ECRIS Support Programme (ESP)

Project End Stage Report
Phase 1

Purpose of the Document

An end stage report is used to give a summary of progress to date, the overall project situation, and sufficient information to ask for a Project Board decision on what to do next with the project.

The report clearly shows the stage performance against the plan and any abnormal situations are described, together with their impact.

A detailed description of the project and its aims and objectives can be viewed in both the "Background" section and the "Review of Project Objectives".

Executive Summary

This is the end stage report for the first phase of the ECRIS Support Programme (ESP). It reviews the project objectives, stage objectives and stage products and assesses compliance with the project business case, as well as a review of benefits achieved so far. It also looks at team performance and governance, as well as lessons learnt and risks and issues. Finally, the report will provide a forecast for the remainder of the project and highlights the stage plan for Phase 2 of the project.

The ECRIS Support Programme commenced on 15th June 2011 with the aim to prepare EU Member States for the implementation of ECRIS, to carry out a Training Needs and Gap Analysis with all countries and to explore the requirements for exchanging information extracted from criminal records for purposes other than criminal proceedings.

A number of project objectives were achieved in Phase 1 of the project, including the establishment of a periodical ECRIS publication (ESP Newsletters), the hosting of EU wide seminars (ESP Conferences), the establishment of one-to-one contact with countries and the compiling of comprehensive country reports, as well as ongoing support to Member States through the establishment of an ECRIS Information Centre. ESP has produced a number of reference guides, which have been made available to Member States using CIRCABC as a platform. Furthermore, a Training Needs and Gap Analysis has been carried out with all Member States, which included visits to all Member States, and a detailed report has been submitted to the European Commission and EU countries.

In terms of tolerance, the project is within its time and quality tolerance. In regards to costs, these were amended during Phase 1 of the project to make adjustments to the section on staff. The accounts are currently being evaluated by

ESP to see if further adjustments will have to be made to take into account additional activities tasked to the project by the European Commission.

A number of benefits have already been achieved through the work of the ESP team. A sustainable support network has been created and best practice in business processes has been identified and shared. The ECRIS Information Centre has furthermore supported the technical implementation of ECRIS in collaboration with the European Commission and contact between Member States for the purposes of ECRIS has been noticeably improved.

A number of deviations from the business case have been noted. Firstly the European Commission delegated a number of additional activities to the project. This included preliminary country visits at the beginning of the project, as well as additional support visits where required. Furthermore a number of monitoring activities were passed to ESP in regards to the ECRIS RI Roadmap.

The role of the supplier supporting the gap analysis work was also re-evaluated and some adjustments were made.

Towards the end of this report, a forecast has been provided for Phase 2 of the project. The team will continue to provide support to Member States through the ECRIS Information Centre, additional partner country meetings and ESP Conferences and the publication of guidance and knowledge products. It will also specifically focus on a research project in regards to the exchange for purposes other than criminal proceedings and produce a report for all Member States.

Background

The European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS)

The computerised system ECRIS was established to achieve an efficient exchange of information on criminal convictions between EU countries.

Examples such as the Fourniret case of 2004 and numerous subsequent studies have demonstrated that national courts frequently pass sentences on the sole basis of past convictions featuring in their national register, without any knowledge of convictions in other countries. Consequently, criminals were often able to escape their past simply by moving between EU countries.

In response to this obvious need, ECRIS was created to improve the exchange of information on criminal convictions throughout the EU.

It will establish an electronic interconnection of criminal records databases to ensure that information on convictions is exchanged between EU countries in a uniform, speedy and easily computer-transferable way.

The system will give judges and prosecutors easy access to comprehensive information on the offending history of any EU citizen, no matter in which EU countries that person has been convicted in the past. Through removing the possibility for offenders to escape their criminal past simply by moving from one EU country to another, the system could also serve to prevent crime.

ECRIS is based on a decentralised IT architecture. Criminal records data is stored solely in national databases and exchanged electronically between the central authorities of EU countries upon request.

The EU country of nationality of a person will become the central repository of all convictions handed down to that person. The country's Central Authorities must store and update all the information received and retransmit them when requested.

As a result, each EU country upon request will be in a position to provide, from another EU country, exhaustive, up-to-date information on its nationals' criminal records, regardless of where those convictions were handed down.

An EU country convicting a non-national will be obliged to immediately send information, including updates, on this conviction to the member state(s) of the offender's nationality.

The transmission of information on convictions will be made electronically, through a standardised European format, using two reference tables listing categories of offences and penalties.

These tables facilitate automatic translation and enhance mutual understanding of the information transmitted.

When transmitting information on a conviction, EU countries will have to indicate appropriate codes for the category of the offence and the penalty or sanction, which will be automatically translated into the language of the recipients, enabling them to react immediately upon receipt of the information.

EU countries should have implemented the system by 27th April 2012. A number of technical and financial measures have been taken in order to help them to prepare the technical infrastructure to connect their criminal records systems.

The Commission has put special software called 'reference implementation' at Member States' disposal to facilitate the interconnection. The countries can also avail of financial support in the form of grants to modernise their national criminal records systems.

General principles governing the exchange of information and the functioning of the system are regulated in the Framework Decision on exchange of information on criminal records and in the Decision on the establishment of ECRIS.

The scope for the use of grants is regulated through the Criminal Justice Programme.

ECRIS Support Programme

The ECRIS Support Programme (ESP) is a European Commission supported project, which focuses on assisting EU Member States in the implementation of ECRIS. The project foresees a number of activities:

- ensure that Member States are prepared for the implementation of ECRIS
- carry out a Training Needs and Gap Analysis across all EU Member States
- explore the requirements to exchange information extracted from criminal records for purposes other than criminal proceedings

The project commenced on 15th June 2011 and will run over a two year period, with a projected end date of 14th June 2013.
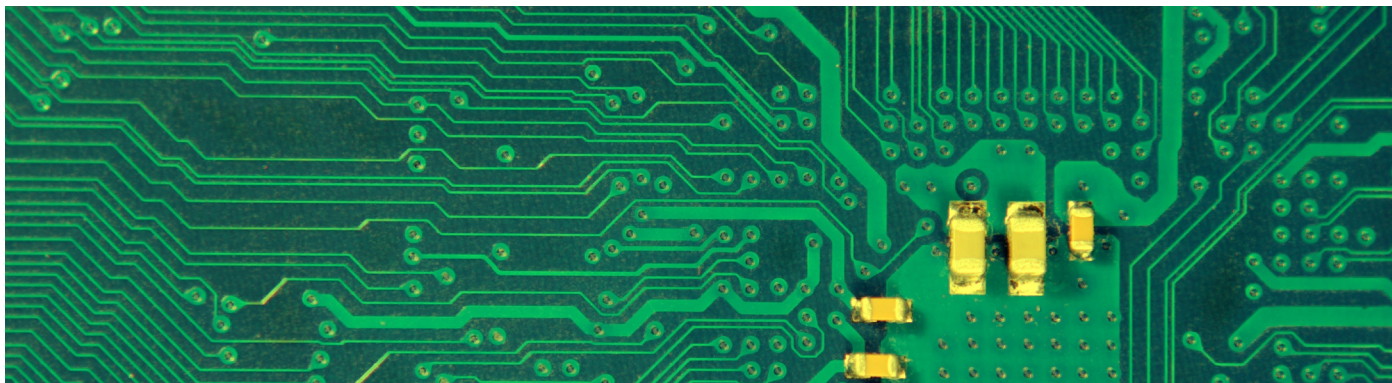
Review of Project Objectives

Project performance against planned targets

Periodical ECRIS publication

The funding application to the European Commission specifies that the project aims to introduce a periodical ECRIS publication with case studies and developments. It should be designed to inform a wider audience as to the successes brought about by the European Commission ECRIS model.

ESP commenced the publication of a monthly newsletter in January 2012, which has received positive feedback from Member States. It is a one page newsletter, which summarises developments in ECRIS, new documents available on CIRCABC and upcoming events.

Four EU wide seminars

The project proposed the organisation of four EU wide seminars, which would include representatives from each Member State and the European Commission. The aim of the seminar would be to update the group on the progress of the project and to discuss operational issues deriving from the implementation of ECRIS, for example specifically identified training needs, business process issues and resource implications.

So far the ESP team have organised and held three ESP Conferences with the aim of providing a forum for discussing operational matters:

17th November 2011 – London, United Kingdom
13th January 2012 – Prague, Czech Republic
9th March 2012 – Copenhagen, Denmark
22nd and 23rd May 2012 – Vilnius, Lithuania (to be held)

All three conferences had good attendance from Member States, albeit not all countries were represented. The European Commission also attended the conferences in London and Copenhagen. Countries have generally found the meetings beneficial and a large number of operational issues has so far been addressed. The latest conference had a particular focus on preparing for "go live" of ECRIS on 27th April.

Following the last ESP Conference in Copenhagen, Member States expressed that they would find it beneficial to host these conferences over two day periods, to ensure that complex operational issues can be discussed in detail. The next conference in Vilnius, Lithuania has therefore been scheduled over two days (22nd and 23rd May 2012).

Regular one-to-one contact with Member States

As emphasised in the funding application to the European Commission, one of the main aims of ESP is to assist Member States in the implementation of ECRIS. The project team committed themselves to regular one-to-one contact with Member States in order to provide the best support possible to each Member State and their specific situation.

As well as conducting visits to all Member States, the team arrange regular follow-up phone calls and emails to Member States in order to have an accurate picture of readiness of the Member States and to offer support, where this is required. ESP are also liaising closely with the European Commission, especially where technical assistance may be required.

Comprehensive Country Reports

In their funding application to the European Commission, the ESP team confirmed that a comprehensive report would be published to the European Commission on each Member States' position in regards to their readiness for ECRIS. This would also include any concerns for pre- and post-implementation, training requirements and the country's statutory position in regards to the exchange of criminality information (for example limitations and data protection issues).

Reports have now been written for all 27 Member States, following detailed country visits between July 2011 and March 2012. All reports have been submitted to the European Commission using a standard template.

The ECRIS Information Centre continues to provide updates to the European Commission in regards to country progress, as this is an ever changing picture in the run up to the deadline on 27th April 2012. An up-to-date RAG (Red, Amber, Green) map as to countries' readiness for ECRIS can be accessed on the ECRIS Support Programme page on CIRCABC using the following link:
https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/9ab1e5cb-2d64-43c6-b617-9a99ca4623c3

Reference Guides

One of the project tasks is to produce reference guides, which produce detailed agreed policies and procedures in every Member State. These will then be shared with all stakeholders and include position statements describing areas, such as the retention of criminal records and disclosure processes.

The ECRIS Information Centre, which was established to provide support and a point of contact to all Member States in regards to ECRIS, has already produced a number of guidance documents, which have been made available on CIRCABC. So far, the following research and reference documents have been published:

Consecutive and Concurrent Sentences and Other Offences Taken Into Consideration
Country Requirements for Identification
ECRIS Contacts within each EU Member States
Frequently Asked Questions
Requests for further information on convictions
Requests for non-criminal proceedings
Accepted Languages for Requests In
Resolving Conviction Disputes

All of these documents can be accessed in the library section of the CIRCABC web portal:
https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/1b15a4bc-45c5-481c-a2e6-9fa98a7de095

The Information Centre will continue to collate information from Member States and develop guidance documents, depending on Member States' requirements. It is hoped that once ECRIS is live, countries will send in operational questions to the ECRIS Information Centre, which can then be researched and developed. It is envisaged to continue to use CIRCABC as a source for guidance documentation.

Training Needs and Gap Analysis

A detailed training needs and gap analysis was carried out with all EU Member States. Members from the ESP team, and sometimes representatives from the project partner countries, visited all EU Member States between September 2011 and March 2012 to conduct an interview and to visit countries' criminal registers.

A standard questionnaire template was developed and approved by the partner countries and the results were recorded on a gap sheet template.

As the visits were conducted over a six month period, additional chase-up questionnaires were sent to Member States in March 2012 to obtain updated development information.

The results of the analysis and possible recommendations were compiled in a Gap Analysis Report, which was quality reviewed by the National Policing Improvement Agency and submitted to the European Commission for information.

It became clear during early stages of the project that the analysis should primarily focus on gaps, whilst also addressing training activities planned in each Member State. The questionnaire template therefore focused on this area. ESP took specific actions, where gaps were identified to try and resolve these in collaboration with the European Commission.

In Phase 2, the project team will focus on mutually agreed training framework packages for Member States, which are aimed at assisting with local training strategies and will be based upon the findings of the training needs analysis. This is a long-term activity for the project.

Several questions were already addressed in Section 8 of the Gap Analysis questionnaire and specific assistance was provided to Member States who requested this during Phase 1 of the project. Furthermore the project team developed a presentation to assist countries with the preparation for using the ECRIS RI, which was sent to all Member States.

Tolerances for time, cost, quality, scope, benefits and risk

Time Tolerance

The initial funding application envisaged having two phases to the project, Phase 1 (month 1-17) and Phase 2 (month 18-24). The overall project length is 24 months, with a tolerance of 0 weeks.

The European Commission specifically asked for an early commencement of the project on 15th June 2011, which was accommodated. The main reason for this was to meet the Member States' support requirements in regards to meeting the ECRIS go live deadline of 27th April 2012.

As a result, the project schedule was amended to reflect this. Phase 1 would focus on month 1 to 10, and Phase 2 on month 11 to 24.

The project is within tolerance of the project schedule for Phase 1 and the overall deadline of the phase was met. A number of breakdown activities took longer as expected, such as the visits to all Member States, as not all countries were available for visits at the time that would have been most suitable to the project, but this was counteracted with a quicker review period of the analysis report.

Cost Tolerance

The initial budget submitted to the European Commission was amended during Phase 1 of the project to make adjustments to the section on staff. Funds were moved from the allocation to contractors to project staff, as some of the project activities were now undertaken by ESP staff, rather than the contractors.

The accounts are currently being evaluated by the finance officer and the ESP team. Further adjustments may have to be made following this evaluation to take into account the additional activities undertaken on request of the European Commission.

Quality Tolerance

In terms of quality the project is within tolerance. A number of tools and ongoing activities have been put in place to monitor quality of the project products:

External evaluation of training needs and gap analysis through feedback questionnaires to Member States (this will be undertaken in Phase 2 of the project)
Internal evaluation of training needs and gap analysis undertaken by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). This has already been completed as part of Phase 1.

Business benefits and lessons learnt are evaluated and the significance of the project will be determined. This is done in end stage reports and the final project report.

Project Management process of planning, implementation and evaluation. The project is managed in line with Prince2 Methodology, which plans, implements and evaluates in stages. This Phase 1 end stage report is part of this management process.

Internal reports for workshops, including qualitative and quantitative reviews

Annual report at the end of each year (this will be undertaken through end stage reports, stage plans and the end project report, see 4 and 10)

Collate best practice and lessons learnt. This is done through the work of the Information Centre, regular reporting and the compilation of guidance documents on the CIRCABC web portal.

Detailed cost benefit analysis throughout the project.

Constant monitoring of outcomes against initial objectives. This is carried out through stage planning, end stage reporting and project management activities.
End of project report. This will be prepared at the end of the project and a copy, as well as a final narrative report will be submitted to the European Commission for review. Outcome of the project to be considered by the project governance board and Her Majesty's Constabulary. This will be done, when the project has been completed by means of an audit of the usefulness of information exchanged.

External evaluation of the project by a team drawn from additional stakeholders, including the Home Office, criminal justice representatives from Member States and the European Commission. The external evaluation will focus on the analysis of the internal evaluation, site visits and a draft report. The aims of the external evaluation are to relay successes to an ESP Conference in year 2, to submit a detailed project report including observations and conclusions from all partner agencies against the initial objectives, a detailed financial breakdown for European Commission scrutiny and to establish partner country satisfaction with the project and seeking detailed reviews from partner countries. This activity will be carried out in Phase 2 of the project.

Scope Tolerance
The tolerance is within the scope of the tolerance. It has to be stated, however, that ESP have been assigned a number of additional activities by the European Commission, such as additional visits to Member States and monitoring activities in regards to the ECRIS RI Roadmap, which have been built into the project plan and may require moving funds from one budget section to another. This will be reviewed in Phase 2 of the project.

Benefits Tolerance
The benefits have been analysed as part of the Phase 1 end stage report and are within tolerance. A number of significant benefits have already been achieved and additional benefits are expected during Phase 2 of the project.

Risk Tolerance
All project risks in the project log were reviewed. All risks are currently within tolerance and are being actively managed using Management of Risk (MoR) methodology.

Effectiveness of project strategies and controls

The project is managed in line with Prince 2 Project Management Methodology and adequate project strategies and controls have been put in place to monitor tolerance and achievement of objectives.

The project plan has been drafted allowing enough time for the review and approval of products. End stage reports and stage plans are produced, in order to monitor progress against the plan. The project plan is also reviewed at regular intervals.
A project log has been established, which contains tabs for actions, issues, risks and decisions and the file is actively managed by the project manager and the project support officer. This tool has proven useful in monitoring project progress and issues. Risks are also managed in the same way, using Management of Risk (MoR) methodology.
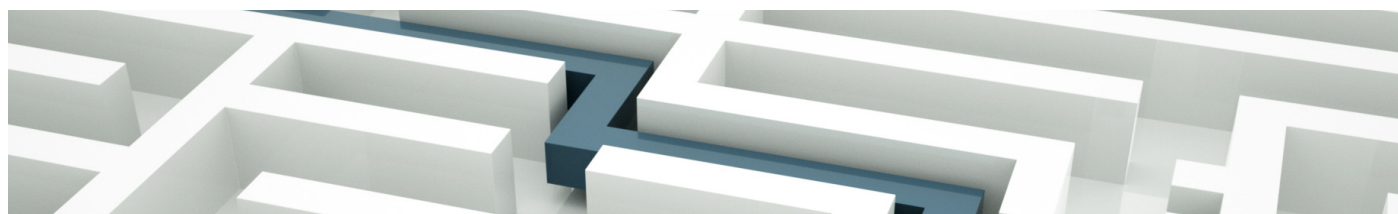
Review of Stage Objectives

Phase 1 of the project (month 1 to 10) had a number of aims and objectives, which are set out below, together with an update on progress.

Project Governance
The project team established a project board governance structure in line with Prince2 methodology.
The governance of project management concerns those areas of corporate governance that are specifically related to project activities. Effective governance of project management ensures that that an organisation's project portfolio is aligned to the organisation's objectives, is delivered efficiently and is sustainable. Governance of project management also supports the means by which the corporate board and other major project stakeholders are provided with timely, relevant and reliable information. The project governance structure was finalised during the project initiation stage in June 2011.

Project Initiation Document
The project team drew up a detailed Project Initiation Document in line with Prince 2 methodology, which was approved by the Project Board. Please see completed products for a more detailed description.

Project Launch Seminar
The project team committed themselves to organising an EU-wide project launch seminar to outline the aims and objectives and planned activities of the project. The ESP team benefited from a number of events held in Brussels by the European Commission and presented on the project and project progress at the following meetings:

ECRIS Experts Meeting – 15th June 2011
COPEN Meeting – 24th June 2011
ECRIS Experts Meeting – 20th July 2011
COPEN Meeting – 20th September 2011
ECRIS Experts Meeting – 21st September 2011
NJR Plenary Meeting – 28th October 2011
ECRIS Experts Meeting – 9th December 2011
ECRIS Experts Meeting – 8th February 2012

Stakeholder Meetings
In the business case it is outlined that ESP would hold stakeholder meetings involving all partner countries. The following meetings have so far taken place:

Stakeholder Meeting with France – 17th June 2011
Stakeholder Meeting with Lithuania – 23rd June 2011
Stakeholder Meeting with Latvia – 21st July 2011
Stakeholder Meeting with all partner countries, Latvia - 22nd July 2011
Kick-off Meeting with the European Commission – 8th September 2011
Stakeholder Meeting with all partner countries, France – 7th October 2011
Stakeholder Meeting with all partner countries and presidency countries in Estonia – 2nd February 2012

Further meetings will be scheduled during Phase 2 of the project, as these regular meetings have proven very beneficial. At the last stakeholder meeting in Estonia, the ESP team also invited the active or upcoming presidency countries. Denmark, Cyprus and Lithuania were in attendance to discuss the future of ECRIS and support mechanisms for countries. Ireland were invited, but were unable to attend. It is anticipated that the presidency countries will also attend future stakeholder meetings.

Standard Programme of Questions
One of the aims of the project was to work with partner countries to create a template containing a standard programme of questions and key research areas for conducting the training needs and gap analysis.

A template was drafted by the ESP team in collaboration with a training consultant and was furthermore agreed by all partner countries. Please see completed products for a more detailed description.
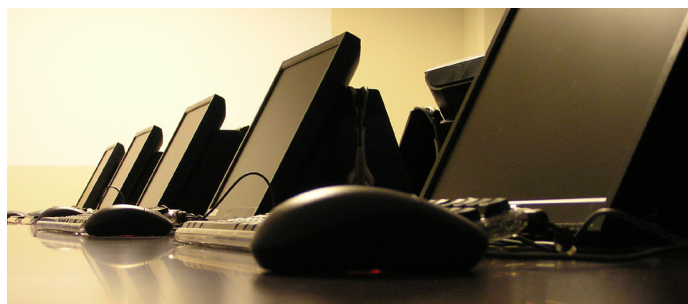
Country Visits

The ESP project was tasked with visits to every EU Member State with the training supplier to consult through focus groups and interviews and to gather information concerning the criminal records system and processes in use. Particular focus was given to the following areas:

Clarify the current situation and individual intentions in relation to the implementation of ECRIS and NJR

Identify likely future capability of Central Authorities

To conduct a training needs and gap analysis in every Member State identifying specific training needs and potential gaps for presentation to the European Commission

Develop an EU support network for Central Authorities who require additional support

Capture requests from Central Authorities for support to enhance performance including developments of infrastructure, business processes, project and change management

Visits were conducted between September 2011 and March 2012 in the following order:

Malta – 27th September 2011
United Kingdom – 11th October 2011
Belgium – 19th October 2011
Ireland – 25th October 2011
Bulgaria – 28th October 2011
Germany – 3rd November 2011
Austria – 4th November 2011
Slovakia – 7th November 2011
Cyprus – 9th November 2011
Hungary – 14th November 2011
Italy – 15th November 2011
Latvia – 21st November 2011
France – 23rd November 2011
Sweden – 30th November 2011
Poland – 6th December 2011
Portugal – 13th December 2011
Spain – 14th December 2011
Czech Republic – 21st December 2011
Lithuania – 10th January 2012
Finland – 11th January 2012
Denmark – 12th January 2012
Slovenia – 20th January 2012
Romania – 26th January 2012
Estonia – 1st February 2012
Luxembourg – 15th February 2012
The Netherlands – 17th February 2012
Greece – 14th March 2012

At least two members of the ESP team visited each Member States. On some visits the team were joined by representatives of the partner countries, too. France, for example, joined the visits to Belgium and Italy, whilst Lithuania joined the visit to Denmark.

The team met with representatives from Central Authorities, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and IT in each Member State and covered the questions in the agreed standard questionnaire in detail. Often, the team also had the opportunity to visit the criminal register in the visited country and in some instances it was possible to see developed applications for ECRIS as well.

As illustrated above, the visits took place over a period of 6 months. In March 2012 an additional questionnaire was sent out to Member States to ensure that the information held was up to date and any outstanding questions were answered.

Immediately after conducting a visit, a summary of gaps and training needs was compiled and actions were taken where necessary in order to provide support to Member States.

Reference Guides for Central Authorities

As part of ESP, a number of research projects were undertaken, with the aim to produce reference guides for central authorities and ECRIS practitioners. This is an ongoing piece of work, which commenced in Phase 1. So far the following reference guides have been produced, with the assistance of EU Member States, and have been made available to all countries on the CIRCABC web portal:

Concurrent and Consecutive Sentences and Other Offences Taken Into Consideration
Country Requirements for Identification
ECRIS Contacts List
Frequently Asked Questions
Further Information Requests
Requests for Non-Criminal Proceedings
Accepted Languages for Requests In
Resolving Conviction Disputes

All of the above documents can be accessed at the following address:
https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/1b15a4bc-45c5-481c-a2e6-9fa98a7de095

ECRIS Information Centre

As part of the project, an ECRIS Information Centre has been established in the United Kingdom, which is capable of collating and disseminating best practice to all EU Member States, as well as assist countries with the implementation of ECRIS from an operational point of view.

The ECRIS Information Centre works closely with the European Commission ECRIS RI development team, as well as the Council Secretariat, to deal with any questions, that EU Member States may have in regards to the implementation of ECRIS. The centre mainly deals with operational and practitioner questions, but will also take on a co-ordination function in regards to technical and legal questions.

The centre will acknowledge receipt of the query within 1 day. It is aimed that responses to queries are then provided within 5 working days. Questions are also captured on a frequently asked questions document, which is available on the CIRCABC website.

The centre also collates basic statistics in regards to the type of queries received and countries using the service. The statistics collation will also address the evaluation of service standards, and this will be reviewed by the ESP team and partner countries on a regular basis.

The ECRIS Information Centre will continue throughout the life of the project.

EU-wide Seminars

The project team has committed itself to facilitating EU wide seminars to update on project progress and the experiences of Member States in relation to the implementation of ECRIS. The meetings also aim to focus on sustainability options and early sight of project proposals.

So far, a number of additional seminars were arranged to discuss operational issues, provide a platform for Member States and update on project progress:

ESP Conference, London, UK – 17th November 2011
ESP Conference, Prague, Czech Republic – 13th January 2012
ESP Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark – 9th March 2012
ESP Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania – 22nd and 23rd May 2012 (to be held)

Countries have confirmed that they have found these meetings helpful. The next meeting is planned during Phase 2 in Vilnius, Lithuania (22nd and 23rd May 2012).

Review of Stage Products

Project Initiation Document (PID)

Prince2 Methodology foresees the compilation of a Project Initiation Document at the beginning of the project. The purpose of the PID is to define the project, in order to form the basis for its management and an assessment of its overall success. The PID gives the direction and scope of the project and forms the contract between the Project Manager and the Project Board.

The three primary uses of the PID are to ensure that the project has a sound basis before asking the Project Board to make any major commitment to the project, act as a base document against which the Project Board and Project Manager can assess progress, issues and ongoing viability questions and to provide a single source of reference about the project so that people joining the temporary organisation can quickly and easily find out what the project is about and how it is being managed.

The following documents have been compiled and approved as part of project initiation and are available to view at request:

Business Case (Technical Annex A of funding application)
Acceptance Criteria and Product Descriptions (ECRIS Support Programme Reference Document)
Project Organisation Structure
Project Logs (actions, risks, issues, decisions)
Project Plan (Microsoft Project Plan)
Configuration Management Library

The PID is a living product in that it should always reflect the current status, plans and controls of the project. The documents are updated on a regular basis and re-baselined as necessary at the end of each stage to reflect the current status of its constituent parts.

Standard Questionnaire for Training Needs and Gap Analysis Report

In order to conduct the training needs and gap analysis during Phase 1, the ESP team developed a standard questionnaire for conducting the analysis during specific country visits. The template was developed in collaboration with a training contractor and was reviewed and approved by the project's partner countries.

The standard questionnaire covered the following sections:

Section 1 – Central Authority
Section 2 – National Legislation
Section 3 – Criminal Registers
Section 4 – Translation
Section 5 – Non-Binding Manual for Practitioners
Section 6 – Business Processes
Section 7 – Information Technology (IT)
Section 8 – Training
Section 9 – Use for Purposes other than Criminal Proceedings

In addition, a standard template was also developed for capturing gaps identified during gap analysis visits.

Individual Country Reports

After each visit conducted with Member States as part of the training needs and gap analysis, individual country reports were prepared, which summarised the current situation, any identified gaps and an overview of IT developments and requirements. These were then forwarded to the European Commission for information and actioning, where necessary.
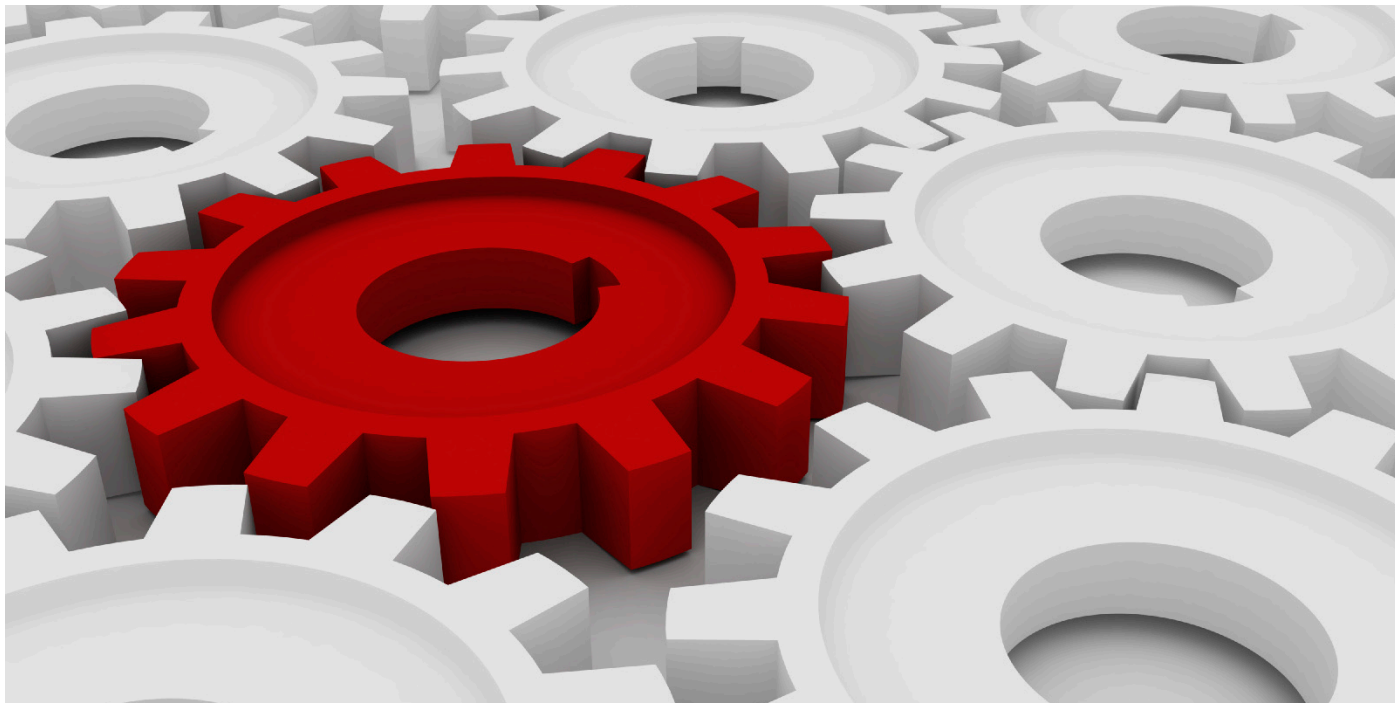
Training Needs and Gap Analysis

The ESP team recognised that there was a risk associated with identifying an appropriately skilled and experienced supplier to undertake the gap analysis work within a timescale that facilitates completion of the gap analysis work before 27 April 2012.

The ESP Team sought advice from NPIA procurement professionals who advised that it would be sensible to procure the supplier through an existing framework agreement, designed to facilitate procurement within tight timescales. The Sprint II framework agreement provides a convenient 'one-stop-shop' for a range of products and services enabling quick and efficient procurement via a single supplier. Developed in consultation with our public sector customers, the framework agreement has ensures that standard terms and conditions provide the important contractual safeguards required in public procurement.

In furtherance of the advice, ESP engaged the SPRINT II Framework with the assistance of the Hampshire Constabulary Procurement Department. This enabled the prompt procurement of MCCS (Hampshire) Ltd, a supplier with a proven track record of delivering Training Needs and Gap Analysis work, particularly in the public sector.

After conducting all training needs and gap analysis visits to Member States the training supplier and ESP team drafted a training needs and gap analysis report, which was reviewed by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) for quality purposes. Following a successful review, the report was shared with the European Commission and Member States. The report focuses on the gaps identified during the visits and highlights common difficulties amongst Member States.

Reference Guides for Central Authorities

As part of ESP, a number of research projects were undertaken, with the aim to produce reference guides for central authorities and ECRIS practitioners. This is an ongoing piece of work, which commenced in Phase 1. So far the following reference guides have been produced, with the assistance of EU Member States, and have been made available to all countries on the CIRCABC web portal:

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Review of the Business Case

The Technical Annex to the funding application to the European Commission for the ECRIS Support Programme serves as the project Business Case, and outlines all of the planned activities and expected benefits of the project.

After reviewing the document in detail it can be concluded that all sections are still valid.

Benefits achieved to date

Creation of a Sustainable Support Network
One of the expected benefits of ESP was that the project will also engage with every EU Member State and create a sustainable support network, where guidance and advice can be collated and disseminated on behalf of the European Commission.

The ESP team have successfully established an ECRIS Information Centre, which provides continued support to Member States. This is additionally enhanced by a web portal (CIRCABC), where guidance documentation and frequently asked questions are published on a regular basis. The site is managed by ESP staff and regularly updated.

Additionally good contacts have been established with all Member States, through visits to all EU Member States, regular phone calls and emails and ESP conferences, which take place on a regular basis.

Identifying Best Practice in Business Processes
Through visits to all Member States of the EU and continuous support provided through the ECRIS Information Centre, ESP staff continue to identify best practice in Member States. This information is actively shared using an online portal (CIRCABC), to which experts can gain access through registration.

Examples of this are the Irish process guide for the customisation of the ECRIS Reference Implementation folders, the making available of answers to frequently asked questions, the sharing of guidance test cases for Verification of Conformity (VoC) Phase 2 and specific research projects on requests made by the person concerned, request for further information on conviction details and resolving disputes.

Supporting the Technical Implementation of ECRIS
An ongoing aim of ESP is to support the technical implementation of ECRIS by looking at the individual needs of Member States. ESP work closely with the European Commission to achieve this and support is provided through specific country visits, queries received into the ECRIS Information Centre and telephone conferences.

Countries are encouraged to request support with the technical installation of the ECRIS RI, their own ECRIS implementation and in regards to operational practices, where required. The ESP team and the European Commission are already providing as much support as possible, to assist with the implementation.

For example, the ESP team recently visited Ireland, together with the Commission to provide additional support in regards to the installation of the ECRIS RI and the drafting of customised folders, roles and rules for the ECRIS RI Graphical User Interface (GUI).

ESP have also created an extensive web portal on CIRCABC, which contains a large number of guidance documents, technical installation information and a platform for practitioners and experts.

Improving Contact Between Member States for ECRIS
Both the work of the European Commission and ESP have led to increased contact between experts and practitioners in EU Member States preparing for ECRIS. Regular expert meetings in Brussels and ESP conferences organised by the ESP team enabled representatives from Member States to meet and discuss issues and suggestions.

Member States have welcomed the opportunity to discuss operational matters at ESP conferences in addition to the ECRIS expert group meetings, which so far have had more of a technical focus. Indeed the meetings were deemed successful and ESP intend to organise conferences going forward, with the next conference being scheduled for 22nd and 23rd May in Vilnius, Lithuania.
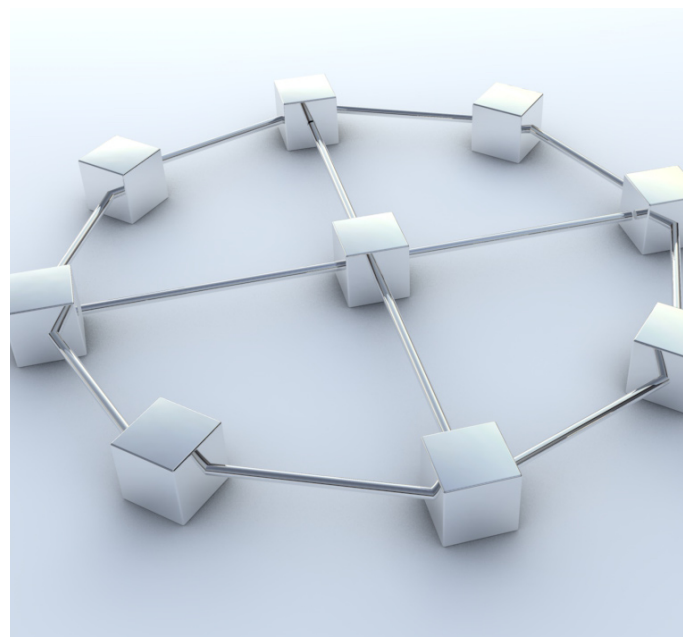
Residual benefits expected

Enhance Sources of Information and Fill Knowledge Gap

This project seeks to enhance the sources of information and improve the knowledge base in regards to the exchange of criminal records information across the EU. A better understanding will provide a benefit, not only to immediate practitioners, but also all of those who are affected by the new arrangements, including citizens of the European Union. The work of the project will be of particular interest to target groups including Legal Practitioners, Judges, Prosecutors, Advocates and Solicitors, as well as Ministry Officials and Court Officials and more generally, to all professionals associated with the Judiciary and Police Services in the area of criminal law.

This benefit has already been achieved in part with the establishment of the ECRIS Information Centre and the CIRCABC web portal. The visits to Member States have also highlighted some gaps and recommendations have been made. As work continues on the project in Phase 2 and with countries exchanging live information after the 27th April, it is anticipated that this benefit will be further enhanced.
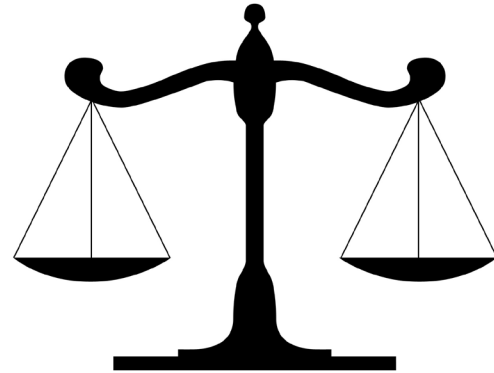
Promote Judicial Co-operation and Mutual Trust Between Justice Authorities

It is expected that in Phase 2 of the project, with Member States actively exchanging information using ECRIS as per Council Framework Decisions 2009/315/JHA and 2009/316/JHA, the ECRIS Information Centre will be able to play a significant role in promoting judicial cooperation and mutual trust between justice authorities. It is anticipated that the increased exchange of criminal conviction information between Member States will also enable the proper recognition of judicial decisions across the EU.

The ECRIS Information Centre will continue to promote best practice and will work with Member States, where required, to establish effective operational processes to facilitate the exchange.

Promote the Exchange of Information Extracted from Criminal Records for Purposes other than for Criminal Proceedings

Phase 2 of the project also includes a specific study to look at the exchange of criminal records for purposes other than criminal proceedings. Countries' approaches to this subject matter have already been collated through detailed questionnaires at country visits. Further work will now be undertaken to analyse the information and develop this area of exchange further. It is hoped that this will encourage the regular exchange of information for non-criminal purposes. This also foresees the creation of an expert contact list which Member States can access for advice, guidance and ad hoc assistance.

Promoting a Safer Environment for EU Citizens / Tough Cross-border Criminal Justice System

By assisting Member States in the implementation of ECRIS and by promoting best practice in regards to the exchange of criminal records across the EU, a safer environment is created for EU citizens. Furthermore the effective exchange of criminal conviction information creates a tougher criminal justice system within the EU, which reaches across internal borders. ESP anticipate that the continuous support provided by the ECRIS Information Centre and the additional planned project activities will contribute towards this.

Cost Effectiveness

The project will ensure that the most cost effective use is made of ECRIS by Member States and that the benefits of the European Commission expenditure on the system are realised.

This will be done through continued sharing of best practice and specific support to Member States through country visits, the work of the Information Centre and dissemination of information via CIRCABC.

Ongoing support and configuration change management
One of the tasks in Phase 2 is to explore future support for ECRIS, in line with the needs and expectations of Member States. ESP will look at this, also in particular in the area of configuration change management of the ECRIS RI.
This benefit will be measurable by a system being in place towards the end of the project that is a) agreeable to the European Commission b) one that is implementable by the ECRIS technical support supplier and c) that delivers actual change which can be seen by the users.

Deviations from the Business Case

Additional Activities identified by the European Commission

At the beginning of the project and throughout Phase 1 the European Commission identified a number of activities, which were delegated to the ECRIS Support Programme (ESP). This will have an impact on the initial budget, which will have to be revised and agreed with the European Commission.

Preliminary Country Visits

A number of Member States were identified, who could benefit from preliminary country visits to establish, how the development for ECRIS was progressing and what difficulties, if any, had been encountered. At the request of the European Commission, early visits were conducted with five countries. Both the European Commission and ESP benefited from these early visits, as a clear picture

was established as to where these countries were in terms of preparing for ECRIS. ESP also used the experience gained from the early visits to inspire the questionnaire template, which was later developed for the training needs and gap analysis.

Reports were drafted for each country visit and submitted to the European Commission for information. This process also informed the wider gap analysis process.

Additional Country Visits

The European Commission and ESP offer as much assistance as possible to Member State in order to make sure that countries can achieve the go live deadline of 27th April 2012. Ireland requested specific assistance. A team member from the European Commission travelled to Dublin to assist with the technical installation of the ECRIS RI, whilst a team member of ESP travelled to Thurles to assist with the customisation of the ECRIS Reference Implementation folder/ rule and roles structure and to assist with outstanding operational queries. This was an additional visit, which was not initially planned for in the budget. An adjustment will have to be made to the budget to reflect this.

ECRIS Roadmap

It was formally agreed at the COPEN meeting on 24th June 2012 that the ESP team would take on a number of monitoring activities relating to the ECRIS RI Roadmap at the request of the European Commission. This can be viewed in detail on the following page.

A roadmap monitoring spreadsheet was developed, which was updated and supplied to the Commission at regular intervals. Furthermore the gap analysis questionnaire was enhanced to include a section on technical questions (Section 7) at request of the European Commission. The ESP team continue to monitor progress through visits, discussions and written communication with Member States.

Role of Supplier

It was initially envisaged that a training needs and gap analysis supplier would conduct the training needs and gap analysis across all EU Member States. This was amended to reflect a change in staffing on the project. It was decided that ESP staff members would indeed conduct the visits, with support from the training supplier.

An amendment was made to the budget to reflect this change in work required, which was agreed with the European Commission.

Review of Team Performance and Governance

The initial funding bid proposed the following staff structure:

Project Governance Board consisting of main stakeholders.
Project Executive (Part time)
Senior Supplier and Senior User (not contained within financial bid)
Project Manager
Project Officer
Project Finance Officer (Part time)
Specialist Training Adviser (2)
Training Supplier

Following an evaluation of the structure and the planned work, an adjustment was made to the staff structure and agreed with the European Commission. An amendment of the project structure can be reviewed on the following page. It is anticipated that further adjustments may be required before the end of the project.

A number of project control activities were envisaged for monitoring team performance and governance structures, namely:

Internal reports for each workshop, including qualitative and quantitative reviews. These are compiled at each meeting and workshop, peer reviewed by the ESP team, and in some instances partner countries and the European Commission and stored for project management and audit purposes.

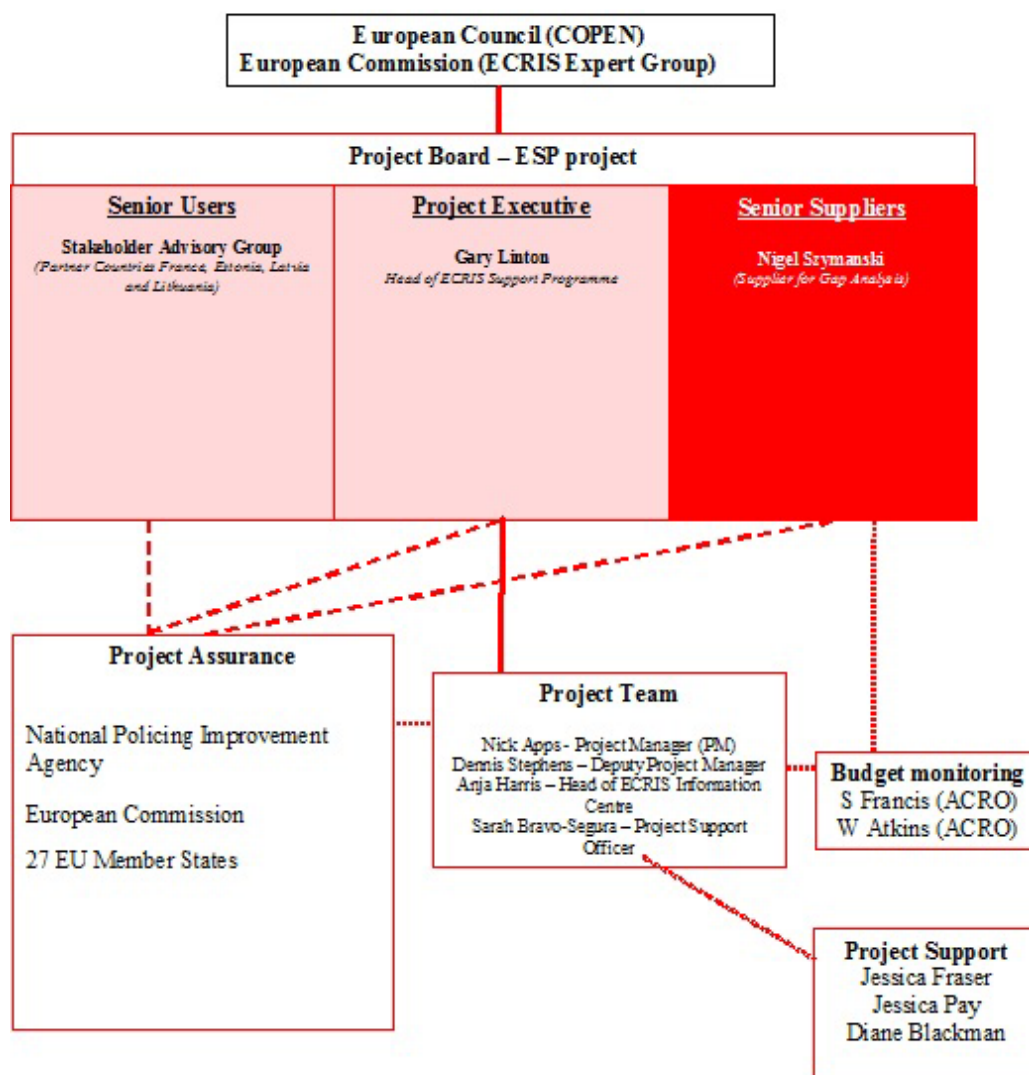Annual reports will be produced at the end of each year.

Best practice and lessons learnt will be collated throughout the project and published in end stage reports.

A detailed cost-benefit analysis will be carried out throughout the project. The project manager has responsibility for this activity and an evaluation will be carried out for the final project report.

A constant monitoring of outcomes will be carried out against initial objectives through end stage reporting and stage planning.

An end project will be prepared by the end of the project with a number of recommendations.

These tools are deemed to be effective to monitor project team performance and governance and have already been put in place.

European Council (COPEN)
European Commission (ECRIS Expert Group)

Project Board – ESP project

Senior Users	Project Executive	Senior Suppliers
Stakeholder Advisory Group *(Partner Countries France, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)*	Gary Linton *Head of ECRIS Support Programme*	Nigel Szymanski *(Supplier for Gap Analysis)*

Project Assurance

National Policing Improvement Agency

European Commission

27 EU Member States

Project Team
Nick Apps - Project Manager (PM)
Dennis Stephens – Deputy Project Manager
Anja Harris – Head of ECRIS Information Centre
Sarah Bravo-Segura – Project Support Officer

Budget monitoring
S Francis (ACRO)
W Atkins (ACRO)

Project Support
Jessica Fraser
Jessica Pay
Diane Blackman

Lessons Learnt Report

In Prince2 methodology, although lessons may be identified and recorded during a project, learning lessons involves taking action to implement improvements. These actions may apply to the current project, in which case they should be incorporated into the appropriate plans and work packages, or they may be relevant to different projects. If a lesson is significant and has relevance for future projects, it should be included in end stage reports and the project closure report.

The following lessons learnt have been identified during Phase 1 of the project:

the project commenced earlier than planned on request of the European Commission. This meant that not all office equipment was put in place at the beginning of the project. It should not be underestimated, how long it can take to put an effective IT infrastructure in place to support project staff.

In order to monitor budgets on European Commission projects effectively, an early engagement with the financial officer is recommended to confirm processes and parameters.

When developing templates, it is important to agree on a final version, before disseminating a document. Later changes can cause confusion, especially when the document in question is a questionnaire.

Language requirements of countries should be considered, when communication is issued, be it verbally or in writing. English is often not a first language, and it may be difficult for a Member State to understand, especially if the content of a message or telephone call is highly technical.

Issues and Risks

All issues and risks are monitored in the project logs in accordance with Management of Risk (MoR) methodology.

Risk management refers to the systematic application of principles, approach and processes to the tasks of identifying and assessing risks, and then planning and implementing risk responses. This provides a disciplined environment for proactive decision-making.

For risk management to be effective, risks are:

Identified. This includes risks being considered that could affect the achievement of objectives within the context of a particular organisational activity, and then described to ensure that there is a common understanding of these risks.

Assessed. This includes ensuring that each risk can be ranked in terms of estimated impact and immediacy, and understanding the overall level of risk associated with the organisational activity being studied.

Controlled. This includes identifying appropriate responses to risks, assigning owners and then executing, monitoring and controlling these responses.

There are currently five open risks recorded in the risk register. All of them have a hazard rating between 3 and 6 (maximum possible: 13), which means they can be considered low level risks, which do not need to be escalated to the project board.

No issues have currently been identified against the project.
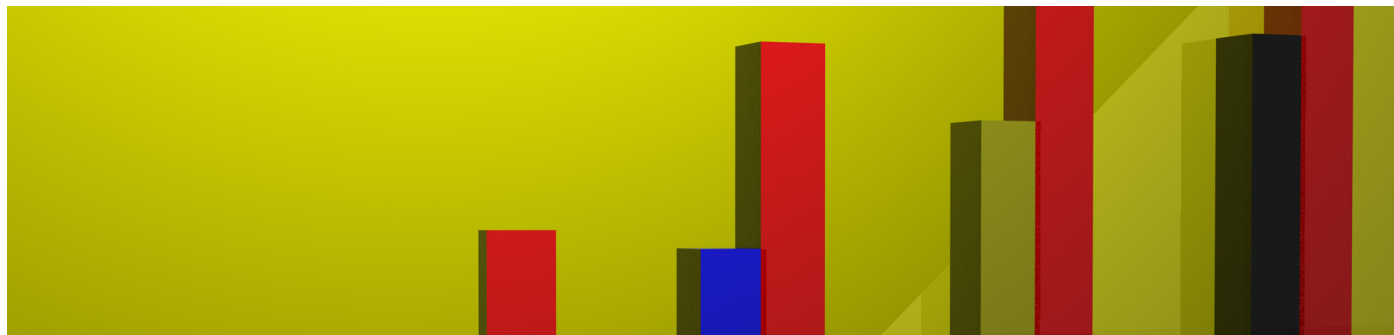
Forecast / Stage Plan Phase 2

The following activities are planned for Phase 2 of the project:

Exchange for Purposes other than Criminal Proceedings

ESP will carry out a research project into the exchange of criminal conviction information for purposes other than criminal proceedings. Information has already been obtained to some extent from Member States during the training needs and gap analysis in Phase 1 of the project. This information will be analysed, further research will be undertaken and report drafted. The final report will be reviewed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group before dissemination.

Finalise Guidance and Knowledge Products

The project team will finalise all research and guidance documents and will make them available to Member States using the CIRCABC web portal. The topic of research is determined by requests for guidance received from Member States.

ECRIS Information Centre

The project team will continue to share best practice amongst Member States and work closely with countries, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat to assist Member States through its ECRIS Information Centre. Information, such as frequently asked questions, will be made available through the CIRCABC web portal. Individual country support will be provided as required.

Additional Partner Country Meetings

Additional partner country meetings will be arranged as required. The next meeting is scheduled for 24th May 2012 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Additional ESP Conferences

The ESP team will continue to host conferences for Member States, should this be desired. The next conference has been scheduled for 22nd and 23rd May in Vilnius, Lithuania. Towards the end of the project a project closure seminar will be organised. The initial budget foresees the hosting of 4 conferences. It must be considered, therefore, if the budget needs to be revised.

Recommendations for Sustainability

The project team will present recommendations to the European Commission in regards to sustainability following the findings of the training needs and gap analysis.

EU Member State Guides

The project team will create a guide for every Member State relating to their criminal justice arrangements, including legal and operational issues concerning the ECRIS implementation.

End of Project Report

The project team will prepare an end project report, which will be presented to the European Commission.

External Evaluation

An External Evaluation (EE) will be carried out by a team drawn from extra stakeholders including the Home Office, criminal justice representatives from Member States and the European Commission, if this is desired. The outcome of the Project will also be considered by a Governance Board and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary who will conduct an audit of the usefulness of the information exchanged. The EE process will cover three distinct areas a) analysis of the Internal Evaluation b) site visits and c) draft report.

Specifically, the following EE will be carried out:

Detailed Project report including observations/conclusions from all partner agencies against initial objectives
Detailed financial breakdown for European Commission scrutiny
Establish partner country satisfaction with Project and seek detailed reviews from partner countries

Acronyms

ECRIS	European Criminal Records Information System
ECRIS RI	ECRIS Reference Implementation
EE	External Evaluation
ESP	ECRIS Support Programme
EU	European Union
GUI	Graphical User Interface
IT	Information Technology
MoR	Management of Risk
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
PID	Project Initiation Document
VoC Phase 2	Verification of Conformity Phase 2