

The Hague, <sup>December</sup> 2 November 2020

Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group Secretariat

To the attention of the JPSG Co-Chairs

By email only:

[jpsg.libesecretariat@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:jpsg.libesecretariat@europarl.europa.eu)

**Europol reply to written questions from the Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Mr Patrick Breyer, to the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG)**

Dear Co-Chairs,

In accordance with Article 4.2 of the JPSG Rules of Procedure and Article 51 of the Europol Regulation, Europol would like to respond to the question raised by JPSG members, Mr Breyer, received by Europol on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 as follows:

**Written questions by the MEP Mr Patrick Breyer**

**1) Does Europol support IT companies financially in deploying automated tools? Please specify.**

Europol's answer:

Europol does not support IT companies financially in deploying automated tools. Europol personnel, including consultants, perform the deployment of the tools for Europol.

**2) The report "Catching the virus"<sup>1</sup> addresses i.e. disinformation. Is 'Disinformation' part of the Europol mandate?**

Europol's answer:

As explained in Europol's public reporting regarding the developing crime situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of disinformation including fake news is a key feature of the current hybrid threat landscape.

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Europol has focussed the work on a number of areas in its strategic reporting (e.g. how the serious and organised crime landscape is shaped in the EU, 'enterprising' criminals, reporting on the impact on drug criminality and child sexual exploitation). While the production and dissemination of fictitious claims is often not a criminal offence in itself, disinformation aspects have accompanied and are even an integral component of some of the criminal offences with respect to terrorism (jihadist campaigns online), counterfeiting of goods as well as online scams and fraudulent activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting several Member States, generating significant financial profits for organised crime networks over a longer period of time.

<sup>1</sup> Europol report "Catching the virus", 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020.

## Europol Public Information

Citizens become vulnerable and receptive to disinformation and fake news, in particular given the circumstances and impact on their life situation. This is compounded by the increasingly complex societal environments that appear to emerge across EU Member States and beyond, which can be characterised, beyond the aspect of disinformation, by radicalisation, fragmentation and propensity for violence. This poses growing challenges for public security authorities including the police. The EU Police Chiefs, under the lead of the German Presidency and Europol, are in the process of addressing the resulting challenges for effective policing, with a view to safeguarding the common security interests for EU citizens.

Against this background, Europol's activities are based on Articles 3 and 4 of the Europol Regulation EU 2016/794, which also include the task to support crime prevention.

I hope that these answers will prove satisfactory. Europol remains available for further clarifications.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Ebner', is written over the printed name and title.

Jürgen Ebner  
Deputy Executive Director of Governance