

THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT COLLABORATION IN COMBATING ECONOMIC CRIME IN EUROPE

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Abstract. The *subject of this study* is the legal and theoretical foundations of law enforcement co-operation in Europe in combatting economic crime, with a particular focus on the co-operation of these bodies with the relevant Ukrainian authorities. The research examines legal systems across various regions of the world, with a focus on the obstacles that hinder effective collaboration. This emphasises the necessity for consistent methodologies in addressing the challenges posed by economic crime. The primary objective of the study is to establish a framework for law enforcement agencies in Europe to collaborate in the fight against economic crime. The focal point of this study is the interaction between Ukraine and the EU, with particular emphasis on Ukraine's growing integration into European political, economic, and cultural frameworks. The objective of the present article is to ascertain the fundamental concepts, legal instruments and challenges, and subsequently to propose solutions for the enhancement of collaboration. This is particularly important given that Ukraine wants to join the European Union and must address issues such as corruption within its own borders. *Methodology.* The article uses a combination of general scientific methods and specific legal approaches. It primarily examines how international and European Union legislation, including Council of Europe conventions and EU directives, compares with state laws. It provides a systematic analysis of the roles of Europol, Interpol, Eurojust and other institutional structures. The study also examines data from reports by foreign organisations and case studies of collaborative investigations, as well as reviewing Ukraine's law enforcement changes through case studies. This ensures that both the theoretical and practical aspects of collaboration are examined in depth. The *findings* demonstrate that people can work together more easily when solid legislative frameworks are in place, such as EU directives and Council of Europe treaties, as well as institutional mechanisms like SIENA and joint investigative teams. However, difficulties arise in relation to legislation, business practices and technology, particularly when it comes to tackling cybercrime. Ukraine must comply with EU regulations and collaborate more closely with Europol and Eurojust. This is crucial. Ideas for tackling economic crime in Europe include harmonising legislation, investing in technology and empowering Ukraine's anti-corruption authorities.

Keywords: international economic security, state economic security, Interpol, Europol, economic crime, crime prevention, international co-operation in the prevention and combatting crime.

JEL Classification: K14, K33, K42

1. Introduction

Professor Caianiello (2022) from the University of Bologna has correctly noted, that the EU's primary effort must be concentrated "on combatting economic and financial crimes, which are capable of undermining the Eurozone's economic prosperity", since "the attack

on the internal market and its economic-financial foundations appears so serious...as to be perceived potentially destructive of the entire supranational edifice, thus overwhelming peace, social security and democracy, that is endangering, in one concept, the basic values of the Union". Indeed, money laundering,

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fraud, corruption, and cybercrime are all types of economic crime that pose a threat to financial systems and people's trust in government institutions all over the world. This is a matter of particular concern in Europe, particularly in periods when economic crime becomes almost impossible to distinguish from sabotage carried out in the context of full-scale armed conflicts along the European borders, which have the potential to escalate into an armed conflict within the borders of the European Union at any moment.

Close economic ties enable criminal activities to cross borders easily, making them harder to detect without co-operation between law enforcement bodies in multiple states. This topic is important because economic crime, particularly money laundering, is becoming increasingly common. In Europe, this affects a large number of financial transactions each year. This issue is of paramount importance for Ukraine because, as a country aspiring to join the European Union, it needs to address economic crimes that threaten its stability, reforms and well-being during the ongoing armed conflict caused by Russian aggression.

In order to combat the high levels of corruption, cross-border money laundering through offshore territories and cybercrime, which are often linked to European markets, Ukraine must work closely with European law enforcement. During times of war and economic hardship, robust measures against economic crime are essential to safeguard financial security and uphold the commitments outlined in the Association Agreement with the European Union. This paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the theoretical and legal foundations of law enforcement agencies collaborating to combat economic crime in Europe, with a particular focus on Ukraine's involvement. The article aims to explain how international collaboration operates, evaluate its effectiveness, and propose solutions to overcome existing obstacles.

The goal defines the research objectives, namely:

- To explain what economic crime is and its main types;
- to provide an outlook into international and regional laws that govern co-operation;
- to evaluate the roles of organizations like Europol, Interpol, and Eurojust;
- to look into ways to share information, work together on investigations, and mutual legal assistance;
- to consider the pros and cons of Ukraine's partnership with European law enforcement agencies and find legal, organisational, and technological problems alongside with proposals on their improvement.

Particular attention should be given to Ukraine joining European frameworks for dealing with economic crimes. This is important for meeting EU standards and enhancing national security. The study relies heavily on a thorough comparison of regulatory legislative tools, such as EU directives and Council of

Europe treaties, as well as an in-depth examination of the institutional and practical aspects of co-operation. The preliminary theoretical conclusions that are arrived at may then be applied to draw practical conclusions. These conclusions are arrived at using data summarising methods from reports from international organisations, investigations into the activities of law enforcement agencies, and reviews of scientific literature. The article aims to elucidate the theoretical and legal aspects of co-operation, whilst also proposing pragmatic recommendations for enhancing communication, particularly in light of Ukraine's prevailing challenges, such as the necessity to reform the law enforcement system and combat corruption in the context of European integration.

2. Conceptual and Methodological Framework for Research on Law Enforcement Co-operation in Combating Economic Crime

The issue of economic crime represents a significant challenge within the context of contemporary international relations, given its capacity to undermine financial system stability, erode public confidence in government institutions, and impede economic growth. Economic crime is a broad category that encompasses a wide range of illegal actions aimed at gaining unfair benefits by taking advantage of financial assets, market conditions, or power. There is no universally recognised definition, and scholars rely on soft law instruments developed by relevant international actors. For instance, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2005) provided an initial delineation of economic and financial crime as "any non-violent crime resulting in financial loss". A wording extremely broad and vague, which stimulated further research, but with little success. For instance, the definition of the Europol given in 2022 does not step a lot further: "Economic crime, also known as financial crime, refers to illegal acts committed by individual or a group of individuals to obtain a financial or professional advantage. The principal motive in such crimes is economic gain". A slightly different definition was given by the FATF (2020), which defined economic crime as "actions that hurt the economic interests of the state, legal entities, or individuals through lying, breaking trust, or abusing an official position."

However, the absence of a satisfactory definition does not prevent the phenomenon from being devastating for the global economy and the economies of individual states. Major types of economic crime include money laundering, fraud, corruption, tax evasion, cybercrime related to financial transactions, and illegal trade and smuggling. A widespread example is the laundering of illegally obtained funds in the legal economy. According to the FATF, money laundering

occurs on a global scale each year, accounting for between 2% and 5% of the world's GDP (FATF, 2020). There are several types of fraud, including pyramid schemes, falsifying financial accounts and securities fraud. Examples of corruption include bribery, abuse of power, and other illegal uses of government positions for personal gain (Transparency International, 2021).

A salient feature of economic crime is its transnational character. Crimes such as computer fraud and money laundering have the potential to transcend many borders, thereby complicating their detection and investigation. This necessitates that international law explicitly delineates the definition of economic crime and its classification. The Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure, and Confiscation of the Proceeds of Crime (1990) standardises definitions of certain crimes among Member States, thereby facilitating collaborative efforts (Council of Europe, 1990).

Theoretical frameworks that accurately represent contemporary realities of globalisation and state interdependence are key to international collaboration in combatting economic crime. This is achieved through the globalisation of laws and the dissemination of international legal norms and ideals. However, this is contingent on globalisation embodying the 'global shift in economic and political power' (Jeronimo, 2019), which elevates the fight against economic crime to an international level. A crucial way of addressing transnational crimes is to enhance the universality of laws by establishing global legal standards and principles. International treaties, conventions and recommendations facilitate the harmonisation of norms for combating economic crime by globalising law. The FATF's guidelines for tackling money laundering and terrorist financing show that most European countries agree on a unified approach (FATF, 2020).

The concept of cross-border jurisdiction is another significant element in this regard. It has been argued that this facilitates intergovernmental collaboration in the prosecution of transnational crimes. Cross-border jurisdiction can be defined as the capacity to execute national law on actions conducted beyond the nation's borders if they jeopardise the state's economic security (Ryder, 2015). Despite the occurrence of money laundering offences partially outside the European Union, European Union Member States employ the principle of universal jurisdiction to prosecute them.

The concept of mutual recognition of judgments and reciprocal legal assistance serves as a theoretical framework for international collaboration. This notion is formalised by numerous international treaties, including the European Convention on

Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959). The principle of mutual recognition, as articulated by the Council of Europe in 1959, stipulates that nations are obligated to acknowledge and implement the decisions made by other nations, thereby facilitating processes such as extradition, asset confiscation, and information exchange. The process of globalisation of law and the establishment of cross-border jurisdiction is fraught with challenges, largely due to the existence of disparities in the legal systems of various countries. This complicates efforts to harmonise them. Another significant theoretical issue is that of collective responsibility among nations in addressing economic crime (Wabwile, 2015). The fundamental premise of this concept is that economic crimes have a profound impact on the global community, rendering it incapable of addressing these issues independently. This necessity has given rise to the establishment of multinational organisations such as Europol and Interpol, which facilitate the collaboration of law enforcement agencies across many nations (Europol, 2022).

Law enforcement is of paramount importance in the prevention of economic crime, encompassing the prevention, investigation and deterrence of such offences. The primary responsibilities of law enforcement agencies include monitoring financial transactions, investigating suspicious activities, collaborating on investigations, and ensuring compliance with court orders. In Europe, the execution of these responsibilities is undertaken by national law enforcement agencies, including police and financial intelligence units, in conjunction with international organisations such as Europol and Eurojust (Europol, 2022).

In order to combat economic crime, law enforcement officials must focus on a number of key areas. These measures are primarily designed to prevent economic violations. These include formulating and executing plans for prevention, overseeing financial transactions and training personnel. Secondly, they can conduct investigative operations to detect and document transgressions, collaborating with other nations to procure evidence. Thirdly, international networks such as SIENA, which are managed by law enforcement organisations, enable the dissemination of information (Europol, 2022). The extent to which law enforcement can address economic crime is dictated by national legislation and international treaties. In accordance with EU Directive 2014/42 (European Union, 2014), law enforcement officials in EU Member States are authorised to seize assets obtained through illegal means. The principles of law enforcement include compliance with the law, transparency, respect for human rights and international collaboration. Furthermore, these principles form the basis of protecting essential freedoms while tackling economic offences (Arakelian et al., 2025).

3. Fundamentals of Legal Regulation of Co-operation in Combating Economic Crime in Europe

International and regional legal frameworks set out the rules governing police co-operation in tackling economic crime in Europe. These frameworks establish standardised protocols that enable countries to work together on initiatives, exchange information and ensure that their respective legal frameworks are aligned. The Strasbourg Convention, formally known as the Council of Europe Convention on the Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds of Crime (1990), is a key instrument. It establishes criteria for identifying and seizing assets acquired through illicit methods, and requires Member States to collaborate in investigating these offences (Council of Europe, 1990). The Convention addresses several economic offences, including corruption and money laundering. It establishes lawful mechanisms for countries to assist one another, such as information sharing and the extradition of criminals (Pasechnyk et al., 2025).

Another significant accord from the Council of Europe is the Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959). It establishes a framework for nations to collaborate on criminal investigations, including economic offences. The Convention sets out protocols for responding to requests for legal assistance, including the interrogation of witnesses and the management of evidence (Council of Europe, 1959). These treaties provide a framework for European nations to collaborate and manage transnational economic crimes more effectively. It is crucial for the European Union to establish regulations and directives that standardise laws across all its Member States. The Fourth Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Directive (Directive EU 2015/849) establishes regulations for overseeing financial transactions, identifying clients, and reporting suspicious activities, with the aim of preventing the financial system from being exploited for money laundering or financing terrorism. This rule requires all EU Member States to establish financial intelligence units and collaborate via international channels (European Union, 2015). The Fifth Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Regulation (2018/843), enacted in 2018, broadened the scope of the previous regulation. It introduced regulations for cryptocurrencies and made it easier to identify the actual owners of companies (European Union, 2018).

EU Regulation 2018/1805 enables EU Member States to swiftly enforce court rulings on the freezing and confiscation of assets. This is crucial for tackling economic crimes, which often transcend national borders (European Union, 2018). These laws establish a legal framework for collaboration between law enforcement agencies, setting out specific rules and

processes for such co-operation. The collaborative efforts of multinational entities such as Europol, Interpol, and Eurojust are fundamental to the establishment of effective law enforcement collaboration in Europe. These groups are of paramount importance in the orchestration of initiatives aimed at combating economic crime. Europol is the principal organisation that coordinates law enforcement agencies within the EU to combat international crime. The foundation of the institution dates back to 1999. Europol facilitates rapid information sharing among law enforcement organisations via the secure SIENA platform. This facilitates the exchange of information regarding suspected transactions and the coordination of co-operative investigations (Europol, 2022). In 2021, Europol orchestrated an operation to dismantle a transnational money laundering network. A significant number of individuals were detained, and substantial sums of money were seized (Europol, 2022).

Interpol fosters international co-operation among nations worldwide, encompassing those outside the European Union. Interpol's I-24/7 database has been developed for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of information. Concurrently, the organisation conducts international investigations into economic crimes, including fraud and money laundering. The 2020 operation "Global Airport Action", conducted in collaboration with Interpol, identified multiple instances of financial crime within the aviation sector (Interpol, 2020).

The European Agency for Judicial Co-operation (Eurojust) plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration among judicial and law enforcement entities to combat economic crimes. Eurojust plays a pivotal role in facilitating the establishment of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), thereby enabling law enforcement agencies from multiple nations to collaborate on complex transnational criminal investigations. In 2019, Eurojust conducted an investigation into VAT fraud across multiple EU nations, resulting in the confiscation of assets totalling over 2 billion EUR (Eurojust, 2019). These organisations provide a network that effectively facilitates information sharing, action coordination, and execution of court orders.

The harmonisation of legal frameworks across European nations is a critical component in the fight against economic crime. The European Union (EU) has established legal directives, such as Directive 2015/849, which mandate the implementation of uniform national laws across Member States. Germany has enacted the Anti-Money Laundering Act (*Geldwäschegesetz*), thereby ensuring compliance with EU AML regulations. The relevant regulations stipulate that financial organisations are obliged to conduct client due diligence (*Bundesgesetzblatt*, 2017). The Monetary and Financial Code (*Code Monétaire et Financier*, 2020) in France contains

analogous regulations that govern the operations of financial intelligence units. Despite endeavours to achieve uniformity, disparities in national laws across Europe persist, with the potential to complicate collaboration. Bureaucratic issues or inadequately constructed institutional frameworks may impede asset seizure operations in Eastern European nations such as Poland and Hungary (Transparency International, 2021).

Simultaneously, Western European nations such as the Netherlands and the UK possess superior mechanisms for monitoring financial activity, facilitating the detection of economic crimes. These disparities have the potential to impede collaborative efforts, particularly in the context of extradition and the execution of court orders. In numerous EU nations, extradition of individuals is prohibited by law, which complicates the prosecution of those suspected of transnational crimes. The EU is diligently striving to enhance the consistency of its legislation by enacting new laws and directives that rectify legal discrepancies and standardise procedures (European Union, 2018).

4. Practical Mechanisms for Law Enforcement Co-operation in Combating Economic Crime in Europe

With the theoretical framework in mind, the following discussion will turn to practical implications, leading to an immediate observation about the prevailing nature of information exchange in combatting international economic crime. Such exchange is imperative for the operations of police and other law enforcement agencies.

The European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) established the legal foundation for information sharing in Europe, and it is this convention that provides the relevant requirements. This agreement delineates the protocols for information exchange among countries (Council of Europe, 1959). The Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive (EU Directive 2015/849) obliges Member States to establish mechanisms for the exchange of information among Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), with the aim of identifying suspicious transactions (European Union, 2015). Europol established the SIENA (Secure Information Exchange Network Application) platform, which functions as the primary conduit for information sharing among individuals in Europe. This technology facilitates the secure exchange of information among law enforcement agencies in EU nations, pertaining to financial transactions, suspicious individuals, and criminal networks. Europol (2022) reported that SIENA processed over 1.2 million reports in 2022, with a significant proportion of these relating to economic crimes. In 2021, SIENA facilitated the coordination

of an anti-money laundering operation alongside law enforcement agencies in Spain, Italy, and France. This course of action resulted in the confiscation of assets with an estimated value of 50 million EUR (Europol, 2022). Interpol's databases, most notably the I-24/7 system, represent a substantial resource. This system provides access to information regarding sought individuals, stolen assets, and dubious financial transactions. Interpol's national offices facilitate collaboration among non-EU nations through data sharing (Interpol, 2020). Europol is responsible for the management of the FIU.net infrastructure, facilitating the exchange of information among EU financial intelligence units. This is crucial for identifying money laundering operations (European Union, 2015). These strategies enable a quick response to economic crimes, but their effectiveness depends on countries coordinating their procedures and technical infrastructure. Joint investigations enable law enforcement agencies from multiple countries to collaborate in addressing complex economic crimes that transcend national borders. In Europe, such investigations are often carried out by Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), which are set up with the help of Eurojust. JITs facilitate collaboration between law enforcement agencies and prosecutors from different countries, enabling the exchange of evidence, coordination of activities and execution of joint operations (Eurojust, 2019).

EU Framework Decision 2002/465/JHA sets out the rules governing joint investigations. It also provides the legal basis for the formation of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). These teams may comprise professionals from national law enforcement agencies, Europol and Eurojust. Certain aspects of their work are financed by the European Union (European Union, 2002). In 2020, a consortium of investigators from the Netherlands, Belgium and Eurojust examined a significant value-added tax (VAT) fraud scheme known as "carousel fraud". The operation resulted in the arrest of 23 individuals and the seizure of assets worth 150 million EUR (Eurojust, 2020).

The "Trojan Shield" initiative, carried out by Europol and Interpol in 2021, is an example of a successful operation. The operation primarily targeted money laundering through bitcoin platforms, but also targeted organised crime more broadly. Due to the collaboration of law enforcement agencies from 16 nations, including EU Member States, more than 800 individuals were apprehended and assets valued at 48 million USD were seized (Europol, 2021). These cases demonstrate how collaborative investigative efforts can effectively address economic crimes by pooling information and resources from multiple nations. Extradition and mutual legal assistance are two key mechanisms through which governments can work together to pursue individuals suspected of economic

crimes. Since its establishment in 2002, the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) has significantly streamlined extradition processes within Europe. The European Arrest Warrant enables suspects to be transferred quickly between EU Member States, bypassing the lengthy formalities associated with traditional extradition procedures. For example, in 2019, a money laundering suspect was transferred from Poland to Germany in under two weeks using a European Arrest Warrant (European Union, 2002).

Examples of reciprocal legal assistance include providing evidence, interrogating witnesses and executing court orders. The governing legal frameworks are the Council of Europe Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) and EU Directive 2014/41 concerning the European Investigation Order (EIO). The European Investigation Order (EIO) enables law enforcement in one EU Member State to request evidence or investigative actions from another Member State, significantly expediting investigations (European Union, 2014). For example, in a 2020 case involving fraud relating to financial instruments, France used the EIO to obtain banking information from Luxembourg. This facilitated the exposure of a 30 million EUR fraud (Eurojust, 2020). Despite these instruments, collaboration remains challenging. Initially, discrepancies in national legislation can make it difficult to execute requests. In countries such as Hungary, for example, constitutional constraints can make extradition impossible, which can complicate investigations (Transparency International, 2021). Secondly, the flow of information may be impeded by bureaucratic procedures and linguistic obstacles. Thirdly, cyber-related economic crimes require a prompt response, but not all countries have the necessary technology to address this issue effectively. To address these issues, the EU is facilitating collaboration by digitising processes and increasing the authority of Europol and Eurojust.

International and bilateral agreements establish a framework for the exchange of information, collaborative investigations and legal assistance. These accords form the basis of the legal framework that governs Ukraine's co-operation with European law enforcement agencies in tackling economic crime. The most important document is the 2014 Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, which came into effect in 2017. This agreement facilitates the alignment of Ukrainian legislation with EU standards, particularly with regard to the prevention of money laundering, corruption and fraud. According to Article 18 of the Agreement, Ukraine is required to collaborate with the EU in combatting economic crime. This includes sharing information and complying with the FATF standards (European Union, 2014). Ukraine has signed

the Council of Europe's 1990 Convention on the Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of Criminal Proceeds. This agreement sets out the rules for identifying and confiscating illicit assets. It enables Ukraine to collaborate with other European countries in investigating transnational crimes (Council of Europe, 1990).

Furthermore, Ukraine has ratified the 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, establishing a legal framework for witness interrogation, evidence transfer and judgment enforcement (Council of Europe, 1959). Bilateral agreements with European countries such as Poland, Germany and the Netherlands further strengthen this framework. For example, the Ukraine-Poland Agreement on Co-operation in Combating Crime (2016) stipulates that the two countries will exchange information on financial crimes and collaborate on operational efforts (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2016). While Ukraine's collaboration with European partners is facilitated by these agreements, adherence to all EU regulations is challenging due to differing legal systems. Ukraine works closely with international organisations such as Europol and Interpol to combat economic crime. Although Ukraine is not a Member of the European Union, it is a Europol partner thanks to the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Co-operation signed in 2016. Ukraine can disseminate information via the SIENA network, collaborate on operations and receive analytical support from Europol (Europol, 2016). For example, in 2020 Ukraine collaborated with Europol on a cyber fraud operation which identified a network using phishing to launder money through Ukrainian banks (Europol, 2020).

5. Theoretical Legal Challenges, Problems and Prospects for Improving Co-operation

Legal impediments remain a significant challenge, hindering collaborative efforts by law enforcement agencies to address economic crime in Europe. Despite significant efforts to harmonise legislation, discrepancies between different legal systems continue to hinder collaboration. Germany and France, both of which are Members of the European Union, impose stringent regulations on the confiscation of criminals' assets under Directive 2014/42/EU (European Union, 2014). However, in some Eastern European nations, such as Hungary or Romania, adherence to these criteria is challenging due to differing procedural laws or insufficient judicial independence (Transparency International, 2021).

Conflicting jurisdictions also present challenges. Money laundering and fraud are examples of economic crimes that may occur across multiple nations. This can result in disputes over which country has the authority

to investigate a case. For example, in 2019, inquiries into VAT fraud across several EU countries encountered difficulties due to the different legal definitions of the offence in each nation (Eurojust, 2019). Such conflicts can make it difficult to execute the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), as some countries may be prohibited by their constitution from extraditing their own citizens (European Union, 2002). To overcome these legal impediments, legislation must be more harmonised. EU Regulation 2018/1805, which concerns the mutual recognition of asset freezing and confiscation orders, aims to facilitate co-operation among Member States; however, its implementation remains time-consuming (European Union, 2018). Although international accords, such as the Council of Europe's 1990 Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime, establish uniform criteria, the efficacy of these agreements ultimately depends on the political will of individual nations (Council of Europe, 1990).

Organisational challenges can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of law enforcement collaboration. For various authorities, such as national police forces, financial intelligence units, Europol and Eurojust, to collaborate effectively, clear regulations and the prompt exchange of information are essential. However, bureaucratic procedures in many countries prolong this process. Europol's 2022 report indicated that requests sent via the SIENA network could take weeks to process due to each country's individual bureaucratic procedures (Europol, 2022).

Language and cultural differences can complicate collaborative efforts. With over 20 official languages, Europe's linguistic diversity can prolong the translation of documents and hinder the collaboration of police professionals from different countries. Eurojust's joint investigations, for example, often encounter difficulties when preparing trial materials due to linguistic challenges (Eurojust, 2020). Co-operation may also be hindered by cultural differences, particularly with regard to the different approaches to law enforcement adopted by various nations. In France, for example, where the structure is centralised, law enforcement agencies collaborate more effectively. In contrast, Germany's federal system means regional authorities may pursue different objectives (Ryder, 2015).

Europol and Eurojust are setting up coordination centres for joint investigative teams (JITs) and running training programmes to help overcome organisational challenges. In 2021, for example, Eurojust provided police personnel from ten countries with training on collaborative approaches to money laundering investigations. This has increased compatibility between systems (Eurojust, 2021). In order to resolve these issues in an effective manner, it is essential to enhance institutional capacity and ensure consistency in procedures.

As cybercrime, a rapidly growing form of economic crime, becomes more prevalent, technological issues are increasingly significant. Cybercrimes such as phishing, cryptocurrency fraud and attacks on financial systems require law enforcement to rapidly acquire proficiency in emerging technology. Europol reports that, in 2022, nearly 30% of all recorded cybercrimes in Europe were related to economic offences (Europol, 2022). The 2020 "Cryptojacking" investigation revealed a substantial scheme involving the use of cryptocurrencies for money laundering. This indicated that law enforcement organisations needed in-depth knowledge of blockchain technology (Interpol, 2020).

A significant issue is that several nations, particularly in Eastern Europe, lack the necessary technical infrastructure. Traditional techniques for monitoring financial transactions can hinder the timely detection of fraudulent activity (Transparency International, 2021). Furthermore, law enforcement is unable to address emerging types of crime effectively without a greater number of proficient cybersecurity professionals. Investigating cyber fraud often requires the analysis of large amounts of data, which can only be achieved using artificial intelligence and advanced software that is not available in many countries. Another issue is the rapid proliferation of cryptocurrency and other anonymous financial instruments. The Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directive (2018/843) requires EU Member States to regulate cryptocurrency exchanges. Nevertheless, due to the cross-border nature of these transactions, monitoring them is difficult (European Union, 2018). In order to overcome these technological challenges, it is crucial to invest in digital infrastructure and provide law enforcement personnel with training. Europol established the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) to help countries investigate cybercrime (Europol, 2022).

6. Conclusions

An examination of the legal and theoretical justifications for police collaboration in combating economic crime in Europe reveals the complexity and difficulty of this endeavour. Money laundering, fraud, corruption, and cybercrime represent various forms of economic crime that significantly jeopardise the safety and stability of the economy of European nations. The necessity for synchronised action, founded on robust legal principles, is a consequence of its transboundary nature. It is evident that international and regional legal frameworks, including the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure, and Confiscation of the Proceeds of Crime (1990) and the EU Directive 2015/849, have been instrumental in establishing regulations with the aim of harmonising legislation and fostering collaboration. It is evident that organisations such as Europol, Interpol and Eurojust play a pivotal role in

ensuring the efficient transmission of information via platforms such as SIENA. Furthermore, these organisations have been instrumental in facilitating the establishment of collaborative investigations. These are of critical importance in the investigation of complex economic crimes.

It is imperative that Ukraine collaborates with European law enforcement agencies in order to facilitate its integration into Europe and address its internal issues, most notably corruption. The legal framework for collaboration is established by the Association Agreement with the EU and bilateral agreements with other European nations. Ukraine has the potential to contribute to international operations by becoming a member of Interpol and Europol. However, co-operation is hampered by legal issues such as differences in national legislation; organisational challenges, including bureaucratic delays and language difficulties; and technological obstacles, particularly the rise of cybercrime. The NABU and the DFSM are working to reform Ukraine's police force to bring it more into line with European standards, although it needs to be strengthened.

Law enforcement agencies must collaborate effectively to combat economic crime. This facilitates the identification and investigation of transnational crimes, the confiscation of perpetrators' illicit assets, and their prosecution. This suggests that Ukraine must have confidence in its leadership and honour its commitments to the EU. To enhance collaboration, it is recommended that European nations align their legal frameworks, address legislative deficiencies and facilitate access to digital information exchange platforms, such as SIENA and FIU.net. They should also invest in technologies to combat cybercrime, particularly by developing analytical tools and training specialists. Furthermore, they should support reforms in Ukraine to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies, such as NABU. Finally, they should reinforce coordination via international organisations, notably by increasing the authority of Europol and Eurojust. These measures will improve the effectiveness of the fight against economic crime, increase safety in Europe and integrate Ukraine into the European legal framework.

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