

**JOINT DECLARATION  
OF PROSECUTORS GENERAL  
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP MEMBER STATES  
AND REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA**

**Budapest, 10th June 2021**

Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has made daily case management in prosecution services more complicated, and adapting to the pandemic has required a flexible approach and an extremely rapid development of IT tools.

Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria share the view that current crime trends have changed due to the pandemic. New crime types and forms of perpetrations have emerged, which require immediate responses from law enforcement authorities.

Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria strive to achieve significant progress in the fight against crime through an enhanced cooperation among their countries. Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria seek enhanced cooperation particularly in the following areas.

### **Observing new trends of cybercrime**

Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria closely observe crimes committed in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, the features, structure and dynamics of cybercrimes that have become typical and widespread during the time of the pandemic. There has been a particular increase in the area of online sexual exploitation of children, fraudulent activities in e-shops, but also in the form of sophisticated fraud. The perpetrators also focused on critical infrastructure in connection with the pandemic. The Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria will continue to monitor closely cybercrime trends based on Europol's findings, while regularly exchanging information on identified trends and socio-economic risks in their countries, as well as on best practices and possible forms of cooperation.

## **Fight against children's sexual exploitation**

Taking into account that the number of crimes relating to the online sexual exploitation of children has sharply increased worldwide since the outbreak of the pandemic, Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria express their determination to pay special attention to detecting sexual abuses against children, to preparing the prosecution of perpetrators as well as to prosecuting them in court with the aim to have them severely punished. Taking into account the global nature of this form of crime, they will support the deepening of cooperation within the European Union as well as with third countries.

In order to increase the effectiveness of cooperation both among the Visegrad Group Countries and Republic of Austria and the cooperation with other states, Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria consider it necessary for national experts of this field to exchange information and experience among each other regularly, and in case of identifying networks of perpetrators set up for child sexual exploitation carrying out activities that involve at least two out of the five cooperating countries, they encourage conducting joint investigations and support Joint Action Days.

## **The Budapest Convention and international cooperation**

Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria declare their full commitment to cross-border cooperation with each other and with other states in order to detect these crime types causing serious, immeasurable personal and economic damages and to bring perpetrators to justice.

They reaffirm their intention expressed at the signing of the Convention on Cybercrime to make greater use of rapid data retention and other effective methods of evidence preservation provided for by the Convention in order to investigate cybercrime and to collect digital evidence related to any crimes, and to ensure smooth implementation of all this, they agree to make available the emergency contact details of each other's competent authorities.

The Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria support efforts to modernize the Budapest Convention, which will remain a key global international tool in the fight against cybercrime. They are convinced that the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime will make mutual legal assistance more effective by allowing for direct cooperation with service providers and creating stronger safeguards for existing practices of transborder access to data.

At the same time, the Prosecutors General of the Visegrad Group and Republic of Austria support the European Union institutions in their efforts to conclude negotiations on the e-evidence legislative package as soon as possible, so that modern evidentiary procedures are available to law enforcement authorities in the fight against cybercrime.

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