

JUSTICE & HOME AFFAIRS AGENCIES NETWORK

NEWSLETTER

Issued January 2024

In 2023, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) held the presidency of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network (JHAAN). Established in 2010, the network currently includes nine EU agencies working in the field of justice and home affairs.

This newsletter presents the highlights of the cooperation activities carried out during the year. It is one of several new or updated promotional materials initiated by the EUAA in close collaboration with the other JHA agencies. We invite you to consult the new promotional video of the network (produced in-house by the EUAA) and an updated brochure on JHA agencies.

Scan & access to the brochure and promo video:



CEPOL | EIGE | EMCDDA | EUAA | EU-LISA | EUROJUST | EUROPOL | FRA | FRONTEx



Priorities of the Network in 2023

Taking into account the work of the network, the mandates of the JHA agencies and the overall political context, the EUAA identified the following main priorities for the network in 2023:

- Digitalisation in JHA agencies
- Implementation of the EU Green Deal
- Information provision in mixed migration situations
- Cybersecurity
- JHAAN communication and promotion

Under each priority, the EUAA initiated and organised several activities (a full list of events is available at the end of this newsletter).

Highlights of the EUAA's presidency

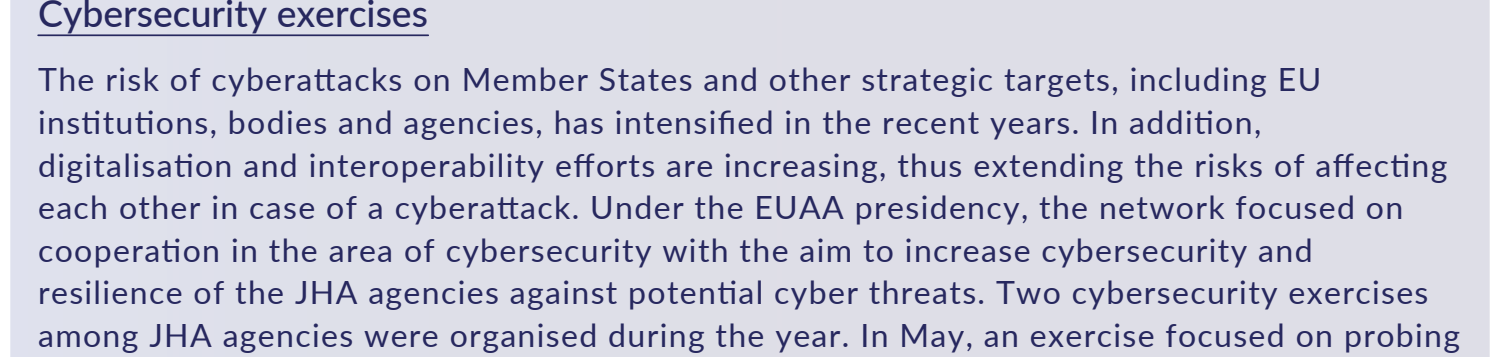
Conference on digital innovation

A conference on digital innovation was organised on 13 and 14 June by the EUAA, together with GDISC⁽¹⁾ and IGC⁽²⁾ and with the involvement of JHA agencies. The aim was to take stock of technological developments and needs centred around the wider context of asylum and migration. The meeting was attended by participants from 24 States including the United States of America (US); the European Commission, and five other JHA agencies (eu-LISA, FRA, Eurojust, Frontex, Europol).

The conference provided an opportunity to gain an overview of the state of play of digital innovation in the field of asylum and migration and discuss interesting examples from the Member States and different JHA agencies. More specifically, the meeting focused on challenges and opportunities of interconnectivity of systems at national and international levels (e.g., in the context of interoperability of large-scale EU systems) and showcased inspiring cross-border cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs. Building on the lessons learned at a thematic meeting held in 2021, the discussion also touched upon new developments regarding the digitalisation of identification procedures.

Digitalisation constitutes a common challenge for public administrations, be it at national or EU level, in the field of asylum, migration or law enforcement alike. Cooperation in this regard, within the EU and between the EU and partner countries can be mutually beneficial.

⁽¹⁾ General Directors' Immigration Services Conference.
⁽²⁾ Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees.

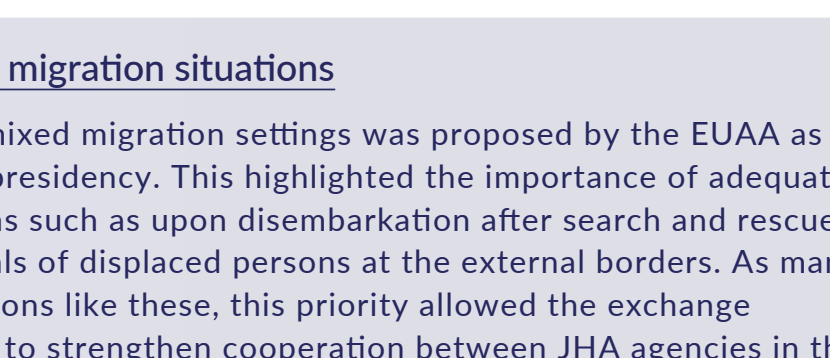
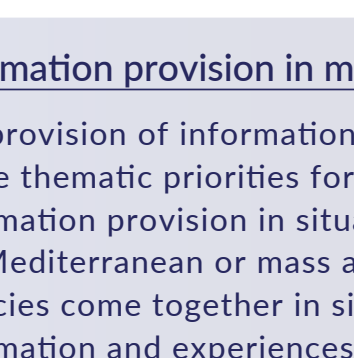


Implementation of the European Green Deal in JHA Agencies

In February 2023, the EUAA conducted a survey of JHA agencies' environmental and greening activities to determine the current situation, to identify areas of interest for future activities in this regard by the JHAAN, and to take stock of the agencies' efforts, best practices and lessons learned. A focus was on registration with the Commission's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). The results of the survey provide a baseline of the current state of play across all JHA agencies in this regard. Moreover, the results demonstrate the JHA agencies' shared commitment to stepping up their environmental and greening activities. The survey report was published online in July 2023 and can be accessed [here](#).

Cybersecurity exercises

The risk of cyberattacks on Member States and other strategic targets, including EU institutions, bodies and agencies, has intensified in the recent years. In addition, digitalisation and interoperability efforts are increasing, thus extending the risks of affecting each other in case of a cyberattack. Under the EUAA presidency, the network focused on cooperation in the area of cybersecurity with the aim to increase cybersecurity and resilience of the JHA agencies against potential cyber threats. Two cybersecurity exercises among JHA agencies were organised during the year. In May, an exercise focused on probing the technical knowledge within the agencies regarding cybersecurity. In addition to practical activities, colleagues were encouraged to discuss current challenges, exchange best practices and to further strengthen cooperation among JHA peers. A second cybersecurity exercise was organised for managers in September, in close cooperation with eu-LISA colleagues. Participants took part in a tabletop simulation working on a progressing scenario with six injects (updates which advance the scenario and introduce new elements). The main objective of the exercise was to see how organisations react when there is a potential or real threat, what procedures they follow and how the overall response to an incident is handled.



Information provision in mixed migration situations

The provision of information in mixed migration settings was proposed by the EUAA as one of the thematic priorities for its presidency. This highlighted the importance of adequate information provision in situations such as upon disembarkation after search and rescue in the Mediterranean or mass arrivals of displaced persons at the external borders. As many agencies come together in situations like these, this priority allowed the exchange information and experiences and to strengthen cooperation between JHA agencies in this area.

First, the EUAA launched a survey to collect information on JHA agencies' activities in relation to information provision. On the basis of this survey, two seminars were organised, one focusing on how to provide information in mixed migration contexts, and another one on what information should be provided in these situations. Participating agencies found both seminars insightful as they provided a space to reflect on lessons learnt, to discover common approaches and to find possible synergies and opportunities for cooperation on this topic in the future.

Staff Exchange Programme

In 2023, the EUAA organised the first ever Staff Exchange Programme for the JHAAN. Six agencies participated in the programme (CEPOL, EIGE, EUAA, eu-LISA, FRA and Frontex) who together submitted 59 offers to host colleagues from other JHA agencies and 90 offers to send staff to those positions. When the 59 final matches had been made, the actual exchanges took place, with the majority being related to core business functions, i.e. mandate-related activities.

Initial impressions about the programme are very positive and the network is currently conducting an evaluation of the programme prior to setting up a second edition.

Open Market Event

On 22 September, the EUAA organised an online open market event for all JHA agencies staff and colleagues from the EU institutions. Over 300 colleagues joined the online session to learn about the activities of the various agencies and their mutual cooperation.

In an opening video, the different Heads of the Agencies addressed the audience, followed by the premiere of the new promotional video of the network. Subsequently, in four rounds, agencies presented themselves in individual 'market stalls' (i.e. break out rooms) which could be freely visited by the participants. After the session, the EUAA received extremely positive feedback on this event from colleagues across all agencies.

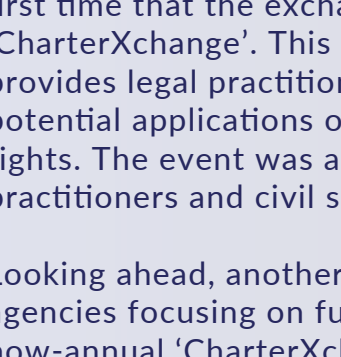
JHAAN Heads of Agencies meeting

Senior representatives of JHA agencies, the network's observers as well as the incoming Belgian Presidency of the Council, and the representative of the EU Agencies Network, gathered at the EUAA's headquarters in Malta on 21 November for the Heads of Agencies meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss recent and upcoming developments of note in the field of Justice and Home Affairs and to set out the priority topics of the network building on what was achieved in 2023 at a practical level, and to draw conclusions for future engagements. It was also an opportunity for the Heads of JHA agencies to discuss the most pressing matters of common interest. The EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, addressed the participants by video message.



Joint Paper on Ukraine

In March 2023, the JHAAN published an updated *Joint paper on JHA agencies' contribution to EU solidarity with Ukraine*. Covering the period from February 2022 to February 2023, the paper provides a comprehensive overview and summary of JHA agencies' actions aimed at supporting the EU, the Member States and EU partners such as third countries and international organisations in the Member States of Russia's military aggression in Ukraine.



- Producing targeted analytical products and reports.
- Identifying key fundamental rights challenges and ways to overcome them.
- Providing operational support to investigations of core international crimes allegedly committed in Ukraine.
- Providing operational support to national authorities, with a particular emphasis on Member States bordering Ukraine and Moldova.
- Information provision-related activities and support.
- Contributing to the enforcement of EU sanctions.
- Supporting the authorities of Ukraine and Moldova

Annual exchange of JHA agencies on the charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

On 13 December 2023, FRA organised and moderated the annual exchange of JHA agencies to discuss the promotion of the rights outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the 'Charter') both internally and externally. The session included 32 participants from EUAA, FRA, Frontex, CEPOL, eu-LISA, Eurojust and two non-JHA agencies, ECDC⁽¹⁾ and Eurofound⁽²⁾, along with observers from the EU Commission DG Justice. During the session they shared examples and good practices of how agencies promote the Charter, emphasising internal efforts such as actively encouraging greater diversity and inclusion and external endeavours to ensure compliance with fundamental rights in operational work, such as during training, exercising the right to access to documents and by providing recommendations to Member States.

This marked the fourth exchange since the Heads of the JHA agencies signed a joint statement on the implementation of the Charter in November 2019. However, it was the first time that the exchange was held as a dedicated (closed) side event of the pilot event 'CharterXchange'. This unique forum, jointly run by FRA and the European Commission, provides legal practitioners and stakeholders with a platform to explore current and potential applications of the Charter, aiming to drive positive change for enhancing people's rights. The event was attended by more than 700 participants, including more than 350 legal practitioners and civil servants from EU Member States.

Looking ahead, another online exchange among the JHA agencies, along with other EU agencies focusing on fundamental rights is scheduled to occur within the framework of the now-annual 'CharterXchange' event, set for December 2024.

⁽¹⁾ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.
⁽²⁾ EU Agency for the improvement of living and working conditions.

List of events organised in 2023 by the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network

- 25 JANUARY** | Trio Contact Points Coordination Meeting
- 30 JANUARY** | Ad hoc JHAAN Contact Points meeting on information provision
- 17 FEBRUARY** | Trio Contact Points Coordination Meeting
- 22 FEBRUARY** | Presentation of the EUAA Presidency activities and JHAAN priorities for 2023 to COSI
- 17 MARCH** | Regular JHAAN Contact Points meeting
- 22 MARCH** | Presentation of EUAA Presidency activities and JHAAN priorities for 2023 to LIBE
- 20 APRIL** | Meeting of the Working Group on Data Protection
- 04 MAY** | Technical JHA agencies' Cybersecurity Exercise
- 26 MAY** | Trio Contact Points Coordination Meeting
- 01 & 02 JUNE** | Seminar on Information Provision ("How")
- 08 JUNE** | Trio Heads of Agencies meeting with the incoming Spanish Presidency
- 08 JUNE** | Meeting of the Working group on communication
- 09 JUNE** | Workshop on communication with Member States
- 12 JUNE** | Regular JHAAN Contact Points Meeting
- 13 & 14 JUNE** | Digitalisation Conference
- 05 JULY** | Meeting on Reporting Methodologies
- 06 JULY** | Meeting of the Working Group on ICT and Cybersecurity
- 12 AUGUST** | Trio Contact Points Coordination Meeting
- 05 SEPTEMBER** | Regular JHAAN Contact Points meeting
- 19 SEPTEMBER** | Cybersecurity Exercise for Managers
- 21 SEPTEMBER** | Meeting of the Working Group on Training
- 22 SEPTEMBER** | JHAAN Open Market Event
- 12 OCTOBER** | Meeting of the Working Group on External Relations (RELEX)
- 17 & 18 OCTOBER** | Meeting of the Working Group on European Situation Monitoring
- 19 & 20 OCTOBER** | Digital Learning and Learning Technologies Ecosystem in JHA agencies
- 25 OCTOBER** | Ad hoc JHAAN Contact Points meeting
- 15 NOVEMBER** | Seminar on Information Provision ("What")
- 20 NOVEMBER** | Crisis Communication Coaching for Heads of JHA agencies
- 21 NOVEMBER** | JHAAN Heads of Agencies meeting
- 24 NOVEMBER** | Exchange on Single Programming Document (SPD) good practices
- 05 DECEMBER** | Trio Heads of Agencies meeting with the incoming Belgian Presidency
- 05 DECEMBER** | JHAAN Brussels Briefing
- 11 DECEMBER** | 2nd meeting of the Working Group on Data Protection
- 13 DECEMBER** | Annual exchange of JHA agencies on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- Q1-2 2024** | Presentation of the JHAAN Annual Report 2023 to COSI
- Q1-2 2024** | Presentation of the JHAAN Annual Report 2023 to LIBE Committee

About the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network

	The EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)
	The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
	The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)
	The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)
	The EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA)
	The EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust)
	The EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)
	The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
	The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)

Within the network, agencies cooperate on different topics in the areas where their work is complementary, such as migration, asylum, external border management, fundamental rights, gender equality, fight against organised crime, illicit drugs and drugs addiction, countering terrorism, as well as ensuring the functioning of relevant EU IT systems and law enforcement training. To foster inter-institutional dialogue and overall horizontal coordination at EU level, the network closely cooperates with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Union External Action Service and with the Council of the European Union whose representatives participate in the network's meetings as observers⁽⁵⁾.

How does the network function?

Over time, the network has developed its way of working – the functioning of the JHAAN is organised through regular meetings at horizontal level and through several working groups, which facilitate cooperation and finding synergies at expert level. The network has also developed a set of tools and products, which are updated on a yearly basis, to inform its main stakeholders about individual and joint work of the agencies on different topics in a comprehensive manner.

Every year, one of the participating agencies holds the presidency of the network. This means that the chairing agency proposes the priorities of the network for a particular year and organises work of the network throughout a year. In 2023, the European Union Agency for Asylum held the presidency of the network.

Trio coordination presidency

In 2021, the network adopted the JHAAN Assessment report which described key achievements of the network and, in addition, provided a set of recommendations to ensure better coordination inside and outside of the network, to improve its functioning and to increase the network's visibility.

One of the concrete results of these recommendations was the establishment of a Trio presidency concept which was introduced at the beginning of 2022. This concept brings three consecutive presidencies close together to enhance continuity and coordination in the network from one year to another. The first Trio is composed of CEPOL, EUAA and eu-LISA, covering the period 2022-2024. At the beginning of that period, the three agencies agreed on three priority topics which would be reflected in the programmes developed by the respective agencies for the network during this period. These Trio priorities included digitalisation and its different dimensions, business continuity and the EU Green Deal implementation.

⁽⁵⁾ Directorate-General of the European Commission for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Directorate-General of the European Commission for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Secretariat of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Secretariat, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU (GSC).