



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION  
**IN THE FIGHT AGAINST**  
**ORGANISED CRIME**





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# INTRODUCTION

Organised crime represents one of the most serious security challenges of modern society. Its transnational nature means that no state can independently respond to the threats posed by criminal networks whose operations span wider geographic areas, often covering multiple continents. Today, Montenegro faces significant risks stemming from numerous manifestations of organised crime – from drugs, cigarettes, and arms trafficking to human trafficking and irregular migration, as well as sophisticated forms of money laundering and cybercrime. In addition, organised crime contributes to an increase in corruption, including high-level corruption, which in the past two decades has penetrated nearly all segments of Montenegro's state apparatus. The threats and risks posed by organised crime and high-level corruption exceed Montenegro's national capacities and therefore require strong partnerships with international counterparts in order for the state to respond effectively.

As a candidate country for membership in the European Union, Montenegro has made notable progress over the past decade in strengthening institutional capacities and aligning its legislation with European standards in the field of combating organised crime. Through negotiations under Chapters 23 – *Judiciary and Fundamental Rights*, and 24 – *Justice, Freedom and Security*, the state has recognized international cooperation as a key instrument in the fight against criminal networks and as one of the conditions for advancing in the EU accession process. In this regard, Montenegro has become a partner to European and international institutions, establishing operational and strategic cooperation with EUROPOL, EUROJUST, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), as well as INTERPOL. These forms of cooperation have enabled swifter information exchange, joint operations, and more efficient prosecution of transnational cases of organised crime and corruption.

Despite visible progress, several challenges continue to limit the impact that the full potential of international cooperation could have in Montenegro. In its annual reports, as well as in the *Interim Benchmark Assessment Report* (IBAR), the European Commission notes that, although Montenegro's legal framework is largely aligned with the EU acquis, practical results remain limited – particularly with regard to financial investigations, the permanent confiscation of assets derived from crime, and the active use of modern mechanisms of international cooperation, such as Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). Institutions continue to face

limited capacities, both in terms of the number of trained personnel and the technical resources available to them.

The aim of this study is to provide an analysis of the legal, institutional, and operational framework of Montenegro's international cooperation in combating organised crime, with a particular focus on relations with key European agencies and international organizations. It examines the application of existing international cooperation mechanisms, as well as the achieved results and identified shortcomings, and proposes concrete steps necessary to improve system efficiency. Special attention is devoted to the importance of active participation in programs of EUROPOL, EUROJUST, and EPPO.

The study concludes with recommendations aimed at improving the legal framework, further strengthening international cooperation, and enhancing the effective use of European judicial cooperation mechanisms in the fight against organised crime and corruption. The study is structured into the following five chapters: (1) Analysis of the Legal Framework of Montenegro's International Cooperation in Combating Organised Crime; (2) Cooperation of Montenegro with Key European Union Agencies in Combating Organised Crime; (3) Cooperation of Montenegro with INTERPOL; (4) Conclusions; and (5) Recommendations.

The study was developed as part of CeMI's research activities within the project *"Open Trials Project: Monitoring of Organised Crime and High-level Corruption Trials in Montenegro,"* supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

# CHAPTER I:

## ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF MONTENEGRO'S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN COMBATING ORGANISED CRIME

The legal framework governing Montenegro's international cooperation in combating organised crime is structured as a combination of international conventions, bilateral agreements, and domestic legislation, which is continuously aligned with the EU acquis, particularly in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters. In the field of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, the prevailing principle is that cooperation is provided on the basis of multilateral and bilateral treaties, and where no treaty exists, or where certain issues are not regulated by a treaty, domestic legislation applies. The current Montenegrin legal framework provides a solid basis for effective international judicial cooperation and for conducting investigations and prosecutions of criminal offences related to organised crime. More importantly, it ensures that Montenegro acts as a reliable partner to international and European institutions in the fight against organised crime.

### 1.1. INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Ratified instruments adopted by international organisations constitute the most important part of the legal framework in the field of international cooperation in combating organised crime. Before presenting the most significant international instruments in this field, it should be noted that Article 9 of the Constitution of Montenegro stipulates that ratified and published international treaties and generally accepted rules of international law form an integral part of the domestic legal order. The Constitution further establishes that these legal acts take precedence over domestic legislation and apply directly when they regulate certain matters differently from national law.

Montenegro is a party to numerous multilateral conventions regulating various aspects of international legal assistance in criminal matters at the global level, with a particular focus on combating organised crime. These instruments include, inter alia: the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC, 2000) and its supplementary protocols; the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC, 2003); the International Convention for the Suppression of the Finan-

cing of Terrorism (1999); the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988); the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime (1990), supplemented by the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (2005); and others.

Below, we elaborate on some of the most significant conventions Montenegro has acceded to, which place international cooperation in combating organised crime at their core.

– **UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC, 2000)**

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime was adopted on 15 November 2000. It is the primary international legal instrument in the fight against transnational organised crime. It was opened for signature at the conference held in Palermo (12–15 December 2000) and entered into force on 29 September 2003. Montenegro acceded to the Convention several months after regaining independence, on 23 October 2006. The Convention currently has more than 170 States Parties, as well as the European Union. Three protocols were adopted alongside the Convention.<sup>1</sup> This Convention establishes general standards for the criminalisation of participation in organised criminal groups, as well as for mutual legal assistance and extradition.

– **UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC, 2003)**

The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal multilateral treaty dedicated to combating corruption. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in October 2003 and entered into force in December 2005. The Convention emphasises the importance of both preventive and repressive measures in the anti-corruption field. Montenegro signed UNCAC in 2003 and acceded to it as an independent state in 2006. By becoming a State Party to this Convention, Montenegro committed to enhancing mechanisms for prevention, criminalisation, and international cooperation in relation to corrupt practices, which are often inextricably linked to organised crime.

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1 1) Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children; 2) Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, and 3) Protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and ammunition.

– **European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) with Additional Protocols (1978, 2001)**

Montenegro has succeeded to the obligations arising from the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and its protocols, thereby securing the legal basis for mutual legal assistance with other Council of Europe member states. The Convention establishes rules guiding the actions of competent authorities in the requested state, with the goal of obtaining evidence (hearing witnesses or defendants, service of documents, obtaining criminal records data) or transmitting evidence (documents, records) for use in criminal proceedings in another state. The Convention also defines in detail the requirements that a request for legal assistance must meet (central authority, language requirements, grounds for refusal). The Second Additional Protocol (2001), which Montenegro joined in 2008, is particularly important in the context of mutual legal assistance in cases related to organised crime and high-level corruption.

– **European Convention on Extradition (1957) with Additional Protocols (1975, 1978)**

Montenegro has succeeded to the obligations under the European Convention on Extradition and its protocols, providing the legal basis for the extradition of persons suspected or convicted of criminal offences to other Council of Europe member states. The Convention facilitates extradition procedures through common standards and clearly defines grounds for refusal (e.g., political offences). In practice, it enables Montenegro to cooperate with most European states under harmonised rules, rather than relying solely on bilateral agreements.

– **European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (1977)**

Montenegro acceded to this Convention in 2008. It establishes mechanisms for the extradition of perpetrators of terrorist-related criminal offences. It lists criminal acts that States Parties undertake not to consider political offences, offences connected with political offences, or offences inspired by political motives, particularly serious acts such as aircraft hijacking, kidnapping and hostage-taking, and the use of bombs, grenades, rockets, or explosive devices when such acts endanger individuals.

– **Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime (1990)**

Montenegro has succeeded to this Convention, which the FRY acceded to in 2001. Its purpose is to enhance international cooperation in investigating crime and tracing, seizing, and confiscating proceeds of criminal activity. The Convention provides for various forms of assistance in investigations (e.g., obtaining evidence, applying joint investigative techniques, lifting bank secrecy), provisional measures (“freezing” funds, temporary seizure of assets), as well as confiscation measures.

Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (2005)

Montenegro acceded to this Convention in 2009. It complements the 1990 Convention and aims to improve the efficiency of access to financial information or data on property held by criminal organisations, including terrorist groups.

– **Convention on Cybercrime (2001)**

Montenegro ratified this first international treaty addressing cybercrime in 2009. It provides the legal basis for the criminalisation of acts such as unauthorised access, interception, and misuse of computer systems and data, as well as for international cooperation in obtaining electronic evidence. The Convention also requires the establishment of 24/7 contact points to ensure urgent assistance among the Member States of the Council of Europe, enabling Montenegro to exchange digital evidence more rapidly with partners across Europe.

– **EU Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (2000)**

The Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Member States of the European Union was adopted in May 2000 as a “third pillar” instrument (Justice and Home Affairs). Its purpose was to enhance and modernise the existing cooperation framework, which had previously relied primarily on the 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and its protocols. Its main objective is to increase the efficiency and speed of judicial cooperation within the EU, particularly in complex cases of organised crime and terrorism. The Convention introduces new mechanisms enabling direct communication between judicial authorities, faster execution of requests, and the use of modern technologies in evidence-gathering processes.

## **1.2. BILATERAL TREATIES ON MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS**

In addition to universal and regional conventions, bilateral treaties constitute an important segment of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters. They enable faster and more efficient exchange of evidence, extradition of suspects, and the implementation of joint investigative actions in cases where multilateral instruments do not provide sufficient flexibility or do not cover the specific needs of the signatory states. Bilateral agreements often regulate procedures in greater detail, define direct contact points, and establish shorter deadlines for the execution of requests, thereby overcoming bureaucratic barriers present within broader multilateral frameworks.

For Montenegro, bilateral treaties hold particular significance for several reasons. As a state situated along transit routes between the Western Balkans and the European Union, Montenegro is exposed to intensive transnational criminal activities. Effective prosecution of such offences almost always requires international cooperation. Although Montenegro already applies international and regional conventions that ensure judicial cooperation in the field of organised crime, bilateral treaties provide an additional level of legal certainty and practical efficiency, especially in relations with states with which it shares intensive migration flows, economic ties, or common security challenges.

The importance of bilateral treaties is also reflected in the strengthening of trust among the signatory states. In the case of Montenegro, the implementation of bilateral agreements on judicial cooperation in criminal matters confirms that the country is committed to building partnership-based relations with neighboring states in the field of justice policy, which is an essential element of the EU integration process. In its reports, the European Commission regularly highlights the need to strengthen international judicial cooperation, viewing bilateral treaties as complementary to multilateral frameworks and as practical tools for the efficient conduct of investigations and trials.

With the aim of more effectively regulating specific aspects of mutual legal assistance procedures in criminal matters, Montenegro has concluded a series of bilateral treaties with countries in the region – Serbia, Croatia, and North Macedonia. These agreements were concluded primarily because the volume of mutual legal assistance exchanged with these states is the highest. Bilateral instruments also frequently expand the list of criminal offences for which extradition may be granted, thereby overcoming limitations found in older conventions. Practice has

shown that bilateral agreements contribute to shortening procedures and improving coordination between competent authorities. For example, bilateral treaties between Montenegro and neighbouring countries allow extradition requests or requests for legal assistance in cases of organised crime and corruption to be processed through direct communication between ministries of justice or specialized prosecution offices, which significantly accelerates proceedings compared to relying solely on mechanisms established under multilateral conventions. Montenegro has not yet concluded bilateral agreements with Albania or Kosovo.

In addition to the agreements with regional countries, Montenegro has concluded two bilateral treaties with Italy aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the European Convention on Extradition (1957) and the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959). Both treaties with Italy entered into force in 2014.

### 1.3. NATIONAL LEGISLATION

International cooperation in the fight against organised crime would not be possible without national legislation that enables the implementation of international conventions, bilateral agreements, and European standards within the domestic legal system. In the case of Montenegro, national laws represent the primary instruments through which effective links are established with the judicial and security systems of other states and international organizations. This confirms the principle that international legal cooperation does not function in isolation, but always through clearly defined competences, developed capacities, and mechanisms of national institutions.

This section outlines several key laws relevant for ensuring effective international cooperation in combating organised crime. It should be noted that these legislative texts are continuously subject to compliance assessments with the EU acquis under Chapters 23 and 24.

The central piece of national legislation in this area is the **Law on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters**.<sup>2</sup> This law represents the basis for the actions of domestic judicial authorities in providing international legal assistance, both in terms of requesting international assistance from foreign states for the purposes of criminal proceedings, and in terms of providing assistance upon the request of foreign judicial and competent authorities. The Law on International

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<sup>2</sup> "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 160/2025 of 30.12.2025

Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters sets out the conditions and procedures for providing MLA in criminal cases. It defines the rules and procedures for handling Montenegro's requests and for sending letters of request for international legal assistance submitted by Montenegro to foreign states. In addition, the law addresses issues of extradition, transfer of criminal proceedings (delegating and assuming criminal prosecution), recognition and enforcement of criminal judgments and other court decisions, as well as other matters relevant for international legal assistance.

The law was adopted after the Government of Montenegro, in October 2025, aiming at "more efficient implementation," adopted a draft of the new Law on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, further harmonizing the framework with international standards in this area.<sup>3</sup> According to the explanatory memorandum accompanying the draft, the new law aims to "eliminate important ambiguities and problems in implementation, both regarding the provisions of the law itself and the mechanisms prescribed by international treaties, which also apply directly as part of the legal system." The explanation further states that the updated text aligns the law more closely "with key instruments of the applicable Council of Europe conventions to which Montenegro is a party, in order to ensure their more effective implementation, as well as with international practice in providing international legal assistance in criminal matters."

**The Law on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters with the Member States of the European Union**<sup>4</sup> was adopted in 2018. As the title indicates, it regulates in greater detail the judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Montenegro and EU Member States. This law was adopted as part of Montenegro's harmonization process with the EU acquis under Chapter 24. Namely, at the outset of negotiations in this chapter, the European Commission recommended that Montenegro adopt a dedicated law that would comprehensively regulate new legal instruments in this area, establish procedures, and designate competent authorities for their implementation. This law harmonized the national legal framework with more than 15 EU legal acts in this field. Judicial cooperation in criminal matters under this law includes: the European Arrest Warrant, the European Investigation Order, decisions on financial penalties, judgments imposing custodial sentences or measures involving deprivation of liberty, judgments and decisions imposing probation measures and alternative sanctions, decisions on supervision measures, the European Protection Order, as well as cooperation with

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<sup>3</sup> See more: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/d81c6112-b417-495b-b758-48f3fd0e9dfd> , <https://www.gov.me/clanak/saopstenje-sa-99-sjednice-vlade-crne-gore>

<sup>4</sup> "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 85/2018

the European Judicial Network (EJN) in criminal matters. This law will enter into force on the day Montenegro accedes to the European Union. In previous years, numerous capacity-building activities have been organised through the Judicial Training Centre and EU rule-of-law assistance projects, with the aim of preparing judges, prosecutors, and state authorities for the practical implementation of these instruments. Montenegro is expected to have fully developed capacities for applying these legal instruments upon accession.

**Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC)**<sup>5</sup> adopted in 2015 aimed to improve certain provisions to enhance the efficiency of international judicial cooperation. The CPC contains a number of procedural provisions governing the handling of letters of request for international legal assistance from other states, as well as Montenegro's requests to other states.<sup>6</sup>

**The Law on seizure and confiscation of material benefit derived from criminal activity**<sup>7</sup> contains a special section regulating international cooperation. It provides that international cooperation for the purpose of seizure and management of confiscated assets shall be carried out in accordance with an international treaty. If no such treaty exists, or if certain matters are not regulated by it, international cooperation is carried out under the provisions of this law, if reciprocity exists or may reasonably be expected. For matters not regulated by this law, the provisions of the law governing international legal assistance in criminal matters apply *mutatis mutandis*. This law also provides for the possibility of sharing permanently confiscated assets with other states, regulated by an international agreement. Under this law, competence for acting upon requests in accordance with Council Decision 2007/845/JHA of 6 December 2007 is assigned to the police organizational unit responsible for financial investigations.

International judicial cooperation in cases of organised crime is also carried out through the implementation of the **Law on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing**.<sup>8</sup> This law regulates measures and activities to prevent and detect money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as the tasks, powers, and method of work of the organizational unit within the Police Directorate

5 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 57/2009, 49/2010, 47/2014 – Constitutional Court decision, 2/2015 – Constitutional Court decision, 35/2015, 58/2015 – Law, 28/2018 – Constitutional Court decision and 116/2020 – Constitutional Court decision

6 See more: „Legal framework and judicial practice – study on system of international legal assistance in criminal matters in Montenegro“ CeMI, 2023, available at: [r14SC1ESbld2K2khqby7AqbYER-pVuAiyG59FSCrq.pdf](https://www.cemi.gov.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/r14SC1ESbld2K2khqby7AqbYER-pVuAiyG59FSCrq.pdf)

7 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 58/2015, 47/2019 and 54/2024

8 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 110/23 from 12.12.2023, 065/24 dated 05.07.2024

responsible for these matters, along with other issues relevant to preventing and detecting money laundering and terrorist financing.

**The Law on the State Prosecution Service**<sup>9</sup> provides that the prosecution service may engage in direct cooperation with the prosecution services of other states within the framework of international agreements and other international documents. The law also establishes special competences regarding judicial cooperation in criminal matters with EU Member States, stipulating that, upon Montenegro's accession to the EU, the prosecution service will be responsible for issuing European Arrest Warrants and European Investigation Orders, in accordance with the law regulating judicial cooperation in criminal matters between Montenegro and EU Member States.

**The Law on the Special State Prosecutor's Office**<sup>10</sup> establishes, within this office, a dedicated Department for International Cooperation, which according to the provisions of the law, handles cooperation with competent authorities and bodies of other states and international organizations, and designates members for Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), established pursuant to international agreements for the prosecution of criminal offences falling under the competence of the Special State Prosecutor's Office.

Under **the Law on Courts**<sup>11</sup> higher courts are designated as competent to provide international criminal-law assistance upon letters of request for the questioning of persons, the execution of special evidentiary actions, and other forms of international criminal-law cooperation.

The European Commission, in its reports, assesses that Montenegro's legislative framework in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters is largely aligned with the EU acquis. In the Interim Benchmark Assessment Report (IBAR) for Chapters 23 and 24, the Commission highlights the evolution of legislation in this area since negotiations began in 2013. As evidence of progress, it notes the 2014 amendments to the Law on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and the adoption in 2018 of the dedicated Law on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters with EU Member States. Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that Montenegro's legal framework recognizes the possibility of establishing Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) and improved extradition procedures. Certain in-

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9 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 11/2015, 42/2015, 80/2017, 10/2018, 76/2020, 59/2021, 54/2024 and 92/2025.

10 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 10/2015, 53/2016 and 54/2024

11 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. [11/2015](#), [76/2020](#) and [54/2024](#)

struments such as the European Arrest Warrant, although already recognized in Montenegrin legislation, will be applied only upon Montenegro's accession to the European Union.

## **CHAPTER II: MONTENEGRO'S COOPERATION WITH KEY EUROPEAN UNION AGENCIES IN COMBATING ORGANISED CRIME**

Organised crime in the Western Balkans displays a distinctly transnational character, with criminal groups originating from Montenegro active not only across the region but also within the territories of EU Member States. Such activity requires continuous cooperation with EU agencies mandated in the fields of justice, internal security, and financial control. Montenegro's key institutional partners in this regard are EUROPOL, EUROJUST, and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). Over the past decade, substantial progress has been achieved in enhancing cooperation between Montenegro's institutions and their European counterparts.

### **2.1. COOPERATION BETWEEN MONTENEGRO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION (EUROPOL)**

The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) serves as the EU's central body for police cooperation and intelligence analysis in the field of serious and organised crime. Montenegro concluded an Agreement on Operational Cooperation with EUROPOL in 2014, and its Liaison Bureau in The Hague functions as the primary contact point.<sup>12</sup> The Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation aims to establish a framework through which EUROPOL and Montenegro support EU Member States and Montenegro in preventing and combating organised crime, terrorism, and other forms of international criminal activity, particularly through the exchange of information between EUROPOL and Montenegro.

At the political level, several high-level meetings took place during the previous year between Montenegrin officials and EUROPOL representatives. Notably, at the beginning of the year, Prime Minister Spajić met with EUROPOL Executive Director Catherine De Bolle on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. During the meeting, it was highlighted that the volume of exchanged data had increased by 25% compared to the previous year. "Over the past years we

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<sup>12</sup> See more: <https://zakoni.skupstina.me/zakoni/web/dokumenta/zakoni-i-drugi-akti/698/611-4876-24-2-14-6-4.PDF>

have recorded a significant increase in data exchange, which has further strengthened our cooperation with Montenegro,” De Bolle stated, expressing her appreciation to Prime Minister Spajić.<sup>13</sup> In addition, delegations of the State Prosecution Service and the Police Directorate held several meetings with EUROPOL leadership, consistently noting the high quality of cooperation between the two sides.<sup>14</sup>

According to the European Commission’s assessments in the IBAR Report under Chapter 24, Montenegro continuously implements activities aimed at strengthening international police and judicial cooperation. The Commission considers Montenegro’s implementation of the EUROPOL cooperation agreement to be satisfactory. Within its cooperation with EUROPOL, Montenegro is identified as one of the key partners in the EUROPOL Analytical Project on High-Risk Organised Criminal Groups (HROCG). Progress has also been recorded in the field of intelligence reporting, particularly concerning the illicit trafficking of firearms.

The Commission notes that Montenegro regularly submits statistical data on irregular border crossings and migrant smuggling affecting its territory. Moreover, Montenegro maintains a good level of cooperation with EUROPOL in the areas of cocaine trafficking and counterterrorism. Participation of Montenegrin institutions in activities targeting cybercrime has also increased, especially in the segment of preventing online child sexual exploitation). Montenegro makes active use of EUROPOL’s Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), which has contributed to increased proactivity and operational efficiency in investigations, especially those relating to terrorism and organised crime. The number of messages and intelligence exchanges via SIENA continues to rise, indicating growing trust and operational integration with European partners. In the past year alone, a total of 3,439 messages were exchanged between Montenegro, EUROPOL, and partner states through the SIENA-ME communication channel (2,452 messages received and 973 sent, including communication via the FAST channel).<sup>15</sup>

Within the 2022–2025 cycle of EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats), the EU’s leading operational instrument for combating

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13 See more: <https://glascg.me/politika/spajic-u-davosu-sa-direktorkom-europola-crna-gora-se-konacno-bori-protiv-kriminala/>

14 See more: <https://www.cdm.me/hronika/markovic-i-novovic-u-europol-u-sdt-uziva-visok-step-en-povjerenja/>; <https://gradski.me/scepanovic-u-sjedistu-europola-sa-de-bol-puna-podrska-up-ravi-policije-u-daljem-jacanju-bezbjednosnih-politika-i-borbi-protiv-kriminala/>; <https://www.gov.me/en/article/pm-abazovic-visits-europol-headquarters>

15 Annex II to the 2025 European Commission Report on Montenegro, covering the period from 1 April 2025 to 1 September 2025

serious and international crime, Montenegro actively participates in numerous joint actions and plans. EMPACT was established as part of the EU's security cooperation policy, with the aim of unifying the efforts of Member States and partner countries in tackling the most dangerous criminal threats affecting Europe — such as drug and firearms trafficking, migrant smuggling, cybercrime, money laundering, human trafficking, and high-risk organised crime networks. Through EMPACT, each participating state takes part in Operational Action Plans (OAPs), which bring together police, customs, and prosecutorial bodies from multiple countries and EU agencies (EUROPOL, EUROJUST, Frontex, OLAF) for the purposes of joint investigations and the exchange of intelligence. During the current 2022–2025 cycle, Montenegro participates in 14 out of 15 operational plans and in as many as 76 operational actions, acting as co-leader in three of them, which confirms the high level of engagement and the trust of European partners in the work of Montenegro's investigative authorities.

Nevertheless, cooperation between Montenegro and EUROPOL has been marked by intensive communication regarding documentation delivered to Montenegrin investigative bodies relating to the so-called "Sky ECC" communications. This segment of cooperation represents one of the most complex and significant aspects of international collaboration in the fight against organised crime in the region. Sky ECC is an encrypted communication platform that, according to EUROPOL data, was widely used by criminal networks to coordinate drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and other unlawful activities. In a joint international operation conducted between 2020 and 2021 by the Belgian, French, and Dutch police, with EUROPOL's support, hundreds of millions of messages were decrypted. These messages were subsequently provided to countries whose nationals or criminal structures were involved — including Montenegro. Several years after the delivery of decrypted messages to investigative bodies in the region, it can be concluded that Montenegro was among the countries whose nationals and criminal groups were most represented in the Sky ECC communications. Based on intelligence and technical data obtained through EUROPOL, Montenegrin security services and the Special State Prosecutor's Office (SDT) initiated a number of large-scale investigations, resulting in arrests, asset seizures, and the prosecution of several dozen individuals. In July 2025, public debate regarding the admissibility of evidence originating from the encrypted SKY ECC application was concluded after the Supreme Court of Montenegro upheld the judgement of the Court of Appeals concerning a conviction based on communications extracted from this application.<sup>16</sup>

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16 See more: <https://www.monitor.co.me/sky-prepiske-prosle-i-vrhovni-sud-kriptovana-komunikacija-jeste-dokaz/>

Overall, cooperation with EUROPOL has become one of the primary mechanisms of Montenegro's international judicial and police cooperation. The results demonstrate that the state can act as a responsible and effective partner within the European security framework. Continuing this trend, alongside further trust-building and strengthening of technical capacities, represents a key prerequisite for successfully combating organised crime and reinforcing the rule of law — as well as for Montenegro's continued progress in accession negotiations with the European Union.

## **2.2. COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE COOPERATION (EUROJUST)**

The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (hereinafter: EUROJUST) was established in 2002 with the aim of improving the effectiveness and coordination between national prosecutors' offices and judicial authorities of the Member States of the European Union. Within its competences, EUROJUST provides support to national prosecutors in investigations and criminal proceedings involving two or more countries, particularly in cases of organised crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering. This EU agency facilitates the exchange of evidence and information between prosecutors' offices, organises coordination meetings, and assists in resolving conflicts of jurisdiction. The particular value of EUROJUST lies in its ability to enable synchronized actions between the judicial authorities of multiple states, thereby contributing to faster and more effective prosecution of transnational organised crime cases.

The first formal meeting on the negotiation process for concluding an agreement between Montenegro and EUROJUST was held in December 2010 at EUROJUST headquarters in The Hague. Following this meeting, and in the context of preparatory activities for concluding the agreement, EUROJUST representatives visited Montenegro twice (in 2013 and 2014). These expert missions were organised with the aim of assessing the situation and the implementation of EUROJUST's recommendations for Montenegro in the field of data protection and international judicial cooperation in criminal matters. After the October 2014 mission, it was concluded that all EUROJUST recommendations had been considered and fully implemented in practice. On 4th of March 2015, EUROJUST invited Montenegro to commence formal negotiations on concluding the Cooperation Agreement. At its session held on 16 April 2015, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Bases for Conducting Negotiations and Concluding the Cooperation Agreement

between Montenegro and EUROJUST. The Agreement was signed on 3 May 2016 in Brussels.

The Assembly of Montenegro ratified the Cooperation Agreement with EUROJUST in December 2016. In early June 2017, EUROJUST informed the Government of Montenegro that its internal procedures for the entry into force of the Agreement had been completed, thereby officially establishing the formal legal framework for the exchange of information and operational coordination between the Montenegrin prosecutorial authorities and this EU agency. The Agreement entered into force in June 2017. By concluding this Agreement, Montenegro became the first non-EU state in the Western Balkans to obtain the possibility of appointing a national contact point – a liaison prosecutor with EUROJUST. The Agreement enables the exchange of information and evidence within the framework of international legal assistance; participation in coordination meetings and Joint Investigation Teams (JITs); the temporary secondment of prosecutors and experts for the purpose of conducting specific investigations; as well as access to EUROJUST’s analytical tools and expertise in the field of combating organised crime.

Montenegrin institutions, particularly the State Prosecutor’s Office, maintain continuous communication with EUROJUST leadership. At a recently held meeting with EUROJUST President Schmid, the Supreme State Prosecutor, Marković, assessed that the existing cooperation with this institution has demonstrated that joint efforts can enhance the efficiency of the Prosecutor’s Office and contribute to creating a safer environment for the citizens of Montenegro. During the meeting, the work of Montenegro’s liaison prosecutor to EUROJUST, Đaletić, was commended, and her contribution to improving cooperation between the State Prosecutor’s Office of Montenegro and EUROJUST was described as “exceptionally significant.”<sup>17</sup>

Since the establishment of cooperation in 2016, Montenegro has regularly utilised EUROJUST mechanisms, particularly in cases of organised crime with a cross-border dimension. The most frequent areas of cooperation relate to drug trafficking, money laundering, migrant smuggling, high-level corruption, and cybercrime. Over the past several years, Montenegro has been involved in several hundred coordination cases with the support of EUROJUST. The table below presents data on the number of cases in which cooperation was established between the State Prosecutor’s Office of Montenegro and EUROJUST over the past five years.

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17 See more: <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/776402/markovic-dosadasnja-saradnja-sa-eurodzastom-pokazala-da-zajednickim-aporima-mozemo-unaprijediti-efikasnost-tuzilastva>

Number of cases in which cooperation with EUROJUST was achieved (2020-2024)	
Year	Number of cases
2020	58
2021	82
2022	92
2023	103
2024	85
<b>TOTAL :</b>	420

Although Montenegro meets all legal requirements for participation in Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) with EU Member States, this mechanism has not yet been utilised in practice. In order to enhance this segment of cooperation with EU Member States and EUROJUST, it is necessary for the prosecution service and the police to develop operational capacities through the training of specialised teams for participation in joint investigation teams. More active use of JITs brings numerous advantages: it enables faster and more efficient exchange of information, synchronised investigations and arrests in multiple countries, direct access to evidence and analytical resources of EUROJUST and EUROPOL, and strengthens Montenegro's credibility and visibility as a reliable partner within the European network for combating organised crime. Establishing even a few pilot JITs with EU Member States would represent a clear indicator of institutional maturity and Montenegro's readiness to transition from formal cooperation to operational partnership within the European judicial area, and would constitute one of the key achievements necessary for the closure of Chapter 24 in the EU accession negotiations.

Within the framework of cooperation with EUROJUST, it should also be noted that Montenegro actively participates in the "Western Balkans Criminal Justice (WBCJ)" project, implemented by EUROJUST with the aim of strengthening cooperation among Western Balkan countries, as well as between the region and the European Union, in combating organised crime and terrorism through the use of modern judicial cooperation tools and instruments. The project encompasses the following types of support: expertise and best practices from EUROJUST and EU Member States concerning the use of judicial cooperation tools and instruments; direct funding of operational meetings (including coordination meetings and coordination centres) and investigative activities among Western Balkan partners, both within and outside the framework of joint investigation teams (JITs); provision of modern ICT equipment, such as secure mobile phones and laptop computers; and translation and interpretation services enabling unhindered communication and information exchange among participants.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> About the project: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/western-balkans-criminal-justice>

## 2.3. COOPERATION OF MONTENEGRO WITH THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is an independent institution of the European Union, established based on Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2017.<sup>19</sup> Following a period of institutional establishment, EPPO commenced its operational activities on 1 June 2021, with its seat in Luxembourg. The primary competence of EPPO is to conduct investigations and prosecute criminal offences affecting the financial interests of the European Union (the so-called PIF offences – Protection of the EU's Financial Interests). These include fraud involving EU funds, corruption related to the use of EU financial resources, money laundering, customs fraud, cross-border VAT fraud, and similar offences. EPPO operates through a two-tier structure: a central level headed by the European Chief Prosecutor (currently Laura Codruța Kövesi), and a national level composed of European Delegated Prosecutors in each Member State participating in EPPO's work. Out of the 27 EU Member States, 24 actively participate in EPPO.<sup>20</sup>

A Working Arrangement between the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of Montenegro and EPPO was signed in September 2022.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of the Arrangement is to establish mutual cooperation and facilitate the exchange of information in order to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of all persons suspected or accused of criminal offences against the budget of the European Union. Pursuant to its provisions, the parties shall provide each other with the widest possible scope of cooperation in the collection of evidence, in accordance with the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) and its Additional Protocols. The parties have also undertaken to cooperate in the area of asset freezing, in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime (2005). The Arrangement establishes the legal basis for cooperation between the Montenegrin State Prosecutor's Office and EPPO through the establishment of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) in cases falling under EPPO's competence. It also pro-

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19 See more: : Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO'), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/1939/oj>

20 Of the other Member States of the European Union, Hungary has decided not to join the EPPO. Denmark and Ireland have an opt-out status in the areas of justice, freedom and security. Judicial cooperation in criminal matters with these countries is based on the instruments of the European Union for which, in accordance with Article 105(3) of the EPPO Regulation, the EPPO is designated as the competent authority.

21 See more: [https://www.eppo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-09/WA-EPPO-Montenegro-SSPO\\_MN.pdf](https://www.eppo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-09/WA-EPPO-Montenegro-SSPO_MN.pdf)

vides for the possibility for the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of Montenegro to second a liaison officer to EPPO headquarters in Luxembourg. However, to date, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office has not made use of this possibility.

Montenegro has so far participated in three cases prosecuted by EPPO. At this stage, no publicly available information has been presented regarding these cases, presumably due to the sensitivity of ongoing investigations. In the Interim Benchmark Assessment Report (IBAR) for Chapters 23 and 24, the European Commission states that Montenegro must ensure that cooperation between EPPO and the competent Montenegrin state authorities is conducted in accordance with the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959), with the aim of recognising EPPO as a judicial authority. Therefore, Montenegro's legal framework must be amended in this regard so as to formally recognise EPPO's status as a judicial body, in line with the EU *acquis* and ratified international instruments, thereby removing formal obstacles to cooperation between Montenegro's judicial authorities and EPPO.

Looking ahead, Montenegro's accession to the European Union and to the network of formal EPPO members would bring multiple benefits for the country. It would, *inter alia*, enhance transparency in the use of EU funds allocated to Montenegro. However, in order for this to occur, Montenegro will, either in the final phase of accession negotiations or immediately prior to joining the EU, be required to amend its Constitution to create the conditions necessary for incorporating the EPPO Regulation into the domestic legal order. It is expected that these matters will be regulated by Montenegro's EU Accession Treaty, through which Montenegro will formally commit to the full corpus of EU law. The Accession Treaty would then take precedence over national legislation, but not over the Constitution of Montenegro, which defines the State Prosecutor's Office as "a unified and autonomous authority"—a formulation incompatible with the structure and functioning of EPPO, whose central level of decision-making in Luxembourg acts as a direct higher instance over delegated prosecutors in all participating EU Member States (potentially including Montenegro). Given that this issue is complex, both legally and politically, it must be addressed with due care and in a timely manner, so that appropriate modalities for alignment of Montenegro's constitutional framework with the EPPO Regulation can be properly defined. Legal scholars who have examined this matter suggest that the potential issue of "dual authority" over the prosecutorial system in Montenegro could be resolved through a simple amendment: deleting the word "unified" from the functional description of the State Prosecutor's Office in Article 134 of the Constitution of Montenegro.<sup>22</sup>

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22 See more: Nikola B. Šaranović, *European Public Prosecutor and Montenegro* (2022), available at: [https://studiaiuridica.me/wp-content/uploads/arhiva/godina4-broj1/1-2022\(4\).pdf](https://studiaiuridica.me/wp-content/uploads/arhiva/godina4-broj1/1-2022(4).pdf)

## CHAPTER III: MONTENEGRO'S COOPERATION WITH INTERPOL

The International Criminal Police Organization (hereinafter: INTERPOL) was established in 1923 and today comprises 196 member states, making it the largest global network for police cooperation in the world. The core mission of INTERPOL is to facilitate the exchange of information, coordination, and operational cooperation among the police services of different states in combating all forms of international crime—ranging from organised and financial crime, to terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and cybercrime.

Cooperation between Montenegro and INTERPOL is of essential importance for the effective suppression of transnational crime. Membership in INTERPOL provides the Montenegrin police with access to global intelligence networks, faster identification and location of suspects, and the ability to link domestic investigations with international operations. Montenegro became a full member of INTERPOL in 2006, shortly after the restoration of its independence, and has since actively participated in the organization's work through the National Central Bureau (NCB), which operates within the Police Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. INTERPOL's NCB Podgorica represents the key liaison between the Montenegrin police, the INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon, and other member states. The NCB is responsible for transmitting and processing international requests, warrants, notices, and information related to persons, items, vehicles, and criminal activities of an international character. Through INTERPOL's databases—particularly I-24/7, the global secure communication network—the Montenegrin police have access to a wide range of data on international arrest warrants and fugitives (Red Notices), stolen vehicles, weapons, documents and works of art, DNA profiles, fingerprints and biometric identifiers, and individuals suspected of terrorism or cyber-attacks. This system enables real-time information exchange and instant verification of data concerning persons and objects, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of police operations in Montenegro.

According to data contained in the Strategy for Combating Transnational Organised Crime 2024–2027, during the period 2021–2023, the execution of international cooperation activities in Montenegro resulted in the location and arrest of 231 persons subject to international arrest warrants. Of this number, 93 persons were arrested on the basis of warrants issued by INTERPOL's National Central Bureau (NCB) Podgorica, including 30 members of organised criminal groups. Based on

international arrest warrants issued by foreign INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, 138 persons were arrested in Montenegro, including 20 members of foreign organised criminal groups.<sup>23</sup> According to available data, in 2024, 75 persons subject to international arrest warrants issued by foreign NCBs were arrested in Montenegro, while 32 persons were arrested abroad on the basis of warrants issued by INTERPOL's NCB Podgorica. In total, therefore, 107 persons were deprived of liberty during the year on the basis of international arrest warrants.

In recent years, Montenegro has participated in several high-impact operations coordinated by INTERPOL in the Western Balkans region. During 2024, officers of the Police Directorate of Montenegro – the Department for International Operational Police Cooperation INTERPOL-EUROPOL-SIRENE – took part in **Operation "LIBERTERRA II"**, a global action coordinated by INTERPOL in 116 countries, targeting organised criminal groups primarily involved in migrant smuggling and human trafficking. During the implementation of the operation in Montenegro, and in coordination with the Special State Prosecutor's Office, 15 persons were processed for the commission of 21 criminal offences, including five foreign nationals, while 12 individuals were deprived of liberty. The processed individuals are suspected of committing criminal offences of creating criminal organizations and the unlawful crossing of the state border and smuggling of persons.<sup>24</sup>

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23 Strategy for Combating Transnational Organised Crime 2024–2027, available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/1db4222e-985d-4557-95c6-4c488369e269?version=1.0>

24 See more: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/uprava-policije-ucestvovala-u-globalnoj-interpolovoj-operaciji-liberterra-ii>

## CHAPTER IV : CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

Over the past decade, since the opening of EU accession negotiations in Chapters 23 and 24, Montenegro has achieved significant progress in establishing and applying international mechanisms of judicial and police cooperation in the fight against organised crime—progress confirmed by the European Commission through its assessments in the Interim Benchmark Assessment Report (IBAR). The country has largely aligned its legal framework with the EU acquis in the field of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters. However, it should be noted that the Ministry of Justice continuously invests efforts to further align the legal framework with newly adopted segments of the EU acquis and the applicable conventions in this area. In that context, in January 2026 the new Law on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters came into force. In addition, the adoption of the Law on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters with EU Member States (2018) created the basic preconditions for establishing judicial cooperation with EU Member States immediately upon Montenegro’s accession to the EU. A harmonised legal framework with EU standards lays the foundation for Montenegro’s full integration into the European area of justice immediately upon accession. Nevertheless, institutional capacities and the use of modern mechanisms of international cooperation (such as active participation in Joint Investigation Teams, joint databases, or digital evidence exchange) still need to be further elevated to a higher level of operating.

In recent years, cooperation with EUROPOL has proven to be one of the most important segments of Montenegro’s international efforts in combating organised crime and high-level corruption. Through the SIENA communication network and participation in the EMPACT cycle—the EU’s leading operational instrument for addressing serious and cross-border crime—Montenegro has become an important operational partner in countering criminal networks operating along the Western Balkans–Western Europe route. However, the cooperation with EUROPOL that has had the most profound impact on the prosecution of organised crime and high-level corruption cases in Montenegro is cooperation in cases based on communications extracted from the “Sky ECC” application. Collaboration and continuous information exchange in these cases demonstrated the ability of Montenegrin institutions to process complex digital evidence and act in line with European standards on the protection of integrity and confidentiality of data. At the same time, it served as a test of institutional trust, as European partners assessed that Montenegro is capable of responsibly handling sensitive operational information.

Montenegro's cooperation with EUROJUST is of high quality and is continuously improving. The liaison prosecutor actively participates in the work of this institution and facilitates the exchange of information between Montenegro and EUROJUST. Nevertheless, Montenegro has not yet utilized the full potential offered by EUROJUST's cooperation mechanisms—primarily through the establishment of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) with EU Member States. The absence of concrete JITs indicates the existence of institutional and procedural barriers to achieving full cooperation with EUROJUST. The underlying causes may include insufficient experience of domestic prosecutors, limited human resources, the absence of standardized cooperation protocols with foreign prosecutorial authorities, as well as language barriers, reflected in the inability of prosecutors or investigators to work in foreign languages - an issue that would significantly ease communication and casework. This segment of cooperation remains a key test for the coming period, as JITs represent the most effective instrument in combating transnational organised crime.

Montenegro's cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) represents a highly important component of its integration into the European system of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, particularly in the area of protecting the European Union's financial interests. Although Montenegro is not yet a member of the European Union, its status as a candidate country and its increasing participation in EU-funded programs make cooperation with EPPO especially significant. The Working Arrangement concluded in 2022 between Montenegro and EPPO has thus far generated limited practical effects. Therefore, in the forthcoming period, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office should intensify communication with EPPO so that cooperation on the conduct of concrete investigations can strengthen engagement with this important EU institution. It should be emphasized that, during the period of intensified use of pre-accession funds in Montenegro, such cooperation is of particular importance with regard to preventing financial fraud and corruption related to the use of European financial resources.

In the context of cooperation with INTERPOL, Montenegro has a long and continuous tradition of active membership, and the National Central Bureau (NCB Podgorica) has built a reputation as a reliable and professional partner, particularly in the field of intelligence exchange and the execution of international arrest warrants. Through participation in several high-profile INTERPOL operations, the Montenegrin police have demonstrated the ability to make an active contribution to international operational activities and to achieve concrete results. Moreover, cooperation with INTERPOL has been crucial in identifying and apprehending members of organised criminal groups operating in the territory of Montenegro.

## CHAPTER V : RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is necessary to continue harmonizing the legal framework with EU standards in the field of international cooperation in combating organised crime.
2. In line with the recommendations of the European Commission, further harmonization of the legal framework with the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) must continue. It is necessary to recognize the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) as a judicial authority, in order to remove formal obstacles to cooperation between the judicial authorities of Montenegro and the EPPO, in accordance with the EU acquis.
3. It is essential to prepare in a timely manner a proposal for amendments to the Constitution of Montenegro, with a view to creating the prerequisites for the incorporation of the Regulation establishing the EPPO into the domestic legal order. In order to avoid future constitutional dilemmas regarding the acceptance of EPPO competences in Montenegro following EU accession, it is necessary to amend Article 134 of the Constitution of Montenegro by deleting the word "unified" from the functional definition of the State Prosecution Service.
4. The Ministry of Justice must undertake additional efforts to strengthen administrative capacities for handling requests from EU Member States in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters upon Montenegro's accession to the European Union. This refers in particular to capacity-building for the conduct of extradition procedures, prisoner transfers, implementation of the European Arrest Warrant, proper application of EU standards on the confiscation and freezing of criminal assets, and related mechanisms.
5. It is necessary to further strengthen the human, technical, and organizational capacities of the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary, the prosecution service, and the police, so that international cooperation in combating organised crime becomes standard practice rather than an ad hoc process. This includes establishing permanent contact points within courts, prosecution offices, and police organizational units, as well as training staff to handle international requests and improving institutional coordination.

6. Over the next two years, training organised by the Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centre should be intensified, so that judges, prosecutors, and legal practitioners become fully familiar with the theoretical aspects of new instruments governed by the Law on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters with EU Member States (2018), as well as the practical aspects of judicial cooperation after Montenegro's accession to the EU.
7. Judicial authorities should make full use of the existing legal possibilities for establishing Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) with EU Member States. This form of cooperation on concrete multi-jurisdictional investigations would ensure faster and more efficient information exchange and access to evidence, as well as strengthen mutual trust between partners from EU countries and Montenegro. It is recommended that the first JITs be established before Montenegro's accession to the EU, to demonstrate the country's readiness for full integration into the European security area.
8. Montenegrin institutions should continue to utilize their membership in INTERPOL through increased participation in global operations and the exchange of intelligence data on criminal networks and organised criminal groups. Particular emphasis should be placed on strengthening cooperation in combating human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and cybercrime.
9. It is necessary to introduce an annual "scorecard" of international cooperation in the fight against organised crime and high-level corruption, containing detailed indicators on the performance of judicial and police cooperation mechanisms in this area. Such a mechanism would enhance transparency and public trust in the activities of law enforcement and judiciary, while enabling systematic monitoring of progress in this key area under Chapter 24.
10. Over the coming year, it is essential to continue modernizing the technical infrastructure of courts, prosecution offices, the police, and the Ministry of Justice. Effective international cooperation in combating organised crime requires reliable and security-vetted digital communication channels. Montenegro must modernize systems for accessing databases used by EU agencies in the fight against organised crime and establish a unified channel for electronic evidence and data exchange, in line with standards on privacy and data confidentiality.
11. Operational cooperation with EU agencies (EUROPOL, EUROJUST, EPPO, etc.) requires highly specialized personnel familiar with the practical aspects and procedures stipulated by these institutions' protocols, as well as at

least command of the English language. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a permanent English-language training program for prosecutors, police officers, and judges, in cooperation with the Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centre. Only through continuous professionalization of staff can Montenegro become a credible partner within the European system of justice and security.





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