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## EURIEC Action Plan

### History

For the purpose of the intergovernmental objectives of the Senningen 2013-2016 (Benelux) action plan, a working group regarding an administrative strategy to combat organised crime was established on 28 November 2014 and formalised through a declaration of intent that was signed by Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. One of the outcomes of this working group is the report on Tackling Crime Together (2016) which describes the strategy to control OMGs in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg and calls for closer collaboration. One of the recommendations from this report is starting a pilot project with a multidisciplinary information and expertise centre in the Meuse-Rhine Euregion, modelled after the Dutch Regional Information and Expertise Centres (RIECs).

This recommendation was repeated in the Council conclusions regarding the administrative strategy to combat organised crime adopted by the JHA Council in June 2016 when the Netherlands held the Presidency of the EU. This also called for a pilot project where a cross-border multi-disciplinary information and expertise centre tackles concrete cases to gather experience of the possibilities and impossibilities that occur in the cross-border administrative strategy and the information exchange needed for this.

### Introduction / Assignment

During a symposium on 17 May 2018 in the government building of the Dutch province of Limburg in Maastricht, the Belgian Minister of Security and Home Affairs Jan Jambon, NRW Minister of Home Affairs Herbert Reul and Dutch Minister of Justice and Security Ferdinand Grapperhaus signed a declaration of intent emphasizing that they wish to reinforce their collaboration regarding improving the information exchange for the purpose of the administrative strategy among Belgium, North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands.

In this context, they will strive for the establishment of a Euregional Information and Expertise Centre (EURIEC for short) for the administrative strategy to combat organised crime. They are commissioning RIEC Limburg to give substance to the Euregional Information and Expertise Centre in conjunction with the Belgian ARIECs and a body yet to be determined in North Rhine-Westphalia\*.

This action plan intends to give substance to the establishment of this centre.

\* The North Rhine-Westphalia Department of Home Affairs has asked the Bezirksregierung Köln to represent it on the EURIEC project



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## Context

EURIEC is being developed in the Meuse-Rhine Euregion. The partners are Belgium, North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands. Three languages, i.e. German, French and Dutch, are spoken in an area with almost 4 million inhabitants.

There are major differences in their political setup and laws and regulations. Furthermore, responsibilities have not been assigned equally everywhere. This currently limits the opportunities to exchange information for administrative purposes. Awareness building is also something that will have to be worked on in the three countries. It is currently quite a challenge just to align the various definitions to each other so as to ensure that we are talking about the same things.

## Ambition

EURIEC aspires to bring “field workers” from the three countries together and offer an expertise platform. Experts in various fields (justice/investigation/administration) are brought together to find solutions, working from a practical and case-focused approach, enabling information to be brought there where it can be used as part of the joint strategy to combat organised subversive crime. Integrated tables will be set up for this in order to create the opportunity to study a case together, analyse it, and use this as a basis to prepare proposals for interventions.

Any bottlenecks will also be identified and addressed against this background.

The tasks resulting from this ambition are related to the available budget of €1 million with a term of 2 years.

The bottlenecks will be identified through a detailed description with legal substantiation. They will be addressed at the bodies responsible for the bottlenecks in the three countries.

## Description of EURIEC

As stated in the declaration of intent referred to above, EURIEC will focus on several matters, including:

- Developing policy and legal knowledge and gathering experience – based on case histories – in order to advise stakeholders on the effective application of the legal tools (permit procedures, closing premises and companies, etc....);
- Developing screening methods to prevent and repress the underworld infiltrating into legitimate society<sup>1</sup>;
- Developing standard working processes for the administrative strategy and for anchoring these processes;



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- Educating government staff to increase their awareness and resilience;
- Recognising crime trends;
- Triggering optimisation of legislation <sup>1</sup>.

## Tasks

This can be presented as the following tasks:

- Building cross-border case histories;  
Participants in the expert platform that is to be built up can submit cases (signals) which will be assessed and then elaborated in more detail and analysed by EURIEC.
- Developing policy proposals for a legal administrative strategy framework <sup>1</sup>;  
Based on the bottlenecks identified in cases, reports will be prepared that clearly describe what these bottlenecks are. Such reports will also describe proposals that can lead to a legally correct solution.
- Developing barrier models<sup>1</sup>;  
The barrier models method, which has already been tried and tested in the Netherlands, will be developed further in the three countries, using national resources.
- Developing uniform terminology (in three languages);  
A comparison and definitions of terms in the three languages will be prepared, clarifying any similarities and differences.
- Increasing awareness among the different authorities as regards the possibilities of an administrative strategy.  
Education and courses will be used to inform the authorities and their personnel of the situation regarding subversion and the possibilities of taking their roles in the strategy to combat this.

## Organisation

EURIEC will be a physically based network organisation.

It will give experts and case owners a flexible platform.

Depending on the cases offered, the number of people in the field that are using the platform will vary.

A fixed staff will support the case owners in this respect.

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<sup>1</sup> is part of a three-year project and cannot be achieved in a two-year setup.



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This fixed core/crew consists of:

Legal support: three lawyers from the three countries

Account management: three account managers who are the liaisons in the three countries, and who will identify and retrieve case histories and maintain contacts with case owners

Management: 1 coordinator + support

Arrangements with one or several universities will be initiated in order to offer counselling and support for the project.

EURIEC will be under the responsibility of the Head of the RIEC Limburg and will also be housed near the RIEC Limburg.

## Governance

EURIEC will be counselled and supervised by two steering groups;

One **steering group** will focus on **Strategy and Management** and will be formed by the current RIEC Limburg (NL) steering group.

As the applicant and manager of the subsidy, this steering group will focus on the strategic themes in relation to the financial management and responsibility.

Based on this responsibility, the steering group will be expanded by someone from the EC with a standing invitation.

The **Strategy and Management steering group** will work closely together with, and consult with, the Policy and Development steering group. This steering group will focus on the operational development of EURIEC.

The Policy and Development steering group will consist of:

- The deputy chair of the RIEC Limburg steering group, also the chair of the EURIEC steering group. This also safeguards the connection with the steering group;
- Two ministerial/department level representatives from the three countries;
- One Head of ARIEC Hasselt + one Head of RIEC – East NL;
- Head of RIEC Limburg.

Representatives of the scientific community from the three countries (DE, BE and NL) will be invited to attend the SG EURIEC meetings as advisers for any relevant points on the agenda.

Information meetings for a **sounding board group** will be held twice a year.

These meetings serve to give organisations that are not directly involved in the implementation of the European EURIEC project feedback on the progress made. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and to comment on how things are going and on the activities of the EURIEC.



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Some of the organisations that will be invited to this sounding board group are: EUROPOL, EMR, BENELUX, ENAA, BES, EPICC, Gemeinde Selfkant, Innenministerium NRW, Fachhochschule Köln, Bezirksregierung Köln, ARIECs Belgium.

## Budget

Project leader / coordinator	1 fte	€ 100,000
Account managers	3 x 0.5 fte per country	€ 150,000
Legal assistants	3 x 0.5 fte	€ 150,000
Housing / ICT		€ 20,000
Translations		€ 50,000
Travel cost		€ 15,000
Meeting cost		€ 15,000

## Funding

The original project assumed a period of three years, with a total budget of approx. €2 million. A recent EC communication has shown that €1 million is available; the impact of this communication will be considered in consultation with the parties involved.

A lower budget would affect the term of the project, possibilities of available capacity and, as a result, the ambitions.

This note considers the impact for the ambitions.

Various matters will be discussed with the EC. The option to apply for additional budget for a third and fourth year, enabling phased achievement of the ambitions/objectives, will be considered.

## Timeline

The formalities regarding the European Commission's direct call have been completed. The final grant application was submitted on 29 January 2019.

The staff recruitment process will be initiated in February and March. This process is expected to be completed in March 2019.