

## Online HELP Seminar: Reinforcing International Cooperation in times of COVID-19

### Conclusions

- **Tuesday, 23 March 2021, 9.30am – 13.00.**
- Organised within the framework of the **EU-CoE project 'HELP Radicalisation prevention, judicial response to terrorism and international cooperation in criminal matters'** (HELP RP-TERR-ICCM).
- **Total number of participants: 129**
- **Participating countries:** Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK.
- **Profile of participants:** Judges, prosecutors, lawyers, prison & probation officers, academics, psychologists, representatives of European institutions (CoE, EU), representatives of national governmental institutions (Ministries of Justice, Judicial Schools, Bars, etc.).

**EU-CoE Project 'HELP Radicalisation Prevention, Judicial Response to Terrorism & International Cooperation in Criminal Matters' (RP-TERR-ICCM)**

## Seminar Objective

The rationale behind the seminar was to provide a forum for justice professionals (i.e. all professionals involved in the different stages of the criminal process) to discuss recent developments in international cooperation in criminal matters, as well as to analyse the challenges to international cooperation that have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus was on the areas of counterterrorism, organised crime, and radicalisation.

The seminar wanted to offer professionals the opportunity to learn from key experts in the subject and exchange ideas and best practices from which to draw these conclusions.

An ancillary objective was to disseminate information on the HELP online courses related to this area and included in the EU-CoE HELP RP-TERR-ICCM project, namely: HELP course on International Cooperation in Criminal Matters (new 2021 version); HELP course on Radicalisation Prevention; HELP course on Managing Foreign National Prisoners (developed jointly with Europris).

9.30- 10.00	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eva PASTRANA, Head of HELP Unit, Council of Europe</li> <li>• Eva MASSA, HELP Project Coordinator, Council of Europe</li> </ul>
10.00-10.45	<p><b>RP-TERR-ICCM Update- challenges created by COVID-19</b></p> <p>Jelena JOLIC, Counter-terrorism Division, Council of Europe</p>
10.45 11.00	Break
11.00 11.45	<p><b>Reinforcing international cooperation – a European perspective</b></p> <p>José DE LA MATA AMAYA- Eurojust. Former judge of the Spanish Special Criminal Court</p>
11.45-12.15	<p><b>Presentation of HELP courses under the project:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>International Cooperation in Criminal Matters</b> (updated), Salvador CUENCA CURBELO, European Public Prosecutor's Office</li> <li>• <b>Radicalisation Prevention</b>, Eva MASSA, Project Coordinator</li> <li>• <b>Managing Foreign National Prisoners</b>, Nick Hammond &amp; Petra Pavlas, EUROPRIS</li> </ul>
12.15 – 13.00	<b>Workshop/Q&amp;A/sharing ideas &amp; concerns/conclusions</b>

## Challenges and obstacles to international cooperation

- **New challenges related to terrorism and radicalisation:**
  - emerging terrorist threats.
  - changes to terrorist organisation structures.
  - rise of violent extremism attacks (e.g. far-right and far-left groups).
  - future return of foreign fighters.
  - the massive use of internet and social media.
  - radicalisation in prisons.
  - changes to terrorism financing.
  - the impact of COVID-19 on terrorist propaganda and terrorist operations.
  
- **Short and long-term impact of COVID-19 in transnational issues:**
  - increase in the reach of narratives to an online captive audience
  - limitations on some operational activities.
  - diversion of counterterrorism resources to aid the pandemic response and recovery.
  
- **Lack of knowledge:**
  - No awareness of existing cooperation agencies, systems & processes in place.
  - Lack of knowledge of other European judicial systems.
  - Lack of awareness of bilateral treaties and of international legal instruments.
  - The existence of a large number instruments and sometimes there is a blurred line between them.
  - Deficit of training at national level. Some reasons:
    - No knowledge of other languages or of new technologies.
    - Professional focus only on national issues, with no attention to international cooperation.
    - It is hard for professionals to find time for training, due to the large workload at national level.
    - No training on online tools to look for information on international cooperation.
  
- **Different national systems within the EU:**
  - Different views and strategies, which makes it difficult to find common ground.
  - Differences in legislation and the lack of identical charges in many serious crimes.

- **Lack of communication and mutual trust between different countries & agencies:**
  - Excessive restrictions in the provision of information.
  - Lack of secure channel to exchange information (email / internet).
  - Difficulty in finding interlocutors and methods to exchange information. (Many countries do not accept communication via email). Unnecessary delays.

## **Suggested solutions to challenges**

### **❖ Challenge - New challenges related to terrorism and radicalisation.**

#### **Solutions:**

- Developing standards to counter new threats.
- Artificial Intelligence may contribute to address/respond to new terrorist threats.
- Need to invest in trust and in informal networks, as well as the need to improve the coordination of judicial responses and investigations, including how judicial authorities respond to conflict of jurisdictions.
- Improve interagency work to tackle radicalisation among young people, which is associated with poor educational achievement, mental health problems, active engagement with online social media, exposure to other radicalised networks and associates, personal grievances and triggering events.

### **❖ Challenge - Lack of knowledge.**

#### **Solutions:**

- More (regular) training needed at national and international level.
- Encourage participation in cooperation seminars, workshops and practice with real law cases.
- Improve training at national level by analysing specific training needs by sector.
- Specific human rights training, particularly for Prison staff.
- Enhancing knowledge of online tools (porntuario, Atlas, ...) to look for the proper authority to address to.
- Introduce specific training sections dedicated to international cooperation within any field (for example, drug trafficking).
- to improve informal contacts between the stakeholders.

❖ **Challenge - Lack of communication and mutual trust between different countries & agencies.**

**Solutions:**

- Need to invest in trust and in informal networks, as well as the need to improve the coordination of judicial responses and investigations, including how judicial authorities respond to conflict of jurisdictions.

## **Next steps**

- A. The HELP Secretariat will take into consideration all these important contributions with a view to develop and implement further training at national level, as well as to continue organising networking events that will provide more opportunities to justice professionals to exchange ideas and best practices.
- B. Within the framework of the EU-CoE project HELP RP-TERR-ICCM, a **High-level Conference on Countering cross-border crime: human rights implications - improving international and multi-agency cooperation to tackle radicalisation, terrorism and organised crime** will be held on 20 and 21 October 2021. The aim of the conference will be to further explore these and other issues arisen during the implementation of the project.

It will include general sessions and workshops on a variety of topics: priorities and challenges during investigation and arrest, judicial cooperation & mutual legal assistance, imprisonment & probation; returnee Foreign Terrorists Fighters (FTFs) and their families; de-radicalisation/disengagement programmes; supporting victims of terrorism and cybercrime.

Conclusions from the Conference will also be circulated among stakeholders. For further information and to register, please visit the Conference webpage: [HELP High-level Conference on Countering cross-border crime](#).

- C. The Council of Europe will continue its long-standing cooperation with the European Union to tackle new threats in the fields of counterterrorism, radicalisation and organised crime.