Europol 2.0 :

Secure **T**oday, Protect **T**omorrow

*As Europol approaches its upcoming mandate renewal - scheduled for legislative review in Q2 2026 - the expectations are unequivocal: **the agency must scale up its operational and tactical capacity to match the growing complexity and urgency of Europe's security challenges.** is all the more crucial as some national police forces face structural constraints: chronic underfunding, shortages of qualified staff, or limited capacity to sustain complex, large-scale investigations. **In such situations, Europol's reinforced analytical, operational, and technological capabilities serve not only to support national authorities facing structural constraints, but also to complement and strengthen the work of even the best-resourced services, ensuring that serious crime is confronted consistently across the Union.***

*The Commission has signalled its intention to **significantly expand Europol's capabilities and workforce while reinforcing oversight and mandate**[1]. This commitment comes at a time when the very nature of crime has transformed. Crime scenes are no longer confined to physical jurisdictions; they now operate through interconnected digital pathways. Actors coordinate across borders they physically cross, targets are reachable instantly from anywhere, tools are commercially available as illicit services, and evidence has become volatile, encrypted, and dispersed.*

*In this environment, success hinges not only on individual sovereignty but on enabling **a strong culture of, cooperation, partnerships, and rapidly adaptable technological toolkits.** Europol's future does not lie in risk-averse strategies, but in concentrating and re-materialising fragmented intelligence into actionable and operational outcomes - built on state-of the-art technology, information, support and cooperation, matched with resources commensurate to the ambition.*

*The expansion of Europol's mandate should be accompanied by a **strengthening of Eurojust's role.** Reinforcing the EU's police capacities must go hand in hand with a corresponding reinforcement of its judicial tool.*

The concrete proposals put forward by our group are structured around six key pillars and are as follows :

- **o THREATS :**
- To effectively safeguard the Union against emerging security challenges, **we propose ensuring that Europol has the competence to act in response to hybrid threats, including cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, covert sabotage (such as attacks on underwater cables and pipelines), and the exploitation of technological vulnerabilities (such as cyber extortion and digital infrastructure attacks).** Building on this enhanced mandate, we further propose **the establishment of a dedicated Centre of Expertise for Countering Hybrid Threats** within Europol. This centre would enable the agency to

consolidate specialised knowledge, coordinate operational support, and drive innovation in detection and response across Member States.

- To step up the fight against drug trafficking, which Member States have difficulty in tackling individually, we propose to **increase Europol's analytical and operational capacities.**

- **Strengthening Europol's role in the recovery of criminal assets** would significantly enhance the Union's capacity to disrupt illicit financial flows, but also to dismantle the criminal networks that sustain them. **Following the money is one of the most effective ways to uncover organisational structures**, identify key facilitators, and expose cross-border links. By improving the identification, tracing, and freezing of criminal proceeds, Europol could help ensure that stolen assets are intercepted before they vanish and are returned to public budgets. To translate intelligence into rapid operational impact, we advocate **the creation of an accelerated system for urgent alerts and swift action**. Such a mechanism would ensure that criminal profits are frozen before they can be laundered or transferred beyond reach.
  - ✓ In this context, strengthening Europol's mandate also represents a strategic opportunity to **reinforce the Union's broader antifraud architecture**. By intensifying the fight against illicit financial flows and boosting the recovery of criminal assets, Europol directly contributes to dismantling the networks that enable fraud, corruption and the misuse of EU funds. Its upgraded data analysis tools, artificial intelligence capabilities and closer cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office and AMLA would allow earlier detection of fraudulent schemes and ensure more effective judicial follow up.

- **Europol will continue to contribute to the assessment of new and emerging terrorist threats** - in particular their online dimension and links to radicalisation processes. This would inform **the development of the Union's new counter-terrorism programme, strengthen the fight against terrorist financing, and support the development of an EU critical communication system for the use of competent public authorities**.

- Finally, we propose to **extend Europol's right of initiative.** For the upcoming mandate revision, **this should be done within the scope of the current Treaties**, notably where criminal activity lacks an immediate or identifiable link to a specific Member State - a scenario that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the digital environment. This should include **the ability to proactively propose and initiate the establishment of operational task forces in cooperation with relevant national authorities, as well as streamlining and accelerating national authorities' procedures for responding to Europol's requests to open criminal investigations, with detailed justifications required in cases of refusal.** Should these changes not prove sufficient in the fight against crime, further steps could be considered, including possible Treaty changes for the longer term.

o TECHNOLOGY

- While Europol has strong potential to become the EU Information hub, its capabilities risk falling behind. First, **the benefits of the personal data processing powers provided since 2022 have not been fully maximised yet, and should be reaped.** Second, **current constraints have to be mapped and assessed, which could lead to targeted enhancements of its data aggregation and analytical capacities**, in order to ensure that Europol can innovate and remains fully equipped to respond to evolving operational needs while maintaining appropriate fundamental rights safeguards.

    - ✓ **Facilitate and scale up Europol's use of Artificial Intelligence for law enforcement** by reinforcing its mandate, allowing **the Innovation lab, with a dedicated AI Lab, to develop applications that remain ahead of the curve, and to fully leverage and integrate AI technologies in its data-hub and analysis functions** , allowing it to rapidly detect emerging threats and help deliver and analyze actionable intelligence and data, in line with the AI Act.
    - ✓ Strengthen Europol's online operational capabilities by **gradually extending the Internet Referral Unit's mandate beyond terrorism** to other serious and harmful online activities where appropriate, **establishing a dedicated Online Safety Unit with trained officers deployed directly in digital environments** (e.g., social networks, gaming platforms and online marketplaces), **and facilitating prevention and early-warning mechanisms by sharing strategic intelligence, trend analysis and risk indicators with Member States, online platforms and civil society partners, to support timely responses and awareness-raising initiatives at national and community level**

o TRAINING

- **Invest in Europol's operational human capital alongside technological capabilities,** making strategic recruitment and continuous training core drivers of operational excellence and adaptability.

    - ✓ **Develop a European Police Academy in cooperation with CEPOL**, establishing **standardised, certification-based training pathways for cross-border operational roles and a shared framework to strengthen European law enforcement interoperability**. This should not come at the expense of scarce operational resources and therefore follow a distributed model, where specialised expertise areas are developed across networks of national police academies that build and deliver EU-wide curricula.
    - ✓ Promote a comprehensive policing approach, following the same distributed model: **strengthen Europol's role, in cooperation with CEPOL and within the EMPACT framework, in developing programmes that equip officers with both operational enforcement tools and preventive capacities to address serious and organised crime**. Such holistic, multidisciplinary training should enhance knowledge of legal

systems, investigative methods and information-sharing practices while fostering cooperation across security and justice actors. This balanced approach supports the development of a shared European policing culture that reinforces trust, professionalism and public safety.

- ✓ **Enhance Europol's flexibility and responsiveness by expanding the use of short-term seconded experts and guest specialists** in the Innovation Lab and other supportive and innovative functions for rapid deployment to priority projects and support to operational teams, task forces and temporary operational cells, **supported by an adaptable administrative framework for temporary and specialised assignments** that ensures swift mobilisation of expertise while preserving efficiency and legal clarity.

o **TEAMWORK**

- Further develop Europol as the **EU's centre of excellence for data analysis,** strengthening its capacity to detect emerging criminal trends early and to support coordinated responses to complex, cross-cutting threats.
    - ✓ Establish a **more structured and interoperable cooperation framework between Europol and key EU bodies** - including Eurojust, the EPPO, AMLA and other relevant agencies - to better connect analytical, judicial and operational efforts.
    - ✓ **Deploy secure, proportionate and automated information-matching mechanisms (hit/no-hit), supported by dedicated contact points, common reporting standards and flexible arrangements** for sharing relevant analytical insights.

- Ensure simplification by design: **prevent the creation of significant overlaps between Europol and other EU agencies by clarifying mandates**, promoting complementarity and interoperability, and fully leveraging existing instruments and capabilities before proposing new structures, tools, or reporting layers. This includes fostering a culture of cooperation and joint working, notably through, where appropriate, joint meetings - particularly in the context of new partnerships with third countries - and by systematically and proactively considering the most effective way to act together.

- **Extend this integrated cooperation model to the Schengen Associated Countries,** enabling faster and more operational collaboration from information exchange to joint actions. Frameworks for operational cooperation should enable Europol to facilitate joint analytical work with trusted third countries and parties, ensuring effective collaboration in areas such as counter-cybercrime and ransomware.

- **Reinforce Europol's operational presence beyond the EU**, by deploying experts in third countries . where major criminal networks originate or operate to facilitate and assist investigations and information exchange, in order to disrupt illicit structures at an early stage and prevent spill-over effects into Europe.

o **TRANSPARENCY AND DATA**

- **Empower Europol to both access and contribute to EU-level databases,** ensuring that its analytical capabilities and operational insights strengthen the EU information ecosystem as a whole.

- **Develop a shared digital police space,** including lawful access to relevant private-sector data, to enable efficient cross-border intelligence generation. A major step forward would be to provide the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) with a legal mandate to remotely access criminal attack infrastructure, for example to stifle ongoing ransomware incidents.

- **Embed strong data protection safeguards by design,** maintaining high privacy standards while enabling the effective use of operational data to deliver timely and actionable intelligence.

- **Align Europol's expanded operational role with strengthened and streamlined oversight and accountability,** strengthening the supervisory powers and sharp increase of resources of the EDPS, so that it can exercise its supervisory powers in a more effective and efficient way, in order to avoid unnecessary operational delays.
  - ✓ **Improve parliamentary oversight to safeguard democratic accountability and public trust,** with a smaller but more effective Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group, which convenes on a more regular basis and has better ways of exercising democratic scrutiny.

o **TOTAL RESSOURCES**

- **Acknowledge and address Europol's existing structural under-resourcing,** ensuring that future allocations correct current capacity gaps rather than merely accommodating new responsibilities. The focus should lie in enhancing and supporting the operational teams.

- **Endorse and safeguard the Commission's proposal under the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework,** ensuring that Europol is provided with the full range of budgetary, human and operational resources required to deliver on its expanded mandate.