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Police Cooperation as a Response to European Union Security Threats

Współpraca policyjna jako odpowiedź na zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa Unii Europejskiej

Abstract
This paper examines the rapidly evolving police cooperation within the European Union, which represents a crucial and essential response to emerging internal security threats. This article focuses on developments since 2022, examining enhanced legal and operational frameworks, including Europol's expanded mandate, the role of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), and the integration of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced biometric systems. The research demonstrates the indispensability of police cooperation in addressing organized crime, cybercrime, migration crisis management, and hybrid threats. Furthermore, the study identifies that the effectiveness of police cooperation is directly contingent upon the interoperability of information systems, mutual trust among EU member states, and response capabilities to contemporary challenges, while maintaining robust standards for fundamental rights protection and citizen privacy.

Keywords: police cooperation, EU security, cross-border crime, cybercrime, artificial intelligence, biometric data

Abstrakt
Niniejszy artykuł analizuje dynamicznie rozwijającą się współpracę policyjną w ramach Unii Europejskiej, która stanowi kluczową i niezbędną odpowiedź na pojawiające się zagrożenia dla bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego. Tekst koncentruje się na zmianach zachodzących od 2022 r., obejmujących wzmocnione ramy prawne i operacyjne, w tym rozszerzony mandat Europolu, rolę Europejskiej Wielodyscyplinarnej Platformy Przeciwko Zagrożeniom Przestępczym (EMPACT) oraz integrację innowacyjnych technologii, takich jak sztuczna inteligencja (AI) i zaawansowane systemy biometryczne. Przeprowadzone badania wskazują na nieodzowność współpracy policyjnej w przeciwdziałaniu przestępczości zorganizowanej, cyberprzestępczości, w zarządzaniu kryzysami migracyjnymi oraz w reagowaniu na zagrożenia hybrydowe. Ponadto w artykule stwierdzono, że skuteczność współpracy policyjnej jest bezpośrednio uzależniona od interoperacyjności systemów informacyjnych, wzajemnego zaufania między państwami członkowskimi UE oraz zdolności reagowania na współczesne wyzwania, przy jednoczesnym utrzymaniu wysokich standardów ochrony praw podstawowych i prywatności obywateli.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca policyjna, bezpieczeństwo UE, przestępczość transgraniczna, cyberprzestępczość, sztuczna inteligencja, dane biometryczne

Introduction

The fundamental duty of every state, and in the context of the European Union (EU), the common objective of member states, is to ensure internal security. The threat landscape is undergoing dynamic changes associated with the evolving cross-border nature of organized crime, cybercrime, and increasingly complex hybrid threats, against which traditional EU response mechanisms are becoming insufficient. Police cooperation in the EU, consisting of coordinated actions by the member states' law enforcement agencies which constitutes a fundamental response to these challenges, has been evolving in recent years toward increasingly integrated and innovative solutions.

The analyzed period from 2022 is characterized by a series of events that have significantly influenced the priorities and dynamics of police cooperation. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, ongoing since February 24, 2022, has not only sparked discussions about geopolitical security but has also revealed the need for effective countermeasures against conflict-related crimes such as arms trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, and cyberattacks. Furthermore, the conflict between Iran and Israel, which began on June 13, 2025, has impacted attempts to destabilize functioning of the European Union and weakened the sense of security in member states. In this context, there are concerns about the intensification of organized crime, particularly in the area of arms trafficking, as well as increased radicalization among young people.

The ongoing migration crisis at the EU borders, unfolding in the background of these events, remains one of the most important reasons for strengthening coordinated actions in the field of border management and combating human trafficking. The phenomenal development of artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies, utilized by both criminal perpetrators and law enforcement agencies, creates new challenges in personal data protection and in the area of inalienable fundamental human rights.

In the research process, the source base primally consists of normative acts, and the method of institutional – law analysis has been used. Sources of EU law and Polish generally applicable law have been examined. Reports of EU agencies have been also analysed. Within research process, mainly normative acts currently applicable, adopted after 2022 have been analysed. Ongoing research was conducted with consideration of the research objective. The research objective has both cognitive and practical value. The aim of the research was to identify and present, in a systematic and comprehensive manner, the necessity of cooperation between police forces and EU Member States in the use of new technologies.

1. Origins of Police Cooperation in the European Union

Police cooperation in the European Union has evolved from initial, loose forms of interstate cooperation, which were primarily based on bilateral agreements, to today's highly institutionalized system. The beginnings of cooperation were primarily associated with the Schengen Agreement,[1] followed by the establishment of Europol[2] in 1995; these two actions formed the foundations of a common security space. Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union signed in Lisbon (TFEU),[3] which entered into force in 2009, introduced the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) as one of the main areas of policies of member states, significantly strengthening the legal basis and competencies of the Union in the scope of police cooperation, making it transnational in nature. Nowadays, the processes of integration and strengthening of police cooperation tools are characterized by greater intensity, which is a direct response to the rapidly changing security environment.

Data derived from analysis concerning the most serious threats, based on information exchange, or cross-checks, are collected in Europol's EU-SOCTA report (EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment). This report serves to inform and activate European law enforcement agencies to combat serious and organized crime across all the EU. The EU SOCTA 2025 report highlighted the necessity for deeper police cooperation and the need for continued commitment to protecting EU societies. Since the previous report in 2021, "Europol's support for member states' law enforcement has evolved toward a more targeted and effective operational approach, consolidating a more integrated model of EU police cooperation."[4] Europol participates in complex criminal investigations at the European level, conducting activities through operational task forces. Looking ahead, Europol's primary objective "is to provide an even more extensive response to internal security threats, strengthen Europol's role as a centre of knowledge and excellence, reinforce dedicated operational teams in the crime areas of greatest concern to EU member states, and further develop innovative potential for the purposes of law enforcement."[5]

[1] Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders. Schengen.1990.06.19 (OJ EU.L.2000.239.19).

[2] Europol – The European Police Office, headquartered in The Hague. The Europol Convention was signed on 26 July 1995, and the office began operations on 1 July 1999. Europol is a law enforcement agency tasked with increasing security in Europe by providing assistance to law enforcement agencies in EU Member States.

[3] Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007 (Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 203, item 1569).

[4] Europol, *European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment – The changing DNA of serious and organised crime*, Luxembourg 2025, p. 7; https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU-SOCTA-2025.pdf [date of access: [7.07.2025].

[5] Ibidem.

As part of Europol's EU SOCTA report, published on March 18, 2025, recommendations were developed for setting priorities in combating serious and organized crime at the level of EU policy. The report assesses all threats across areas of crime under Europol's mandate, including criminal entities, criminal infrastructure, and geographical scope, taking into account the driving factors and impact of organized crime. The 2025 report developed recommendations indicating priorities for EU government services, noting that "organized crime is becoming increasingly globalized, digital, and adaptive, requiring an unprecedented level of cooperation and information sharing from law enforcement at the European level."[6]

Consequently, presenting the key aspects and mechanisms of police cooperation in the European Union, with particular emphasis on evolution and introduced innovations, aims to demonstrate how the EU adapts its tools and strategies to effectively respond to security threats. The EU SOCTA methodology is based on qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, and specific indicators have been established to identify the most dangerous criminal phenomena in the EU. Intensive analyses are conducted to establish priorities in police service operations.

Furthermore, EU SOCTA 2025 identified key threats that should be treated as the EU priorities in combating organized crime over the next four years in the context of EMPACT – European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats. EMPACT is an EU instrument, adopted in 2010, aimed at fighting and preventing the most serious crimes facing the Union. This initiative optimizes EU services at national levels, encouraging the use of their own resources and joint strengthening of efforts.

On April 1, 2025, in Strasbourg, a new Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions regarding Protect EU was issued: European Internal Security Strategy,[7] based on the unwavering promise of maintaining the peace. The Document identified security as the foundation upon which European freedoms are built, along with "democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights, competitiveness, and prosperity."

The main premise of the new actions is close strategic and operational cooperation between the Commission, member states, and the EU agencies, which will be based on new methods of information sharing and regular comprehensive analysis and assessment of threats. Another action planned by the European

[6] EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA), https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/socta-report [date of access:17.07.2025].

[7] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on ProtectEU: European Internal Security Strategy, COM/2025/148 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0148 [date of access:19.07.2025].

Commission is the development of new tools for law enforcement agencies, aimed at strengthening resilience against hybrid threats, enhancing cybersecurity, limiting access to tools and assets used in criminal activities, and providing special protection for transportation hubs and ports.

There are also plans to tighten regulations aimed at combating organized crime and take measures to prevent the recruitment of European youth into criminal groups. The European Internal Security Strategy announces the introduction of a comprehensive counter-terrorism programme, preventing radicalization through securing cyberspace and public spaces, and eliminating financing channels. The response to threats will include development of operational cooperation through partnerships with key regions, such as Latin America and the Mediterranean region.

Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the planned transformation of Europol into an operational law enforcement agency in 2026, the strengthening of Eurojust, and the expansion of the role and tasks of Frontex.

2. Legal Foundations of Police Cooperation in the European Union

The objective of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters is to guarantee the security of European Union citizens through the prevention and combat of crime, racism, and xenophobia. This matter is regulated by Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in Chapters I, IV, and V. The cooperation, which serves the EU's internal security, involves collaboration between national police forces, as well as between national administrative authorities, such as customs services and national judicial authorities.[8] This cooperation is implemented with the participation of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and the European Judicial Network.

Police cooperation in the European Union is based on a complex legal system that is continuously developed and adapted to new needs. The foundation is established by the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), particularly Articles 87-89, which define the objectives and scope of police cooperation and Europol's role. However, it is derived law – regulations, directives, and decisions – that specifies concrete mechanisms and instruments of action.

Currently, the development of EU law in the area of internal security is extremely intensive, resulting in a series of key acts that have redefined the framework for law enforcement operations in Europe. After 2022, the EU legal acts were adopted that strengthen police cooperation.

[8] An official website of the UE, *Police and criminal justice cooperation*, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM: police_judicial_cooperation [date of access:20.07.2025].

First, it is necessary to mention Regulation (EU) 2022/991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2022 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794[9] regarding Europol's cooperation with private parties, the processing of personal data by Europol to support criminal investigations, and Europol's role in research and innovation. This act significantly expanded Europol's competencies, enabling it to, among other things, more efficiently process large datasets (Big Data) to support cross-border investigations, expand cooperation with private entities (e.g., online platforms in removing terrorist content or content related to sexual abuse of children), and strengthen Europol's role in research and development of innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence, for law enforcement purposes. The new regulations also introduced a more robust framework for supervising data processing, responding to privacy concerns.

Directive (EU) 2023/977[10] of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on information exchange between member states' law enforcement authorities is another key instrument aimed at streamlining and harmonizing operational information exchange processes. The Directive introduced the requirement of establishment of a single point of contact for each member state, an obligation of prompt response to requests for information (within strictly defined timeframes, such as 8 hours in urgent cases), and established standard format for data exchange. These changes were aimed at overcoming bureaucratic barriers and accelerating the flow of data crucial for effective crime prevention.

Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 is a breakthrough legal act that establishes harmonized rules on artificial intelligence and amends Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), and has become known as the AI Act. While full implementation of the AI Act provisions will begin in 2026, certain provisions (Chapters I and II) have been in effect since February 2025, including those concerning prohibited practices of high-risk AI systems.

The EU legislator, acting with awareness of implementing the most far-reaching regulatory measures regarding AI technology development and use, which is

[9] Regulation (EU) 2022/991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2022 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794 as regards Europol's cooperation with private entities, the processing of personal data by Europol in support of criminal investigations, and Europol's role in research and innovation, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/991/oj [date of access:18.07.2025].

[10] Directive (EU) 2023/977 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on the exchange of information between the law enforcement authorities of Member States and repealing Council Framework Decision 2006/960/JHA, http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/977/oj [date of access:18.07.2025].

prohibition, designed Article 5 of the act (concerning prohibitions) on artificial intelligence, striving to define the scope of prohibition as precisely as possible.[11] The Act is fundamental in determining how the EU law enforcement authorities will use AI technologies, above all, biometric recognition systems. The AI Act, introduces strict conditions for the use of AI in real-time remote biometric identification in public places, permits such use only under strictly defined circumstances, such as searching for victims of a crime, prevention of specifically identified and imminent terrorist threats, or searching for suspects or perpetrators of serious crimes. This highlights the constant and intense tension between the need for security and the protection of fundamental rights.

Furthermore, the European legislator has introduced several legal acts supporting police cooperation and regulating topics such as: migration, border management, and security management through regulations concerning: Entry/Exit System (EES)[12]; European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS)[13]; European Criminal Records Information System for Third-Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN)[14]; Schengen Information System (SIS)[15]; Visa Information System (VIS)[16]; Eurodac.[17]

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[11] J. Kozłowski, *Akt w sprawie sztucznej inteligencji w praktyce – charakterystyka unijnej regulacji opartej na ryzyku*, „Europejski Przegląd Sądowy" 2024, no. 12, pp.s 20-25.

[12] Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulations (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011.

[13] Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 September 2018 establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and amending Regulations (EU) No 1077/2011, (EU) No 515/2014, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2016/1624 and (EU) 2017/2226.

[14] Regulation (EU) 2019/816 setting up a centralised system for the identification of Member States holding conviction information on non-EU nationals and stateless persons (ECRIS-TCN) (UE) 2018/1726.

[15] Regulation (EU) 2018/1862 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in the field of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, amending and repealing Council Decision 2007/533/JHA, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1986/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Decision 2010/261/EU.

[16] Regulation (EU) 2021/1134 amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EC) No 810/2009, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240, (EU) 2018/1860, (EU) 2018/1861, (EU) 2019/817 and (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Decisions 2004/512/EC and 2008/633/JHA in order to reform the Visa Information System (OJ L 248, 13.7.2021).

[17] Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of biometric data in order to effectively apply Regulations (EU) 2024/1351 and (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Directive 2001/55/EC and to identify illegally staying third-country nationals and stateless persons and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The regulations establishing interoperability frameworks entered into force on June 11, 2019,[18] enabling the creation of the European Search Portal, shared biometric matching service, Common Identity Repository, Multiple-Identity Detector, and Central Repository for Reporting and Statistics. Simultaneously, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) was established[19]. The agency is responsible for designing changes in the EU and Schengen border management and the registration process for third-country nationals crossing these borders.

The issue of biometric data has been particularly controversial and was also the subject of complaints before the Court of Justice of the European Union, resulting in a ruling C-205/21.[20] In this ruling, dated January 26, 2023, the CJEU determined that Police are authorized to process biometric and genetic data, within proper regulatory limitations. The use of new technologies is essential given the escalation of tensions in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine, which are directly linked to various threats, including the influx of illegal migrants through Belarus.

The processing of personal data, including sensitive data, by various EU Agencies and member state police forces has become a permanent element in combating threats, while the EU legislator maintains parallel efforts to uphold high standards of human rights, democracy, and rule of law within the Union. The aforementioned new legal frameworks, complementing existing regulations on information systems, create a comprehensive legal ecosystem designed to support police cooperation throughout the EU.

Cross-border police cooperation is largely based on the provisions of the Schengen Convention Implementing Agreement, which enabled the implementation

[18] Regulation (EU) 2019/817 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the area of borders and visa and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240, (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decisions 2004/512/EC and 2008/633/JHA and Regulation (EU) 2019/818 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the area of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816 . Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the state of preparations for the full implementation of the interoperability regulations pursuant to Article 78(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/817 and Article 74(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/818, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal content/PL/ALL/?uri=COM%3A2025%3A162%3AFIN [date of access:(2./7./025])

[19] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the state of preparations for the full implementation of the interoperability regulations pursuant to Article 78(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/817 and Article 74(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/818, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal content/PL/ALL/?uri=COM%3A2025%3A162%3AFIN [date of access: (2./7./025])

[20] OPINION OF ADVOCATE GENERAL PITRUZZELLA delivered on 30 June 2022 (1) Case C-205/21 Criminal proceedings against V.S., third party: Ministerstvo na vatreshnite raboti, Glavna direktsia za borba s organiziranataprestapnost, https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf;jsessionid=F7224E-4F7A500191A56E89B120053942?text=&docid=261934&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=16808143 [date of access: (2.07.2025]r

of its mechanisms and instruments. The EU legal acts concerning police cooperation are either linked to Schengen or derive from its legal acquis. Furthermore, through bilateral agreements and arrangements between Schengen area member states, selected issues concerning instruments, scope of cooperation, and the possibility of establishing permanent structure for police cooperation in border regions have been regulated.[21] Examples include the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on cooperation between police, border, and customs services, signed in Zgorzelec on May 15, 2014 (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 939), and the Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation in border matters, signed in Prague on May 25, 1999 (Journal of Laws 2002 No. 195, item 1644).

Police cooperation in the European Union is also guided by the development of the EU substantive criminal law. In the current legal framework, provisions of Title V, Part III of the TFEU are particularly significant in this context, including Article 83(1), which establishes a closed catalogue of crime areas considered particularly serious and with a cross-border dimension, for which the Union has competence to harmonize national law through defining minimum definitions of prohibited acts and possible criminal sanctions.[22]

The closed catalogue of specified crimes was established in the Treaty of Lisbon; however, through a unanimous Council decision a provision was made for its expansion if future crime developments justify such action.[23] This provision opens the possibility for changes, particularly when considering and analysing new emerging forms of technological, social, and cultural threats.

3. Selected Forms of EU Police Cooperation

In June 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation on operational police cooperation.[24] It established standards concerning operational cooperation for police officers operating in another EU member state or officers participating in joint operations. Rules regarding cross-border pursuits and cross-border surveillance were established.

[21] M. Róg, *Bilateral cooperation between the Polish and Lithuanian police (in the light of agreements and understandings)*, "Society and Politics" 2019, no. 3, pp. 303-316.

[22] A. Grzelak, *Expanding the list of offences in Article 83(1) TFEU – grounds, procedure and proposal to include hate crimes in the scope of harmonisation of European Union criminal law*, "Europejski Przegląd Sądowy" 2025, no. 6, pp. 4-10.

[23] Ibidem.

[24] Council Recommendation (EU) 2022/915 of 9 June 2022 on operational law enforcement cooperation (Dz.U-.UE L z dnia 13.06.2022 r.), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022H0915 [date of access: 15.07.2025].

The recommendation also included a list of crimes in relation to which cross-border pursuit and cross-border surveillance are permissible, frameworks for joint police operations, the establishment of a platform to support joint patrols and other joint operations, while ensuring secure communications and access to information, as well as joint police education with the goal of establishing a European police culture.

International police cooperation is conducted based on governmental and departmental legal acts, as well as documents enabling local cooperation in border areas.[25] Cooperation primarily consists of information exchange, which is the foundation of effective police collaboration. Currently, we can observe further modernization and development of key information systems, which constitute a vital lifeline of European security:

1. Schengen Information System[26] (SIS II): As the EU's largest information exchange system, SIS II underwent significant improvements following extensive modernization in 2022. New categories of alerts were introduced concerning persons wanted for entry or residence ban, vehicles, aircraft and boats, as well as objects related to terrorist offenses. The capabilities for entering and exchanging biometric data (fingerprints, facial images) were strengthened, which is crucial and essential for rapid person identification. According to the 2023 Ministry of Interior Affairs and Administration regulation,[27] Polish Police effectively uses SIS II to verify fingerprint data and images, which directly translates to crime detection and prevention capabilities.
2. European Criminal Records Information System for Third-Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN), that launched in 2023, is a system enabling judicial and police authorities to access information about convictions issued against third-country nationals and stateless persons throughout the Union. This represents an important enhancement in fighting cross-border crime, particularly in the context of border and migration management, as previously access to this type of data was partial.
3. European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS), which will be fully operational in 2026, will introduce preliminary security

[25] *Współpraca międzynarodowa*, https://info.policja.pl/inf/wspolpraca-miedzynarod/72445,Wspolpraca-miedzynarodowa.html [date of access:(16.07.2025])

[26] The legal basis for the creation of the Schengen Information System (SIS) is three regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council: Regulation 2018/1862, 2018/1861 and 2018/1860.

[27] Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 3 March 2023 on the procedure for handing over to the Police persons or objects found as a result of access to SIS data, the procedure in cases of disclosure of misappropriated identity and the method and procedure of cooperation between authorities and the SIRENE office (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 427).

screening for visa-exempt third-country nationals, aiming to identify potential threats before their arrival at the border. The Entry/Exit System (EES), becoming fully operational in October 2025, will begin automating the entry and exit of third-country nationals crossing external Schengen borders, replacing traditional passport stamping and collecting biometric data (fingerprint data and facial biometric data). Both systems, managed by eu-LISA, significantly enhance the monitoring and identification capabilities in the border area, which is invaluable in counteracting illegal migration and crime. When fully operational, the capabilities of the systems will revolutionise the work of state authorities, including the Police.

4. Shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS): In pursuit toward interoperability, sBMS enables simultaneous searching of biometric data across multiple databases (SIS, VIS, Eurodac, EES, ETIAS). The service enables fingerprint matching and first-time facial recognition. sBMS contains approximately 400 million biometric templates, aiming for precision during person identification and verification, enhancing border security and EU border controls. The launch of this new service coincides with the adaptation of the Visa Information System (VIS), which is now ready to interact with the Entry/Exit System (EES).[28] The system was launched on May 19, 2025. The shared biometric matching tool represents an important step needed to reduce the time required for identity verification and multiple identity detection, which is critical in combating current EU security threats.

The heart of police cooperation in the European Union is Europol – the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation – which serves as a centre for multidimensional coordination. Europol's strengthened mandate from 2022, established by the aforementioned Regulation 2022/991, has enabled the Agency to operate even more effectively. Europol supports member states in analysing large datasets, which is crucial and irreplaceable in detecting complex criminal networks. Furthermore, Europol's creation of "threat maps" (SOCTA) and setting strategic priorities for the EU (EMPACT) serves as a starting point for coordinated and targeted police actions in the EU. The Agency is also the main AI development and implementation institution for law enforcement purposes, while ensuring its use complies with AI Act requirements and personal data protection principles.

[28] News article 19 May 2025 Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Commission announces launch of the shared biometric matching service, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-announces-launch-shared-biometric-matching-service-2025-05-19_en?prefLang=pl&etrans=pl [date of access: 23.07.2025].

Interpol,[29] the International Criminal Police Organization, assists law enforcement agencies in combating all forms of crime, bringing together 195 member states and is responsible for cooperation through a network of Police liaison officers operating in European Union countries, i.e., France, Spain, Lithuania, Germany, Croatia, Hungary, and Italy, as well as non-EU countries, i.e., Great Britain, Norway, Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States of America, and cooperation with foreign liaison officers accredited in Poland. It provides direct access to police databases concerning missing and wanted persons, fingerprint cards, DNA profiles, stolen vehicles and documents, etc.[30] Interpol continuously introduces innovations, keeping pace with contemporary policing challenges by utilizing new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which can pose a security threat but can also serve as a police tool and source of evidence.[31] Interpol is an integral part of police cooperation worldwide and in Europe. It has been working towards international security for 100 years, evolving and introducing innovations to its security services.

In the Polish Police, the contact point and location where all international police information exchange channels converge – Single Point of Contact (SPOC) – is the International Police Cooperation Bureau of the National Police Headquarters. This unit coordinates and supervises all activities within international non-operational, operational, and training cooperation.

Another strategic and operational mechanism for coordinating EU internal security actions is EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats). This is an initiative led by the EU member states to identify, prioritize, and respond to threats posed by organized and serious international crime.[32] In the EMPACT policy cycle for the years 2025-2029, adopted by the EU Council in June 2025, seven priority threat areas were identified, including high-risk organized crime, cybercrime, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, financial crime, as well as firearms and explosives-related crimes and environmental crimes.

EMPACT conducts Joint Action Days (JADs), which involve Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, and national law enforcement authorities. EMPACT provides a comprehensive approach, combining strategic analysis with specific operational activities to achieve measurable results in combating cross-border crime.

[29] CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION-INTERPOL file:///C:/Users/752050/Downloads/01%20E%20Constitution_2024.pdf [date of access:23.07.2025].

[30] *Who we are*, https://www.interpol.int/ [date of access: 23.07.2025].

[31] *NTERPOL – Five actions for a safer world,* https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/What-is-INTERPOL2/INTERPOL-Five-actions-for-a-safer-world [date of access: 23.07.2025].

[32] *EMPACT fighting crime together*, An official website of the UE, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/law-enforcement-cooperation/empact-fighting-crime-together_en [date of access: 23.07.2025].

In 2023, as a result of EMPACT, cooperation with non-EU partners was strengthened to combat criminal activity in the Western Balkans, Latin America, and in the context of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine, but there were also many other achievements:

- 15,644 investigations initiated (over 7,500 victims identified and secured),
- 13,871 arrests made,
- €797 million confiscated (in assets and money),
- 197 tons of drugs seized,
- 821 high-risk criminal networks identified,
- 155 high-value targets revealed.

In 2024, under EMPACT:

- 6,635 investigations initiated,
- 13,575 criminals arrested,
- 5,024 victims identified and secured,
- €1.05 billion in assets and money seized,
- 1,941 firearms and 222 kg of explosives confiscated,
- 85 tons of drugs seized,
- 73 high-value targets were identified.[33]

Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) represent one of the most advanced forms of operational cooperation. The legal basis for establishing JITs within Member States' cooperation is founded on Article 13 of the 2000 Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance[34] and the 2002 Framework Decision concerning JITs.[35] These frameworks enable law enforcement authorities from different Member States to establish joint teams for conducting specific cross-border investigations, particularly in cases involving terrorism, organized crime, or cybercrime.

JITs, comprising of prosecution, law enforcement officials, and judges, are established for a specified duration, typically ranging from 12 to 24 months, deemed necessary for the successful completion of investigations.[36] Following the establishment of a JIT, police officers from various EU states, as team members, can directly exchange information and evidence, collaborate in real-time, and conduct joint operations. JITs facilitate the presence of police officers during investigative procedures in the territory of another state, resulting in the exchange of technical expertise and human resources.

[33] Ibidem.

[34] COUNCIL ACTof 29 May 2000 establishing in accordance with Article 34 of the Treaty on European Union the Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Member States of the European Union (2000/C 197/01).

[35] COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION of 13 June 2002 on joint investigation teams (2002/465/JHA).

[36] European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, Joint investigation teams, https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/judicial-cooperation/instruments/joint-investigation-teams [date of access: 23.07.2025].

Direct contact and communication enable JIT members to build personal relationships and trust, which translates into more brisk and efficient cooperation.[37] Eurojust (The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation) plays a pivotal role in supporting and coordinating JITs by providing legal and financial assistance.[38] In collaboration with the Prosecutor's Office of the International Criminal Court, Eurojust actively supports handling cases of international scope by teams, representing a precedent-setting example of cooperation in the prosecution of international crimes.

Effective management of external borders is another crucial domain for EU internal security, with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) playing a central role. The most recent modification to Frontex's legal framework was implemented through the enactment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13 November 2019 concerning the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019). Hundreds of officers from the EU Member States participate in operations along and beyond the European Union's external borders, executing tasks related to border protection, combating cross-border crime, and facilitating return operations.[39]

During the period 2022-2025, Frontex significantly enhanced its operational capabilities by increasing the number of permanent corps officers, developing advanced surveillance technologies (including drones and satellites), and intensifying joint operations along the EU's external land and maritime borders. In the context of increased migratory pressure on the EU's eastern border and Mediterranean routes, Frontex's cooperation with national border services and police forces has become increasingly strategic.

According to preliminary data collected by Frontex in the first half of 2025, the number of illegal border crossing incidents at the European Union's borders decreased by 20% to 75,900, primarily due to significant drop in numbers along the Eastern Mediterranean and West African routes.[40]

4. Training and Capacity Building for Police Cooperation

Non-operational cooperation among Member States' police forces represents another significant aspect of the EU law enforcement collaboration. This primarily

[37] Ibidem.

[38] European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, Joint investigation teams (Eurojust), https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/eurojust_pl [date of access: 23.07.2025].

[39] *Who we are*, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/who-we-are/tasks-mission/?etrans=pl [date of access: 22.07.2025].

[40] *EU external borders: Irregular crossings drop by 20% in first half of 2025*, 10.07.2025, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-irregular-crossings-drop-by-20-in-first-half-of-2025-CUpZ5o [date of access: 23.07.2025].

encompasses training exchange and cooperation with other police institutions from the EU Member States, facilitated through EU agencies and bodies. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL – Collège Européen de Police) extends its activities beyond the Union, particularly to Eastern Partnership countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine). CEPOL is responsible for developing the competencies of law enforcement officers within the EU.

During 2022-2025, CEPOL intensified its training programs, focusing on emerging threats and technologies. The training curriculum encompasses cybercrime (e.g., digital forensics, countering ransomware), hybrid threats (combating disinformation, critical infrastructure protection), counter-terrorism (including online radicalization), and the application of artificial intelligence in investigations. Investment in officer education is crucial to ensure that the Member States law enforcement agencies possess the necessary skills to combat evolving forms of crime. Consequently, the utilization of the EU funds by Member States' police forces for training and equipment acquisition represents a significant development.

Non-operational cooperation also encompasses the development of the EU legislation and familiarization with legislative solutions implemented in other Member States. Professional and personal contacts within this domain are equally important, as they foster interpersonal trust, eliminate prejudice, and dismantle harmful stereotypes.

Conclusion

Contemporary police cooperation would be impossible without the dynamic development and implementation of new technologies. Biometric data (facial images, fingerprints, and behavioural biometrics) has become fundamental for rapid and unambiguous identification. Systems such as sBMS and the development of AI-based analytical tools within Europol and eu-LISA enable automatic data comparison from various sources, identification of criminal behaviour patterns, and threat prediction. AI is also employed in analysing open-source information during Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) operations, in combating terrorist content and online child exploitation materials.

The EU AI Act will ensure technological development within clearly defined legal and ethical frameworks while protecting the fundamental rights of citizens and residents within the Union. Surely, police cooperation in the European Union continues to face numerous challenges that shape its developmental trajectory. Primarily, the protection of personal data and fundamental rights presents a significant challenge, with the balance between security and freedom remaining a persistent concern.

European Court of Justice rulings, such as those concerning biometric data collection (C-205/21 of 2023) and the legality of fingerprint collection in identity documents (C-61/22 of 2024), are clearly setting the boundaries of permissible intervention and require Member States to align national regulations with EU requirements.

Regarding system interoperability, challenges remain concerning the full integration of national databases with EU systems. Differences in system architecture, data standards, and national procedures hinder smooth information exchange. The level of trust between Member States' law enforcement authorities may still constitute a barrier, stemming from differences in legislation, operational procedures, and concerns about national sovereignty. Further development of a common police cooperation culture should be pursued through officer exchange programs and joint training initiatives.

EU national police forces must rapidly adapt to new criminal modus operandi, necessitating contemporary legal frameworks and EU investment in research and development. Effective police cooperation requires substantial financial and human resources as implementing innovative technologies, complex information systems, and joint operations is costly and requires consistent and adequate funding from national and the EU budgets.

In the years to come, we can expect the development of police cooperation with third countries, particularly EU neighbours and regions that are sources of criminal activity. This appears crucial in combating terrorism, organized crime, and illegal immigration. Given the increasing complexity of financial crimes and money laundering, the EU will place greater emphasis on developing capabilities in tracking financial flows and effectively recovering criminal assets.

Police cooperation within the European Union constitutes an appropriate response to complex and cross-border internal security threats that represents a dynamic and continuously evolving mechanism. The period since 2022 has brought significant reinforcement of legal and operational frameworks, responding to the necessity of adaptation to an evolving security landscape, marked by the war in Ukraine, destabilization in the Middle East, the migration crisis, and phenomenal technological advancement. The strengthening of Europol's mandate, EMPACT's development, information exchange through modernized systems, while pursuing full interoperability, is the appropriate representation of steps toward building an integrated and effective European security space.

In conclusion, police cooperation in the EU undergoes continuous development and is characterized by multidimensionality, encompassing a broad spectrum of operational tools and mechanisms. In the face of multiple global security threats

that do not respect national borders, decisive and well-coordinated action by all Member States' police forces remains a sine qua non condition for ensuring the protection of Union citizens. The development of this cooperation, while maintaining parallel respect for democratic values and human rights, will be paramount for the future of the European area of freedom, security, and justice.

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