JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAMS - JITS

Numerous successes across the board

What JIT is?

A joint investigation team is an international cooperation tool based on an agreement between competent authorities – both judicial (judges, prosecutors, investigative judges…) and law enforcement – of two or more States, established for a limited duration and for a specific purpose, to carry out criminal investigations in one or more of the involved States.

JITs are now an established efficient and effective cooperation tool amongst national investigative agencies when tackling cross-border crime. They facilitate the coordination of investigations and prosecutions conducted in parallel across several States.

The terms in accordance with which a JIT operates vary from case to case, but they are based on the model JIT agreement as appended to Council Resolution (2017/C 18/01). This resolution "encourages the competent authorities of the Member States that wish to set up a Joint Investigation Team with the competent authorities from other Member States, in accordance with the terms of the Framework Decision and the Convention, or from non-EU States, on the basis of the relevant international instruments, to use, where appropriate, the Model Agreement […] in order to agree upon the modalities for the joint investigation team".

In accordance with the Council document establishing the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams (the JITs Network), the national experts’ role is to facilitate the work of practitioners in the Member States, in association with Europol and Eurojust in their supportive role to JITs. The national expert may either be a person or a representative of a generic organisation (a contact point, perhaps representing a law enforcement or judicial authority, e.g. Head of International Division, the National Criminal Intelligence Service) depending on the circumstances and national arrangements in each Member State.

The JITs Network, along with Europol and Eurojust, has created the ‘Practical Guide’ to Joint Investigation Teams, which provides advice, guidance, useful information, as well as answers to FAQs by practitioners, and more. The JITs Network Secretariat supports the national JIT experts and is based at Eurojust, The Hague.

HOW JITS OPERATE IN PRACTICE

Here’s how JITs work: the competent authorities in one or more Member States, joined as noted above by authorities from outside the EU, may decide to set up a JIT for a specific purpose and for a limited period (which may be extended by mutual agreement). A JIT team can consist of:

- law enforcement officers;
- prosecutors;
- judges;
- other relevant personnel.

The JIT is led by a member from the country in which the JIT is based. And it is the law of that country that governs the JIT’s activities.

EUROPOL’S ROLE

Download the model agreement in different EU languages.

Europol supports JITs in a number of ways, such as by:

- showing the big picture: identifying links between related cases and investigations;
- liaising directly with JIT members;
- providing members with information that Europol maintains;
- offering analytical and logistical support, and technical and forensic expertise;
- supporting the secure exchange of information.

Successes across a range of crime areas

JITs have contributed to successes in a range of crime areas. For instance, they have:

- dismantled migrant smuggling networks;
carried out an operation resulting in the arrest of 12 members of an organised crime group who were running a voice-phishing scam that bilked bank-account holders of millions of euro;

arrested members of a cybercrime group involving in distributing malware;

dismantled a network of child-abuse photographers operating in six EU countries, arresting 10 individuals and seizing evidence.