Cooperation in criminal matters

Judicial cooperation in criminal matters is facilitated between the legal practitioners of the EU member countries.

The Stockholm Programme sets out a new list of objectives for the period 2010-2014:

- to develop instruments implementing the mutual recognition principle in each phase of criminal proceedings;
- to approximate national procedural law and substantive law where necessary to improve mutual trust and mutual recognition;
- to develop common minimum standards to ensure that trials are fair throughout the EU;
- to develop and assist EU bodies or instruments of judicial cooperation such as EUROJUST and the European Judicial Network in criminal matters;
- to improve mutual confidence between EU national judicial systems by developing a European judicial culture through training and networking of legal practitioners;
- to monitor the implementation of EU laws that have already been adopted;
- to take account of external aspects of EU judicial cooperation (for example negotiation of agreements with non-EU countries, evaluation of judicial systems of countries applying for - or considering applying for - EU membership)

The EU has adopted several legislative instruments in accordance with the principle of mutual recognition – please consult relevant subpages to find more information on:

- the European Arrest Warrant,
- the European Evidence Warrant,
- freezing of assets and evidence,
- confiscation orders,
- exchange of information on convictions/criminal records,
- Pre- and post-trial measures,
- mutual recognition of protection measures,
- mutual recognition of financial penalties.
Three directives have been adopted to develop common minimum standards to ensure fair trial rights:

- Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings
- Directive on the right to information in criminal proceedings and
- Directive on the right of access to a lawyer and the right to communicate upon deprivation of liberty