



## CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS FOR JUSTICE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# CROSS BORDER COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE: THE STRENGTHENING OF COOPERATION TO COUNTER TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES<sup>1</sup>

18 to 19 September 2025  
Valletta, Malta

We, the Ministers of Justice of the member States of the Council of Europe, gathered in Valletta, Malta, on 19 September 2025, under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, united in our shared responsibility and commitment to justice and enhanced cooperation in criminal matters;

RECALLING the Council of Europe's foundational values, aimed at upholding democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights, as enshrined in its Statute and in the European Convention on Human Rights;

CONVINCED that a common and united commitment by member States is indispensable in countering transnational and organised crime, which threatens peace, justice, and the security of our societies in an urgent way;

AFFIRMING that the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 1959, together with its Additional Protocols, remain the backbone of judicial cooperation among member States, fostering greater unity, and serving as a global model for mutual assistance in criminal matters;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the ever-evolving nature of transnational and organised crime, particularly in the context of technological developments, including artificial intelligence and digitalisation, impacting both the commission and combatting of criminal activities, necessitates robust and agile legal frameworks and resilient institutions to ensure swift and effective cooperation;

WELCOMING the opportunity presented by the Valletta Ministerial Conference to assess the practical application of the existing framework and explore innovative tools, including digital solutions, to modernise judicial cooperation;

HIGHLIGHTING the significance of the Third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Valletta Protocol) opened for signature on the margins of this Conference, as a key milestone in the development of more responsive and streamlined modern mechanisms of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters;

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<sup>1</sup> The political declaration was adopted by all Member States of the Council of Europe at the conclusion of the Conference, with the EU Delegation also present.



RECOGNISING the valuable contributions of the Council of Europe's conventions and expert bodies, and relevant regional and international organisations, in enhancing legal frameworks and supporting member States in addressing new and emerging criminal threats;

ENCOURAGING increased trust, transparency, cooperation and synergy among member States, national authorities, judges, prosecutors and law enforcement agencies so that they can tackle organised crime and transnational criminality with even greater energy and efficiency;

HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. Reaffirm our unwavering commitment to strengthening cross-border cooperation in criminal matters, grounded in the principles of mutual assistance, reciprocity, and respect for human rights, under national, European and international norms and standards, including the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights.
2. Welcome the Valletta Protocol as a timely and forward-looking response to address practical challenges, the changes in criminal patterns, and legal gaps identified in the application of the 1959 Convention and its Protocols.
3. Underscore our collective determination, through the Valletta Protocol, to bridge current legal and procedural gaps and to adapt our cooperation mechanisms to meet the evolving challenges of justice and security.
4. Explore ways to continuously modernise mutual legal assistance frameworks by integrating the use of digital tools that enhance the speed, security, and accessibility of cooperation procedures including, among the main measures proposed by the Protocol, the increased use of electronic means of communication and, where appropriate video conferencing, as a valuable and primary ways for the hearing of witnesses and experts.
5. Encourage the development and adoption of common standards for the responsible and secure use of digital tools in the fight against transnational crime and in this context, highlight the importance of ensuring that digitalisation and the use of electronic means respect international human rights standards, including the right to a fair trial, data protection and procedural safeguards, as well as the right to privacy.
6. Commit to continued judicial dialogue, to promote mutual trust and the exchange of best practices across borders to ensure that judicial cooperation mechanisms keep pace with the growing complexity of transnational and organised crime, including cyber-related crime.
7. Call for enhanced cooperation between national central authorities, prosecutors, and courts, to ensure the full and effective implementation of mutual legal assistance instruments, both at the legislative and practical levels, and prioritise the investigation, prosecution, adjudication and prevention of the most serious crimes.
8. Recognise the importance of fostering mutual trust and judicial dialogue across borders, through training, institutional exchanges and the promotion of shared legal values, with the aim to improve cooperation and building mutual understanding and effective partnerships in the framework of the Council of Europe and at bilateral levels.



9. Underline the continued efforts of the Council of Europe in supporting national authorities in setting standards and implementing cooperation frameworks and invite its bodies, particularly the European Committee on Crime Problems and the Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Cooperation in Criminal Matters, to continue providing guidance on best practices, legal interpretations, and emerging issues related to international cooperation in criminal matters.
10. Promote strengthened cooperation among States and with other international and regional organisations to advance global efforts to counter transnational and organised crime, underlining the global relevance and reach of Council of Europe Conventions in fields such as mutual legal assistance, extradition, cybercrime, money laundering, terrorism financing, trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.
11. Commit to ensuring that our cooperation frameworks are inclusive, flexible, and capable of addressing new criminal trends and practical modern challenges, while preserving and promoting the rule of law, due process, and human rights.

We, the Ministers of Justice, gathered in Valletta, Malta, under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, declare our resolve to work collectively to uphold the objectives set forth in this Declaration, to promote the full implementation and effectiveness of the Valletta Protocol, and to reinforce cross-border cooperation and mutual legal assistance in order to strengthen efforts to counter transnational and organized crime.