

Brussels, 27 May 2022

COST 047/22

## DECISION

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Subject: Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action  
“Globalization, Illicit Trade, Sustainability and Security” (GLITSS) CA21133

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The COST Member Countries will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action Globalization, Illicit Trade, Sustainability and Security approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 27 May 2022.

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## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For the implementation of a COST Action designated as

### **COST Action CA21133 GLOBALIZATION, ILLICIT TRADE, SUSTAINABILITY AND SECURITY (GLITSS)**

The COST Members through the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wish to undertake joint activities of mutual interest and declare their common intention to participate in the COST Action, referred to above and described in the Technical Annex of this MoU.

The Action will be carried out in accordance with the set of COST Implementation Rules approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), or any document amending or replacing them.

The main aim and objective of the Action is to There is currently no consensus on the nature and scope of illicit trade, and on how to address it. Additionally, networks where such questions can be addressed are missing. GLITSS aims to create a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue on illicit trade issues, with shared ideas and a common language.. This will be achieved through the specific objectives detailed in the Technical Annex.

The present MoU enters into force on the date of the approval of the COST Action by the CSO.

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**OVERVIEW**

**Summary**

Illicit trade affects all aspects of contemporary societies. By definition, the term “illicit” signals practices that are not permitted by law or disapproved of by society. It enables security threats to materialise, such as natural-resource-fuelled conflicts and terrorism. It presents safety hazards, such as those created by counterfeit medicines and drugs. It threatens the sustainability of our societies by consuming excessive planetary resources and undermining the regulated functioning of international markets. Yet, despite this obvious objective relevance, the discussion on illicit trade remains compartmentalized within disciplinary boundaries. It requires an interdisciplinary approach instead. The Globalization, Illicit Trade, Sustainability and Security (GLITSS) COST Action contributes to filling a research gap. Three working groups are established, focusing on the phenomena of illicit trade (the smuggling and trafficking of goods and money), the platforms behind it (norms, actors and regulations) and the responses to it (enforcement, alternative measures and legalisation). GLITSS creates an interdisciplinary research network characterised by the inclusiveness and epistemological diversity that defines the research field today. The objectives of the Action are to create a holistic research agenda on illicit trade practices, to increase public awareness with a view to enhancing societal resilience and to explore how technological innovation facilitates illicit trade, but can also be used to fight it. Governmental agencies, civil organizations and academics will benefit from a Europe-wide discussion on illicit trade. Ultimately, GLITSS will advise stakeholders on how to create a more resilient and sustainable society by identifying, understanding and countering illicit trade.

<p><b>Areas of Expertise Relevant for the Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Political Science: Political systems and institutions, governance</li> <li>● Law: Criminal law</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Illicit Trade</li> <li>● Security</li> <li>● Sustainability</li> <li>● Safety</li> <li>● Globalization</li> </ul>
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**Specific Objectives**

To achieve the main objective described in this MoU, the following specific objectives shall be accomplished:

Research Coordination

- Develop a common holistic understanding of illicit trade supported by joint debate on the matter and a concrete research agenda
- Study the potential threats from and long-term effects of illicit trade vis-à-vis the 3Ss (Safety, Security and Sustainability)
- Contribute to the critical engagement with the definition of what “illicit” is, and when certain practices become so
- Develop methods for the studying of illicit trade and for the collection of reliable data. The Action will contribute to the refining and development of methods and digital tools for analysing the impact of illicit trade at the local, regional and international levels
- Create visibility – both within the academic community and for other stakeholders – about the common issues and challenges facing the academic community, local, national and European Union authorities
- Develop and publish an Action website to become the reference point for addressing the challenges posed by illicit trade, including a multimedia room for resources, a platform to highlight the work of

individual researchers, a repository of related projects as well as information about networking events and channels of dissemination

- Disseminate research outputs to third-party stakeholders through publications, Training Schools and capacity-building initiatives
- To develop a software application and a website aimed at addressing the networking and knowledge-sharing needs of illicit trade researchers, so as to ensure that coordination can outlast the Action's own lifespan

#### Capacity Building

- Bring together, in a coordinated way, the geographically scattered European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) members in order to stimulate further research and knowledge-sharing on the topic of illicit trade by fostering collaboration between scholars of all ages and genders which can outlast the Action's own lifespan
- Cooperate with technology professionals in order to create innovative means of deterring, monitoring and countering illicit trade
- Introduce and educate students, ECIs, entrepreneurs and other interested parties to the multifaceted nature of illicit trade in order to stimulate further research and refine the current piecemeal approach taken
- Support the development of PhD students and ECIs by organising Training Schools and seminars to bolster the wider activities of the Action. It is envisaged that such activities will secure a new generation of researchers properly equipped to deal with the issue of illicit trade
- To actively engage stakeholders through invitations to join WGs or to participate on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore WGs 1–3 will develop training programmes applicable to both scholars and professionals, made available free of charge on the Action website and via YouTube videos
- Provide support and recommendations for educational programmes at various of the Action's partner universities
- Deliver guidance and recommendations on how to overcome presenting challenges in a comprehensive policy document targeting policymakers and other relevant stakeholders at the national and EU levels
- Support and encourage publication of peer reviewed papers and presentations at important conferences and events, in order to create international awareness regarding the issue of illicit trade

## TECHNICAL ANNEX

### 1. S&T EXCELLENCE

#### 1.1. SOUNDNESS OF THE CHALLENGE

##### 1.1.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF THE ART

“Illicit trade” is a generic term used to describe a number of diverse and invasive practices that characterise our societies, involving illicit flows of goods, money, services, information and people (Andreas, 2004). Attention is often drawn to explicit violations, such as cases of transnational organised crime (Boister, 2018), and to the most evident impacts of illicit trade, such as the recent cases of counterfeit masks and vaccines related to the Covid-19 pandemic ([OECD, 2020](#)). In fact, there is no consensus either on what illicit trade is or on how to address it; as such, the Globalization, Illicit Trade, Sustainability and Security (GLITSS) Cost Action intends **to foster interdisciplinary debate regarding illicit trade** that will be of benefit to anyone wishing to tackle it: namely, businesses, law-enforcement agencies, governments, civil society activists and international organisations operating around the globe.

The lack of common understanding of what exactly the label “illicit trade” pertains to ([Radisch, 2016](#)) has seen the debate fragment into several sectorial discussions. These include human trafficking (Wylie and McRedmond, 2010), counterfeit and pirated goods (Chaudhry, 2017), illegal arms trafficking ([Boutwell, Klare & Reed, 1995](#)), natural-resource-related trade ([Nellemann et al., 2014](#)), illicit wildlife trafficking ([Rosen & Smith, 2010](#)), narcotics ([Dorn, King & Levi, 2005](#)), and cybercrime ([Steinmetz & Yar, 2019](#)) among others. Those who approach the topic from an economic perspective might focus only on the irregular trade in licit goods, such as counterfeiting (Chaudhry, 2017), others might focus more on the human consequences of illicit trade, and thus include trafficking in human beings and illegal narcotics (Wylie and McRedmond, 2010).

Truly holistic, interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the scope/implications of illicit trade practices remain limited. Instead, the literature has focused on a number of specific cross-cutting themes regarding factors facilitating illicit trade. The lion’s share in this regard is certainly taken up by studies on illicit financial flows ([Radisch, 2016](#)). Other common themes concern the overlooked role of informal institutions ([Gallien, 2018](#)), the institutionalised forms of inequality fuelling illegal/illicit behaviour (van Schendel and Abraham, 2005), the connection between illicit and licit markets (Beckert and Dewey, 2017) the role of organised crime ([Comolli, 2018](#)), the norm-contestation dimension of illicit trade ([Capie, 2008](#)), international cooperation on illicit trade matters ([Efrat, 2012](#)) as well as the inevitability of the practice in a globalising world (Andreas and Nadelmann, 2006).

There is thus neither a common definition nor a shared platform, but regardless the debate is rich given the “size” of the problem at hand. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), illicit trade creates an annual drain of approximately USD 2.2 trillion on the global economy – nearly 3 per cent of total gross domestic product. If illicit trade was a country, its economy would be larger than Brazil’s, Italy’s or Canada’s, and as large as Mexico’s and Indonesia’s combined ([UNCTAD, 2020](#)).

The debate has also seen extensive discussion of the **various implications of excessive illicit trade**. Illicit financial resources are reinvested in illicit purposes such as terrorism. They thus can pose a serious

threat to national and international security. There are examples from Europe of cooperation between terrorist and criminal organisations. For instance, the IRA shared smuggling routes with Eastern European criminal networks who were themselves using those illicit pathways to profit from prostitution ([Gallagher, 2014](#)). There are also conflicts fuelled by illicit trade, such as the notorious cases of diamonds in Sierra Leone or Liberia and crude oil theft in Libya and in the case of Islamic State ([Le Billon, 2008](#)). As highlighted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, illicit trade compromises the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by displacing legitimate economic activity and depriving governments of revenues for investment ([UNCTAD, 2020](#)). Furthermore, such trade is one of the three primary sources of illicit political finance ([Kupferschmidt, 2009](#)) and there is a demand for politicians and their parties to take responsibility for their connections with illegal markets ([Marsavelski, 2015](#)). The links between illicit trade and political power enable criminal networks to influence election campaigns, ultimately leading to democratic decay – something we are witnessing today in many countries around the globe ([Andreas & Naím, 2012](#)).

Certainly, the rapidly developing digital society has fostered the emergence of new forms of illicit trade and the reproduction of old habits with new tricks. The Internet and the dark web provide numerous opportunities to carry out illicit activities, but the real impact of the latest technology has been on digital services and on identity theft online ([Hier & Greenberg, 2009](#)). The emergence of crypto/digital/virtual currencies offer new possibilities to engage in illicit trade activities ([Liu & Serletis, 2019](#)). Other technological advances, such as 3D printers and drones, can also support smuggling activities by further complicating the enforcement of export-control regulations and intellectual property rights (Chaudhry, 2017).

Whereas these technological developments create new opportunities for illicit trade and illicit financial flows, it has also been discussed that emerging methods such as big-data analysis are a potentially very useful tool to combat illicit trade practices (Shelley, 2018; Kornberger et al., 2019). However the debate on how technology can help the combating of illicit trade has only marginally gone beyond the one taking place in the technical disciplines. **Technological solutions can be applied to the various steps of illicit trade governance**, from its prevention with enhanced monitoring of the numerous transactions that make up the global economy on a daily basis to enforcement measures thanks to systems that facilitate the tracking of who the ultimate beneficiaries of trade and a given transaction are ([Farruggia, Ellul and Azzopardi, 2020](#)). Broad, inclusive fora to discuss **how technology can enhance the governance of illicit trade are lacking, however**.

Indeed, a major shortcoming of the illicit trade debate is that **there is little cross-fertilisation**. Disciplines are currently compartmentalised in their thinking, which leads to tunnel vision in terms of scrutinising the phenomenon (Jakobi, 2020). While the independent aspects of illicit trade are highly important, focusing on only one or the other is detrimental to a holistic understanding of the multifaceted issues at hand. **Research on the various aspects of illicit trade is often undertaken by specialists in different disciplines**, meaning there is **little collaboration** between individual researchers – thus stifling scientific advancement. This also affects the role of **technology** in the various phases of combating illicit trade practices; GLITSS hence aims to bring this aspect to the fore in the ongoing debate on illicit trade.

### 1.1.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE (MAIN AIM)

Currently, the debate on illicit trade **is scattered and there is little collaboration across social and natural sciences**. Research is highly fragmented and compartmentalised. The **lack of a coordinated European illicit trade research community** means that disseminating scholarly work is difficult, given

that it is based on individual efforts. Researchers operating in bubbles may lack the necessary technical expertise, network capacity or multidisciplinary understanding to translate their findings into tangible solutions tackling the issue of illicit trade.

**This especially applies to the lack of collaboration between the social, legal and natural sciences**, from which the **creation of technological solutions** can be informed by political scientists, economists and lawyers. As well, existing knowledge of **new technologies** can inform ongoing discussions beyond technical circles alone. The often covert nature of illicit activities makes collecting reliable and relevant data an extremely difficult task, a further reason why interdisciplinary collaboration is necessary. Such a methodological approach may serve as the impetus for **advanced data-collection techniques, as well as for holistic research leading to innovative solutions.**

Illicit trade is discussed in different disciplines from a number of angles. **Criminology and Sociology** focus on deviance, as well as on the harm it causes. **Legal Science** is interested in the normative dimensions of trade, while **Economics** is concerned with the appropriate allocation of resources and with the externalities of illicit trade. **International Relations** has been preoccupied with cooperation regarding determining and countering illicit trade practices. However, behaviours can also be culturally driven, which is why **Anthropology and Psychology** would remind us that a bottom-up approach is paramount if we are to fully understand social choices. **Natural Sciences**, such as Biology, are particularly interested in the impact of illicit trade practices on the environment, such as wildlife trafficking and illegal logging. **Medicine** plays a special role in dealing with counterfeit medicines – the latter causing the deaths of thousands of people each year. With the **development of digital society**, the proliferation of big data and globalisation have given a special place to technology, so that engineers in different fields are also preoccupied with understanding how the latter is helping/hindering illicit trade practices.

This is just a short overview of the multidisciplinary relevance of illicit trade, but the diversity of the research angles taken also constitutes a barrier to interdisciplinary discussion. While we intend to valorise the inputs originating from different disciplines, the challenge that GLITSS aims to address is the creation of a platform enabling dialogue between researchers from different disciplines but who are all working on the same phenomenon: illicit trade. As a consequence, GLITSS asks the following questions which are to be answered from interdisciplinary perspectives:

- What are the common features of illicit trade across different sectors?
- What key characteristics of the international system allow/facilitate/cause illicit trade?
- What problems can be identified in the current governance of illicit trade?
- Why do actors engage in illicit trade practices?
- How can illicit trade be best measured?
- How can local experiences enhance regional responses to illicit trade challenges?
- How can the main actors fuelling illicit trade practices best be classified?
- How does technology affect illicit trade? And, how does illicit trade affect technology?
- How can new technologies be used to counter illicit trade?
- What is the role of legal/legitimate markets in fostering/facilitating illicit trade practices?
- How can illicit trade be most effectively addressed?

There is a clear need **for a shared body of knowledge which embeds diversity and that can be responsive to the realities and requirements arising from current illicit trade practices.** Related research would benefit greatly from more intimate collaboration, in a manner that is not solely focused on human trafficking, organised crime or any sectoral view of illicit trade. The main challenge in such research is finding a common platform for these debates in order to facilitate effective interdisciplinary dialogue. **Europe needs a pan-continental effort which provides high-impact research based on**

**a participatory model that informs governments, enforcement agencies, international organisations and civil society on the realities of illicit trade.**

## 1.2. PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE OF THE ART

### 1.2.1. APPROACH TO THE CHALLENGE AND PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE OF THE ART

With a holistic approach in mind, the **Action aims to overcome the challenge posed by the hitherto compartmentalisation of the debate**, developing **models that can travel across disciplines** in catalysing debates across specialty fields. There are two main pillars to the Action: interdisciplinarity and epistemological diversity. First, the Action takes a **bird's-eye view of the problem of illicit trade**. Second, the inclusion of epistemological diversity will allow not only for the enhancement of our understanding of the practice but also to **reflect critically on current institutionalised structures of power** embedded in what the Action defines as “illicit” activities. In order to achieve both objectives, we aim at creating a wide network of academics and practitioners. This is why the **GLITSS network needs to be broad in scope from its inception**. Because of its variety, the impact on knowledge production can be maximised in the target countries as well as across the whole Cost Network. In essence, **a large network is necessary to move the scientific community towards a better understanding of what illicit trade is**, how it operates and what appropriate responses may entail. Ultimately, such advancements will serve to secure public safety, enhance societal resilience and ensure a sustainable future for modern societies.

**As such, GLITSS will adopt a three-pronged framework** that allows for interdisciplinary debate and facilitates cross-fertilisation. **First, the Action will meet the pressing need to closely investigate the phenomenon of illicit trade**, understood as the trade in both tangible and intangible objects on black and grey markets. In the simplest sense, the phenomena involved may be broken down into goods (**tangible** ones like humans, narcotics and antiquities, **intangible** ones like digital forms of identification and services) and capital (**money laundering, illicit financial flows, cryptocurrencies, tax avoidance, informal economies**). Research on the phenomena making up illicit trade will benefit from empirical-data gathering and cross-sectoral learning.

**Second, the Action will investigate the platforms of illicit trade.** This involves studies examining governance, infrastructure, norms and economic dynamics. In essence, the platforms establish the “rules of the game” – thus influencing and facilitating illicit activities. Illicit trade operates in the shadow of the global economy, but it relies on a number of formal institutions that are constitutive parts of the global economy, such as tax havens and free trade zones (FTZs). The operations of those involved in such activities are increasingly sophisticated, and deal in everything from humans to cigarettes. Interconnected economies and societies have allowed illicit trade to flourish, also thanks to the evolution of a global financial system. Understanding the nature of the practice is thus paramount to developing effective techniques to counter it.

**Third and finally, the Action will examine responses to illicit trade.** Criminal networks are active within every major economy and all parts of the world. No single national or regional law-enforcement agency is able to effectively counter the problem of illicit trade on their own. Any effective solution to the challenges posed by the phenomenon requires concerted efforts that encompass multiple stakeholders, such as international organisations, national law-enforcement agencies and private actors. Strategies



to counter illicit trade must see national and international endeavours converge, and give a clear role to the recovery of criminal assets – be it in the form of confiscation or civil forfeiture. Since illicit trade practices also have socio-economic determinants, responses will need to include debates on criminalisation/decriminalisation and alternative development measures. Given the increasing digitisation of modern society, there will be no single law enforcement or technology providing a panacea here.

This three-pronged approach will allow researchers to establish the bird's-eye view of illicit trade currently lacking. Those engaged in illicit trade activities are constantly evolving so as to adapt to and transcend these realities. Furthermore, the convergence of illicit sectors makes tracking, responding to and preventing related trade extremely difficult. This threatens the public safety, security and market sustainability of Europe. These three areas – **termed here “the 3Ss” (Safety, Security and Sustainability)** – can give structure to the interdisciplinary debate and will become the main research themes of the Action.

**There is a clear need for multidisciplinary efforts that actively engage technology professionals able to tackle the practice by helping overcome disparities.** The relevance and pertinence of the identified challenges is evident from the increasingly globalised and technological society of the current age. GLITSS will pave the way for research cooperation of academics, researchers and other stakeholders with technology experts, as this will contribute to the creation of a holistic debate on what illicit trade is and regarding its impact on Safety (products), Security (people and state institutions) and Sustainability (preserving natural resources).

**Safety:** The sale of products on the black and grey markets bypasses the safety procedures of legitimate markets, and potentially endangers both individual and public health. Counterfeit goods – such as pharmaceutical products, alcohol and cigarettes – are not put through the same rigorous health and safety checks as legitimate items, and are often extremely dangerous. Licit items intended only for adults may be accessed illicitly by minors, posing serious health consequences. Human security – understood as freedom from fear and hunger – is also at risk, and, as such, the direct threat to individuals posed by criminal organisations and the scarcity of food supplies are also key challenges. Under this umbrella, technology would help to facilitate knowledge transfer vis-à-vis increased societal resilience in the face of challenges to safety and contribute to the improved transparency of supply chains too.

**Security:** illicit trade practices pose challenges to security, understood as threats to the state and/or to considerable parts of the population. On the one hand, illicit trade can provide the resources to purchase military equipment which can be then used to challenge the authority of national institutions. On the other hand, the control of illicit trade routes can be a necessary objective for terrorist or armed groups. Criminal networks can challenge states in controlling territories yielding profits originating from illicit trade, but they can also use violence against other criminal groups in seeking control of illicit markets. As such, they pose a security concern for both state institutions and citizens alike. Finally, states themselves can also take advantage of illicit trade to embark on policies that threaten international peace and stability – as the case of North Korea has shown. Prevention and risk assessment are essential in containing the security consequences of illicit trade, and technology could play a central role in monitoring and tracing international trade – with the aim of reducing the resources available to politically motivated and terrorist actors.

**Sustainability:** Illicit trade represents a threat to the sustainability of our society and economy, within the Earth's boundaries. Activities ranging from wildlife trafficking and illegal deforestation to oligopolies on water and food resources driven by organised crime pose a serious danger to the quality of life of both current and future societies. Additionally, illicit trade – also through **corruption** – poisons good-

governance practices involving both public and private actors and undermines the efficient and just allocation of resources through a functioning market. Left unchecked, illicit trade compromises all efforts made by local and international actors vis-à-vis preventing the overexploitation of natural resources, preserving ecosystems, allocating economic resources evenly and improving quality of life globally. Technology could contribute to the reduction of the threat by monitoring the exploitation of resources, enhancing transparency regarding economic actors and increasing awareness of negative externalities originating from international trade.

These three challenges will be best addressed through the creation of a common platform benefitting from interdisciplinarity and openness. The Action is particularly concerned with interdisciplinarity, placing specific emphasis on including technology experts in research efforts. Such collaboration will be extremely beneficial in studying responses to illicit trade. GLITSS has positioned itself to create a **highly inclusive network of countries which, due to enhanced knowledge transfer, will contribute to the production of new and better ways of understanding illicit trade.**

The Action's approach is innovative in a number of ways, including regarding scope, dissemination and expectations when it comes to results. **The Action will create an interdisciplinary research network.** Most European research networks currently focus solely on the respective issues of organised crime, money laundering or human trafficking to the detriment of understanding how these phenomena fit into the wider concept of illicit trade. **The Action seeks to enrich academia, policy and practice by an explicit emphasis on interdisciplinarity. There will be a key focus on including often-marginalised scholarly voices in order to account for the emerging epistemological diversity which characterises the research field today.** Moreover, the Action aims to engage and train Early Career Investigators (ECIs) in order to ensure that the next generation of illicit trade researchers are best positioned to further the work already done in this area. The Action aspires to setting up a research network that can outlive the Action's own lifespan.

**By uniting methods, theories and academic traditions, GLITSS enables established scholars and ECIs to explore their own original ideas, critically engage with existing knowledge, develop their professional skills and to use the provided platform to share their respective findings.** By bringing together partners who have participated in prior national projects and actions, GLITSS aims to spread acquired knowledge uniformly across all participating institutions and to reach all relevant stakeholders.

**Finding innovative solutions to the issues posed by illicit trade requires technological approaches.** The Action has already brought together researchers beyond Social Sciences and Legal Science, such as from Computer Science and other Natural Sciences. This fostering of cooperation is currently lacking in the European arena, something highlighted in the search for researchers to participate in the Action. **By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, the Action will contribute to the establishment of new data-collection methods and potentially develop more sophisticated means of deterring, monitoring and countering illicit trade.**

**Combating illicit trade requires a societally integrated approach involving relevant government agencies, representatives of impacted industries, consumers and the general public alike.** The Action's outreach efforts **will provide fertile ground for public and private sector decision-makers to reinforce their prevention and mitigation efforts at the European level.** Thus, the Action reinforces sustainable economies and secure futures for all. The Action strives to involve external stakeholders by inviting them to participate in working groups (WGs) as members or on an ad hoc basis. **Nurturing international public-private partnerships and a pan-European dialogue will allow for a clearer understanding of illicit trade as a whole, ultimately serving to inform policy communities and third-party stakeholders.**

## 1.2.2. OBJECTIVES

### 1.2.2.1 Research Coordination Objectives

The research coordination objectives of the Action are to:

- develop a common holistic understanding of illicit trade supported by joint debate on the matter and a concrete research agenda;
- study the potential threats from and long-term effects of illicit trade vis-à-vis the 3Ss (Safety, Security and Sustainability);
- contribute to the critical engagement with the definition of what “illicit” is, and when certain practices become so;
- develop methods for the studying of illicit trade and for the collection of reliable data. The Action will contribute to the refining and development of methods and digital tools for analysing the impact of illicit trade at the local, regional and international levels;
- create visibility – both within the academic community and for other stakeholders – about the common issues and challenges facing the academic community, local, national and European Union authorities;
- develop and publish an Action website to become the reference point for addressing the challenges posed by illicit trade, including a multimedia room for resources, a platform to highlight the work of individual researchers, a repository of related projects as well as information about networking events and channels of dissemination;
- disseminate research outputs to third-party stakeholders through publications, Training Schools and capacity-building initiatives; and,
- to assess the feasibility of a software application and to develop a website aimed at addressing the networking and knowledge-sharing needs of illicit trade researchers, so as to ensure that coordination can outlast the Action’s own lifespan.

### 1.2.2.2 Capacity-building Objectives

The capacity-building objectives of the Action are to:

- bring together, in a coordinated way, the geographically scattered European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) members in order to stimulate further research and knowledge-sharing on the topic of illicit trade by fostering collaboration between scholars of all ages and genders which can outlast the Action’s own lifespan;
- cooperate with technology professionals in order to create innovative means of deterring, monitoring and countering illicit trade;
- introduce and educate students, ECIs, entrepreneurs and other interested parties to the multifaceted nature of illicit trade in order to stimulate further research and refine the current piecemeal approach taken;
- support the development of PhD students and ECIs by organising Training Schools and seminars to bolster the wider activities of the Action. It is envisaged that such activities will secure a new generation of researchers properly equipped to deal with the issue of illicit trade;
- to actively engage stakeholders through invitations to join WGs or to participate on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore WGs 1–3 will develop training programmes applicable to both scholars and professionals, made available free of charge on the Action website and via YouTube videos in order to have the largest outreach possible;
- provide support and recommendations for educational programmes at various of the Action’s partner universities;
- deliver guidance and recommendations on how to overcome presenting challenges in a comprehensive policy document targeting policymakers and other relevant stakeholders at the national and EU levels; and,
- support and encourage publication of peer reviewed papers and presentations at important conferences and events, in order to create international awareness regarding the issue of illicit trade.

## 2. NETWORKING EXCELLENCE

### 2.1. ADDED VALUE OF NETWORKING IN S&T EXCELLENCE

#### 2.1.1. ADDED VALUE IN RELATION TO EXISTING EFFORTS AT EUROPEAN AND/OR INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Currently, research on illicit trade is fragmented. There are a number of European-funded projects that focus on a specific sector thereof, but none that take a bird's-eye view of the phenomenon. In addition, most studies do not involve adopting an interdisciplinary academic perspective. By bringing together researchers from a variety of disciplines, the Action will facilitate the synthesis and improvement of existing knowledge concerning illicit trade in empirical as well as theoretical terms. The Action will take a holistic approach to the topic by having a shared research platform featuring coordinated European efforts. GLITSS's inclusive approach will enable the contextualisation of illicit trade's inherent complexity. Furthermore, the Action will facilitate the cross-fertilisation of methodological and epistemological approaches.

GLITSS's work will complement a number of projects and WGs already active on the European and international levels:

- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has a Task Force on Countering Illicit Trade (TF-CIT).
- **European working group on Organized Crime (EUROC)** is an initiative aiming to stimulate and facilitate research in the international field of organised crime and is open to members of the European Society of Criminology.
- The **Standing Group on Organised Crime (SGOC)** is one of the standing groups of the **European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR)**. Like GLITSS, a major aim of SGOC is to share its work both with other academics and the general public.
- The **Organized Crime Observatory (OCO)** was created in February 2001. Its main objective is to connect those who are concerned about challenges and issues related to transnational organised crime.
- **Europol** analysts support EU law enforcement authorities and other partner organisations in tackling organised crime and terrorism. The Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessments (**SOCTAs**) generated by these specialists may serve as the impetus for research by members of the Action.
- **TAKEDOWN** is a project for developing effective and efficient security solutions to organised crime and terrorist networks.
- The **Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI)** is a network of practitioners and researchers from various backgrounds which aims to develop new and innovative strategies and responses to organised crime.
- The **Centre for Information and Research on Organized Crime (CIROC)** is an organisation which promotes knowledge transfer between researchers and practitioners, with a particular focus on the Netherlands.
- The **International Association for the Study of Organized Crime (IASOC)** is a professional association of criminologists, researchers, working professionals, teachers and students working to promote greater understanding of and research on organised crime.

The Action will complement the work by these groups and projects; as is evident, however, the vast majority of them focus on organised crime. GLITSS aims to place emphasis on illicit trade, which covers

not only criminal organisations but includes other actors (also public ones); it also involves reflecting critically on the norms and rules according to which international trade is regulated. GLITSS will add a distinctly interdisciplinary approach here, and integrate work on organised crime into the broader field of illicit trade. Private stakeholders and technology experts will be actively sought during the first two years of the Action. Given the delicate balance between public-private cooperation, we plan to involve the Managing Committee (MC) of the Action to define the best approach to fulfilling this aim. Cross-fertilisation will bring disparate research efforts together so as to create a clearer understanding of the orchestra of interrelated illicit sectors, and the norms that make their existence possible.

## 2.2. ADDED VALUE OF NETWORKING IN IMPACT

### 2.2.1. SECURING THE CRITICAL MASS AND EXPERTISE

GLITSS consists of at least one participant from each Cost country, and all those involved are engaged in ongoing research on topics related to illicit trade. However, as mentioned above, these participants currently for the most part do not engage in relevant academic discussions because they belong to different disciplines. Instead, GLITSS and its focus on illicit trade has already started to create a common platform for dialogue that will help secure and develop the critical mass of people and expertise required in this domain.

The Action is composed of international colleagues representing a vast array of academic disciplines. Many are renowned scholars who have published highly influential work on diffuse aspects of illicit trade, such as human trafficking, the impacts of organised crime and illicit financial flows. Concurrently, the network will include ECIs harbouring great interest in learning from more seasoned colleagues. The individual scholars and participants in the Action have shown excellence and reliability through their respective output, participation in collaborative projects and via their involvement in various European organisations. The individual strength of each researcher will ensure the securing of the necessary critical mass, as each person has previously demonstrated competence vis-à-vis the Action's research and dissemination objectives.

**By focusing on illicit trade as an issue in its own right** and creating WGs which can investigate each relevant element of the phenomenon in an interdisciplinary manner, the Action will generate a clear picture of the phenomenon in its entirety. **The Action's networking activities will facilitate multifaceted research** output of relevance to stakeholders and applicable to factual circumstances. By disseminating the results of the Action widely and in different ways, such as via digital platforms aimed at target groups (discussed *infra*), the aim is to engage with a broad range of researchers. The scientific output will be disseminated through **COST Action working papers and articles in leading academic journals**. Furthermore, conferences and seminars will be invaluable for facilitating knowledge transfer. On the basis of these events, **special issues of journals and/or policy briefings will be created**. The findings produced by the Action will be made accessible free of charge to the fullest extent possible in order to optimise outreach.

The Action will facilitate academic knowledge exchange between partners within the network. Currently the Action spans 36 countries and 58 proposers, with a view to expanding particularly in the first year of its existence. Especially, we plan to actively search for partners in the relevant private sectors involved in the management of illicit trade challenges, from monitoring (e.g. companies developing software to keep track of financial transactions, developing scanning devices for containers) to enforcement (e.g. businesses providing solutions on how to trace the origins of a given financial transaction or who the ultimate beneficiary of a company is). The involvement of technical universities and private companies

will inform the Europe-wide debate on how technology can create both opportunities for illicit trade activities and solutions to them. Action participants will benefit from the newly gained knowledge and the deepening of their expertise and skills through interdisciplinary exchange. Furthermore, the increased visibility provided by the network will help them to progress in their individual careers too.

The Action will seek outcomes representing maximum productivity in a number of ways. Close cooperation between the different members of the MC will ensure coherent, comparable and focused research activities. Frequent evaluation of the Action's results in relation to their declared intermediate targets will ensure the quality of output and enable hurdles to be overcome as they are encountered.

In order to ensure that the collaborative network fostered can outlive the Action itself, **the Action website** will contribute to increased networking among researchers – thus allowing for ease of data- and output sharing. The yielded findings will remain accessible beyond the duration of the Action, for at least five years' time. The development of the website will remove barriers to cooperation based on issues such as age, gender, geographical location or institutional affiliation. Once the platform of the website is ready, we plan to investigate whether a **software application** could be developed to contribute to both the social impact of GLITSS and the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform on illicit trade at the international level. Dedicated apps are becoming common instruments for knowledge acquisition and -sharing. Via the website, GLITTS members will be able to do two things. First, they will have access to other network members and be able to access and share information about relevant institutional actors, enabling them to find specific regional or sectoral expertise as needed. Second, they will be able to share knowledge and practices on monitoring, managing and fighting illicit trade in all its forms. This will take the form of a **database of vignettes of modi operandi**: GLITSS members can enter short textual descriptions of the forms of illicit trade they encounter, which will be moderated by an assistant who also coordinates the compilation of overviews of illicit trade sectors on the basis of the descriptions that were entered into the website. Subsequently, these compilations and the underlying descriptions will be available to all GLITSS members and, after careful consideration, to a wider audience too. By doing so, the website would institutionalise illicit trade memory and become a true "social media for illicit trade experts". This website will be made available free of charge, in order to promote an inclusive research environment at the European level as well as to narrow the gap between expert discussions and other sectors of society.

### 2.2.2. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

While illicit trade is being combated by intergovernmental agencies and other actors, there is still a clear **deficiency in the role the academic community plays in providing a more sophisticated understanding of the threat at hand**. The Action **wishes to bring this information not only to national law-enforcement agencies but also to policymakers, governmental agencies and international entities such as Europol, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)**. Representatives of these institutions will be invited to WG meetings to ensure that the Action's implementation is credible and relevant. Ultimately, the Action will work closely with law-enforcement agencies across Europe to understand how illicit trade can best be countered.

**Stakeholders and the political community are more likely to be open to suggestions made by the network as a whole compared to isolated contributions from individual researchers**. In collective research, the knowledge base is larger. The Action expects that developing further knowledge on the

phenomenon could aid in strengthening responses thereto, and thus ultimately increase European societal resilience. **The Action will encourage the strong representation of non-academic stakeholders – international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), national law-enforcement agencies, and civil society organisations (CSOs) – in its activities.** The multiple events held over the lifespan of the Action will stimulate an ever-increasing level of integration. **The emphasis on holistic involvement does not end with research.** External stakeholders will be invited to participate in conferences, Training Schools and workshops.

The Action will include the **private sector** in its dialogue and capacity-building activities concerning illicit trade. It will reach out to business associations such as BusinessEurope and workers' associations such as the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Industry representatives will be invited to engage with the Action as participants or on an ad hoc basis. These professionals will also be invited to participate in the Training Schools developed by WGs 1–3. The main goal here is to **build awareness among industry professionals and to ensure resilience to illicit trade.** Furthermore, the Action will involve **CSOs**. Fighting illicit trade is not only for public officials; private actors and individual persons can also acquire **illicit trade literacy**, which can also contribute to making societies more resilient. By consulting with CSOs currently involved in the tackling of illicit trade, the likelihood that the coordination of overall research objectives will be achieved increases. Moreover, this form of collaboration will ensure the relevance and accuracy of scientific output and help oversee its broad dissemination across Europe.

### 2.2.3. MUTUAL BENEFITS OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF SECONDARY PROPOSERS FROM NEAR NEIGHBOUR OR INTERNATIONAL PARTNER COUNTRIES OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Though the main aim of the Action is to increase knowledge on the issue of illicit trade and to enhance European resilience, the phenomenon is not merely a regional one. Therefore, the Action will aim to include institutions from non-COST Member Countries (currently the United States and a researcher of Kosovan nationality are also involved).

First, we will include in the network highly respected researchers from international partner countries. These are prominent scholars in the field of illicit trade and pioneering figures on this topic in the social sciences. Their contributions will add credibility to the Action's output and help bolster the scientific quality of the knowledge generated. Furthermore, as illicit trade is a truly international phenomenon, the inclusion of voices from across the globe may strengthen the potential for significant scientific breakthroughs being made.

Second, we will include a researcher from Kosovo. Bringing one of the youngest states in the Balkans into the fold will provide great insight on organised crime and trafficking in the region. Additionally, further internationalising universities from Kosovo corresponds with the aim of strengthening knowledge transfer within Europe regardless of geographical location.

The expansion beyond the boundaries of Cost membership will be carefully assessed, but it will not necessarily be a priority in the first part of the Action. The main objective is to create the required critical mass; once achieved, we will think about expanding its basis.

## 3. IMPACT

### 3.1. IMPACT TO SCIENCE, SOCIETY AND COMPETITIVENESS, AND POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATION/BREAKTHROUGHS

#### 3.1.1. SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND/OR SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS (INCLUDING POTENTIAL INNOVATIONS AND/OR BREAKTHROUGHS)

Although illicit trade is a topic of great societal importance, as mentioned in several Horizon Europe calls, responses to it would clearly benefit from more intense dialogue at the European level. The Action will bring researchers from across the continent together, pooling their collective knowledge in terms of research skills, methodologies and expertise. In turn, this will serve as the impetus for new research projects. This interdisciplinary approach seeks to create new synergies and to enhance capacity-building activities.

##### **Short-term impacts shall:**

- enhance academic-knowledge exchange between partners in the Action network, which already spans 34 European countries covering Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe and 2 non-European ones, the United States and South Africa);
- facilitate the development of a community of researchers engaged with and collaborating on the researching of illicit trade regardless of age, gender or geographical location;
- increase the international availability of data, with Action outputs and knowledge being a core standard for networking;
- enable researchers to advise on illicit trade matters at the local, regional, national and international levels;
- develop a common understanding of illicit trade, including its driving forces, critical engagement with norms and regarding solutions to the issue;
- raise awareness of and academic interest in illicit trade in the European context;
- promote a willingness to respond to the issue of illicit trade by ensuring dissemination of findings to all sectors of society;
- enhance collaboration between researchers and technology professionals in order to ensure that the knowledge generated by the Action may be implemented as tangible systems tackling the problem of illicit trade;
- extend the knowledge of all participants on the nature, means and impact of illicit trade, also utilising such knowledge in the application, development and implementation of recommendations on the 3Ss;
- enhance evidence-based policies, grounded in solid research data;
- facilitate collaboration between academic researchers and policymakers through Training Schools and public debates;
- increase efforts vis-à-vis public outreach in regards to research results, doing so in readily understandable and applicable ways (briefings with journalists, media articles, promotion videos etc.); and,
- make findings available free of charge to governments, researchers, CSOs, IOs, NGOs and industry in order to enhance European resilience to illicit trade.

##### **Long-term impacts shall:**

- create an international, institutionalised and interdisciplinary network of scientists;
- set up a Training School for the next generation of ECIs;
- design an education programme focusing equally on all three elements of illicit trade (constituting phenomena, platforms, responses);



- promote new modalities for sharing information on and best responses to illicit trade;
- contribute to a new and critical way of looking at the norms which determine when given practices are defined as “illicit” by political communities;
- create, share and maintain a website and assess the feasibility of a complementary software application to collect, compile and present all findings and to facilitate network-building; and,
- facilitate technological advances by external stakeholders including law-enforcement agencies, governments and NGOs.

## 3.2. MEASURES TO MAXIMISE IMPACT

### 3.2.1. KNOWLEDGE CREATION, TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Europe-wide debate will certainly contribute to **creating new knowledge** on and deeper understanding of illicit trade. Especially, interdisciplinary interaction will contribute to enhanced knowledge in – at least – two specific ways. First, the creation of a common platform for dialogue will trigger cross-fertilisation mechanisms so that experts from different disciplines will benefit from being exposed to the latest developments in studying illicit trade from various angles. Second, the focus on technology and illicit trade will lead to renewed understanding of the dialectic effects (or two-way-street interaction) between the two, leading to better understanding of **how the infrastructures of illicit economies work**.

**Knowledge transfer** is guaranteed by the very nature of the Action. The frequent interaction between Action participants will lay the foundations for a shared – and possibly more nuanced and comprehensive – understanding of illicit trade. In itself, this will sustain the existing efforts undertaken against illicit trade practices and steer the debate towards more innovative and effective solutions. Especially, **knowledge transfer towards Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs)** will certainly take place, if only via socialisation during interaction – but this is only part of the story. The Action will encourage peer-mentoring opportunities for scholars from their colleagues at various stages of their career, particularly across national borders. The educational activities – such as seminars and Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) – provided by the Action will ensure that the next generation of researchers are positioned to continue this work. STSMs encourage collaborative efforts which transcend state borders and that promote knowledge transfer between institutions.

The various activities planned by GLITSS will also contribute to the **career development** of individual researchers. **Special attention will be paid to ECIs**, as they will have key roles in conferences, panels and extensively collaborate within the network. Discussion spaces will be created for ECI representatives, while special activities – such as a **young-talent speaker series and dedicated pursuits on key** issues for career development, for example a panel on “How to Publish on Illicit Trade” – will take place during the conferences. With this in mind, we aim at creating the conditions allowing early career colleagues to acquire **managerial experience** which can be useful as part of their ongoing professional development.

WGs 1, 2 and 3 will each develop a **Training School** explicitly targeted at external stakeholders, with the aim of facilitating knowledge-sharing between researchers and practitioners. This training content will be open to the academic community, industry, public officials and policymakers in order to encourage effective collaboration and to ensure the Action has a tangible impact. Such dynamic

participation may also serve as the impetus for innovative research, **by exposing scholars to stakeholders** who may otherwise be difficult to connect with. Moreover, face-to-face interactions will promote openness and lead to more effective communication between relevant stakeholders – which is difficult to achieve via email, phone or online meetings.

### 3.2.2. PLAN FOR DISSEMINATION AND/OR EXPLOITATION AND DIALOGUE WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC OR POLICY

(i) In order to keep third-party stakeholders and relevant scholars up to date and engaged with the work of the Action, the MC will compile a mailing list and distribute **a biannual newsletter** detailing progress and output. Furthermore, such external stakeholders will be invited to participate in the Action as participants or as ad hoc contributors. The Training Schools developed by each WG will be available to both ECIs and external stakeholders, with the aim of fostering dialogue on the research on illicit trade as well as regarding policy responses to it.

(ii) The Action will make **resources for civil society** available in order to better inform lay persons on the issue of illicit trade and to challenge related practices. The website will host a **multimedia room**. During the course of the Action, resources (books, movies, papers, documentaries etc.) will be gathered to be made publicly accessible.

(iii) **Academic output** that will strengthen knowledge about illicit trade. The output objectives include a **collection of papers from the multiple conferences** to be held during the life cycle of the Action. Furthermore, each WG will produce two articles published in **peer reviewed journals** per year. By the end of their lifespans, WGs 1–3 will have produced a special issue each. At the end of the Action, an **edited volume** will be collated by the MC and published in the final year. The final targets regarding academic output will be agreed upon by the MC during its first meeting.

(iv) **Ensuring each participant's visibility** is key to both ensuring their career development as well as to the dissemination of the Action's achieved progress. First, each Action participant will be **highlighted in the Experts section of our website**. Here, contact information, research projects and output will be detailed. Furthermore, researchers will take **speaking engagements, conduct interviews and make special contributions to blogs, newsletters and newspapers**.

(v) The Action will use **social media** to the fullest extent possible in order to **engage all relevant stakeholders**. The Action will have **Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn** accounts where researchers will be highlighted, the work of each WG will be detailed and where general notes of interest will be shared. It is anticipated that such public activities will encourage engagement with each WG and generate interest in their work.

(vi) The Action will **develop three Training Schools** which can then be brought to embassies, law-enforcement agencies and policymakers in order to enhance capacity-building. More concretely, these training courses will consist of lectures and interactive workshops. While illicit trade is being combated by intergovernmental agencies and other actors, their efforts only partially succeed in containing the problem. The Training Schools will offer opportunities for **policy-related dialogue between academics, CSOs and governmental agencies**.

(vii) Following the creation and successful implementation of the website and all its various components, the Action will consider the development of an **app specifically for mobile phones and tablets**. Data

and output will be accessible via this app. The latter will be targeted at all stakeholders, and open to all of society – with a view to encouraging greater public discussion and awareness of the issues at hand.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION

### 4.1. COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WORKPLAN

#### 4.1.1. DESCRIPTION OF WORKING GROUPS, TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

The MC will be formed during the first quarter of the first year, and strictly follow the rules and procedures outlined in “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”. The MC will be headed by the Action Chair, whose primary responsibility will be to coordinate and manage activities – including the work of the WGs. The MC will be completed by a Vice Chair and made up by no more than two members from each participating country. The MC will lead the Action, ensuring the timeliness of tasks and the quality of deliverables. The MC will meet biannually. The first coming together of each year will be a two-day on-site meeting, to be combined with WG activities. To reduce travel costs, one shorter meeting will be organised online. The MC’s specific tasks will be as follows:

- develop and manage the work of GLITSS and oversee its WGs;
- oversee administrative duties, including developing a financial plan and allocating funds to WG activities;
- ensure that deliverables are of high quality and occur on time. If a problem with the deliverables arises, the MC should handle the issue and ensure a favourable outcome;
- engage with the heads of each WG to ensure that the groups’ needs are met;
- act as an intermediary between GLITSS and external stakeholders; and,
- prepare an annual newsletter for dissemination to a mailing list consisting of contributions also from the WGs.

Action participants will form three WGs structured according to the different elements of illicit trade. This is to facilitate interdisciplinary research within each subfield, and to ensure that the Action can maximise its scientific output. Furthermore, such a structure will help guarantee that ECIs are connected with relevant mid-career and senior researchers. This will help bolster the future of illicit trade scholarship once the lifespan of the Action is over. Additionally, there will be one Task Group (TG). The TG will be a small, operational group of Action Members who are working on the feasibility of an app for which particular networking and cooperation is required.

The division of labour between the three WGs is explained below by detailing the subfield that each will focus on:

#### **WG 1 – The phenomena: Goods and money**

Illicit trade concerns both tangible (drugs, humans, counterfeit products, arms and livestock) and intangible (passwords, information and malware) goods that are for sale on the black and grey markets. This WG will focus on the “phenomena” making up illicit trade, providing a forum for discussion between all those who study the “goods” (counterfeiting, smuggling, trafficking etc.) and the “capital” (money laundering, tax evasion etc.).

## **WG 2 – Platform: The governance of illicit trade**

This WG will deal with both the physical and organisational structures which allow, facilitate and create illicit trade practices. This includes research into governance, infrastructure, norms and the illicit/licit economy paradox, among other issues. This WG will focus on the “rules of the game”, stirring discussion on the governance of sanctions (actors, norms and institutions) and on the infrastructure of illicit trade (including the interaction between the material and the human elements).

## **WG 3 – Responses to illicit trade**

This WG will work to explore ideal ways to counter illicit trade practices. It will focus on the role of regulatory enforcement agencies, of the police and of other law enforcement agencies, but also on other aspects such as the role of legal frameworks in determining illicit trade practices as well as socio-economic determinants of the phenomenon. This WG will focus on best responses to the manifold challenges posed by illicit trade issues: enforcement, legalisation, alternative measures and so on. This WG will strive to understand, evaluate and improve such responses, from reviewing the capabilities of international and European law to examining the coordination between different law-enforcement agencies.

WGs 1, 2 and 3 will contribute to the preparation and organisation of each conference. Furthermore they will each hold one seminar, facilitate two STSMs, prepare two mid-term reports, compile one final report and contribute to the development of one Training School aimed at external stakeholders.

## **TG – Website development**

This TG will focus on discussing and preparing a satisfactory online space that can serve as a platform for both information-sharing and social networking with like-minded people. In its immediate format, the online space will take shape as a website aimed at facilitating researcher collaboration, thus enabling the transfer of data and the dissemination of academic output. This TG will make an inventory of categories of users that are likely to benefit from such an online space, both Action participants and users outside it, and will reach out to those users in order to take their preferences and ideas for the potential development of an app into account. The final work plan for this TG will be agreed upon in the fourth month of the Action.

The website should fulfil two functions. First, it should become **a social network for illicit trade**. One of the main challenges for enhanced understanding of illicit trade challenges is the compartmentalisation of the related debate, as indicated above. Therefore, the identification of experts is a challenging endeavour – as previous efforts to create a network in support of GLITSS have demonstrated. Thus, the website will constitute a database serving the objective of showing who is working on what subject related to illicit trade in Europe. When operational, individuals interested in international collaboration on specific subjects would have only to sign up on the website and search through the database that will be built up during the course of the Action.

The second goal is to **enhance networking between researchers and allow for ease of content- and intelligence-sharing**. This means that the website will enable users to post information, comments, descriptions, messages, images and similar on topics and issues related to illicit trade, whether on a specific subset or on a more generic level. The starting point will certainly be the three WGs identified by GLITSS, but further subcategories will also be considered in the first two years of the Action. During the lifetime of the Action, the various outputs will be analysed, compiled and presented in a usable format so as to assist GLITSS members and possibly a wider audience as well. The development of such a website will, as noted, remove barriers to cooperation based on issues such as age, gender,

geographical location or institutional affiliation. GLITSS will bear the development costs for the website. Their maintenance in the five years after the ending of the Action will be sought either from within the Action itself, the network (e.g. via the institutional registration of GLITSS members) or with interested institutional parties/donors (whether public or private).

#### 4.1.2. DESCRIPTION OF DELIVERABLES AND TIMEFRAME

##### **Deliverables for which the MC will be responsible:**

**Deliverable 1:** Action website hosting information on Action activities, a multimedia room, output and a researcher portal. The website will be launched in month three and routinely updated for the remainder of the life cycle of the Action.

**Deliverable 2:** Dissemination of biannual newsletters, amounting to eight in total, which will serve to engage external stakeholders and keep them updated on the progress of the Action. By the end of the 12th month the MC will have established a mailing list for relevant academics and stakeholders. This mailing list will be updated throughout the lifespan of the Action. The MC will then distribute a biannual newsletter detailing the progress of the Action, so as to encourage continued engagement and interest.

**Deliverable 3:** Four conferences. These conferences will serve as opportunities for researchers to share their projects, enhance their professional skills and to optimise the knowledge-sharing capacities of the Action. The MC will be responsible for organising the kick-off conference in month four, the mid-term conferences in the 18th and 30th months respectively, and the end of term conference in the 40th month. The MC will delegate the organisational tasks regarding the conference to those they deem fit, and will complete these endeavours with input from each of the WGs.

**Deliverable 4:** One edited volume which will capture a bird's-eye view of illicit trade. This will serve as a primary point of entry for those interested in the topic of illicit trade, in terms specifically of research and learning. By the 46th month, the MC will have published an edited volume based on contributions by the WGs.

**Deliverable 5:** WGs 1, 2 and 3 will produce two intermediary reports detailing the work of each group, highlighting successes and failures. These will be prepared in order to aid those seeking to improve the work of the WGs. These intermediary reports are to be finalised in months 12 and 29 respectively. The TG will produce one mid-term report in month 24. Each WG and the TG will prepare a final report in month 45. The MC will collate a final report detailing the life cycle of the Action, based on the final report of each WG – to be finalised in the 48th and final month of the Action.

##### **Deliverables for which WGs 1, 2 and 3 will be responsible:**

WGs 1, 2 and 3 will have similar objectives, activities, milestones and deliverables, but each will focus on the particularities of their own topics. Therefore the following list of deliverables applicable to WG 1 is identical to that for WGs 2 and 3 too. Each of these WGs will prepare two work plans. The first such plan, applicable for the first two years of the WGs' activities, will be prepared during month four. The second working plan, applicable for the final two years of the Action, will be prepared during the 25th month.

**Deliverable 6:** A seminar activity targeting ECIs but open to all external stakeholders, providing education on a particular illicit trade matter. The purpose of this is to enhance knowledge-sharing and to raise awareness of the issue of illicit trade. Two seminars will be held: one in month three and one in month 15. The videos of these will be published on the Action website and YouTube.

**Deliverable 7:** WGs 1, 2 and 3 will hold one webinar per year, amounting to a total of 12 webinars over the lifetime of the Action. Webinars will engage stakeholders and drive conversation on various topics which fall under the illicit trade umbrella.

**Deliverable 8:** WGs 1, 2 and 3 will establish a Training School applicable for researchers and external stakeholders. The aim of this will be to enhance capacity-building activities at the European level and to provide external stakeholders with the means and knowledge required to better counter illicit trade activities. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening the relationship between the Action, the public and private stakeholders. Training Schools will be held in month 42, videos of which will be published online in month 46.

**Deliverable 9:** Two STSMs which will provide opportunities for researchers from the Action's participating countries to work alongside colleagues from elsewhere. The goal of such activities is to further knowledge transfer, collaboration and to improve the professional skills of those participating. Explicit emphasis will be placed on the development of the capacities of a network of PhD students and ECIs. By pairing them with academic mentors and with research teams at participating institutions, ECIs will be positioned to develop their research and professional skills. One STSM to be held in year two, and one in year three.

#### **Deliverables for which the TG will be responsible:**

The TG is a cross-WG environment; it will provide two work plans (following the same time frame outlined above): an intermediary report in the 24th month and a final report in month 45.

**Deliverable 10:** A feasibility study about a software application aimed at the needs of illicit trade researchers, which can ensure that collaborative efforts endure once the Action itself is over. If designed, the launch of the first version of the app could take place during the 16th month and a revised version be launched by month 24. A final version will be made available in month 40.

### 4.1.3. RISK ANALYSIS AND CONTINGENCY PLANS

- The Action will not be able to engage further external stakeholders. This risk will be minimised through special attention being given to respective relations with the MC. The Action already has a working relationship with a number of credible external stakeholders, which will show the virtue of such partnerships to interested third parties.
- The possibility that some WG members might leave the network cannot be excluded, but this does not constitute a major risk. While the loss of certain members is not ideal, it will not prevent the Action from achieving its outlined objectives. Furthermore, the Action will aim to continually attract new WG members through ongoing advertising.
- The information we will seek may not be readily available. However, the Action aims to engage technology professionals in order to establish new means of collecting data related to illicit trade.
- There is a concern that unforeseen obstacles may hinder the Action in achieving the objectives set out *supra*. In order to combat such issues, the nature and origins of potential risks will be identified as early on as possible. Furthermore, the Action will focus on establishing possible countermeasures. This will be achieved through status updates by WG heads in MC meetings,

- allowing the latter the necessary oversight to deal with potential issues.
- Although the Action would prefer to hold at least some in-person events, we are prepared to hold activities online by relying on the experience acquired during the last 18 months as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic.
  - The WGs will be of varying sizes, with implications for the achievement of the identical deliverables envisaged by GLITSS. If the size of the respective WGs varies considerably, the MC can take this into account and – along with the WGs – adjust deliverables accordingly. Any potential issues must be caught early – as there will be irregular WG meetings and reporting – so as to highlight difficulties or opportunities vis-à-vis more ambitious goals. The envisaged two work plans will further facilitate such adjustments.
  - The funds required to design and maintain the website beyond the Action may be lacking. GLITSS cannot currently foresee the budgetary outlook, as it is designated by the COST Association. In the event that funds are limited, the Action can reduce the dynamic components of the website and reflect on its feasible online presence once the Action is over. Institutional fees could also viably fund the website in the future.

#### 4.1.4. GANTT DIAGRAM

