

Tools4LEAs |

A project of the European Anti-Cybercrime Technology Development Association
(EACTDA)



D1.8 M12 report on EUAB activities



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Main author(s):	Eva Skruba	EACTDA
Contributor(s):	Juan Arraiza	EACTDA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	4
1.1.	Overview of the Tools4LEAs project	4
1.2.	Main objective of this document	4
1.3.	Relation to other deliverables.....	5
1.4.	Structure of the deliverable	5
2.	Structure, tasks and responsibilities of the EUAB	6
2.1.	EUAB Structure	6
2.2.	EUAB Tasks and responsibilities.....	7
3.	EUAB activities	9
3.1.	EUAB meetings	9
3.2.	EUAB prioritisation activities.....	9
3.2.1.	November 2023 prioritisation exercise	9
3.2.2.	April 2024 prioritisation exercise	10
3.3.	Other EUAB activities	10
4.	Summary	11
4.1.	Conclusion	11
4.2.	Evaluation.....	11
4.3.	Future work	11

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Tools4LEAs project

EACTDA is the acronym of the European Anti-Cybercrime Technology Development Association, which is a private non-profit association, established in San Sebastian, Spain. The members of the Association include European Union (EU) public entities fighting cybercrime, universities and research technology organisations, for-profit private companies, and other relevant actors in the field of the EU security research and innovation.

The Tools4LEAs projects are a series of projects that receive a Direct Award under the ISFP programme, and which main goal is to facilitate and promote the uptake of innovative technologies by EU public entities fighting cybercrime. EACTDA, via the Tools4LEAs projects, aims at further developing pre-existing assets, mainly from EU-funded security research and development projects, so that they are offered with no license cost and with access to the source code to EU public entities fighting cybercrime.

In the first Tools4LEAs project (v1; Jul'21 to Jun'23), the focus was on designing and setting up the infrastructures, processes, and governance / decision-making mechanisms, whilst delivering the first set of “fully-tested and operational-ready” tools via Europol’s Tool Repository. Though 11 tools were further developed in the v1 project, it is expected that 3 of them will not be released to their targeted audience as they do not pass the pre-established quality threshold of “operational-ready”. Also, an End-User Advisory Board (EUAB) composed as of Jul'23 by 23 members from 14 EU member states and co-chaired by two Europol units (EC3 and Innovation Lab) was established and it is the body responsible for identifying and prioritising end-user needs and which has veto right over the decisions done by EACTDA/Tools4LEAs with regard to the tool development roadmap.

In the second Tools4LEAs project (v2; Jul'23 to Jun'25), it is proposed to double the number of tools delivered. Also, the repository of tools implemented in v1, and currently used to host the results of the Tools4LEAs projects, will be enhanced and reused to host the results of EU-funded security research projects (when relevant in the field of cybercrime). EACTDA will play the role of custodian of these results, and the technical, IPR, and administrative aspects needed to create this new repository of security research results will be put in place. In addition, the v2 project will include a pilot to proof the concept of initial and limited support&maintenance periods for a selection of tools. Besides, a pilot of the concept of EACTDA national nodes will be included, with nodes planned in LT, FR, ES, and maybe one or two more. Also, a platform for end-users to evaluate online tools will be implemented. Finally, the v2 project will include activities to further build the community of Tools4LEAs stakeholders and to promote the creation and/or adoption of technical blueprints, and in general, of commonly accepted best practices.

1.2. Main objective of this document

This deliverable describes briefly the establishment of the end-user driven Advisory board for the Tools4LEAs project, formed during the Tools4LEAs v1 project and continuing with its role also in the Tools4LEAs v2. The main objective of this document is to describe the activities of this body that relate to their responsibilities and tasks.

1.3. Relation to other deliverables

This deliverable is closely related to the following deliverables:

- **D3.15 First report on events and Dem&Eval activities:** The main objective of this document is to report on the implemented work related to events, organised in scope of the Tools4LEAs project during the first year of its second version (v2) and for the purpose of Tools4LEAs activities such as Dem&Eval events, maintenance workshops etc.
- **D6.2 – Support & Maintenance pilot's selection of tools report:** This document presents the list of tools selected for the Tools4LEAs v2 Support&Maintenance pilot, as well as an explanation on which criteria has been used to select them.
- **D 3.9 First report on Tools Development activities:** The main objective of this document is to report about tool development projects' planning activities conducted from the start of the Tools4LEAs v2 project in July 2023 until June 2024.

1.4. Structure of the deliverable

Section 2 of this document introduces the structure, the tasks and responsibilities of the EUAB.

Section 3 describes each relevant activity of the EUAB.

Finally, section 4 summarises the goal and key aspects of this document, it acknowledges that there is still work to be done to improve the document, as it is the first report of the project and it presents some of the areas of future work that have already been identified.

2. Structure, tasks and responsibilities of the EUAB

2.1. EUAB Structure

The Tools4LEAs End User Advisory Board holds different roles:

1. Chair

Currently the board has 2 co-Chairs, appointed by Europol and their main tasks are:

- The chair at board meetings: Determination of the order of the agenda; ensuring that the board receives accurate, timely and clear information from the Capability Manager; keeping track of the contribution of individual members and ensuring that they are all involved in discussions and decision-making. At all meetings the co-Chairs should direct discussions towards the emergence of a consensus view and sum up discussions so that everyone understands what has been agreed.
- Take a leading role in determining the composition and structure of the board. Regular reviews of the overall size and balance between different types of end-users represented in the board.
- Take care of ensuring effective communication with the Coordinator and the Capability Manager of the Tools4LEAs project and, where appropriate, other external stakeholders.
- Act as the board's leading representatives, which involves the presentation of the board's aims and policies to the outside world.

2. Secretary

The Capability Manager of the Tools4LEAs project is the Secretary of the board. The duties and responsibilities of the Secretary of the End-user Advisory Board include:

- **Documenting the board meetings.** The Secretary is responsible for preparing the minutes of the meetings, which should include a summary of the discussions and deliberations, recording of the decisions/resolutions and of the voting results, and identification of the action items.
- **Record keeping.** The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that all reports submitted to the board or prepared by it have been retained.
- **Providing board members with information and minutes.** The Secretary is responsible for providing the board members with all the information needed in the course of their work.

3. Full members

The End-user Advisory Board of the Tools4LEAs project only includes European public security practitioners as full members. There is no restriction to the number of full members of the board. Each country has one vote in the board's decision-making process, regardless of the number of full board members representing the country.

The full members of the board are expected to actively contribute to the work of the board in the scope of their individual professional capacity: participate in the discussions, provide feedback, share ideas and suggestions etc.

4. Observer members

The full members of the board might decide to invite observer members to participate in the activities of the board. Both private and public actors can become observer members if their role is relevant to the field of fighting cybercrime. Only actors from states which are signatories to the Budapest Convention are allowed to become observer members. There is no restriction with regard to the number of observer members

Observer members hold an advisory role: providing insights, sharing knowledge and experience etc. They will be invited to participate in the board's discussions that are relevant to their area of expertise. To become an observer member, an actor must demonstrate clear added value to the work of the board. Observer members do not hold a vote in the board's decision-making process.

As of June 2023, the EUAB board has 21 members in total, representing 14 different EU member states, plus the two co-Chairs from Europol.

2.2. EUAB Tasks and responsibilities

The tools development work plan of the Tools4LEAs project is end-user driven. Therefore, an End-User Advisory Board (EUAB) has a key role.

The EUAB of the Tools4LEAs project gives direction for the development of tools and doing that, it focuses primarily on these activities:

1. Providing inputs about end-user needs and their priorities
2. Evaluating the tools once they have been developed

The process to capture end-user need information starts with EACTDA Capability Manager requesting input from the EUAB members. Two complementary approaches are followed to identify end-user needs:

- The Top-down approach
- The Bottom-up approach

Once both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches have been completed and the end user needs have been documented by the Capability Manager, the items of both approaches are listed in voting sheet and the EUAB is requested to review, validate and prioritise them. The Capability Manager organises, facilitates and documents the results of a prioritisation exercise.

There are different prioritisation methods and techniques that can be used, some of them in combination. In the end, the objective is to obtain a ranked list of prioritised needs. There are two main methodologies used in the prioritisation exercises: Importance and Urgency and 100 points methodology.

The first methodology uses the two criteria to make a first grouping of the items that are being prioritised, in this case, end-user operational needs.

	Important	Not So Important
Urgent	High priority	Don't Do This
Not So urgent	Medium priority	Low priority

Table 1 - Urgent & Important based prioritisation technique

The second method works as follows: All stakeholders get a conceptual 100 points, which they can distribute among the different items. The maximum number of points that can be given to a single item is 50 and points have to be allocated to at least three different items. The higher the amount allocated to each item, the higher its priority will be. At the end, the total is counted, and the items are sorted based on the number of points received.

Operational need	Voter #1	Voter #2	Voter #3	TOTAL:
Need #1	100	25	10	135
Need #2	0	25	30	55
Need #3	0	25	10	35
Need #4	0	25	50	75
TOTAL:	100	100	100	

Table 2 - 100 points prioritisation method illustrative example

The result of this final filtering of the list of prioritised BRs will become the (new) tools development roadmap of the Tools4LEAs project and it will be communicated to all EACTDA members so that they can present their new software tool development project proposals.

The EUAB participates, and has veto right, in the requirements and in the tools development roadmap definition, to ensure that the whole process is end-user driven and aligned with end-user needs and priorities. In addition, the EUAB also participates in the evaluation of the tools once these have been fully-tested and considered to be ready to be evaluated by the end-users. For this, the EUAB leverages on pre-existing end-user networks to ensure that the needs of all European end-users are considered and that those interested can participate in the project activities.

3. EUAB activities

3.1. EUAB meetings

There has been one formal (official) EUAB meeting during the first year of the Tools4LEAs v2 project and it took place during the Lisbon Tools4LEAs event in March 2024.

The main topics discussed are seen from the agenda below:

- Status of New Tool Development Roadmap
- Tools4LEAs EUAB activities:
 - EUAB meetings: decide about the next venue
 - Support&Maintenance Pilot: hackathons, early adopters
 - EUAB ToR
- Next prioritisation exercise & Domain Experts
- Malta Police Gap Analysis Experts
- CYBERSPACE project Hackathon: volunteer Jury member
- Feedback from the members on the most important issues

24 EUAB members, their colleagues and some public security practitioners from the jurisdiction sector attended the meeting.

The main outcomes of the meeting was the decision of classifying the items of the prioritisation catalogue according to the cybercrime area, adding an explanatory sentence to the ToR description of the voting methodology and providing more time to the end users for the evaluation of the Tools4LEAs finalised tools.

3.2. EUAB prioritisation activities

There have been two prioritisation exercises conducted by the EUAB in the first year of the Tools4LEAs v2 project, both took place online.

The prioritisation exercises have been done following the techniques and procedures defined in the Terms-of-Reference of the Board.

3.2.1. November 2023 prioritisation exercise

There were 33 items on the prioritisation/voting sheet, 5 deriving from the top-down approach and 28 from the bottom-up approach. 7 items were newly added (were offered to the Tools4LEAs between the previous prioritisation exercise and the current one); 1 from the top-down and 6 from the bottom-up approach. The technology providers of the newly added pre-existing tools were invited to present their offered technologies briefly and the EUAB members had an opportunity to ask questions. 14 EUAB members casted their vote and 6 prioritised items became Tools4LEAs new tool development projects.

3.2.2. April 2024 prioritisation exercise

There were 21 items on the prioritisation/voting sheet, 4 deriving from the top-down approach and 17 from the bottom-up approach. 7 items were newly added (were offered to the Tools4LEAs between the previous prioritisation exercise and the current one) and all derived from the bottom-up approach. 2 items were already further developed under the Tools4LEAs v1 project and were offered again with some suggestions for significant improvements.

The technology providers of the newly added pre-existing tools were invited to present their offered technologies briefly and the EUAB members had an opportunity to ask questions.

9 EUAB members casted their vote and 7 prioritised items became or will become Tools4LEAs new tool development projects.

3.3. Other EUAB activities

Two of the prioritised items from the past exercises did not enter the tool development procedure due to lack of resources on the technology providers' side. They informed us that they have sufficient staff members and time to further development the technologies, however, it is unclear in what direction should the developments of these two tools head. Therefore, we organised a brief meeting with the technology providers, where they would present the assets and the issues again. All the EUAB members were invited and we have obtained some important feedback.

In addition, there have been multiple coordination and tracking meetings between the co-Chairs of the EUAB and its Secretary. In this other type of meetings, the Business Manager of EACTDA and Capability Manager of the Tools4LEAs project has also participated.

4. Summary

4.1. Conclusion

This document presents the structure and the activities performed by the EUAB during the first year of the Tools4LEAs v2 project.

The role of the board is key in the success of the Tools4LEAs project, as it is the sole source of information with regard to the inputs needed by the Capability Manager to produce, validate, and prioritise the end-user need fiches, which are translated into business requirements, which are then mapped to the new (software) tools development requirements of the project. Besides, their votes in the decision making/prioritisation process of the Catalogue of pre-existing tools and its thorough review are essential and map to the new business requirements that form the technological roadmap.

The EUAB also provides/suggests domain experts, individuals from the end user community that wish to engage more actively with specific new tool development projects, depending on their area of expertise and interest. They conduct the evaluation of the incoming technology, participate in the project implementation in case end user opinion is sought and conduct the UATs. The EUAB members themselves or their colleagues can become domain experts and also other end user communities are invited.

4.2. Evaluation

The EUAB has played, as mentioned before, the key role in the Tools4LEAs further development projects processes since its setup at the beginning of the Tools4LEAs v1 project. Its operation has been successful, the input essential for the project implementation and its technological roadmap. The majority of the members is very active and the consultations we have had with the Co-Chairs have always provided significant insight for the project.

4.3. Future work

The board representatives come from 14 different EU member states and one of the board's goals is to include representatives of European public security practitioners that have not joined yet. There is no restriction to the number of full members of the board, however, each country has only one vote in the board's decision-making process.

An additional goal of the board in the future will be to provide more information regarding the existing technologies that might be useful for the end user community fighting cybercrime, point the Capability Manager to the research projects of interest for the community and provide more end user needs. A more active engagement with review of the Catalogue of pre-existing tools is going to be sought and appreciated; one of the options of a continuous – parallel work with the Catalogue of pre-existing assets is also narrowing down the scope of the tools in the Catalogue and with that, a more focused engagement with tools from a particular area. That can only be done with input from EUAB members.

There are many board activities that might be implemented in the future work. The role of the board, its members and the operational procedures that are used, have evolved during the execution of the Tools4LEAs project and will continue evolving.