquarters in the Hague

Third parties which cooperate with Europol on the basis of strategic agreements, state of 31 December 2006

<b>Strategic agreements</b>	
<b>States</b>	<b>Organisations</b>
Colombia*	European Commission
Russian Federation	European Central Bank
Turkey	European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
	World Customs Organisation
	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Agreements which are still under way, state of 31 December 2006

<b>Agreements still under negotiation or in the process of ratification</b>	
<b>States</b>	<b>Organisations</b>
Albania	European Police College - CEPOL
Australia	Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the European Union External Borders - Frontex
Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	
Moldova	
Monaco	
Serbia	
Ukraine	

In 2006, Europol focused on the practical implementation of the various agreements with cooperation partners, such as:

- US federal services including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drugs Enforcement Administration, United States Secret Service as well as Customs and Border Guards' representatives)
- Russian federal authorities through special contact points

- Interpol, between heads of operations, heads of units and experts
- Eurojust with regard to participation into analysis work files (AWF) and joint investigation teams.

The main tool of cooperation between Europol and Eurojust in strategic matters is the steering committee, which was set up to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and to develop strategies and priorities. The steering committee met three times in 2006.

In 2006, a project was initiated by Eurojust and Europol to provide a guide on Member States' legislation regarding the setting up of the Joint Investigative Teams. This comprehensive guide was presented and distributed during the expert meeting in November 2006.

Additionally, a secure line between the two organisations enabling the electronic exchange of confidential data has been agreed. Its implementation is currently under way.

Eurojust has also contributed to Europol's Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) in 2006, based on the requirements developed by Europol.

#### **4.4 Public relations**

In 2006, there was even greater interest in Europol by the media and the general public.

To meet these expectations, internal as well as external awareness activities were organised. Europol participated in external information campaigns promoting European and international police cooperation in places including Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Leipzig, Wiesbaden, Warsaw, Malta.

As far as visits to the Europol headquarters are concerned, Europol organised meetings and general presentations for several ministers, ambassadors,

politicians, law enforcement and media representatives. Altogether, more than 250 visits were organised.

Moreover, the Directorate provided around 80 presentations and speeches at meetings in Brussels and in the European Union Member and partner States.

Europol provided answers to around 1,000 requests from the media and public as well as published around 40 press releases throughout the year.

The various communication tools which were in place in 2006, such as the Europol intranet, were further developed and made more user-friendly.

Furthermore, various publications were produced and distributed. Europol produced, among others, general information leaflets, flyers for the Member States and cooperation partners' law enforcement agencies, the Europol Annual Report 2005, as well as the Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2006. Selected information publications were translated into twenty seven languages used by the European Union Member States and Europol partner states.

The increasing interest in Europol led to very frequent visits to the Europol Internet site, which received 1,519,322 hits in 2006.

#### **4.5 Open sources, documentation and library**

Europol further streamlined a small but tailored library and documentation centre, with a collection of specialised books and magazines accessible to its staff.

The acquisition of open source information, such as newspaper reports, press releases, journal articles or newswire transmissions, was an important part of the information gathering process at Europol. This task included monitoring, selection and distribution of news articles on a daily basis, as well as a search for specific open source information requested by Europol staff. During 2006, more

than 6,000 carefully selected individual news reports, related to the Europol mandated areas, were provided to the organisation.

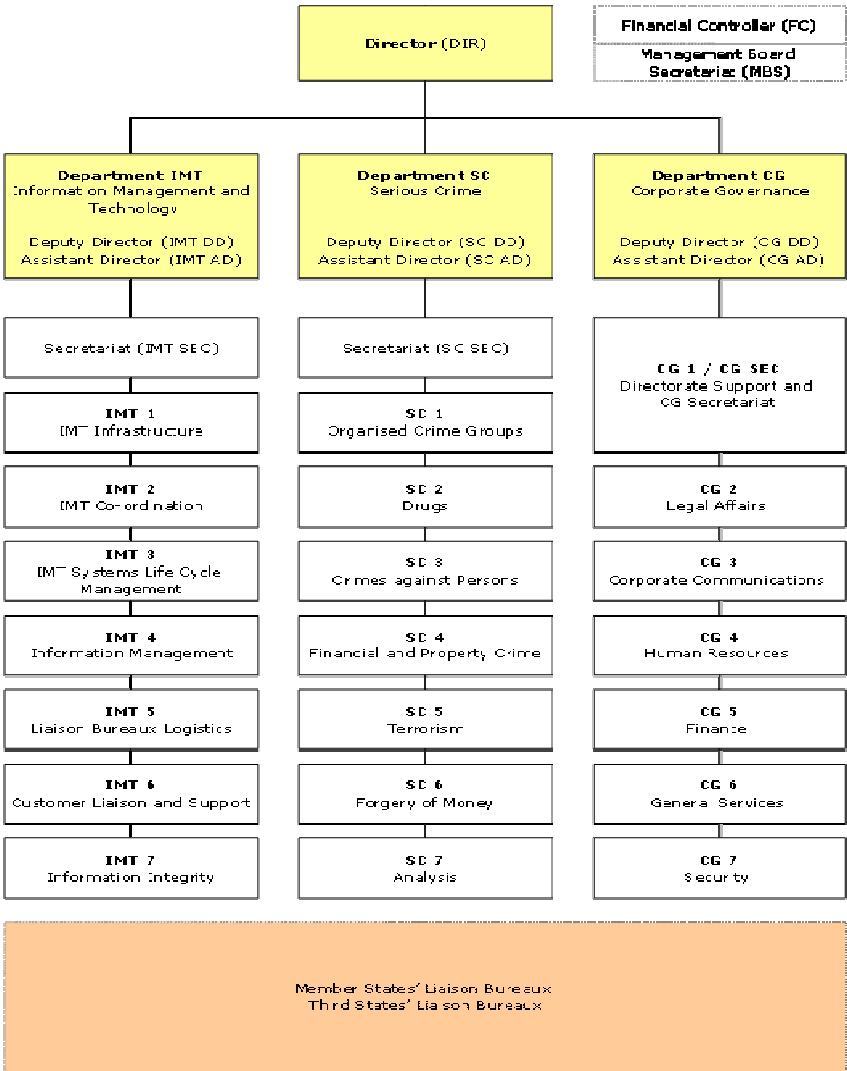
#### **4.6 New Europol headquarters**

The new Europol headquarters will be built in The Hague. The building will be situated close to other international organisations engaged in the advancement of international law, peace and justice.

The new headquarters will be fit for purpose for the organisation, and the design will offer an innovative office layout. There will be spacious conference rooms, adequate library space, documentation offices, laboratories, secure rooms and other facilities indispensable for an organisation representing law enforcement authorities of 27 European Union Member States.

Europol is working closely with the host state to finalise the design of the new building, the layout of offices and its implications for staff. The project is due to be completed in 2009.

4.7 Organisation chart





## 5. Liaison bureaux activities

### 5.1 Introduction by the Heads of Europol National Units' Chairman

The Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs) met five times during 2006 to advise Europol on strategic and operational matters, and to discuss other issues of interest to the HENUs, Member States and Europol.

Throughout 2006 the HENUs concentrated to a great extent on operational activities conducted by Europol, in cooperation with the European Union Member States. They gave special attention to the following areas: money laundering, euro counterfeiting, illegal migration and fraud. In that context, the importance of multi-agency cooperation at national and international level was emphasised.

Emphasis has also been put, as during the previous year, on review and evaluation of all analysis work files (AWFs).

The HENUs assisted Europol in the preparatory phase of the production of the Organised Crime Threat Assessment – OCTA 2007.

Another subject of interest to the HENUs is how the three protocols amending the Europol Convention, expected to come into force in 2007, will affect operational cooperation between Europol and the Member States.

One of the most important issues dealt with by the HENUs in 2006 was the implementation of recommendations made by several HENUs Rhodes Vision sub-groups. Rhodes Vision for Europol was adopted during the EU presidency of Greece in 2003, for the years from 2003 to 2006. That vision was also submitted to HENUs for their consideration, and so they could implement any actions within their field of competence. The main purpose of these actions was to promote Europol as the main channel for the

exchange of intelligence, and to enhance various aspects of information and intelligence gathering.

Several HENUs Rhodes Vision working groups have been set up. The HENUs Rhodes Vision will be finalised and consolidated in cooperation with Europol, during the first half of 2007. Within the framework of the Rhodes Vision, HENUs have adopted a model for an ideal liaison bureau. This proposes and defines specific standards that liaison bureaux must reach, if they are to function and fulfil their tasks in the best possible way.

The HENUs followed the developments in the Europol Enlargement Project for Bulgaria and Romania, which was successfully concluded by the end of 2006.

As during 2005, the HENUs again acknowledged the crucial role fulfilled by the Member States' liaison bureaux in the effective exchange of information between Member States and Europol and between the Member States themselves.

The liaison bureaux network at Europol consists of:

- the 25 Europol Member States' liaison bureaux
- liaison bureaux of Bulgaria and Romania
- countries who became members of the European Union at the beginning of year 2007 and will become members of Europol during this year
- liaison bureaux representing countries with which Europol has signed cooperation agreements, i.e. Columbia, Switzerland and USA (represented at Europol by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and United States Secret Service).

During 2006, two additional non-European Union states – Canada and Croatia – with whom Europol has signed a cooperation agreement, were granted an observer status at HENUs meetings.

## AUSTRIA

The first half of 2006 was marked by the Austrian presidency in the European Union, which meant that Europol Management Board meetings were chaired by an Austrian representative. For this reason, and in order to aid two regular staff members and one temporary liaison officer, one additional liaison officer was delegated to join the Austrian liaison bureau. The officer was in charge of the European Police Chief Task Force Support Unit at the Austrian liaison bureau.

The experience of having a temporary liaison officer, who is seconded from a regional police force for the period of one year, has been a real success. Therefore, the programme will be continued in the future. The purpose is to gain knowledge about the work at the Austrian liaison bureau and in particular and Europol in general. The officer will also become acquainted with the Europol information exchange process and take experience back to their country of origin. After the secondment, the officer would work as a Europol contact person at the home organisation and enhance the awareness about Europol among her or his colleagues.

In 2006 the number of new cases initiated via Europol channels increased again in comparison to the previous years. The contributions to the AWFs also increased. Austria participated in most AWFs and tried to play an active role in their work. There was an increase in the quantity and, more importantly, the quality of the contributions in comparison to the previous years. Several operational meetings were organised as a result of the complexity of the cases. Furthermore, Austria participated in a substantial number of successful controlled deliveries. As anticipated, there was also an increase in bilateral and multilateral exchanges between the Austrian liaison bureau and other Member States and third states.

The Austrian liaison bureau further developed its cooperation with the Austrian member at Eurojust. A Task Force in close cooperation with Europol, Eurojust, European Union Member States and third states has been established and has been operating successfully.

The model used by the Austrian desk to train Austrian analysts at Europol proved highly valuable for both sides. Although this practice ended at the end of March 2006, it improved analysts' awareness of Europol in general, and their analysis skills in particular. Therefore, it will be re-established in the first quarter of 2007 and will involve officers from a regional analysis department.

Cooperation between the Europol National Unit and officers working at the Austrian Ministry of Finance on combating tobacco has been improved. There have been many meetings between the investigators in the Organised Crime Unit of the Criminal Intelligence Service and the officers from the Ministry of Finance. This collaboration is ongoing and raises awareness about Europol in the regional branches of the Ministry of Finance. The Europol National Unit plans to have one officer from the Ministry of Finance located at the Europol National Unit, to give even closer cooperation.

Austria assesses 2006 as another progressive year marked by operational successes and valuable cooperation in the area of European law enforcement.

## BELGIUM

The Belgian liaison bureau in 2006 was mainly focused on working with Europol on AWFs, which led to more cases being initiated. Belgium was particularly active in analysing criminal activities such as money laundering, large-scale burglaries and associated crimes, Islamist terrorism, synthetic drug production and trafficking, production and issuing of counterfeit currency, and all crimes committed by Albanian and associated criminal groups. Furthermore, all Belgian contributions were rated by the Europol project managers as high quality. Contrary to its plans, Belgium was unable to establish automated data loading to the Information System. Use of the system has, therefore, been limited to the personnel of the liaison desk.

The increase in number of information exchange requests sent by the Belgian desk to the other Europol Liaison Bureaux stagnated and it can be said that it has even been on the decline. A noticeable decrease in multilateral requests and a rise in bilateral requests occurred. Whereas the number of cases in trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration dropped considerably, a certain growth was marked in the fields of terrorism and forgery of money.

The information exchange via Europol reflects the Belgium's interest in the AWFs and is in line with the priorities of the country's national security plan, particularly in terms of fighting terrorism.

However, in view of the overall international police cooperation within the European Union, Europol is only one of the platforms for international police cooperation. Moreover, Belgian customs cooperation, also in the

area of fighting organised crime, remains outside the Europol domain.

Belgium was involved in a number of target groups in several AWFs, in particular AWF focused on Albanian and associated criminal groups, which supported the Belgian investigations 'Albaviet' and 'Skanderbeg'. Belgium is also very active in the fight against child pornography in cooperation with Europol AWF partners, with whom noteworthy results have been achieved. Moreover, after the initial set-up phase, Europol provided analytical support to the first French-Belgian joint investigation team in the field of terrorism.

The continued presence of a liaison officer of the Belgian Intelligence Service at Europol illustrates success of the integrated multi-agency approach in the field of terrorism and the joint efforts of all actors involved.

Belgium also continued to cooperate with HENUs. It actively contributed to the realisation of the Rhodes vision of Europol, in particular the current phase of its finalisation and consolidation.

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

In 2006, a stabilisation of the situation within the Czech Europol National Unit was achieved. This was reflected in the increasing number of initiated cases and operational information exchange. Thanks to this, there was a considerable development in cooperation with other European Union Member States as the Czech law enforcement authorities approached Europol in more cases. The majority of exchanged information concerned crimes such as trafficking in human beings, forgery of money, drugs, terrorism and other means of payment.

The Czech Europol National Unit is a recognised and accredited partner in the field of combating organised crime. The special units of the Czech police appreciate the results of analyses provided by Europol. Currently, the Czech Republic is a full member of twelve opened AWFs.

The Czech Europol National Unit was asked by the competent Czech law enforcement authorities to attend several operational meetings in 2006, where further steps in case investigation were discussed. The operational meetings took place in Prague at the Police Presidium or at the Organised Crime Unit of the Czech police. The police officers from the Europol National Unit helped to organise the operational meetings and interpretation services for their participants.

The cooperation of the Czech law enforcement authorities and the ENU led to important criminals being arrested. Several operations with Europol information support were carried out in the territory of the Czech Republic in 2006 – for example, operation ‘Class’ which focused on fraud and swindling. As a result of this operation the Czech Customs services together with the Illegal Proceeds and Tax Crime Combating Unit seized a huge number of counterfeit cigarettes and arrested more than a hundred individuals, mostly Vietnamese. It is also worth mentioning operation ‘Vnuk’, again tackling fraud and swindling, and operation ‘Kerimo’, which focused on trafficking in human beings. Both of these operations were successfully completed in 2006.

The Czech liaison bureau was granted full access to the Europol Information System in July 2006, a fact communicated to all relevant Czech units. Czech units now have authorised access to the Information System for checking and data inputs.

An awareness programme was launched in the second half of 2006 to involve more police units in cooperation with Europol via the Europol National Unit. The search potential of the Information System was also mentioned.

Data loaders are now being developed to help uploading data to the Information System, and Europol Liaison Officers are being connected to the Czech Police databases.

## **CYPRUS**

On 1 February 2006, the Cypriot liaison bureau was reinforced with the appointment of second liaison officer to ensure that it can fulfil its strategic and operational objectives.

Greater awareness and promotion of Europol and its services to the Cypriot law enforcement agencies resulted in a tremendous increase in the volume of information exchange cases that the liaison bureau dealt with during 2006. The total amount of information exchanges rose from 3,175 in 2005 to around 5,075 in 2006 – a 60% increase. The main priorities for these cases were illegal immigration and other means of payment.

Cyprus is a member of six AWFs, and the Cypriot liaison bureau is actively involved in all of them by participating in the meetings or by giving assistance to the national experts who attend. Moreover, Cyprus also contributed information to the six AWFs of which it is a member. Cyprus also contributed to the other Analysis Working Files of which it is not a member.



In 2006, the liaison officers of the Cypriot bureau participated in almost 50 strategic and operational meetings.

Both liaison officers were trained and granted access to the Information System.

During 2006, the Cypriot liaison bureau, with Europol, organised 'Non cash payment fraud seminar'. The seminar took place in Cyprus, with 25 Cypriot Officers participating. Encouraged by this success, the Cypriot liaison bureau is now trying to organise another seminar in on money laundering. This event, which is being organised in cooperation with Europol and TALEX, should take place in Cyprus during the first quarter of 2007.

While the Cypriot liaison bureau continues to develop towards the Ideal Liaison Bureau Model, there is always room for improvement. Support from the Europol National Unit and in general from the Directorate of European Union and International Police Cooperation of the Cypriot Police is helping the bureau reach the standards of the Ideal Liaison Bureau Model.

## **DENMARK**

The main priority for the Danish liaison bureau in 2006 was to get as close as possible to the 'Ideal Desk', which was debated and approved by HENUs. One of the major issues is the time taken to respond to requests. For normal requests the response time is 30 days. The Danish liaison bureau managed to bring the number of pending messages older than 30 days from other European Union Member States down to 14. Delivering prompt replies will remain a high priority in 2007.

In 2006, the number of cases initiated by the Danish liaison bureau was the same as in 2005. As in all previous years, drugs are still the main area for the exchange of information. However, this area showed for the second time in a row a minor decrease. Fraud and swindling is still second on the list of initiated cases. This area showed a significant increase of more than 50%. This figure has been mainly the result of a large increase in the number of cases related to skimming and credit card fraud. The same increase was reflected in the higher number of cases sent to AWF dealing with payment card fraud – over three times the number in 2005. The third area which shows a significant change is forgery of money. The number of initiated cases regarding this area increased more than 100%. However, this is still a minor area compared to other Member States, as Denmark has not introduced the euro.

The number of contributions to one of Europol AWFs was unchanged as compared to 2005. There has been a significant increase in the number of contributions to the AWF on payment card fraud. On the other hand, a decrease in the number of contributions to the AWF on criminal activities of outlawed motorcycle gangs resulted in the fact that the overall number of contributions to the AWFs remained the same as the previous year.

The number of messages sent and received by Denmark at Europol increased by 20% in 2006, despite the fact that the overall number of cases remained the same. This trend was also observed in 2005, and is indicative of more comprehensive and extensive cases that require greater exchange of information. In 2006 the Danish liaison bureau saw a number of such cases, which resulted in a large number of messages.

The Danish law enforcement authorities noted some successful cases arising from cooperation with Europol that led to the arrest of several criminals last year. One such operation resulted in the criminals being caught red-handed while using skimmed credit cards in other countries.

## **ESTONIA**

The Estonian liaison bureau noted further increases in operational information exchange in 2006. This covered the exchange of information both between the European Union Member States and between Member States and Europol. One reason for this was a growing awareness and understanding among Estonian law enforcement authorities of the necessity of using Europol in tackling cross-border crimes. This trend is expected to continue, which may mean the need to expand the liaison bureau in future.

The content of information has been similar to the previous evaluation periods. The increase in requests addressed to the Estonian liaison bureau shifted to include issues pertaining to organised crime groups committing and organising armed robberies throughout Europe. Requests for information from Estonian law enforcement authorities were more related to international drugs trafficking.

Besides supporting the information exchange between different countries and law enforcement authorities, the Estonian liaison bureau officers were also involved in a few concrete investigative activities involving Estonian offenders. One drug case initiated by Estonian law enforcement authorities had links to another country in Europe.

## FINLAND

The preparation for and carrying out of the Finnish presidency in the European Union, including a highlighted role of Finland in Europol, constituted a significant part of work carried out by the Finnish liaison bureau. This concerned especially the second part of 2006. Activities related to the Police Chiefs Task Force and its Support Unit were the most significant and resource demanding task related to the European Union presidency for the Finnish liaison bureau.

A fourth officer was seconded to the liaison bureau to help fulfil these tasks. The officer had a fixed-term contract, covering mostly the Europol cooperation between preceding, current and succeeding Chairmen of the Management Board (called the Troika), and was also in sole charge of issues concerning the Police Chiefs Task Force.

Other activities linked to the presidency were also significant. Some 50% of the liaison bureau's human resources were committed to duties related to the European Union presidency. Day-to-day activities, such as the operational steering group, the staff selection board and the Europol Liaison Officers' representation, should not be thought of as just extra work, but as opportunities to better understand Europol and become more familiar with its personnel.

During the year working procedures were further rationalised and some better practices, agreed by the liaison bureaux, were subsequently adopted. For example, the Finnish liaison bureau has started sending requests via the involved AWFs, rather than straight to the Member States, provided this has been agreed by the AWF in question. This allows an AWF or its subproject to become the central point in the information exchange chain, as all information becomes available for AWF analysts for immediate processing. This reduces the amount of information

bypassing Europol. It also reduces an unnecessary circulation of information and makes the work of liaison officers and analysts more effective.

Finland has continued its proactive practice of sharing information with other countries affected by criminal organisations or networks. Spontaneous gathering and sharing of information to raise awareness, or fill in possible intelligence gaps, has paid off with investigations initiated against mutual suspects elsewhere.

The interaction with officials working at the Europol National Unit is very good, and the Finnish liaison bureau is well supported by them. Cooperation with and between all other Finnish liaison officers has also improved further, as has the level of knowledge among partners in Finland concerning mandates, possibilities and abilities to execute, perform or support investigations. The Finnish liaison bureau, together with the other Europol liaison bureaux, is recognised as a strong platform for multilateral cooperation.

A preliminary estimation suggests that, for the first time in 10 years, the total amount of operational information exchanges did not increase in 2006, and the end result would be noticeably smaller than the previous year. If this indicator was solely used to estimate the information exchange, it would be misleading. Information available regarding the net amount exchanged information suggests the result being approximately the same as the year before. However, procedures like routing requests via the AWFs, and a more precise selection of the requests by receiving countries, are contributing to a lower gross number of messages exchanged.

The diversity of cases initiated by different law enforcement units in Finland continued to increase. This development indicates a greater awareness of Europol among a larger group of units investigating crimes, and covered by the Europol mandate in Finland. The cooperation and information exchange between the police and the customs have functioned very well in Finland at all levels. This reflects a better use of Europol services, which from the perspective of the Finnish liaison bureau, is considered to be a very good development.

Traditionally, the national cooperation of law enforcement authorities has also included the border guards. Recently, the border guards' investigative powers were increased, allowing them to investigate crimes within the Europol mandate, such as illegal immigration. The cooperation with the border guards, especially their Investigation Unit, has developed in a very positive way.

## **FRANCE**

Compared to 2005, the French national police, Gendarmerie and customs noted a tendency to use Europol more as a tool in their work. This can be safely said, despite a 10% decrease in new cases initiated in 2006 – which can be interpreted as Europol National Unit being more selective.

The policy of the French liaison bureau and ENU remained the same and consisted in promoting and soliciting the wide range of Europol products and services. As a result, in 2006 at the liaison bureau level a lot of cross-checks were performed in the Europol systems and databases, e.g. in the index system and information system. It must be mentioned, however, that this did not necessarily lead to the creation of more information exchange requests.

In 2006, with the exception of terrorism, skimming was the major threat that confronted the European Union Member States. Consequently, the number of cases sent by France to the AWF on payment card fraud rose to 71%. The liaison bureau held numerous operational meetings both at the Europol and Eurojust headquarters on this subject. Under the umbrella of the French desk, an important meeting was held at Eurojust in December to support a major case involving the AWF on payment card fraud. Numerous cross-checks which surfaced in different European Union Member States' investigations were the reason for this event.

The relationship established between the French liaison bureau and the French delegation at Eurojust is playing a key role and is improving year after year. It was quickly understood that working together was the best and smoothest way to promote both organisations at the same time at both the law enforcement agencies' and magistrates' levels. Twice a year a four-day awareness session is provided in The Hague to 15 magistrates (prosecutor and examining judges) in collaboration with the two French entities.

The personnel of both the French liaison bureau and Europol National Unit dedicated a substantial amount of time to other awareness programmes, either at the Europol headquarters or directly on site with French investigators (Gendarmerie heads of investigative units) and magistrates.

During the past four months, despite a shortage of personnel, the French desk continued to fulfil its duty and should be reinforced soon with a complete team from February 2007.

The French investigative units note many successful results in the cases where Europol was engaged.

In February 2006, the Netherlands received information that a murder suspect was in Paris. The suspect was wanted in connection to a two-year investigation into outlawed motorcycle gangs. During an operational meeting held at Europol, intelligence was provided to France. Following several exchanges between the liaison bureau and the field unit, the French investigators were able to locate the suspect and to arrest him.

In March 2006, Germany asked France to check a bus at its arrival in Paris. This followed the arrest of a suspect the same day in Munich, who was found in possession of fraudulent credit cards and skimming materials. Performing the requested check in Paris, the French police caught a second suspect in possession of similar items. As a result of several exchanges between the two countries, the contributions sent to the relevant AWF and the analytical work, links with an additional organised crime network in a neighbouring Member State were discovered.

In early April 2006, Germany informed France about an imminent threat in relation to skimming activities starting in Germany and followed by fraudulent withdrawals in Paris. This recurrent modus operandi dated back to October 2005. Exploiting the data, the French investigators were able to locate one of the cash machines where previous withdrawals took place. Searches were conducted inside a nearby hotel leading to the arrest of four suspects found in possession of skimming materials. Due to the lack of evidence, no investigation followed. As a follow-up, an operational meeting was held in early May at Europol to set up a quick response system designed to disrupt the network. Finally, after months of cooperation, the two main suspects were caught in France in July and extradited to Germany where they were sentenced on the 14 December 2006.



In September 2006, during a routine check performed on a Spanish car on the highway in Lyon, a request was sent to the desk asking to involve Spain and the Netherlands. At the same time, the French liaison officer cross-checked the suspect's name in the Europol index system, which resulted in AWF dealing with money laundering activities and related offences for suspicious transactions connected to drugs trafficking. Informed about these very first results, the custom officers in the field carried out a back check on the highway's parking places. As a result they discovered 2,134 kilos of cannabis resin inside a truck whose keeper was the driver of the Spanish vehicle.

A series of rapid information exchanges, carried out via the Swedish liaison bureau, allowed the arrest of drug couriers on three occasions at Roissy Airport and the seizure of ingested cocaine balls.

To conclude, in 2006 the French liaison bureau remained deeply involved in the development of Europol activities. Despite many successes, the French desk remained aware that there was still room for improvement on both sides.

## GERMANY

The fight against international terrorism remained the focal point of security policing throughout the world. The information exchange with other Member States showed that as well as continuing the fight against terrorism, the German liaison bureau together with the other Europol liaison bureaux undertook the common effort against the growth of international drugs trafficking and the spread of organised crime. As an emerging development, the volume of information exchange concerning the fight against tobacco smuggling needs to be mentioned. These

numbers are followed by requests in the fields of terrorism and other means of payment.

The rising trend of the past five years, reflected in the quantity and quality of cases dealt with and other areas of engagement, was confirmed again in 2006. The overall number of transactions will exceed 12,000 again.

The German liaison bureau organised several operational meetings as a result of the complexity of the cases.

In addition to combating international terrorism, drugs trafficking and the spread of organised crime, the other main focus was implementing the Europol information system within the respective German law enforcement agencies. Germany implemented as one of few European Union Member States an automated data loader (ADL), which uploads cases from the German national data network into the Europol Information System. After starting the upload with cases on forgery of money, the flow through the ADL has been extended to all relevant mandated areas in 2006.

The priority in the German liaison bureau was a further development of the cooperation in the framework of the Europol Analysis Projects. Germany is participating in almost all AWFs, with the exception of three. The liaison officers engaged actively in attending the analysis work groups' meetings, together with the nominated national AWF experts, and cooperated with the competent Europol AWF analyst teams. To improve cooperation further within the framework of the Europol analysis projects, two workshops were provided for the nominated national experts at the German Europol National Unit. The current state of play, new developments and challenges were all discussed.

In 2006, many successes were achieved, in cooperation with Europol and the Europol liaison bureaux.

In February, 250GB of German data from investigations on the Caliphate State were contributed to the relevant AWF at Europol. The German liaison bureau organised and led an operational meeting to discuss how to handle and analyse this contribution. This resulted in the data being processed according to the desired criteria in the respective AWFs.

In March, drug investigations in Denmark revealed two suspects being asked to carry out a transport of explosives in a vehicle from Denmark via Germany to Switzerland. The Danish desk asked the German police to check the passengers and the vehicle for any illegal substances and explosives in particular. Therefore the German police carried out all necessary measures and informed the respective police forces. Very soon the Hesse state police located the car and both suspects were arrested. Further inquiries succeeded in finding approximately 500g of explosives.

In May, Swedish authorities conducted two controlled deliveries from Kosovo. The controlled delivery was finalised in Sweden when the couriers arrived at a meeting point with the suspected organiser and drugs receivers. All the targets were arrested. This success was possible because of the excellent cooperation of surveillance teams from Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland through the Europol liaison bureaux.

In August, the Hungarian desk requested support on controlled delivery of marihuana from Belgium via Germany and Austria to Hungary. The close cooperation of the involved member states through the Europol liaison bureaux yielded a seizure of 26kg of marihuana.

## GREECE

During 2006, the main objectives set by the Hellenic liaison bureau under the guidance of the Hellenic Europol National Unit, focused on strengthening the links between Europol and the Hellenic law enforcement services. This was at an operational and strategic level to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in combating serious forms of organised crime and terrorism.

In this context, the Hellenic liaison bureau has successfully handled a wide range of cases at bilateral and multilateral level – resulting in a total of 4,645 information transactions, compared to 3,394 ones in 2005. This was an increase of 27%. In particular, the Hellenic liaison bureau dealt with 238 operational requests from Hellenic competent authorities and 1,003 operational requests from various Member States law enforcement authorities. These covered the fields of illegal immigration, fraud and swindling, trafficking of human beings, forgery of administrative documents, drugs, terrorism and vehicle crimes.

Europol's operational units were actively involved in over 55% of the Greek operational requests mentioned above.

It is worthwhile mentioning that, during 2006, Hellas has initiated 116 new criminal cases in the aforementioned areas. These have been significantly supported by other Member States' law enforcement authorities, through the active involvement of the Greek Liaison Officers at Europol. In addition, the Hellenic liaison bureau, following directions from the Europol National Unit, has successfully supported two joint operations in combating stolen vehicles, and one in the field of illegal immigration. It was also involved in preparations for the project named 'Ilaeira', an initiative of the Hellenic Ministry of Public Order and the Hellenic Police

Headquarters initiated on 07 December 2006 in Athens, to fight trafficking in human beings.

In 2006, a series of significant developments have taken place at national level: the Hellenic Europol National Unit has obtained a new legislative framework and was upgraded as a separate section of the International Police Cooperation Directorate; a full representation of officials from coast guard, customs and financial crime services along with the Hellenic Police in the Europol National Unit, has been accomplished; a regulatory framework for entering data into the Europol Information System and the AWFs was concluded and disseminated to all competent law enforcement authorities; and preparations started on providing access to the Europol Information System to all national competent authorities (coast guard, customs and financial crime service).

Last but not least, the official visits to Europol headquarters by the Chief of the Hellenic Police, the Commandant of the Hellenic coast guard, and the Director of the 33th Hellenic Customs Directorate, have greatly increased awareness of the Europol mission and highlighted again the excellent cooperation between the Hellenic law enforcement authorities and Europol. This was also helped by the visit of the Europol Director to Athens on Police Day.

## **HUNGARY**

Continuing the trend of the previous years, the number of cases dealt with by the Hungarian liaison bureau further increased in 2006, reaching more than 1,300 files. The liaison bureau started a new initiative in the beginning of 2006, in which temporary liaison officers joined the bureau on a three-month rotation basis, thus learning Europol procedures and working environment, and also actively participating in the everyday operations. All three Hungarian law enforcement services now benefit

from this training programme by sending their staff to the liaison bureau at Europol. Altogether seven officers benefited from this exchange programme in 2006. Due to its advantages, the rotation programme will continue in 2007.

There was no change in the operational priorities of the work carried out by the liaison bureau. The most dominant areas of information exchange remained in drugs, illegal immigration, forgery of money, fraud and cigarette smuggling. The Hungarian National Police and the Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard have increased their involvement, especially in drug-related projects at Europol. This has resulted in the organisation and coordination of many more joint cross-border operations by the liaison bureau than in previous years. The Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard has become an active participant in the contraband cigarette project at Europol, while the Hungarian Border Guards took the leading role in working out and leading the comprehensive operational strategic planning for the police project on facilitated illegal immigration.

Other successful operations by the Hungarian liaison bureau included the arrest and subsequent extradition of a Hungarian criminal in London, wanted for armed robbery. This came as a result of excellent cooperation with the UK liaison bureau. Another case to be mentioned was related to an international criminal organisation, dealing with illegal drugs trafficking from Latin America to the European Union. The cooperation and the joint operation between the Hungarian and several other liaison bureaux made it possible for the investigators to arrest the perpetrators and seize the large amount of drugs.

The Hungarian liaison bureau continued to organise and participate actively in awareness programmes and training, both at Europol and in Hungary, thus promoting this kind of cooperation. In 2006, operational

training programs were held in Budapest in the fields of euro counterfeiting, non-cash payment fraud and money laundering.

## IRELAND

During 2006 the Irish liaison bureau continued to work with two liaison officers, both recruited from the Irish Police An Garda Siochana.

On a general level, there was a continued increase in the requests that the Irish liaison bureau sent out from Ireland, which amounted to 31% more than in 2005. This is indicative of the effectiveness of the Europol awareness initiatives undertaken by the Europol National Unit and the growing use of the Europol resources by officers who have benefited from these sessions or have been clients of Europol throughout the year. It further reflects the zeal with which the Irish law enforcement agencies are approaching the question of tackling organised crime, in line with national and European Union wide priorities laid out by the Garda Policing Plan, and the council conclusions setting priorities for the fight against organised crime based on the Organised Crime Threat Assessment.

Statistically, 71% of communications sent by the Irish liaison bureau were bilateral while 2.5% involved all European Union Member States. A status quo was maintained in the amount of requests received from other European Union Member States and Europol. Our most frequent partners in these transactions were Lithuania, the United Kingdom, Spain and the Netherlands.

The mandated areas most commonly addressed in the Irish liaison bureau transactions were drugs, fraud and swindling, terrorism and money laundering. Robbery, vehicle crime and illegal immigration also appeared regularly in the exchanges. These reflected continuing trends both in Ireland and other European Union Member States. In analysing the

activities of the Irish liaison bureau in the past year, no significant change was detected in national patterns or trends.

Our documented collaboration with Europol for 2006 shows a marked improvement in the quality of intelligence passing through the Irish desk, as 2006 saw more diverse operational successes than in previous years. This is interpreted as being indicative of more resourceful and transnational criminals doing business in Ireland who no longer need to solely rely on the traditional drug empire to make a dishonest living.

Traditionally the Irish desk has seen successes in the area of controlled deliveries and this year was no exception. A number of controlled deliveries were carried out which resulted in arrests of indigenous and homogenous criminals. The Irish desk played a pivotal role in keeping international teams regularly briefed on movements. We also had operational successes which have resulted in arrests or identification of suspects through cooperation with Europol analysts. Vehicle crime, robberies, drugs and child pornography are some of the mandated areas of these successes which are before the courts or under investigation.

The priorities of the Irish desk were related to any urgent requests for assistance in live investigations. All such requests continued to be promptly dealt with and had evidently aided some of the operational successes at home and in other jurisdictions. The Irish liaison bureau and the Europol National Unit also had strategic priorities for quality performance indicators, in aspiring to the ideal models of Europol National Unit and European liaison bureau accepted by HENUs.

The Irish desk continued to participate in nine AWFs. The liaison bureau together with the National Unit promoted a push towards growing awareness for quality contributions. The Irish desk also organised



meetings with investigators in the field and analyst teams, where deemed beneficial to an investigation or work file.

The Irish desk consciously made more use of the Europol Information System.

Moreover, one Irish liaison officer participated in and contributed to a working group on the Europol strategy and vision during this year. One liaison officer also took part in a data commissioner's inspection at the Europol National Unit during the year. This resulted in a very favourable report from the commission.

## ITALY

The fight against serious crime has benefited in the new intelligence models built with the purpose of monitoring and analysing the crime patterns and trends. The information exchange in mandated area has recorded a substantial increase in valuable feedback on the operational side. The fraud concerning other means of payment still play a big part of information exchange with other European Union Member States.

Trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration seemed to be the major issues during 2006 as far as collaboration with Europol was concerned. In the field of the illegal immigration, the second and third phases of operation 'Neptune' (a project for the joint patrolling of the eastern Mediterranean sea), were accomplished together with the joint operation 'ABC 5', a part of the pilot project on international airports.

The priorities faced by the Italian desk reflect the general trends described above. From an organisational point of view, the closer cooperation with Eurojust has to be mentioned as one of the key aspects of 2006. Further initiatives have been taken to improve the dissemination of the information

exchange and sharing culture within the Italian law enforcement environment. The planning of and participation in several operational meetings represented a great opportunity to boost international cooperation in criminal matters.

The operation 'Flashpoint' concerned an investigation against the dissemination of child pornography. The cooperation among all the countries was the key factor in achieving valuable outcomes. Good results were also produced by operation 'Tazir', the Italian side of operation 'Abou Ziro', which is combating illegal immigration.

## **LATVIA**

2006 was a successful year for Latvian liaison bureau. The increase in national contributions to various AWFs as well as the improvement of awareness of Europol products and their added value were its main priorities. Several awareness sessions on the Europol Information System were also provided to the Latvian law enforcement agencies.

The competent authorities have nominated their Liaison Officers to the Europol National Unit, which increased the quantity and quality of Latvian contributions to the AWFs and enhanced their cooperation with other countries' law enforcement agencies. In comparison with 2005, the total number of Latvian requests increased by 31%. The number of Latvian contributions to AWFs increased by 65.8%. The operational information exchange was mostly focused on drug-related crimes, illegal cigarette production and smuggling, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation purposes, and bank cards fraud.

During 2006 Latvia conducted several successful joint operations with neighbouring European Union countries which have been coordinated through the Latvian liaison bureau at Europol. As a result of these

operations and because of the fast information and intelligence exchange, there were a number of criminals arrested, a significant amount of drugs seized and some criminal networks dismantled.

The Latvian liaison bureau has regular meetings with the Latvian national representative at Eurojust during which ongoing and upcoming cases are discussed. This improves the cooperation between the law enforcement and judicial authorities in combating serious crime at the European Union level.

During 2006, Europol provided training courses on operative, financial and strategic analysis for the Latvian competent authorities. The courses were very well received by all participants who recruited from customs, border guards, security police and finance police.

With the support of Denmark and the participation of Europol experts, the 'PHARE Twinning Light' project on the establishment of the national criminal intelligence model in the National Police was successfully implemented in 2006.

## **LITHUANIA**

In 2006, Lithuania was mainly involved in information exchange with the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. These exchanges constituted over 40% of overall activities. A large part of the information exchange was related to drugs trafficking, forgery of currency, fraud and swindling, trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration. The majority of these communications covered ongoing investigations against Lithuanian organised crime groups operating both in Lithuania and other Member States.

In 2006, the Lithuanian liaison bureau initiated 25% more new cases than the previous year.

Activity in 2006 showed some changes compared to 2004 and 2005. In the past, the Lithuanian liaison bureau had sent more requests than it received. However in 2006 this situation was reversed, with an estimated 15% more requests received than initiated.

In 2006, 80% of information exchanged concerned AWFs combating currency forgery, synthetic drugs, tobacco fraud and cocaine. Since Lithuania is a member of AWFs on synthetic drug, drug and tobacco trafficking and Islamist terrorism, this demonstrates Lithuania is an active member, constant intelligence provider and feedback user. In most cases, national law enforcement agencies were satisfied with support provided by Europol.

These trends do not differ from 2004 or 2005. At the same time, the most frequent cooperation partners of the Lithuanian liaison bureau and National Unit on the side of the Europol were experts from the drug and forgery of money units. Those units actively assisted with expertise and operational support whenever requested.

Trafficking in human beings, drugs, tobacco fraud, illegal immigration, terrorism and forgery of money were the main priorities in 2006. This does not significantly differ from the year before.

In 2006, a large number of significant operations were coordinated by the Lithuanian liaison bureau. Among the most significant are: the disruption of a counterfeit euro distribution network; several drug controlled deliveries with seizures in other countries; arrests of significant drug-related

suspects based on the European Arrest Warrant. Lithuania also provided intelligence to other European Union Member States that resulted in a large number of cocaine and drug precursors seizures in the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, Poland and Latvia.

Lithuanian liaison bureau has facilitated a number of multi and bilateral operational meetings with participation of various national and foreign law enforcement agencies and Europol. Professional handling of intelligence requests by the Bureau and Europol encourage Lithuanian law enforcement to use Europol channels much more often.

It is worth mentioning that, at some instances, Lithuania played a mediating role in the exchange of information between Europol and some third countries which have no operational agreement with Europol.

An interesting personnel detail is that since March 2006, the Lithuanian liaison bureau has had a customs liaison officer. With this new development, the total personnel number now amounts to three Europol Liaison Officers.

## **LUXEMBOURG**

In 2006 the Luxembourg Liaison desk faced an increase of 16.66% in requests related to new cases initiated by the Luxembourg National Unit. Most of the requests have been made in the area of drugs, illegal immigration and money laundering. The activities in the other crime areas have been about the same as in 2005. Within these cases, 81.2% were related to European Union Member States, 10.2% to non-European Union Member States and 8.6% to AWFs. The latter is due to the fact that Luxembourg only participates in a small number of AWFs. Other factors influencing the limited number of contributions to the different AWFs are the location and size of Luxembourg.

No controlled deliveries were initiated in 2006 by the Luxembourg National Unit.

The number of requests received in 2006 did not change significantly compared to 2005. A majority of the requests were in the area of drugs, terrorism, forgery of money, fraud and swindling, other non-cash means of payment, illegal immigration, money laundering, trafficking in human beings and robbery. A small decrease occurred in requests related to drugs, forgery of money and robbery. To clarify these numbers, it is worth mentioning that there was a small increase in requests relate to money laundering, while for all other kinds of requests, the figures were stable.

Cooperation between Europol and Luxembourg was effective. The Luxembourgian desk noted a similar number of Europol requests originating from AWFs and the Europol Serious Crime Department, with a tendency to a slight increase in 2006. Contributions to the various AWFs increased by 29.36% during 2006, with Luxembourg being an active participant in six AWFs.

The Luxembourg liaison bureau was also involved in a number of operational and non-operational meetings.

## **MALTA**

In its second year of operation, the Maltese liaison bureau has observed a considerable increase in the total number of information exchange transactions with other states. These were mostly related to drugs trafficking, forgery of money, fraud, non-cash payment fraud, terrorism and illegal immigration. The implementation of a number of awareness initiatives concerning Europol among law enforcement actors in Malta throughout 2006 seems to have had a positive effect. More investigative officers used the Europol channel when compared to the previous year.

The Malta Police Force aims to conduct further work in this respect in 2007, with a view to ensuring that most operational officers have a clear view of what can be achieved through the Europol channel.

In volume and type, the exchange of information with Europol has broadly followed the same patterns as observed for exchanges with other states. The Maltese law enforcement community remains committed to providing a valid contribution towards the achievement of Europol objectives. The Malta Police also hosted the Europol Homicide Working Group meeting in Malta in June 2006. Moreover, it provided support for the organisation of various Europol awareness initiatives, targeting all law enforcement actors in Malta.

Given the small size of Malta, and its physical distance from Europol, the Maltese liaison bureau has been engaged in a number of strategic and operational activities and meetings in the organisation. Travel to The Hague is not always economically and operationally viable for the small law enforcement units in Malta, and thus the Maltese liaison bureau has been serving as an essential link between Europol and the various operational elements within Maltese law enforcement. The liaison bureau has also been focusing on creating additional awareness about Europol, especially among operational section heads within the police and customs. The liaison bureau has been additionally involved in numerous live cases which were investigated in Malta.

A number of the cases referred to above, which were mostly related to drugs trafficking, were concluded successfully, leading to the arrest, extradition and prosecution of a number of individuals. In these cases, the liaison bureau served to create links between the investigators in Malta and various other agencies in other states, thereby facilitating the cooperation between the operational actors themselves.

## THE NETHERLANDS

In 2006, the exchange of operational information mediated by the Dutch liaison bureau again increased substantially. In 2006, operational information was exchanged on nearly 8,000 occasions. Of this, 3,400 cases involved new investigations, an increase of 13.9% from 2005.

There were four times as many incoming requests for information as outgoing requests. Of all operational requests, 74.5% were of a multilateral or bilateral nature, between the Netherlands and European Union Member States. In 25.5% of the requests, Europol was the recipient or requester of the operational information. Of the investigations in which assistance and/or information was requested from the Netherlands, most involved drugs (44.7%), followed by fraud (9.2%), human smuggling and trafficking in human beings (7.4%) and terrorism (6.9%).

For the investigations in which the Netherlands requested assistance and/or information from other Member States or Europol, a slightly different breakdown can be seen: most investigations involved drugs (28%), followed by terrorism (18%), human smuggling and trafficking in human beings (11.5%) and fraud (5.6%).

Human smuggling and trafficking investigations are given a very high priority in the Netherlands. The number of investigations involving such crimes in which the assistance of other Member States or Europol was sought nearly doubled in comparison with 2005. This is largely due to that fact that the investigations are coordinated at national level.

Due in part to the fact that the Netherlands is still known as one of the world's top producers of synthetic drugs, the country has taken charge of the COSPOL (the comprehensive operational strategic planning for the



police) synthetic drugs project. In addition to human smuggling, a high priority is given in the Netherlands to combating the production and distribution of child pornography. The Netherlands is a forerunner in COSPOL projects on child pornography and trafficking in human beings.

The Netherlands is a proponent of the target group approach, as in the AWF on illegal immigration. This approach to investigation and analysis assistance works well with investigation methods in the country. The target group approach has resulted in better coordination and clear expectations as regards the AWFs which the Netherlands take part in. At the same time, the Netherlands will take a more critical stance when it comes to participating in an AWF. This is expected to result in more intensive cooperation between the Netherlands and the AWFs it participates in.

In cooperation with Europol, the Netherlands is involved in providing practical assistance and expertise in setting up a new Europol National Unit to Croatia.

The Dutch liaison bureau has played a significant role in a large number of investigations which have since concluded. For instance, it is in part due to the work of the Dutch liaison bureau that an international crime ring involved in skimming and falsifying credit cards was dismantled, and many members were arrested in several different European countries. There have also been a number of major successes in tracking down and dismantling human smuggling and trafficking rings.

A new system for logging all requests for assistance in criminal matters at a national level has paved the way for better coordination. Furthermore redundancies and overlaps in the use of various international channels for

information exchange including Europol, Interpol, Sirene and bilateral liaisons have been reduced to a minimum.

In October 2006, the Netherlands began to supply information to the Europol Information System. It is predicted that in 2007 the whole Dutch Police will be able to send their criminal information to this system. To conclude on this very positive note, the Dutch authorities assess that this development will result in better cooperation and more arrests of criminals.

## **POLAND**

In terms of information exchange with other European Union Member States, the Polish liaison bureau dealt with requests mainly related to counterfeit euro, trafficking in synthetic drugs, fraud and swindling. One case also concerned trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation – a new phenomenon that emerged in 2006.

As regards the collaboration with Europol, the Polish liaison bureau dealt mainly with similar issues related to counterfeit euro, trafficking in synthetic drugs, fraud and swindling and child pornography as well as the aforementioned new phenomenon of trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation.

During 2006, the Polish liaison bureau dealt with a variety of cases related to Europol mandated areas. Three successful cases deserve mentioning in this context.

Operation 'Promised land' was carried out by the Polish National Police together with Italian ROS (Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale) Carabinieri in cooperation with Europol and Interpol. The operation, carried out in the area of Bari and Foggia in Italy and several regions in Poland, was directed against a criminal group that was depriving Polish

agricultural workers in Italy of freedom as well as exploiting and mistreating them. As a result of this operation, 119 Polish citizens were freed, and over 25 criminals were arrested in Poland and Italy. In the context of this operation, the excellent cooperation with the Italian liaison bureau at Europol and ROS Carabinieri in Italy has to be emphasised.

In the area of euro counterfeiting, the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Polish National Police dismantled a large illegal print shop of counterfeit euro and US dollar banknotes. Europol was closely involved as far as the counterfeit euro banknotes were concerned, while cooperation with US Secret Service took place with regard to counterfeit US dollar banknotes. Three individuals were apprehended on-site and a large amount of equipment and chemical substances was seized.

An operation against an international paedophile group was carried out by the Polish National Police across the whole of Poland. The operation was a part of a wider operation, carried out in several countries and coordinated by Europol. As a result, 16 individuals suspected of possession of child pornography were apprehended, 35 computers and over 4,000 CDs, containing mainly child pornography were seized. In one case, a small film studio was detected, which could have been used for producing pornographic movies of children.

The Polish liaison bureau is actively involved in the information exchange between the national law enforcement agencies and the Analytical Work Files in which Poland is participating. The exchange of information within the framework of the AWFs as well as with the Member States is steadily increasing.

It is worth mentioning the expansion of the Polish liaison bureau. In 2006, a second liaison officer representing the Polish National Police took up

duties at the liaison bureau. In the first half of 2007, the number of Liaison Officers at the Polish liaison bureau is expected to increase to four with an arrival of additional police and border guard officers.

During 2006, the Polish liaison bureau, in cooperation with Europol, was involved in organising two Europol awareness sessions in Poland. The awareness sessions focused on operational cooperation and information exchange.

## **PORTUGAL**

During 2006 there were no significant changes in the crime patterns and trends affecting the information exchange with Member States and other states, as well as with Europol Serious Crime Department and AWFs.

There was, however, some change in the crime areas which affected the daily volume of work. In terms of new cases initiated by the Portuguese desk, drugs trafficking (22%), forgery of money (14%), vehicle trafficking (13%) and fraud and swindling (13%) continued to be the major crime areas. There has, however, been an upsurge in money laundering (6%) and document forgery cases (8%) compared to the previous year.

Bilateral requests accounted for 80% of cases, with the remaining 20% were multilateral. The countries with which most of the information exchange took place were Spain, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy.

With regard to exchanging information with Europol, the Portuguese desk worked mostly with Europol units dealing with drugs, terrorism and forgery of money, as well as with AWFs focused on drugs, fraud and counterfeit currency.

The Portuguese National Unit continued its effort of raising awareness in relation to the use of the Europol channel among the Portuguese law enforcement agencies and in order to improve the quality of requests sent from Portugal.

In 2006 the Portuguese liaison officers posted at Europol also took an active role in the several AWFs in which Portugal is participating.

There was also significant cooperation with the Europol Forgery of Money Unit which provided complete and timely replies to several requests to identify the clients of printing machines whose bitmap codes were detected during several forgery investigations by the judicial police.

Portugal maintained its contribution to the Europol Information System, especially with information related to cases of currency forgery within its borders.

The Portuguese law enforcement agencies are still making good use of the Portuguese desk to exchange information with European Union Member States and Europol, which has resulted in a relatively high use of the Europol channel in 2006 by Portugal.

The Portuguese desk cooperated also with Eurojust, especially in relation to a case of money laundering involving Portugal, several other Member States and Europol.

There was an exchange of information between Portugal and Spain in relation to a major case of money laundering involving suspects from both countries. In another case there was close cooperation with AWF on fraudulent activities in relation to a case of counterfeiting of other means of

payment with several Romanian nationals involved as suspects. The latter resulted in an important contribution to this AWF.

The Portuguese liaison bureau was also able to locate the address in another Member State of a suspect of a child rape.

Finally, the Portuguese desk assisted in several controlled deliveries that led to the arrest of some couriers and the seizure of a considerable amount of cocaine.

## **SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

During 2006 the Slovak liaison bureau continued the information exchange with other European Union Member States, third parties and Europol. In 2006, a total of 159 requests were sent and 998 answers received by the Slovak desk. During the same period, the Slovak liaison bureau received 821 requests and sent out 760 answers.

In terms of information exchange with other Member States, a total of 113 requests were sent and 821 answers were received. The Slovak desk received 532 requests from the other European Union Member States and sent 492 answers.

Information exchanged with other European Union Member States focused mainly on drugs, forgery of money, illegal immigration and fraud cases during 2006. The same areas of crime were the main focus of requests sent to the Slovak liaison bureau.

Information exchange in relation to the collaboration with Europol was focused on the same areas as the information exchange with Member

States. In 2006, a total of 72 contributions were sent to the various AWFs, while 74 answers were received. In the same period, the Slovak liaison bureau received 145 requests from AWFs and sent 137 answers. Other than this, 32 requests were sent to other Europol units and 32 answers were received. 112 requests were received and 93 answers were sent by the Slovak desk.

Slovak Republic took part in operation 'Baleno' organised by AWF dealing with child pornography in May 2006. As a result, seven house searches and three searches of other premises were conducted in Slovakia. In total, 9 suspects were identified, and 13 PCs, 5 USB keys, 1 external HDD, 11 memory cards, 211 DVD media, 210 CD media, 277 floppy disks and 170 video cassettes were seized.

The Slovak liaison bureau was involved in two operational meetings of Slovak investigators with the AWF project team dealing with ethnic Albanian criminal groups in relation to the ongoing operation 'Peklo' in May and October 2006. In addition, two meetings at Eurojust took place in relation to the operation 'Mapa' within the AWF on ethnic Albanian organised crime in June and September 2006. The Slovak desk invited representatives of this AWF to take part.

As of August 2006, the Slovak Republic is a part of operation 'Premiere', a joint investigation team on the AWF dealing with Turkish criminal groups. It is also indirectly involved in the information exchange, as well as supporting the team logistically when necessary. The liaison bureau took part in several controlled deliveries requested by the Swedish authorities during the summer 2006. One of the sufficiently disclosed cases was in July–August 2006 when, in close cooperation with Swedish authorities, a Slovak women forced to prostitution in Sweden was set free and transported back to Slovakia.

On 20 March 2006, the Slovak liaison bureau organised a meeting of the new Slovak Ambassador with the Europol Director in cooperation with Europol Corporate Communications Unit.

Moreover, on 08 November, it took an active role, with the support of the same Europol Unit, in the visit of the Slovak prosecutors to Europol that was organised by TAIEX.

The Slovak liaison bureau remains determined to fulfil requirements and meet criteria laid down in the Ideal Liaison Bureau model.

## **SLOVENIA**

The Slovenian liaison bureau remained staffed with one officer in 2006. This is why it was not always possible to meet all expectations of the partners. This is going to improve soon as a second liaison officer is arriving at the beginning of 2007. The steady increase in the exchange of operational information, observed from the beginning of the Slovenian presence at Europol, was brought to a halt in 2006. While the volume of exchanges of messages in both directions was about the same, the quality of information improved with more focused and targeted exchange of intelligence.

More than 2,519 information exchange messages were processed in 2006. The number of initiated cases decreased by 25%, down from 87 to 63, but the total requests sent remained almost the same. This means that more requests were sent on complex or long-lasting cases. This development marks a shift in the approach of the use of Europol network by the Slovenian desk.



The main areas of involvement were drug related cases, forgery of money, terrorism, financial and property crime, weapons and explosives and illegal immigration. The structure of initiated cases reflects the situation of organised crime in Slovenia in 2006. One of the main characteristics is the increasing involvement of criminal groups from Slovenia cooperating with criminal groups from the area of former Yugoslav republics, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. In this respect Slovenia exchanged information mostly with its neighbouring countries, Austria and Italy, and recently also with Croatia.

An increasing problem of forged euro banknotes made Slovenia decide to join the AWF on counterfeit currency in the second half of 2006. Europol also helped Slovenian law enforcement to get ready for the introduction of the euro in January 2007 with the preparation of necessary threat assessments, visits and other advice.

Slovenia also continued with the exchange of information concerning ethnic Albanian crime as one of the members of the AWF on ethnic Albanian organised crime groups. However, the flow of information did not meet all expectations because of the current situation in Slovenia. Slovenian law enforcement also provided some valuable information to other AWFs, especially on cigarette smuggling cases, terrorism and smuggling of weapons and explosives.

Various programs were organised for the Slovenian operational staff and experts during 2006, including visits of Europol experts to Slovenia which acquainted law enforcement officers with the ways of using Europol expertise, analysis products and services.

The cooperation with the Slovenian representative at Eurojust was strengthened, especially through some joint actions concerning investigation into forgery of money.

## SPAIN

In 2006, Spain increased the number and quality of its information exchange. After 334 cases initiated in 2005, the total for 2006 was around 400. The Spanish desk also sent a substantially increased number of answers to the other countries. This number increased from 2,168 in 2005 to more than 3,000 in 2006. The quality of the information provided was also significantly improved, as can be seen in the successful cases reflected below.

Besides the increase in the figures mentioned above, which show the improvements made on the exchange of information with Europol during this year, important changes were carried out to increase the quality of contributions and get better results from Europol analysts. In this sense, new initiatives were taken in order to promote the visit of Europol experts to crime spots to cooperate directly with Spanish operational teams. A Spanish Europol Liaison Officer would travel with Europol experts to help them conduct their tasks. Europol experts had direct access to all the information and thus, the process of information exchange was speeded up.

The Spanish liaison bureau significantly increased its presence at the Europol working groups, intensifying its involvement in operational meetings, expert meetings and AWF activities. It was present in all the main forums of the European Police Office.

This was useful for several reasons. Firstly, according to the policy of the Spanish Europol National Unit, to provide the maximum background information attached to Spanish requests, understanding that the request are not only a national case but could also effect other countries, including third parties.

Secondly, it was a priority of the Europol National Unit and, therefore, of the Spanish liaison bureau, to involve Europol in our major cases, reporting to the organisation as much as possible despite the difficulties linked to the technical restrictions in the information exchange system.

Thirdly, a reduction in the response time to the rest of partners, making Spanish support to investigations more effective, became a permanent concern in the Europol National Unit and the Spanish liaison bureau. The purpose was to accelerate the answering process as much as possible.

Last but not least, the idea of the common benefit in terms of ‘the more you share, the more you get’ has played a key role in the training courses and seminars provided by the Spanish Europol National Unit to Spanish visitors.

The Spanish desk noted several successful operations took place involving Europol. A double murder occurred in the summer of 2006 in Spain. The perpetrator, a Czech citizen, escaped to his home country but, thanks to the fast and effective reaction of the Czech authorities, it was possible to arrest him and to gather all the necessary evidence to secure a conviction. In this case, Europol participation was vital in terms of speed, efficiency and permanent communication between the liaison bureaux.

Operation 'Skol' in Spain which concerned a major skimming case was very successfully dealt with and coordinated by the Spanish desk and AWF on fraudulent activities and payment card fraud. As a result, information came to light linking the operation to another case.

After the training course on counterfeit euro in June 2006 in Bogotá where the 'Europol guidelines on financial support to operational activities' were explained, several counterfeit euro cases arose. Following these events, Europol was involved by the Spanish authorities in the Colombian investigations. As a result, operations 'Caldas' and 'Esmeralda' were initiated. Operation 'Caldas' was successfully concluded with the seizure of 5,000,000 counterfeit euro and 4,400,000 counterfeit dollars. Three people were arrested in Bogotá.

## **SWEDEN**

The number of cases initiated by the Swedish liaison bureau continued to rise, showing a 20% increase in 2006.

The operational cooperation with the other European Union Member States improved in respect of both quantity and quality. Investigations targeting criminal organisations active in the field of other means of payment (skimming) increased significantly. This trend seems to be the same in almost every country in Europe.

Collaboration with the Europol Serious Crime Department and the AWFs has been good and is constantly improving. Swedish contributions to almost all of the AWFs increased, while the support received from the AWFs in different operational cases provided added value for Sweden.

The major activities of the liaison bureaux occurred in the mandated areas of drugs trafficking, trafficking in human beings, illegal immigration and other means of payment.

Two major drug operations in 2006 were very successful with large seizures of heroin. The positive outcome of these operations would have been much smaller if the Europol channel had not been used by all the European Union Member States involved. The success of these investigations was also due to the cooperation with Eurojust as well as the use of a bilateral Nordic liaison officer in a third state. There were a number of successful operations where police and customs assisted other countries with their surveillance in Sweden.

The continuous cooperation with the Swedish representative at Eurojust is still at a very high level and there have not been any discrepancies on the main common goal to fight organised crime.

The number of awareness visits to Europol and at the Swedish liaison bureau remained high. Even more visits from Criminal Intelligence Centres within the Regional Police Forces and from the Customs and the Security Services are expected in 2007. The large numbers of Swedish prosecutors visiting Europol for awareness sessions continues.

The ongoing process in Sweden of informing law enforcement agencies about how to make better, more proactive use of Europol resources continued as well. All parties involved regard this as a successful and valuable activity.

In August 2006 there was an exchange of one Liaison Officer at the Swedish liaison bureau due to the ending of contract. The internal work at

the Swedish liaison bureau was amended to enhance the quality of the information flow and exchange.

## **UNITED KINGDOM**

From a UK perspective, a large volume of work within the areas of drugs trafficking, immigration crime and money laundering has been seen. Some of the new European Union Member States have been very significant partners in much of this work. In particular, the cooperation with Lithuania has been significant because of both the quantity and quality of the work. Within the UK, criminals of Lithuanian origin have been targeted by UK law enforcement who were supported by Lithuania via the Europol Liaison Officers' network. Frequently, these criminal groups have been active in a range of criminal activities including human trafficking, drugs trafficking and cigarette smuggling. Immigration crime and in particular human trafficking has been an area of the UK law enforcement cooperation which has grown in the last 12 months. In addition to this development the UK continues its strong liaison partnership with traditional partners, like the Netherlands and Spain, in combating drugs trafficking.

The UK has benefited from close cooperation with a number of Europol partners. In particular, partnerships with the AWFs have yielded a number of operational results. For example, close cooperation with AWF devoted to drugs trafficking resulted in taking action against an international organised crime group. The same AWF was also instrumental in significant operational successes under subproject 'Apex'.

More recently, close cooperation with the AWFs has contributed to operational success in the areas of immigration crime and money laundering. AWF focusing on East European organised crime has also been used successfully by the UK in combating a series of robberies committed by Estonian gangs across the UK.

Perhaps the most significant assistance Europol has provided to the UK is in the field of counter-terrorism. Europol provided invaluable assistance to UK investigators dealing with both the Islamist terrorist threat and domestic extremism. On occasions, operation rooms have been staffed at Europol in order to support UK investigators during the operations. Europol have also seconded experts to UK operational teams to assist with particular threats.

In addition to the terrorist threat, the UK is focused on tackling drugs trafficking (cocaine and heroin in particular), all types of immigration crime and financial crime, including money laundering.

The UK strategy is to continue targeting the types of crime set out above. It is likely that the UK will also focus more on certain types of financial crime such as Missing Trader Intra Community fraud.

The UK has enjoyed operational success with Europol partners in a wide range of cases. Cooperation with liaison partners has resulted in large seizures of heroin (e.g. operation 'Roister'), large seizures of cocaine (e.g. operation 'Rio') and firearms (e.g. operation 'Ampleforth'). Immigration crime success has also been notable in a number of operations (e.g. operations 'Haps', 'Heriot' and 'Bluesky').

### **5.3 Third Countries' liaison bureaux activities**

#### **BULGARIA**

In 2006 the activities of the Bulgarian desk at Europol mainly focused on the accomplishment of the Europol Enlargement Project II, which was launched successfully on 18 January 2006 in Russe. The Bulgarian desk

has actively supported the work of the different national Critical Area Managers by providing valuable expertise, practical advice and logistical help. Thanks to hard work in the dedicated critical areas, all stated criteria were met in 2006. Already at the end of December the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, with the assistance of the Europol experts, successfully finalised all activities under the Europol Enlargement Project II. The Europol Convention and the protocols were ratified by the Bulgarian Parliament on 24 December 2006 and the full membership at Europol is currently pending.

In the meantime, the Bulgarian desk has continuously fulfilled its duties and actively facilitated and contributed to the information exchange between Europol and the Bulgarian National Unit. Trafficking in human beings, euro counterfeiting and the international drugs trafficking were most frequently addressed mandated areas.

## COLOMBIA

In 2006 the Colombian liaison bureau carried out information exchanges with different Europol units according to the strategic agreement between Colombia and Europol, especially in relation with topics pertaining to drugs trafficking and criminal phenomena closely linked to terrorism in Colombia. Due to the data exchange, support was given to different investigations conducted by authorities in Europe and Colombia. Moreover the exchange of information has been possible with Latin American and Caribbean countries through the Colombia National Unit which obtains the data and later communicates it to Europol. One of the most important examples regarding this process is the permanent cooperation between the Colombian liaison bureau and Europol drugs unit in projects such as cocaine logo and concealment methods, with timely feedback and excellent results.



Cooperation among Europol, Colombian authorities, US Secret Service and Spain resulted in a successful operation against the euro counterfeiting in Colombia. This operation, as well as others carried out in Colombia during 2006, demonstrated the necessity to continue and strengthen cooperation in this area. For this reason the Colombian National Police initiated very important investigation processes against euro counterfeiters in coordination with Europol and some Member States.

Moreover, the Colombian authorities' high officials visited Europol in 2006 and held successful meetings strengthening the relationship between both parties and exploring new possibilities in the fight against transnational crime. Similarly, important achievements have been made regarding the consolidation of CLACIP organisation (Comunidad Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Inteligencia Policia). The Colombian National Police has held the executive secretary position in CLACIP, leading the cooperation processes in the region and contributing to information exchange with Europol, originally focused on drugs trafficking. In this specific area, there are very interesting projects for 2007 which will benefit the two regions.

In 2006, Colombia worked with Europol on the necessary tasks leading to the signing of an operational agreement which will increase the effectiveness of police cooperation against the organised crime.

The bilateral data exchange with the European Union Member States as well as non-EU states has helped law enforcement agencies in some countries with useful operational information in order to support the investigation teams.

## NORWAY

In 2006, one of the priorities for Norway was combating crimes against persons as Norway witnessed a rise in numbers of requests and cases in this area. This type of crime has been a priority since 2005, when the Government introduced an action plan against trafficking in human beings, involving several governmental departments, police and non-governmental organisations. The police have taken this seriously, and as always when looking into a new field of crime, cases were detected which has lead to investigations, arrests and convictions.

Skimming from cash machines and other devices for payment as well as other fraudulent activities concerning other means of payment are on the increase. Thanks to an awareness seminar in this field, arranged by the Europol National Unit in cooperation with Europol, the police have paid special attention to this phenomenon, conducted investigations and exchanged information in relation to this crime.

Drugs are still the most important area of crime, amphetamine being the most frequently seized substance. Illegal immigration seems to be stable compared to last year and is reflected as one of the most requested area. There was a decrease in the number of applicants for asylum in Norway, but this area still has a priority, and statistics reflect a success in fighting this kind of crime.

The Norwegian liaison bureau had several successful cases in different areas of crime.

Several drugs cases were initiated in Norway due to information from Lithuania sent via Europol. This has led to surveillance, seizures of drugs, arrests and convictions. An exchange of information between Norway and

Belgium in one case led to arrests in Belgium concerning smuggling of large quantity of amphetamine to Norway.

Skimming cases have been solved by use of information provided by Europol AWF and the European Union Member States identifying perpetrators from different cases leading to arrests and convictions.

Several large cases concerning trafficking in human beings leading to convictions were conducted via the Norwegian liaison bureau in cooperation with several liaison bureaux via Europol. Additionally, the AWF's analyses contributed to great achievements in investigations concerning this crime area.

There has been a decrease in cases related to robbery in 2006, which reflected the successful work that the Norwegian police had conducted against at least three different criminal organisations with arrests and convictions resulting. This has led to a near disappearance of serious robberies in Norway.

Europol experts have assisted Norwegian police in operational cases relating to outlaw motorcycle gangs, awareness seminars and as expert speakers in conferences arranged in Norway.

## **ROMANIA**

The activity of the Romanian liaison bureau during 2006 consisted of two main components: the strategic component related to European integration, and the tactical component represented by the exchange of operational data and information.

In view of the strategic objective of European integration, the liaison bureau got actively involved in work related to the Enlargement Project of

Europol, facilitating the communication between the Romanian and Europol project teams. Solid support has been provided throughout 2006 to both project teams, especially by mediating and delivering solutions in critical areas of the project. Most of the work required by the delivery of the project was accomplished, and all specific objectives set for 2006 were met. As a welcomed consequence of this process, Romania will become a Europol member state in the first few months of 2007, prompting the level of cooperation significantly higher.

From an operational perspective, the exchange of information has experienced another dramatic increase during 2006, both in quantity and quality terms. More than 4,000 information exchange messages exchanged this year mark a 40% increase of the volume of criminal information and intelligence transmitted to and from Europol and the European Union Member States. Similarly significant increases have been recorded in terms of the number of cases initiated by the Romanian authorities where the assistance and support of other European partners was requested.

The tactical cooperation priorities of the Romanian liaison bureau have been focused in the areas of combating credit card fraud, trafficking in human beings and drugs trafficking. Unwavering efforts to combat these and other forms of serious and organised crime will continue as priorities in 2007.

One eloquent testimony of the success that rapid and consistent international exchange of operational information can bring is operation 'Savitar'. Run in the first half of the year in close cooperation with Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Spain, a large and highly-sophisticated organised crime group involved in credit card fraud was

dismantled and 30 Romanian nationals were arrested across Europe. Analytical support was provided by Europol.

By consistently displaying high levels of professionalism and dedication, Romanian law enforcement officers have gained credibility as trustworthy and committed partners in the current European Justice and Home Affairs area. They are fully prepared to meet the challenges posed by the emerging trends of organised crime and terrorism in Europe.

## **SWITZERLAND**

The operational cooperation agreement between Switzerland and Europol came into force on 01 March 2006. On this day, the first liaison officer took up office, followed by the second one on 01 June. In general, the Swiss liaison bureau felt very welcome and supported by other countries' liaison officers and the Europol staff. Switzerland is now well established among the Europol family.

For the time being the cooperation mandate covers eight crime areas, but an expansion of the mandate is planned in the future.

Since the beginning, the information flow has steadily increased. Drugs trafficking, terrorism and money counterfeiting were the major crime areas that the Swiss liaison bureau dealt with in the first year. Switzerland actively participated in successful cross-border operations against international crime groups.

Within the Swiss Federal Office of Police the cooperation with Europol was successfully implemented into the overall system of international police cooperation. A single point of contact was established and a number of introduction seminars were held. Further awareness seminars will follow.

## **UNITED STATES DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (DEA)**

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the US Department of Justice has only been present at Europol since the first week of October 2006. As this is the first time DEA has been part of Europol, specific protocol has been in existence for some time now in relation to information exchange between DEA and Europol. Currently, Europol has two representatives in Washington D.C. and according to existing guidelines, information requests to DEA are routed through the two representatives in the US capital.

The DEA liaison officer at Europol has not yet had an opportunity to participate in any investigation or analytical process. However, the experience so far from bilateral DEA-Dutch cooperation suggests that the transportation of synthetic drugs, mainly ecstasy, to the United States and Canada may become priorities in DEA-Europol cooperation. It is not only ecstasy, but precursor chemicals and manufacturing equipment being transported to North America to facilitate the manufacturing of ecstasy in Mexico, United States and Canada that are one of the DEA's priorities. Another priority has been the transportation of heroin from the Middle East through Europe into the United States and Canada.

Once the cooperation protocol is updated, DEA will present some other priority areas for cooperation with Europol. These priorities are not limited to synthetic drugs and heroin, but focus also on the transportation of cocaine from South America to the United States and Europe. DEA has got offices all over the world and maintains an extensive database. Much of the information in possession of DEA can be used to facilitate USA-Europol cooperation in the future.

## **UNITED STATES FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (FBI)**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is a federal criminal investigative, intelligence agency, and the primary investigative arm of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). The FBI currently has investigative jurisdiction over violations of more than 200 categories of federal crimes.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's mission is to protect and defend the United States against terrorist and foreign intelligence threats, to uphold and enforce the criminal laws of the United States, and to provide leadership and criminal justice services to federal, state, municipal, and international agencies and partners. In addition to this mission, the FBI has established ten priorities. These priorities are as follows:

- Protect the United States from terrorist attack
- Protect the United States against foreign intelligence operations and espionage
- Protect the United States against cyber-based attacks and high-technology crimes
- Combat public corruption at all levels
- Protect civil rights
- Combat transnational and national criminal organisations and enterprises
- Combat major white-collar crime
- Combat significant violent crime
- Support federal, state, local and international partners
- Upgrade technology to successfully perform the FBI's mission.

During 2006, the FBI completed its first full year of its reinstituted coverage at Europol. The FBI's primary intent in establishing a liaison relationship with Europol at its headquarters in The Hague is to increase

the cooperation between the Serious Crimes Units of Europol and the FBI. Although precluded from direct participation on the Europol analysis work files (AWFs) until the ratification of the Danish Protocol, the FBI and Europol successfully cooperated on several fronts to include the exchange of experts at various conferences ranging from terrorism to cyber crime to outlaw motorcycle gangs, the sharing of criminal intelligence, and participation in Europol coordinated multi-lateral investigations.

The FBI mandate to engage in increased bilateral cooperation with European police and security partners though European-based Legal Attaché Offices preclude active engagement of the Europol liaison bureau, but increased FBI cooperation with the multilateral aspects of Europol is expected in the future.

### **UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE (USSS)**

The closing of 2006 marked the first full year of the United States Secret Service having a Liaison Officer assigned to Europol. The year was full of many accomplishments that are a testament to the excellent cooperation that exists between the US Secret Service and Europol.

In the area of counterfeit currency investigations, there have been numerous successful joint operations between Europol and the US Secret Service. One particular highlight was operation 'Caldas', involving Spain and Columbia, where a counterfeit printing shop was dismantled in Bogotá, Columbia. As a result, 5,000,000 counterfeit euro and 4,400,000 in counterfeit US dollars were seized and three arrests were made. In May 2006, the US Secret Service participated in the training course on combating currency counterfeiting which Europol hosted, by providing an expert on counterfeit currency.



In the area of cyber crime investigations, a joint operation between Europol, the US Secret Service and Finnish Helsinki Police Department resulted in the arrest of two Russian suspects. One of them is a well-known organised crime figure in the Russian hacking, phishing and cyber crime world. These arrests underscore the importance of continuing international law enforcement cooperation in the fight against online criminals. Additionally, the US Secret Service provided intelligence to one of the AWFs on a regular basis.

The US Secret Service and Europol have a long history of working together with successful results. The US Secret Service Liaison Officer is looking forward to building upon these positive results in another year of excellent cooperation between the two agencies, especially in the fields of combating currency counterfeiting, cyber crime, credit card, debit card and cash machine fraud, identity fraud, the sale or trade in false identification documents and last but not least, the laundering of proceeds from the above crimes.

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