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Tackling crime in the European Union

An executive summary from the
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Tackling crime in the EU: an executive summary

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Introduction

UK citizens are protected by various laws which tackle crime throughout the EU. Europol, the Schengen Information System and the European Arrest Warrant are all designed to keep all EU citizens safe. EU law empowers member states to combat crime, including giving them the power to extradite individuals who have committed crimes within their borders.

Europol fosters cross-border collaboration in fighting crime

Europol supports national law enforcement agencies in their fight against serious crime such as drug smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism¹. Europol is the information hub for EU law enforcement, with databases that help different countries to cooperate by identifying common investigations, as well as providing the basis for strategic and thematic analysis. The UK has benefitted from Europol information systems and is copied into 40% of the institution's data messages². Officers at the UK's National Crime Agency access EU databases every day and fear moving from 'member status' to 'operational status' will make it harder to keep British citizens safe³.

The Schengen Information System (SIS) is an extensive database for sharing vital security information

The SIS is the most widely used and largest information sharing system for security and border management in Europe. SIS enables national authorities, such as the police and border guards, to enter and consult alerts on a person or object.

- At the end of 2017, SIS contained approximately 76.5 million records, was accessed 5.2 billion times and secured over 240,000 hits⁴.
- British police officers accessed the system 539 million times in 2017, with equipment capable of searching SIS and the police national criminal data base simultaneously.

¹ "About Europol", *Europol*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol>

² Mark Easton, "Europol head fears loss of UK influence after Brexit", *BBC News*, last modified 31st January 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42874985>

³ Mark Easton, "Europol head fears loss of UK influence after Brexit", *BBC News*, last modified 31st January 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42874985>

⁴ "Schengen Information System", *European Commission*, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen-information-system_en

- Deputy Assistant Commissioner Richard Martin of the Metropolitan Police said there is “no alternative” to Schengen Information System II (SIS II), a huge database containing information on terrorists, criminals, missing people and stolen property⁵.

The European Arrest Warrant (EAW) means criminals can be brought to justice

The EAW is a simplified cross-border procedure for the purpose of prosecuting or enforcing a custodial sentence or detention order. An arrest warrant issued by a national authority (such as the Crown Prosecution of England and Wales) is valid in the entire territory of the EU⁶. The EAW is vital for the UK in prosecuting criminals who have fled the country and deporting criminals that have fled to the UK back to another EU member to face justice. The EU’s chief Brexit negotiator has said the UK will be ‘kicked out’ of the EAW after Brexit⁷. According to the National Crime Agency, other EU members requested the arrest of 14,279 UK-based suspects in 2015-6, up from 1,865 in 2004. The UK made 241 such requests in 2015-6, leading to 150 arrests⁸. George Hamilton, the chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland said non-participation in the scheme was “probably the biggest practical vulnerability” facing law enforcement in Northern Ireland post-Brexit⁹.

AMBER Alert Europe Foundation

AMBER Alert Europe is a foundation that assists in saving missing children at risk by connecting law enforcement with other police experts and with the public across Europe. AMBER Alert Europe brings together 32 official organisations, public organisations and businesses from 21 countries across the EU. The system was inspired by the creation of AMBER Alert Netherlands in 2008 and the system was rolled out for the rest of the EU in 2013. AMBER Alert Europe has the following goal: to be a life-saving factor in abductions or disappearances of children throughout Europe¹⁰. Non-EU countries can take part in AMBER Alert; however it has not been confirmed whether the UK will carry on participating after Brexit.

⁵ Lizzie Dearden, “EU-wide information system threatened by Brexit used by UK 539 million times every year, police say”, *The Independent*, last modified 2nd May 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-security-eu-europol-cooperation-data-sis-ii-arrest-warrant-police-a8333011.html>

⁶ “European Arrest Warrant”, *European Justice*, last modified 19 September 2019. https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_european_arrest_warrant-90-en.do

⁷ “UK can’t keep European Arrest Warrant after Brexit”, *BBC News*, last modified 19 June 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44532500>

⁸ “UK can’t keep European Arrest Warrant after Brexit”, *BBC News*, last modified 19 June 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44532500>

⁹ “UK can’t keep European Arrest Warrant after Brexit”, *BBC News*, last modified 19 June 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44532500>

¹⁰ “AMBER Alert Europe Foundation”, *AmberAlert.eu*, <https://www.amberalert.eu/amber-alert-europe/>

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