

## EUROPOL: establishing the European Police Office

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The Council reached an agreement on some of the outstanding issues regarding a proposal for a Council Decision establishing the European Police Office (Europol):

- the lifting of immunity for Europol officials when participating in operational activities, especially Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), and;
- the principle of staff rotation and the possibility for Europol staff participating in a JIT to receive instructions from the team leader.

Regarding the budget neutrality of the proposal, the Commission announced that it will submit supplementary information to the Council. This issue will be discussed by Coreper in March 2008 with a view to lifting the outstanding reservations.

The Slovenian Presidency announced that it would aim at reaching a political agreement on the draft Council Decision at the JHA Council to be held in April 2008.

It should be noted that the Commission submitted its proposal in December 2006. Since then, the Council has examined it chapter by chapter, with a view to reaching an agreement under the current (Slovenian) Presidency.

Once adopted, this decision will replace the Europol Convention. Europol will then become a Community agency, financed by the Community budget. The JHA Council considers that this change of status will constitute a clear improvement in the operational and administrative functioning of Europol.