

Foreword

The fight against today's new forms of criminality such as economic and organised crime, terrorism, cybercrime, trafficking in human beings, across Europe and beyond, can only succeed if we have the necessary tools, in particular in the form of highly effective international co-operation in criminal matters.

Because a national border traditionally marks the point where the powers of one national justice system end and the powers of another system begin, it is difficult, if not impossible, for judges or the police to reach individuals across those borders. The result may well be that it is possible for a person to commit a crime, and by leaving the country, to escape prosecution. Co-operation among States is therefore essential in order to ensure security of our citizens by allowing for efficient prosecution of suspected criminals across national borders

The events of recent years have shown the need to set up reliable and efficient co-operation channels. The need for an international response to international criminality has meant that such co-operation should be enshrined in a clear and modern legal basis, in order to deal with difficult and complex situations while avoiding disputes occurring among the interested States. As is the vocation of the Council of Europe, such an international response should also be carried out in full respect of individual human rights and the rule of law.

For over fifty years now, a series of some thirty treaties have been negotiated within the Council of Europe in the criminal field. They establish a common legal basis for co-operation in criminal matters across Europe and sometimes beyond. These treaties cover such co-operation mechanisms as extradition, mutual legal assistance and the transfer of sentenced persons, but they also address specific forms of crime which more often than others have a cross border dimension, such as cyber-crime, money laundering, terrorism, trafficking in human beings, corruption.

This compendium gathers together in one volume the main Council of Europe Conventions established to ensure effective co-operation in the fight against various forms of criminality.

I consider that this publication is very timely and I am confident that it will contribute to the current Council of Europe endeavours to improve the efficiency of international co-operation in criminal matters. This

matter is vital in order to reach the objective, adopted at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government in May 2005, of strengthening the security of European citizens.

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