

Response to United States report on human rights

In response to media enquiries, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (April 21) made the following response to the comments contained in the United States Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2017 relating to the HKSAR:

"Since the return to the Motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising a high degree of autonomy and 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' in strict accordance with the Basic Law. This demonstrates the full and successful implementation of the 'one country, two systems' principle, which has been widely recognised by the international community.

"Foreign governments should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR."

Caucasian mafia organisation committing burglaries and retail thefts in France and Greece dismantled thanks to first-ever joint investigation team between the two countries

On 17 April 2018, more than 30 suspects, including the 4 leaders of the organised crime group, composed of Georgian and Armenian nationals, were arrested after simultaneous operations of the French and Greek judicial and law enforcement authorities in Caen and Thessaloniki.

Several coordination meetings held at Eurojust led to the first joint investigation team agreement ever signed between France and Greece on September 2017. Eurojust provided substantial logistical and financial support to the joint investigation team, which culminated in the establishment of a coordination centre at Eurojust's premises in The Hague. The common action day was coordinated by Eurojust with the support of Europol, allowing for real-time exchange of information and cross-checks of the evidence gathered against Europol's databases.

The transnational organised crime group (OCG) is believed to be a predominantly Georgian mafia organisation called 'Vory V zakone', suspected

of having committed thousands of burglaries and retail thefts in the Normandy region as well as in Greece. It is estimated that the OCG committed on average 13 shoplifting acts in France and 3 house breakings in Greece a day, causing a severe damage of several millions of euros. The OCG, whose sponsors were located in Greece, was hierarchically structured and governed by rigid rules, including the provision of capital to the 'obshak', a fund used as a common financial deposit for criminal activities.

Background

Eurojust is the European Union's hub for judicial cooperation and coordination between Member States, assisting in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving serious organised cross-border crime. The judicial cooperation tools that Eurojust offers to national authorities include coordination meetings, coordination centres and joint investigation teams.

Joint investigation teams are established between the national authorities of two or more Member States to coordinate and enhance ongoing national investigations through sharing of case-related information and evidence. In 2017, Eurojust supported 200 JITs and provided EUR 1.31 million in funding to JITs.

For more information about Eurojust, see www.eurojust.europa.eu or contact Eurojust's Corporate Communications Unit at media@eurojust.europa.eu.

For all Eurojust press releases, please see www.eurojust.europa.eu ([Press centre](#))

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Main topics and media events 23 April – 6 May 2018

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Last week to choose your favourite #EURegionsWeek session proposals

It is up to you to help us develop #EURegionsWeek! You have until 27 April to share your opinion, via the [online consultation](#) on the [event website](#). Take a look at the top 20 most popular sessions so far and see if you can find your favourite one.

1. #cooperationiscentral: Why Central Europe needs cooperation more than ever – *Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE*
2. MFF post 2020: what can NPBIs bring to the table for territorial investment? – *ELTI – European Association of Long-Term Investors*
3. Industry 4.0 in EU regions: implications for innovation-led regional development – *European Commission – JRC*
4. EuroPACE: Unlocking Energy Efficiency Renovation at Local Level – *Ente Vasco de La Energía*
5. Six City Strategy (6Aika): Recipes for Happy Citizens and Thriving Businesses – *Six City Strategy Office*
6. Investing in the digital transition of smart cities & communities – *OASC*
7. Reshaping territorial cooperation in the post-Brexit scene – *Interreg North-West Europe*
8. Sustainable development of the Arctic region for the benefit of all of Europe Northern – *European Arctic partnership (Regional partnership)*
9. Accelerating inclusion with innovative entrepreneurial initiatives – *Gothenburg European Office*

10. ISA2 Programme boosting digital public administrations in Europe – *European Commission – DG DIGIT*
11. Personalised medicine: boosting health research at regional level – *Regions for health innovation (Regional partnership)*
12. Connecting rural and urban areas: the way forward to territorial cohesion – *Smart urban-rural communities (Regional partnership)*
13. Co-creating future housing. Living environments shaped by cities and citizens – *Future housing and inclusive cities depend on us (Regional partnership)*
14. How can regional cooperation help maximise blue growth opportunities? – *Smart partnerships for blue growth (Regional partnership)*
15. Sustainability and cultural heritage: is this the only way forward? – *Sviluppumbria*
16. Cohesion and societal challenges: Success stories for a more effective policy – *Innovative regions for a strong cohesion policy (Regional partnership)*
17. PCP and PPI: challenges faced by regions and cities – *Startup Europe Regions Network*
18. 2020+ – How to get funding priorities right – *European Commission – DG REGIO*
19. Blue growth – future perspectives for smart specialisation – *Advanced regions for blue growth (Regional partnership)*
20. Coop cult and succeed! – *European Commission, DG REGIO & DG EAC*

Make the event yours and be part of the preparation phase!

The online consultation is not a selection process as in parallel, the organisers will assess and select the sessions, based on the quality of the proposals and on the criteria of the event guidelines. Even if a session is part of the rating process, please note that this does not mean that the session is selected for the official programme.

