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**International & European
Criminal Law Observatory**

ON CULTURAL ISSUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

[S/RES/2768\(2025\)](#)

One year after adopting a text demanding that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, the Security Council today reiterated that demand in a new resolution and called for ongoing monitoring of the situation as these attacks continue with increasing sophistication. Adopting resolution 2768 (2025) the Council extended, until 15 July 2025, its request that the Secretary-General provide it with written monthly reports on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. It also reiterated its demand that the Houthis immediately cease such attacks and release the *Galaxy Leader* and its crew. Further, the 15-nations body took note of the use of advanced weaponry in these attacks and demanded that Member States stop providing arms to the Houthis. And, emphasizing the need to address the root causes of these attacks — including the conflicts contributing to regional tensions and the disruption of maritime security — the Council urged caution and restraint to avoid further escalation of the situation in the Red Sea and the broader region.

[S/RES/2769\(2025\)](#)

Updating its sanctions regime concerning Libya today, the Security Council exempted certain activities from the arms embargo on that country, allowed for the investment of its frozen assets and created new sanctions designations for those involved in the illicit trade in Libyan petroleum products.

Adopting resolution 2769 (2025) the Council — acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations — demanded full compliance with that arms embargo, called on all Member States not to exacerbate or intervene in the conflict and reiterated that those individuals or entities determined to have violated the provisions of resolution 1970 (2011) are subject to designation.

Through the text, the Council also decided that the relevant arms embargo shall not apply to any technical assistance or training provided by Member States to Libyan security forces intended solely to promote the process of Libyan military and security institutions' reunification. Further, it asserted that such arms embargo is not to be applied to military aircraft or naval vessels temporarily introduced into Libya's territory solely to deliver items or facilitate activities otherwise exempted or not covered by the embargo. The resolution also saw the Council decide to allow the Libyan Investment Authority's frozen cash reserves to be invested in low-risk time deposits with appropriate financial institutions selected by the Authority according to specified conditions. Additionally, the Council decided that certain travel-ban and asset-freeze provisions in resolution 1970 (2011) shall also apply to individuals and entities determined to have provided support for armed groups and criminal networks through illicit exploitation or export of crude oil or refined petroleum in or from Libya.



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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

[UN rights office raises alarm over escalating violence in occupied West Bank](#)

The UN human rights office, OHCHR, on 24 January expressed grave concerns over escalating violence in the Jenin area of the occupied West Bank, condemning the use of “unlawful lethal force” by Israeli security forces. The Israeli military operation in and around the Jenin refugee camp had involved “disproportionate” use of force, including airstrikes and shootings that reportedly targeted unarmed residents. The Israeli military has closed off major entrances to Palestinian cities, including Hebron, restricting movement, and paralyzing daily life.

[Syria: Rights probe reveals systematic torture and detention of Assad regime](#)

A report from UN human rights investigators for Syria released has laid bare the systematic use of arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearances by the deposed Assad regime. The findings from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria detail crimes against humanity and war crimes that left a legacy of trauma for countless Syrians, representing some of the worst violations of international law committed during more than a decade of brutal conflict. The fall of the Assad regime last month and subsequent release of prisoners have been pivotal for many Syrians, but for tens of thousands of families, the agony persists. The discovery of mass graves has deepened fears for those whose loved ones remain missing.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

[UNEP and Italy expand effort to harness digitalization for environmental and humanitarian gains](#)

UNEP and the International Energy Agency, in collaboration with the Italian Government, have launched the second phase of the project to digitalize power systems. The first phase was launched to spread the use of smart technologies to optimize power use, saving money and preventing emissions. The Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security supported pilot projects in Brazil, Colombia, India and Morocco: those initiatives demonstrated innovative models, delivering tangible benefits. “Guided by our *Piano Mattei*, we prioritize multistakeholder collaboration, digitalization and investment to address the dual challenges of climate change and energy access, particularly for the world’s most vulnerable regions,” said the Director General for European and International Affairs and Sustainable Finance at the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security. “This initiative underscores Italy’s dedication to advancing resilient, clean energy systems while building a sustainable future for all”.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

[The neglected crisis on UNFPA](#)

Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Sudan. These are among the neglected crises highlighted by the UNFPA, with violence and climate emergencies spreading



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globally. In 2024, UNFPA's humanitarian operations were only 42 per cent funded, threatening the health and rights of millions of women and girls. Insufficient resources mean midwives cannot be deployed where needed, shelters for gender-based violence survivors close, and women and girls lose access to essential health supplies and services. This situation is already affecting some of the most urgent but underfunded emergencies worldwide.

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)

[The State of Israel orders UNRWA to vacate premises in East Jerusalem](#)

The State of Israel has ordered UNRWA to vacate premises in occupied East Jerusalem by 30 January 2025. This contradicts international law and Israel's obligations under the General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, which protects UN premises from interference, said UNRWA Special Commissioner. Claims that UNRWA cannot occupy these premises are unfounded and endanger the agency's facilities and staff. The Agency keeps working to assist Palestinian refugees.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

[Darfur: ICC Prosecutor urges immediate action to address atrocities](#)

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Monday called on the UN Security Council to act decisively to address the worsening atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region. Violence in Darfur has displaced thousands of families and devastated the region, with vital civilian infrastructure attacked, civilians killed and communities suffering from famine and disease. The gravity of the situation in the wider region was underscored by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who condemned a 24 January attack on the Saudi Teaching Hospital in El Fasher, North Darfur. The Secretary-General reiterated that international humanitarian law mandates the protection of medical facilities and personnel and that the deliberate targeting of such facilities may constitute a war crime. He also renewed his call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a sustainable, inclusive political dialogue to end the conflict.

[ICC welcomes Ukraine as a new State Party](#)

Today, 1 January 2025, the Rome Statute, founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC), enters into force for Ukraine. Ukraine formally becomes the 125th State Party to the ICC, and the 20th State from the Eastern Europe region.

[Situation in Libya: ICC arrest warrant against Osama Elmasry Njeem for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes](#)

On 18 January 2025, Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC, by majority, issued a warrant of arrest for Mr Osama Elmasry Njeem, also known as Osama Almasri Njeem, in the Situation in Libya. Osama Elmasry Njeem, is



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alleged to have overseen prison facilities in Tripoli, where thousands of persons were detained for prolonged periods, is suspected of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, torture, rape and sexual violence, allegedly committed in Libya from February 2015 onwards. On the same day, the ICC Registry submitted a request for the arrest of the suspect to six States Parties, including the Italian Republic. The Court's request was transmitted through the channels designated by each State and was preceded by advance consultation and coordination with each State to ensure the appropriate receipt and onward implementation of the Court's request. The Court also conveyed real-time information indicating the possible whereabouts and movement of the suspect across the European Schengen zone. In tandem, as provided in the Statute, the Court made a request to INTERPOL to issue a Red Notice. The suspect was in Turin, Italy, in the early hours of Sunday, 19 January 2025 and was successfully arrested by the Italian authorities. The suspect was held in custody pending the completion of the required domestic proceedings related to his arrest and surrender to the Court. On 21 January 2025, without prior notice or consultation with the Court, Mr Osama Elmasry Njeem was reportedly released from custody and transported back to Libya. The Court is seeking, and is yet to obtain, verification from the authorities on the steps reportedly taken.

[ICC Judges reject Mr Mokom's request for compensation](#)

On 31 January 2025, the Chamber constituted to decide on the request for compensation presented by Mr Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka pursuant to article 85 of the Rome Statute issued its decision rejecting the request. The Chamber recalled that article 85(1) of the Statute provides that "anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation". However, the Chamber highlighted that a period of lawful detention does not become unlawful simply because the person was ultimately not convicted. The Chamber also recalled that, according to article 85(3) of the Statute, the Court may award compensation in case of "a grave and manifest miscarriage of justice" which must be the reason for the termination of the proceedings. The Chamber was not convinced that the Prosecutor wrongfully prosecuted Mr Mokom or that the withdrawal of the charges was based on a failure to properly evaluate the evidence in the case. The Chamber considered that there was no grave and manifest miscarriage of justice in this regard. Second, the Chamber was not convinced by Mr Mokom's claim that he was subject to an unlawful detention as a result of the Pre-Trial Chamber's decision rejecting interim release. Indeed, the Chamber noted that Mr Mokom did not seek release to a State obliged to receive him and no other State could be identified to accept him and enforce the conditions set by the Pre-Trial Chamber. The Chamber noted that Mr Mokom represented a flight risk and the conditions to mitigate the risk were necessary. Finally, the Chamber ruled that Mr Mokom was not unlawfully detained under article 85(1) of the Statute during his stay at a hotel for 43 days following the termination of the proceedings against him.

OSCE

[OSCE supports improved co-operation between agencies on financial investigations in North Macedonia](#)

The OSCE organised a training course in Skopje on 21 and 22 January 2025 to improve inter-agency cooperation in financial investigations in North Macedonia. The initiative, implemented by the Transnational



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Threats Department (TNTD) and the OSCE Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), with the support of the OSCE Mission in Skopje, aims to strengthen coordination between institutions involved in combating economic crime. The Chief Prosecutor of the Skopje Basic Public Prosecution Office, Gavril Bubevski, stressed the importance of clear procedures to ensure the confiscation of illegally obtained assets and prevent impunity for corruption and organised crime. The event included interactive discussions and practical simulations on strategies for seizing and confiscating illicit assets. Michael McKee, Law Enforcement Attaché at the US Embassy in Skopje, highlighted the broader impact of financial crimes on the economy and society, reiterating the need for coordinated action to ensure that perpetrators face justice. The course was attended by representatives of the main institutions involved in financial investigations, including the Police, the Public Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organised Crime, the Customs Administration, the Ministry of Finance and the Agency for Managing Seized Assets. The initiative is part of the OSCE extra-budgetary project 'Strengthening Efforts to Combat Organised Crime in the OSCE Region', funded by Austria, Germany, Italy and the United States.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

[Anti-torture committee concerned about police practices and prison overcrowding in Switzerland](#)

In a new report the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) raises a number of concerns about the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by the police, as well as prison overcrowding. The CPT once again received allegations of physical ill-treatment and excessive use of force, including biting by police dogs, truncheon blows, headbutts, punches and kicks, as well as violent tackling to the ground. In its report, the CPT also recommends that effective measures be taken to prosecute police officers implicated in acts of ill-treatment, to review police interview methods, including the generalisation of audio-visual recording, and to prevent the use of fixation in a police context. Prison overcrowding remains a major problem in the prisons visited in French-speaking Switzerland. The Committee once again calls on all the Swiss cantonal authorities to review the rules concerning the drastic restrictions on contact with the outside world and the lack of activities for remand prisoners.

[Criminal Asset Recovery Convention: new assessments of Aruba \(Netherlands\) and Morocco](#)

The Conference of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism published new thematic reviews, assessing for the first time the compliance of Aruba (Netherlands) and Morocco with the provisions of the treaty. The reports analyse crucial aspects such as the reversal of the burden of proof in confiscation proceedings, the management of seized assets, the monitoring of banking transactions for investigative purposes, the crime of money laundering, corporate liability, international recidivism, the deferral of suspicious transactions and the sharing and return of confiscated assets. Both countries receive recommendations to improve compliance with the Convention. Morocco's assessment follows the entry into force of the Convention in the country on 1 August 2022, while Aruba's assessment stems from the Netherlands' decision to extend the application of the treaty to this jurisdiction. The Warsaw Convention, opened for signature in 2005, is the first



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international treaty integrating prevention of and fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. It reinforces international standards, in particular those of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and introduces specific rules on liability for money laundering, including negligence, liability of legal persons and international recidivism. The treaty also provides for measures to stop suspicious transactions at an early stage, preventing their transfer through the financial system. The Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) of the Member States must intervene at the request of foreign FIU partners. The Conference of the Parties maintains monitoring of the implementation of the Convention by the signatory states.

[Malta presents strategic vision and goals for the fight against trafficking in human beings](#)

On 15 January 2025, the final conference of the project ‘Supporting Malta in the Design and Implementation of a New National Anti-Trafficking Strategy’ (2022-2024) was held in Saint Julians, organised by the Council of Europe, the European Commission (DG REFORM) and the Human Rights Directorate of the Office of the Prime Minister of Malta. During the event, the new national anti-trafficking strategy and action plan 2024-2030, developed within the project, was presented, together with key tools for implementation, such as the theory of change, the monitoring and evaluation framework and the communication strategy. Rebecca Buttigieg, Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reform, emphasised that this project testified to Malta's firm commitment to strengthen its anti-trafficking system and maintain a high political focus on the issue. Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, pointed out that the adoption of the first national anti-trafficking strategy marks a political will to reform the Maltese system, responding to the new challenges posed by the increase in trafficking for labour exploitation and the use of digital technologies to recruit and exploit victims. Mr Angelos BINIS, Head of Sector for Rule of Law, Public Administration and Governance, DG REFORM, reiterated that human trafficking, especially trafficking for sexual exploitation of women and girls, remains an extremely lucrative crime and that the project will not only have a positive impact on Malta, but can be a model for other countries. The event brought together around one hundred participants from governmental institutions, civil society and international organisations, with experts from Bulgaria, France, Greece, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom in attendance. Through interactive working sessions, central themes such as improving the national referral mechanism for victim identification and support, strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and civil society, and the importance of ethically engaging survivors, ensuring empowerment and support were explored. On 16 January 2025, a side event dedicated to children's participation in the design of child-friendly anti-trafficking tools highlighted the importance of including their perspectives in initiatives to protect the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable.

[New GRECO report on Poland's progress to prevent corruption of MPs, judges and prosecutors](#)

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) published a report on Poland's compliance with recommendations to prevent corruption among parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors, including those related to judicial reforms in 2016-2018. The document shows that Poland has fully implemented eight of the 22 recommendations, partially implemented nine, while five remain unimplemented, maintaining an overall level of compliance described as ‘globally unsatisfactory’. Despite the critical issues, GRECO acknowledges the significant efforts of the Polish authorities to restore the independence of the



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National Council of the Judiciary (NCJ). The forthcoming entry into force of the new law on the election of judicial members of the NCJ will ensure that the majority of its members are judges chosen by their peers. In addition, further measures are being developed to fully implement outstanding recommendations concerning the judiciary. In light of this progress, GRECO has asked Poland to submit an update on its achievements by 30 November 2025 and will address the issue of compliance during a high-level mission to the country later this year.

[Money laundering and terrorist financing: MONEYVAL publishes progress reports on Estonia and Slovakia](#)

MONEYVAL, the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing Measures, published reports on the progress made by Estonia and Slovakia in implementing the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). With regard to Estonia, the report shows improvements in the implementation of targeted financial sanctions against terrorism and terrorist financing. However, the country needs further action to achieve full compliance with the recommendations. Currently, Estonia is rated as compliant on 7 recommendations, largely compliant on 19 and partially compliant on 14 of the 40 FATF recommendations. For Slovakia, the report notes progress in addressing deficiencies concerning non-profit organisations, virtual assets and virtual asset service providers, but these improvements are deemed insufficient. The recommendations in these areas remain partially compliant. Slovakia is rated as compliant on 5 recommendations, largely compliant on 23 and partially compliant on 12. Both countries are still subject to an advanced follow-up procedure and will have to report on progress by December 2025. In addition, Slovakia will have to provide an update on its compliance with FATF Recommendation 10 (customer due diligence) by June 2025.

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

[Alexandru Pătrașcu v. Romania](#) (application no. 1847/21)

In the case of *Alexandru Pătrașcu v. Romania* the ECtHR held that there had been: a violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the ECHR on account of the applicant's conviction for statements made by him on his Facebook page, and another violation of Article 10 in relation to the applicant's conviction for the comments made by third parties on his Facebook page. The case concerned the applicant's liability for his statements and the comments published on his Facebook page. The applicant covered a scandal involving the National Opera in Bucharest, he was ordered to pay compensation for the damage caused by the many posts published on his Facebook page. The Court noted that the national authorities had failed to conduct a proper balancing exercise with a view to demonstrating that the civil judgment against the applicant had corresponded to a «pressing social need». With regard to the civil judgment against the applicant for the comments made by third parties on his Facebook page, the Court considered that the legal provisions relied on and interpreted in the present case by the national courts had not been sufficiently clear and detailed to afford appropriate protection against interference by the authorities with the applicant's right to freedom of expression.



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[Kunshugarov v. Türkiye](#) (applications nos. 60811/15 and 54512/17)

The applicant, Yeldos Kunshugarov, is a Kazakhstani national who was born in 1988, he arrived in Türkiye in 2011. The case concerns concurrent proceedings initiated against Mr Kunshugarov in Türkiye for his deportation and extradition, requested by the Kazakh authorities because he was wanted on charges linked to his being involved in an armed jihadist organisation. He was extradited in 2018 and, in parallel, the Turkish authorities had initiated deportation proceedings against him for possessing a forged passport and because of his alleged affiliation with terrorist organisations. Relying on Articles 2 (right to life) and 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) in conjunction with Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the Convention, Mr Kunshugarov complains about his expulsion to Kazakhstan, alleging that the authorities failed to adequately examine his allegations that he would be exposed to a real risk of the death penalty or ill-treatment. He further complains under Article 3 of the Convention, of poor conditions of detention pending the expulsion proceedings against him. Finally, he relies on Article 5 § 1, 2, 4 and 5 (right to liberty and security) of the Convention to complain in particular that his detention pending removal was unlawful and that the national courts failed to assess effectively and speedily his requests for release. The Court has found no violation of Article 13 in conjunction with Article 2, a violation of Article 3 on account of the applicant's extradition to Kazakhstan, a violation of Article 3 on account of the conditions of the applicant's detention, no violation of Article 5 § 1 and a violation of Article 5 § 4.

[European Court to set up an Ethics Council](#)

The European Court of Human Rights is to set up an Ethics Council to advise the President of the Court on matters of judicial ethics. The Plenary Court has decided that its President will now be able to consult an Ethics Council whenever he or she considers it necessary to give guidance to a Judge seeking advice on compliance with the ethical standards in a given situation. The Ethics Council will have competence to give guidance regarding serving, ad hoc and former judges. Guidance can also concern the Court itself, as an institution. The Ethics Council will be made up of five members: the most senior Vice-President of the Court, the most senior Section President and the three most senior sitting judges. The Ethics Council will be assisted by the Registrar of the Court.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

[MEPs: support for Venezuela's opposition is a "moral duty"](#)

The European Parliament has declared Nicolás Maduro's presidency in Venezuela as illegitimate, condemning his attempt to retain power by force. In a resolution, MEPs praised the democratic opposition's resilience and the Venezuelan people's commitment to democracy despite ongoing repression. They rejected Maduro's presidency, recognizing Edmundo González Urrutia as the rightful winner of the presidential election. MEPs also called for the release of González Urrutia and the publication of the electoral record from the July 2024 elections. The resolution also urges the EU to expand sanctions, including against Maduro, his inner circle, and individuals responsible for human rights violations. MEPs expressed support for International Criminal



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Court investigations into the regime's crimes and urged international alignment with Venezuela's democratic forces. The resolution was passed with 374 votes in favor, 53 against, and 163 abstentions.

[Human rights breaches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran and Algeria](#)

The European Parliament has adopted three resolutions on human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, and Algeria. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): MEPs condemned the death sentence of Jean-Jacques Wondo and other violations of the right to a fair trial. They called for Wondo's immediate release and access to medical treatment, opposed the death penalty, and urged reforms to the judicial system to ensure fairness and protect fundamental rights.

Iran: MEPs condemned the death sentences of human rights activist Pakhshan Azizi and humanitarian worker Wrisha Moradi, demanding their immediate release. They called for a moratorium on the death penalty, condemned the murder of Jamshid Sharmahd, and denounced the regime's repression. The resolution also condemned Iran's hostage diplomacy, urging the release of EU nationals and supporting civil society efforts, particularly the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. It called for the IRGC to be designated as a terrorist organization and sanctions to be extended.

Algeria: MEPs demanded the release of Boualem Sansal, journalist Abdelwakil Blamm, and other activists imprisoned for exercising freedom of expression. They called for a review of repressive laws and emphasized that EU-Algeria relations should depend on substantial progress in respecting the rule of law and freedom of expression.

[MEPs condemn Russia's use of disinformation to justify its war in Ukraine](#)

The European Parliament has condemned Russia's falsification of history to justify its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. MEPs rejected Russia's claims aimed at undermining Ukraine's history and national identity, denouncing Russia's failure to address Soviet-era crimes and its crackdown on historical research. They argue that these actions have enabled Russia to revive imperialist policies and manipulate history for its criminal purposes. The resolution calls on the EU to strengthen efforts against Russian disinformation, urging member states to better coordinate and increase resources to combat foreign interference. MEPs also advocate for promoting media literacy, supporting professional journalism, and exploring new technologies for countering hybrid influence. They urged expanding sanctions against Russian media outlets involved in disinformation and supporting exiled independent Russian media. MEPs expressed concern over social media companies relaxing fact-checking rules, which could aid Russia's disinformation efforts. They called for strict enforcement of the Digital Services Act to combat this issue.

[Parliament denounces the upcoming sham presidential election in Belarus](#)

The European Parliament has called on the EU to reject the upcoming presidential election in Belarus on 26 January, denouncing it as a sham. MEPs condemned the ongoing human rights violations and the suppression of democratic principles in Belarus, urging the international community not to recognize Aliaksandr Lukashenka's legitimacy as president after the vote. They reiterated their non-recognition of Lukashenka and expressed support for the Belarusian people's fight for democracy and human rights. The resolution also emphasizes the grave situation of over 1,200 political prisoners in Belarus, urging the EU to continue



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investigating human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable. MEPs condemned Belarus' involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine and its subordination to Russia in a so-called union state. They called for expanded and strengthened EU sanctions against those responsible for repression in Belarus and its participation in the war.

[EP leaders welcome the recent Ceasefire in Gaza](#)

The European Parliament's Conference of Presidents welcomed the recent ceasefire in Gaza and the progress it represents toward the phased release of hostages. They expressed deep sorrow for the victims on both sides of the conflict and commended the efforts of mediators such as the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar. The Parliament urged all parties to uphold commitments to the ceasefire, ensure the protection of civilians, and hold violators accountable. They highlighted the emotional milestone of releasing the first hostages and called for the immediate release of all remaining hostages. The resolution also emphasized the need for unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza, support for UN agencies, and an end to violence in the region, especially in Lebanon. The European Parliament reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution as the most viable path to lasting peace and security and pledged to engage in peace efforts through diplomacy, dialogue, and cooperation with regional actors.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

[Sanctions against terrorism: Council renews the EU Terrorist List and related humanitarian exceptions](#)

The Council has renewed the list of persons, groups, and entities subject to restrictive measures to combat terrorism, delisting one deceased person while keeping the rest unchanged. Currently, 14 individuals and 22 groups or entities are subject to asset freezes and financial restrictions in the EU, including a prohibition on providing them with funds or economic resources.

Additionally, the Council has extended humanitarian exceptions, initially introduced in February 2024, until 22 February 2027. This extension aims to ensure the continued delivery of humanitarian aid and essential services in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2664 (2022).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

[Steering the EU towards greater sustainable competitiveness](#)

The European Commission has introduced the Competitiveness Compass, a new framework to enhance economic productivity and maintain the EU's competitive edge. Based on Mario Draghi's report, the Compass outlines concrete actions for the EU's future prosperity over the next five years. While recognizing the EU's strong system of rights, values, and infrastructure, the Compass aims to ensure Europe stays competitive in a challenging global landscape.

The Compass focuses on three core areas:



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Innovation – Closing the innovation gap with initiatives like AI adoption, start-up support, and action plans for advanced technologies.

Decarbonisation and Competitiveness – Addressing energy prices with an Affordable Energy Action Plan and promoting a Clean Industrial Deal for sustainable decarbonisation.

Security and Resilience – Reducing dependencies and building global trade partnerships for raw materials, clean energy, and critical technologies. Additionally, five cross-cutting activities will support these actions, including simplifying regulations, enhancing the Single Market, promoting financing, fostering skills and quality jobs, and improving policy coordination. This initiative marks the Commission's first major action for the 2024-2029 mandate.

Bolstering the cybersecurity of the healthcare sector

The European Commission has introduced an *EU Action Plan* to enhance the cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers, a key priority for the first 100 days of the new mandate. The healthcare sector has faced a significant rise in cyber threats, with 309 major cybersecurity incidents reported in 2023 alone. These incidents, which affect digital health records, hospital systems, and medical devices, can compromise patient care and safety. The Action Plan aims to bolster the sector's resilience against cyber threats, building on existing EU cybersecurity legislation. It focuses on prevention, detection, impact mitigation, and deterrence of cyberattacks. A pan-European Cybersecurity Support Centre will provide tailored guidance to healthcare providers, with the plan being refined and rolled out over the next two years. The EU is committed to ensuring that digitalisation in healthcare enhances patient care, supports healthcare professionals, and fosters a secure, tech-enabled healthcare environment.

Indicating the way forward for sustainable European aviation

A new report on the European aviation sector's environmental performance outlines measures to reduce its impact on climate change, air quality, and noise, aiming for climate-neutrality by 2050. Key recommendations include increasing the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), optimizing air traffic management, and adopting more fuel-efficient technologies. By 2050, emissions could be reduced by up to two-thirds with these measures. Key findings of the report include:

- Passenger numbers and flight distance continue to grow, with an average fleet age of 11.8 years.
- In 2023, 8.35 million flights departed from EU and EFTA airports, 10% below 2019 levels.
- Emissions from EU flights were 133 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2023, a 10% reduction from 2019.
- CO₂ emissions per passenger kilometre decreased to 83 grams in 2023.
- Aviation accounted for 12% of total transport GHG emissions in 2022.

The report also highlights that net CO₂ emissions could be cut by 47% (65 million tonnes) by 2050 if the SAF supply mandate is met. However, with air traffic demand expected to grow significantly, further action on fuel-efficient technology and SAF adoption is necessary to avoid increasing emissions. The report was produced by the European Commission, the EU Aviation Safety Agency, the European Environment Agency, and Eurocontrol.



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INTERPOL

[West Africa: INTERPOL border operation nets 45 arrests, seizures worth millions](#)

Operation Screen West Africa 2024, coordinated by INTERPOL, took place from 21 October to 24 November and involved the police forces of 12 West African countries. The initiative aimed to strengthen border security and dismantle transnational organised crime networks. During the operation, more than 1.3 million checks were made through the INTERPOL database, leading to 45 arrests and significant seizures of illegal substances and stolen goods, including 1.6 tonnes of cocaine in Cape Verde and 10 tonnes of amphetamines in Burkina Faso. In addition, 33 types of counterfeit medicines were confiscated in Benin and Togo, 40 tonnes of substandard pharmaceuticals in Côte d'Ivoire, and weapons in Côte d'Ivoire. The operation also led to the discovery of a suspected Islamic State member between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, foreshadowing the plans of an individual linked to ISIS. An international trafficking of stolen passports was also identified, and over 100 stolen luxury vehicles were recovered, mainly from Canada. These vehicles were used to finance criminal activities, such as drug and arms trafficking. The success of the operation demonstrates the importance of international cooperation in the fight against organised crime and terrorism in West Africa.

[37 terror suspects arrested in East African operation](#)

An anti-terrorist operation coordinated by INTERPOL and AFRIPOL in East Africa (November-December 2024) led to the arrest of 37 suspects, including members of ISIS, Al Shabaab and foreign terrorist fighters. The operation involved eight countries and aimed to identify and arrest terror-related suspects and strengthen border controls. In Kenya, 17 individuals, including ISIS members and foreign terrorists, were arrested, while in the Democratic Republic of Congo, members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) were detained. In Somalia, three suspects were arrested, including an Al Shabaab bomber. In Tanzania, an ISIS member and a Ugandan citizen intent on joining a terrorist group in Mozambique were arrested. The operation involved coordination and data analysis between participating countries, with support from INTERPOL and AFRIPOL on the ground. In addition, border controls resulted in 88,000 checks on INTERPOL databases, identifying 15 individuals wanted for various crimes. This operation underlined the importance of international cooperation and information exchange to combat terrorism and strengthen security in the region.

[INTERPOL publishes first Silver Notice targeting criminal assets](#)

INTERPOL launched its first Silver Notice, a notice to trace and recover assets linked to crimes, particularly those of transnational organised crime. The first Silver Notice, requested by Italy, concerns the assets of a high-ranking mafia member and is part of a pilot project involving 52 countries, running until November 2025. This instrument allows countries to request information on assets linked to crimes such as fraud, corruption, drug trafficking and other serious crimes. The information obtained through the Silver Notice can help identify and locate laundered assets, such as property, vehicles and financial accounts. Countries can then use this data to request the seizure, confiscation or recovery of assets, following national laws. INTERPOL Secretary General Valdecy Urquiza emphasised that targeting illicit profits is essential to fight organised crime, considering that 99% of criminal assets are not recovered. The pilot phase allows each participating country to request up to



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500 Silver Notices and Diffusions, with the total distributed equally. Diffusions are sent to selected countries, while Silver Notices are examined to ensure compliance with INTERPOL rules.

EUROPOL

[Law enforcement takes down two largest cybercrime forums in the world](#)

An international operation supported by Europol led to the closure of two major cybercrime forums, Cracked and Nulled, with more than 10 million users. These forums, used for discussions on cybercrime and for selling illegal goods such as malware, stolen data and hacking services, were shut down between 28 and 30 January 2025. Investigators estimate that the suspects made around EUR 1 million in illicit profits. Europol supported the investigation by providing operational, analytical and forensic assistance in the field. It also facilitated the exchange of information between police forces from different countries through the Cybercrime Centre (EC3) and the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT). The operation targeted the growing ‘cybercrime-as-a-service’ phenomenon, where criminals offer tools and infrastructure for cyber attacks, making cybercrime accessible to anyone, even without advanced technical skills. The closed forums also offered artificial intelligence-based services for advanced phishing and security vulnerability scanning. Countries involved in the operation include Australia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain and the United States.

[30 arrested in crackdown on Chinese human trafficking ring in Spain and Croatia](#)

A cross-border operation coordinated by Europol dismantled a sophisticated Chinese criminal network involved in illegal immigration and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. On 17 December, 14 properties in Spain (Barcelona, Madrid, Toledo) and one in Croatia (Zagreb) were raided, leading to 30 arrests, including network leaders. EUR 180,000 in cash, weapons, forged passports, luxury vehicles and 33 mobile phones were seized, and 33 victims, mainly Chinese and Vietnamese, were released. This investigation was based on the dismantling of the largest Chinese prostitution ring in Europe in February 2023, with the analysis of digital evidence. The new information revealed the sophisticated methods used by the network, which operated on two interconnected cells: one for recruiting and smuggling victims from China to Europe and one for sexual exploitation in Spain and other EU countries. The victims were deceived with promises of quick profits, but once they arrived in Europe, they were enslaved and forced to work in brothels, with strict control by the traffickers who took 50% of their earnings. The operation involved the Spanish National Police, the Croatian National Police and Europol, which provided operational and analytical support. Europol sent experts to the field to assist in the operations and analysis of the seized devices. The operation is part of an 11-country task force focused on dismantling Chinese human trafficking networks in Europe.

EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

[Italy: EPPO seizes €5 million in fuel VAT fraud investigations](#)



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In an investigation into a complex VAT fraud on imported fuels, conducted by the European Public Prosecutor's Office in Bologna (Italy), the *Guardia di Finanza* of Modena seized assets worth €5 million in the provinces of Modena and Ravenna in January. There is a suspected intra-EU merchant default fraud (MTIC), a complex criminal scheme that exploits the EU's rules on cross-border transactions between its member states as being exempt from value added tax (VAT). The investigation was launched following a tax audit conducted by the Economic and Financial Police Unit of the *Guardia di Finanza* in Modena, which showed that the company under investigation had imported fuel at a particularly advantageous price through a fraudulent chain of so-called missing traders, shell companies set up for the sole purpose of evading VAT. The suspected company would then sell fuel to service stations at prices well below market prices, thereby obtaining an unfair advantage over honest economic operators. The damage to the Italian budget is estimated at around 14 million euro. In an earlier phase of the investigations, searches were carried out at the company's premises and 120,000 euros in cash were found inside the car used by the legal representative of the company.

[Admiral 2.0 investigation: alleged criminal leader indicted in record time for large-scale tax evasion and money laundering](#)

On 27 January 2025, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Riga (Latvia) filed an indictment against the alleged head of the criminal organization targeted by the Admiral 2.0 investigation. The investigation revealed a large-scale VAT fraud scheme involving trade in popular electronic goods, which created an estimated VAT loss of €297 million. The indictment was issued only two months after the arrest of the defendant, a record time for such a complex investigation. The EPPO reported on 28 November 2024 a criminal organization that was using the same modus operandi, and in part also the same organisation and infrastructure, of the perpetrators investigated under Admiral, to bring about a massive VAT carousel fraud, a complex criminal scheme that exploits the EU's rules on cross-border transactions between its Member States as being exempt from value added tax. Searches, arrests and seizures took place in 16 countries. The alleged leader of this union is indicted for large-scale tax evasion and money laundering. He had been in pre-trial detention since his arrest on 28 November 2024. If convicted, the defendant could face up to ten years in prison for tax evasion and 12 years for money laundering.

[Declaration on the amendments to the Austrian Criminal Procedure Act](#)

On 23 January 2025, the European Chief Prosecutor sent a letter to the European Commission in line with recital 16 of Regulation (EU) 2020/2092 of 16 December 2020 on a general conditionality regime for the protection of the budget of the European Union (Regulation on cross-compliance), indicating the amendments to the Austrian Criminal Procedure Act which came into force on 1 January 2025. Based on an in-depth analysis of the new legislation, the European Chief Prosecutor concluded that it contains several elements which cannot be reconciled with respect for the rule of law principles as laid down in the Regulation on cross compliance. The new law makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the prosecution services, including the EPPO when acting in Austria, to effectively collect and seize digital evidence. In addition, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice has presented a draft law for the implementation of EU criminal justice acts. The European Chief Prosecutor considers that this draft law does not address some of the most obvious shortcomings in the adaptations of the Austrian legal system to the EPPO regulation. At the same time, it contains further draft



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provisions which raise serious concerns, in particular as regards the intrusive supervisory powers of a non-judicial authority and ultimately for the respect of the independence of the EPPO. The European Chief Public Prosecutor has therefore informed the European Commission that the new statutes already in force, as well as the proposed additional provisions under discussion, pose a threat to the efficiency of criminal investigations into breaches of the law in general and, Likewise, for the effectiveness and efficiency of EPPO's investigations under Austrian law. They create a situation where a national non-judicial authority is able to interfere with EPPO investigations in Austria, as well as with EPPO investigations initiated in other Member States, with links to Austria.

OLAF

[OLAF reveals fraudulent use of EU funds in Romanian Danube Delta development projects](#)

OLAF played a key role in uncovering a major fraud case in Romania, revealing that EU funds for development projects in the Danube Delta had been misused through fraudulent schemes. The OLAF investigation, carried out in close cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), revealed significant misuse of funds in over 30 EU-funded projects. The Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of the most ecologically vital regions in Europe. EU funds allocated to this region through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are essential for its maintenance. At the initial request of EPPO, OLAF carried out an investigative analysis on allegations of mismanagement of EU funds and forwarded the results to the European Delegated Public Prosecutor. These fraudulent actions led to the illegal acquisition of approximately EUR 593,000 of EU funds and EUR 104,000 from the national budget of Romania. During the investigation, OLAF worked closely with the EPPO, sharing evidence and coordinating efforts to ensure a thorough and effective investigation.

[OLAF and Honduran customs authorities strengthen cooperation in the fight against customs fraud](#)

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Customs Administration of Honduras have signed an administrative cooperation agreement to improve their collaboration in combating customs fraud and illegal trade. This is the first agreement between OLAF and a customs authority in Latin America, reflecting a significant step forward in international efforts to safeguard commercial integrity. The agreement establishes a framework for cooperation. It aims to strengthen efforts to combat illicit trade in dangerous goods, cigarettes, counterfeit goods and other customs fraud. In this new framework of cooperation, OLAF and the Honduran Customs Administration will support each other in key areas such as information exchange, assistance in investigative activities and strategic risk analysis. The partnership will improve intelligence sharing and enforcement actions, helping to detect and prevent fraudulent practices more effectively.

EUROJUST

[Criminals arrested operating an illegal financial service to launder millions of euros](#)



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An international investigation lasting several years led to the arrest of 23 criminals who operated a sophisticated money laundering scheme. The group acted as a financial service for other criminals to launder their profits. The scheme has facilitated recycling of some €100 million. An international coalition of Spanish, Cypriot and German authorities has been set up with the support of the French authorities, Eurojust and Europol to dismantle the group. The transaction has led to the seizure of over 8 million euros in cash and the freezing of 27 million euros in cryptocurrencies.

[Commissioner McGrath to start cooperation with Eurojust](#)

As a key player in global cooperation on criminal justice, Eurojust works with the European Commission to keep Europe safe. To celebrate the start of his mandate, the European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law, Mr. Michael McGrath, visited Eurojust headquarters in The Hague on 16 January. Commissioner McGrath was welcomed by the President of Eurojust, Mr. Michael Schmid, and the two Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Margarita Šniutytė-Daugėlienė and Mr. José de la Mata Amaya, who presented the various ways in which the Agency supports authorities across Europe and beyond in their cross-border investigations. President Schmid showed the European Commissioner how Eurojust provides practical support to prosecutors by promoting information exchange, developing prosecution strategies, facilitating the use of judicial cooperation tools and implementing joint actions. This makes international judicial cooperation in complex cases simpler and more efficient. In 2024, Eurojust supported over 12,000 criminal investigations, leading to the seizure and freezing of more than €1 billion and more than 1,000 arrests.

EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEX)

[Irregular border crossings into EU drop sharply in 2024](#)

New preliminary data from Frontex show a significant 38% decrease in irregular border crossings into the EU in 2024, reaching the lowest level since 2021, when migration was still impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite ongoing migration pressure, strengthened cooperation between the EU and its partners against smuggling networks has led to a substantial reduction in crossings at Europe's external borders, with just over 239,000 detections recorded last year.

The decrease in the total number was mainly driven by a 59% plunge in arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route and a 78% fall in detections on the Western Balkan route.

Not all routes saw the same trends, as patterns shifted across the continent. Key developments include:

- Central Mediterranean route: Crossings dropped by 59% due to fewer departures from Tunisia and Libya. Despite the significant decrease, this route still accounted for about 67,000 crossings, the second highest among all routes.
- Western Balkan route: A sharp 78% fall followed strong efforts by regional countries to stem the flow.
- Eastern Mediterranean route: Detections rose by 14% to 69 400, driven by new corridors from eastern Libya, with migrants predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Egypt.



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- Western African route: The Canary Islands saw an 18% increase in arrivals to almost 47 000, the highest figure since Frontex began collecting data in 2009. This was fuelled by departures from Mauritania, even as flows from other departure points declined.
- Eastern Borders route: A threefold increase in crossings was reported, mostly along the borders with Ukraine and Belarus.
- English Channel: Detections of attempted crossings to the UK rose slightly, up 9% compared to 2023.

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGION

[Local and regional leaders review EU policy towards the Eastern Partnership](#)

On 20 January 2025, local and regional leaders gathered to review the EU's approach to the Eastern Partnership. The meeting of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) brought together politicians from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia, along with members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR). Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reconstruction, Oleksiy Kuleba, highlighted decentralisation as "one of Ukraine's most successful reforms." He emphasized that Ukraine is working to further improve local self-government to better address current challenges. He also stated that the Eastern Partnership plays a key role in supporting Ukraine's reforms, strengthening democratic institutions, and advancing EU integration. Poland's Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anna Radwan-Röhrenscheff, reaffirmed Poland's commitment to the Eastern Partnership during its presidency of EU ministerial meetings. She stressed that this initiative should continue to support pro-European reforms and promote EU values, complementing the enlargement process. The CORLEAP meeting took place in Rzeszów, Poland, near the Ukrainian border, under the co-chairmanship of Tetiana Yehorova-Lutsenko, head of the Kharkiv Regional Council and the Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils (UAROR), and Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, Mayor of Gdańsk and chair of the CoR's Working Group on Ukraine. Władysław Ortyl, President of Poland's Podkarpackie Region, hosted the event, describing his region as a key example of Poland's dedication to regional cooperation.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY (EDA)

[EDA seeks standardised framework for small arms ammunition](#)

The European Defence Agency (EDA) has launched the Small Arms Ammunition Technologies (SAAT) project, a four-year initiative led by Belgian defence company [FN Herstal](#) and supported by a diverse European consortium to establish a common standard for small arms ammunition.

The project, which brings together 18 partners from nine countries — including defence manufacturers, research organisations, and national Ministries of Defence — aims to strengthen interoperability among European armed forces and to also advance ammunition technology. The kick-off meeting, held in mid-December, laid the groundwork for the project's governance and collaborative framework.



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With a budget of €8.3 million, the SAAT project demonstrates a shared commitment among participating EU Member States — Belgium, Czechia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and non-EU members Norway and Switzerland — to address the following objectives:

- Establish performance criteria for small arms ammunition to counter present and future threats;
- Analyse ammunition components such as projectiles, propellants, and cartridge cases;
- Develop projectile prototypes;
- Advance the design and functionality of key ammunition technologies.

By creating a common standard for small arms ammunition, the initiative aims to reduce dependency on external suppliers and ensure a unified European Union response to evolving security threats.

[Commissioner Kubilius urges 'big bang' in EU defence, Ukraine sees funding gap](#)

The European Union is experiencing “colossal” shortages in military materiel and must adopt a bold, large-scale strategy to address them, European Commissioner for Defence and Space Andrius Kubilius stated at the European Defence Agency’s annual conference

“The shortfalls in military materiel, especially when compared to Russia’s war economy, are enormous. We can no longer afford a fragmented and slow approach. We need a real, large-scale initiative to boost defence production and procurement. A unified European strategy is essential,” Commissioner Kubilius stated.

General Onno Eichelsheim, Chief of Defence of the Netherlands, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that strengthening Ukraine benefits both NATO and the European Union. He also called for joint procurement efforts among EU Member States to increase efficiency and impact.

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CYBERSECURITY (ENISA)

[The EU Agency for Cybersecurity, ENISA welcomes the EU Action Plan for the cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers proposed on 15 January.](#)

ENISA welcomes the initiative and remains committed to collaborating with the European Commission, the Member States, healthcare providers and the cybersecurity community to strengthen the sector’s digital infrastructure and ensure its resilience to cyber threats. This plan is a key priority, in line with the commitment set out by President Von der Leyen’s political guidelines for the new Commission’s mandate for 2024-2029. Several specific actions are foreseen to be implemented progressively in 2025-2026, in collaboration with the Member States, healthcare providers, and the cybersecurity community. Particularly, it is proposed for ENISA to establish a pan-European Cybersecurity Support Centre for hospitals and healthcare providers, designed to provide them with tailored guidance, tools, services and training. Among others, the proposed tasks include the development of guidance for cybersecurity good practices and procurement, the development of a regulatory mapping tool, the establishment of EU capabilities for detecting cyber threats against the health sector, to introduce an early warning service for the sector, the development of cyber incident response playbooks. Building on the existing legislative framework for cybersecurity (NIS2, Cybersecurity Act, Cyber Resilience Act, Cyber Solidarity Act), the actions proposed correspond to the current ENISA mandate to help



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the EU Member States increase the resilience of their critical sectors, while acknowledging that Member States represent different needs. To achieve the goals set out by the Action Plan, a joint effort is needed and adequate resources are required to fulfil the new actions.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

[War in Ukraine: the General Court confirms the restrictive measures adopted against the Russian mobile telephone operator MegaFon](#)

MegaFon, a public joint stock company established in Moscow (Russia), is one of the principal mobile telephone and telecommunications operators in Russia. The General Court of the European Union has dismissed MegaFon's action challenging the EU's restrictive measures against it. The Council included MegaFon on the sanctions list in February 2023, citing its alleged support for Russia's military in the war against Ukraine. These measures prohibit European operators from supplying dual-use goods, technology, or related assistance to MegaFon.

MegaFon argued that the Council's decision lacked justification, contained assessment errors, and violated its rights of defense and proportionality. However, the Court ruled that the Council had provided clear and specific reasons for the sanctions, aiming to prevent MegaFon from aiding Russian military operations. It also affirmed that the Council was not required to hear MegaFon beforehand, as doing so would have compromised the effectiveness of the sanctions.

The Court further rejected claims of assessment errors and concluded that, while the measures impact MegaFon's business and reputation, they are justified in serving a fundamental public interest. The restrictions were deemed necessary and appropriate to counter Russian aggression.



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