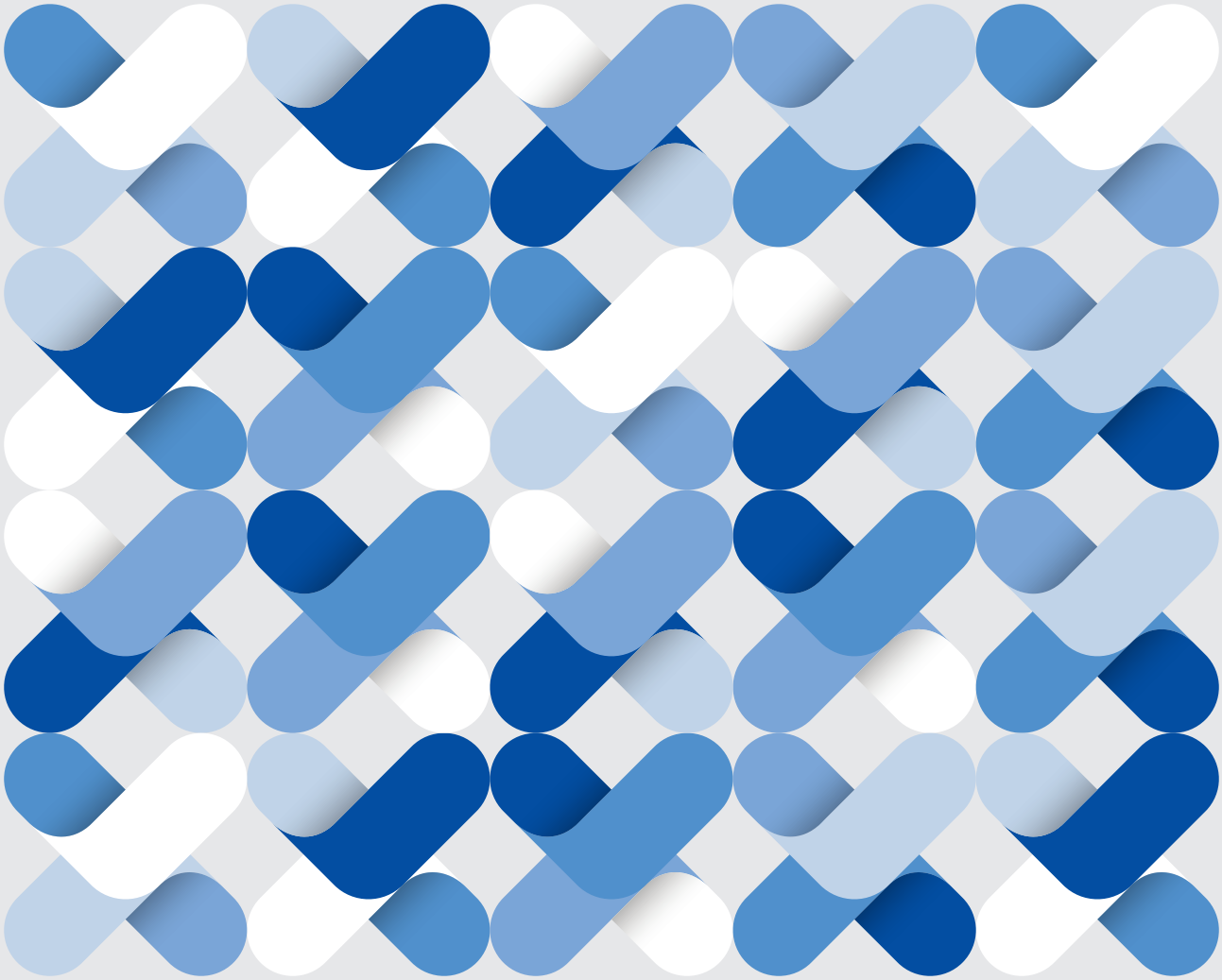
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Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute

MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

HUNGARY



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While this publication was funded by the European Union, its contents are the sole responsibility of UNICRI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Acknowledgements

This guide was produced with the generous financial support of the European Union, through the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA), within the framework of the project "*Transparency Now: Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts in the EU Southern Neighbourhood*."

UNICRI expresses its sincere gratitude to the European Union, the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN) Secretariat and the relevant national authorities, in particular the Office of the Prosecutor General - Department of Priority and Corruption Cases, for their valuable support and guidance throughout the development of this guide.

The guide was developed by Elsa Jarkhedian under the guidance of James Shaw, Senior Legal Officer at UNICRI, with special appreciation extended to Giulia Traverso for her technical support.

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Overview

This guide provides practical guidance on the preparation and execution of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) requests to Hungary in criminal matters. It is intended to help practitioners from non-EU countries identify relevant information and adapt it to the specific needs of each request.

It is not a standardized template.

Important Note on Early Coordination and Informal Contact

Before submitting a formal MLA request, it is considered good practice for the Requesting State to engage in early coordination. Preliminary contact can help identify the appropriate competent authorities, clarify jurisdictional links, refine investigative leads, and ensure that the scope of the request is targeted and proportionate before formal transmission.

Early coordination may take place through central authorities, cooperation networks – such as the Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN) – and technical-support organizations, depending on the nature of the case and the assistance sought.

Type of Contact	Purpose	Examples
Central Authorities	Clarify procedural requirements, applicable legal bases, competent authorities, and formal MLA expectations.	Ministry of Justice or The Office of the Prosecutor General
Cooperation Networks	Verify information, refine leads, trace or identify assets, and facilitate informal contact.	CARIN, Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), INTERPOL
Technical and Advisory Organizations	Provide expertise, training, and practical assistance in structuring or refining MLA requests, and to facilitate cross-border practitioner dialogue.	UNICRI, International Centre for Asset Recovery (ICAR), Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR)

Kindly note that these channels do not replace formal MLA procedures. They support early clarification and preparation and may improve the quality and effectiveness of the requests.

The sections below outline the legal basis, formal requirements, and practical steps relevant to MLA requests to Hungary, providing guidance on how such requests are prepared, transmitted, and executed in practice.

I. Legal Basis for MLA Requests to Hungary

In Hungary, MLA requests may be submitted under the following frameworks:

- **Multilateral Conventions:** such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) Article 46, or the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) Article 18.[1]

Note: UNCAC applies to the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of corruption offences, including bribery, embezzlement, abuse of functions, illicit enrichment, and related asset recovery measures.

UNTOC applies to serious transnational offences involving an organized criminal group, including money laundering, and other forms of organized crime.

- **Bilateral MLA Treaties:** if in force between Hungary and the Requesting State.[2]
- **Domestic Law:** Act XXXVIII of 1996 on International Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters which is the general legal framework for MLA and the Hungarian Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) which governs procedural measures taken within Hungary when executing foreign requests such as searches or seizures.[3]

Note: Hungarian domestic law governs the execution of MLA requests by Hungarian authorities. However, the Requesting State should not cite Hungarian domestic legislation as the legal basis of its request. The request should instead refer only to the applicable multilateral or bilateral treaty, or, where no treaty exists, to reciprocity.

- **Reciprocity:** Hungary may execute MLA requests on the basis of reciprocity when no treaty exists, provided the requesting State explicitly assures reciprocal cooperation. Assistance must not conflict with Hungary's sovereignty, security, or fundamental legal principles, and where coercive measures are requested, dual criminality is required.[4]

Draft example (legal basis section of the MLA request):

- If both States are Parties to the UNCAC or the UNTOC:

This request is made pursuant to Article 46 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), to which both Hungary and [Requesting State] are parties.

OR

This request is made pursuant to Article 18 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), to which both Hungary and [Requesting State] are parties.

- If a bilateral or multilateral treaty exists:

This request is made in accordance with [relevant article] within [relevant bilateral/ multilateral treaty].

- If no bilateral or multilateral treaty exists:

In the absence of a bilateral or multilateral treaty, this request is made on the basis of reciprocity. We hereby provide an explicit assurance of reciprocal cooperation.

Note: For requests involving asset freezing, confiscation, or return, the Requesting State should also cite Article 55 UNCAC in addition to Article 46, as it specifically governs cooperation for confiscation and asset recovery.

Depending on the facts of the case, MLA requests may rely on both the UNCAC and the UNTOC, in particular where corruption offences are linked to money laundering or other forms of organized criminal activity.

II. Formal Requirements for Submitting an MLA Request to Hungary

An MLA request to Hungary must comply with specific formal requirements in order to be accepted and efficiently processed. The key elements are outlined below:

Criminal Nature and Admissibility of Confiscation Orders

Hungary acts on MLA requests when they relate to a criminal matter. The underlying conduct must constitute a criminal offence under both the law of the Requesting State and Hungarian law, consistent with the principle of dual criminality.[5]

Hungary operates primarily a conviction-based confiscation system. Confiscation is generally ordered within criminal proceedings and requires a link between the assets and a specific criminal offence.[6] Hungarian law permits confiscation in certain situations without a final conviction, for example where criminal proceedings cannot be completed due to the death or absence of the suspect. However, such measures remain embedded in criminal proceedings, require judicial determination, and are not equivalent to a standalone non-conviction-based confiscation regime.

In the context of MLA, Hungary may execute foreign confiscation measures where they are criminal in nature, issued by a competent judicial authority, and satisfy the applicable conditions under Act XXXVIII of 1996, including dual criminality, respect for defence rights, and compatibility with Hungarian law.[7] Where the foreign conviction or confiscation order was issued in absentia, Hungarian authorities may assess whether the rights of defence were respected during the foreign proceedings or whether the person concerned has the possibility of obtaining a retrial or review of the decision, consistent with the requirements of Hungarian law and applicable fair-trial standards.[8]

Central Authority

MLA requests involving freezing, seizure, recognition or enforcement of foreign confiscation orders, or the return and disposal of assets are generally transmitted to and processed by the Ministry of Justice, which acts as the central authority for measures requiring judicial execution.[9]

The Office of the Prosecutor General may also receive or transmit requests in cases where the request concerns investigative acts falling within prosecutorial competence in an ongoing criminal proceeding, in accordance with applicable treaties or cooperation arrangements.[10]

Transmission Channels

When made under a treaty, the transmission method specified must be followed. Multilateral conventions, including the UNCAC and UNTOC, establish central authorities as the primary channel for the transmission of MLA requests.11 Where no treaty exists, requests must be transmitted via diplomatic channels, typically through embassies or foreign ministries.[12]

Official Language

Under Act XXXVIII of 1996, a Hungarian translation of an MLA request or its annexes may be required only if the Requesting State does not accept requests of the same type submitted in Hungarian. This makes translation into Hungarian a reciprocity-based approach, not a general obligation. Where a treaty authorizes the use of another language, Hungary follows the language provisions of the treaty. Although a Hungarian translation is not always mandatory, providing one, in practice, often can avoid delays, especially where the content must be examined in detail for execution.[13]

Note: The Requesting State should always verify the applicable language requirements under the relevant treaty or domestic provisions before transmission to avoid delays.

Official Form

An MLA request to Hungary must be submitted as a formal written request. Hungary does not prescribe a standardized form or template, but the request must be prepared in writing and contain the information required for execution by the competent Hungarian authorities.[14] The request should be issued on the official letterhead of the competent authority of the Requesting State, and it should be dated and signed to ensure authenticity and traceability. These formalities reflect standard MLA practice.[15]

To enhance clarity and efficiency, requests should be clearly structured and bear the issuing authority's official seal where available. Where multiple copies are submitted, it is good practice for at least one copy to bear an original signature. Notarization or legalization is not generally required, unless expressly provided for in an applicable treaty.[16]

III. Key Content Requirements

The MLA request must include the following:

Description of the Case

The request should include a clear and detailed summary of the facts under investigation, including relevant dates, locations, individuals or entities involved, and the nature of the suspected offence. The request must explain the factual connection to Hungary, such as the location of assets, banking activity, communications data, or other links relevant to the investigative measures sought. This information enables Hungarian authorities to verify that the matter relates to criminal conduct and to assess dual criminality when required.[17]

Legal Provisions

The Requesting State should clearly describe the offences under investigation, citing the relevant statutory provisions and legal definitions under its own law. Providing these provisions helps Hungarian authorities assess the legal basis of the case and confirm that the conduct described is criminal under the law of the Requesting State. This information is also essential for Hungary to assess dual criminality, which is required for coercive measures.[18]

For this reason, before submitting the request, it is recommended that the Requesting State reviews the relevant Hungarian offence categories to ensure that the described conduct can satisfy the dual-criminality requirement. Where the foreign offence does not have an exact equivalent under Hungarian law, the Requesting State should describe the underlying conduct in neutral factual terms, enabling Hungarian authorities to identify the closest corresponding domestic offence.[19]

Note: Where appropriate, the Requesting State should strongly consider discussing the case with an official in the Hungarian central authority to anticipate and address potential dual-criminality issues before submitting the request.

Purpose and Object of the Request

The Requesting State should clearly indicate what measures are being sought from Hungary, such as:[20]

- Identification of assets (bank accounts, real estate, companies in which a defendant may be a beneficial owner)
- Freezing or seizure of assets
- Gathering of evidence (bank records, property deeds, corporate documents)
- Conducting searches or seizures of evidence
- Enforcement of a foreign confiscation order
- Taking of witness statements
- Return of assets post-confiscation

If the connection to Hungary has not yet been fully established but reasonable grounds or clear suspicions exist, the Requesting State may seek assistance to clarify specific leads, for example, identification of assets or targeted inquiries. Such requests must present a factual basis sufficient to demonstrate necessity and must avoid overly broad or speculative requests.[21]

Note: While a single MLA request to Hungary can include multiple investigative or provisional measures (e.g. asset tracing, provisional freezing, evidence collection), confiscation and asset return generally require a second request once a final order is obtained. Early consultation with Hungarian authorities is strongly recommended to structure MLA requests accordingly.

Supporting Documentation (with certified or officially translated versions where possible)

An MLA request to Hungary should be accompanied by supporting documentation to ensure it can be executed effectively. Attachments may include:[22]

- **A certified copy of any freezing or confiscation order** issued by a competent authority of the Requesting State. While Act XXXVIII of 1996 does not explicitly require foreign orders to be attached, Hungary generally needs the relevant decision when coercive measures are sought, consistent with international practice. Providing a certified copy is considered good practice. Where no order exists, it is useful to indicate whether one can be issued.
- **Evidence linking assets to the offence**, such as bank records or company ownership documents, can reinforce the request. These materials are not legally mandatory, but international best practice encourages including them to strengthen the factual basis, support the assessment of necessity and proportionality, and facilitate dual-criminality review.
- **Copies of the relevant legal provisions from the Requesting State**, such as the penal code sections for the offences or confiscation law provisions.
- **Witness statement or investigator affidavits** summarizing key facts, particularly asset-related information, could also be useful.

Note: Notwithstanding the above, it is generally not good practice to send an entire case file to a Requested State, as this can serve to inundate authorities with too much information. Supporting documentation should therefore be limited to materials that are necessary and relevant to the specific assistance sought.

Early Measures and Urgency

In urgent cases, Hungarian authorities may take provisional measures to preserve evidence or prevent the dissipation of assets when an MLA request is received, provided the request includes sufficient factual basis and meets the legal requirements for coercive measures.[23]

Where coercive measures are requested, such as search or seizure of assets, these are subject to the procedural framework set out in the Criminal Procedure Law. Certain intrusive measures require prior judicial authorization, while others may be ordered by the competent authority and are subject to subsequent judicial review. In urgent situations, measures may be taken to prevent the loss of evidence or dissipation of assets, subject to applicable judicial safeguards and review mechanisms.[24]

Hungarian authorities may carry out urgent investigative measures, such as securing documents, conducting searches, or collecting evidence, when authorized under the CPL and subject to applicable procedural safeguards. These measures may be carried out rapidly when delay could compromise the investigation.[25]

For asset-related provisional measures, Hungary may apply the mechanisms foreseen in the UNCAC, including taking urgent steps to freeze or seize assets upon request, provided the conditions of Hungarian law, including dual criminality, are satisfied.[26]

Hungary may spontaneously share information about assets or criminal proceeds under UNCAC Article 56 and, in organized crime cases, under UNTOC Article 18(4).[27]
An advance copy of the MLA request may be shared informally with the competent Hungarian authority for preliminary coordination.[28]

Note: Such advance communication has no legal effect but can help identify requirements, clarify urgency, and accelerate execution once the formal request is received.

International cooperation networks such as INTERPOL,[29] CARIN,[30] as well as FIU-to-FIU contact through the Egmont Group, can support preliminary discussion and information exchange.[31] Another non-coercive tracing tool is the INTERPOL Silver Notice, introduced in 2025 to help identify assets linked to corruption, fraud, or money-laundering cases. While these mechanisms do not replace formal MLA requests, they can prompt targeted tracing and follow-up through MLA or FIU channels.

Note: Early coordination with Hungarian authorities can help clarify requirements and strengthen MLA requests. In cases involving assets at risk, urgency should be highlighted to allow Hungarian authorities to timely seek preservation or seizure orders under domestic law.

IV. Execution of the MLA Request in Hungary

MLA requests received in Hungary are generally administered as follows:

Reception and Preliminary Review

Upon receipt, the central authority conducts a preliminary review to verify that the request concerns a criminal matter, relies on an acceptable legal basis, and complies with the formal requirements of Act XXXVIII of 1996.[32] The central authority also verifies whether the request contains the necessary factual and legal information and whether a Hungarian translation is provided where and if required. If essential elements are missing, the authorities may seek clarification or request additional documentation before execution.[33]

Once the request is considered complete, it is transmitted to the competent authority, which executes the measures in accordance with Act XXXVIII of 1996 and the CPL.[34]

Judicial Procedure and Legal Assessment

Requests for MLA are executed in Hungary primarily under Act XXXVIII of 1996, the CPL, and any applicable treaty to which Hungary is a party.[35] After the central authority forwards the request to the competent authorities, execution normally proceeds as follows:[36]

- The competent public prosecutor supervises and coordinates the execution of the request, while the relevant investigating authorities carry out the necessary investigative steps. This may include collecting documents, taking witness statements, obtaining information from public registries or financial institutions, and preparing applications for judicial authorization where required.
- The competent court becomes involved whenever the request concerns a coercive measure. Judicial authorization or subsequent judicial review is required for such measures under Hungarian criminal law.

For coercive measures, the court assesses whether the statutory conditions are met, including:[37]

- Dual criminality
- Sufficient factual indications
- Respect for rights of defence and third parties

Note: Hungarian authorities do not reassess the foreign facts or re-litigate the case.[38]

Recognition, Enforcement, and Remedies

Where the legal conditions are met, Hungarian authorities may recognize and execute a foreign freezing, seizure, or confiscation order under Act XXXVIII of 1996. Execution is carried out only to the extent permitted under Hungarian law and subject to verification that the statutory conditions for recognition and enforcement are satisfied.[39]

The requested measure is carried out by the competent public prosecutor or court, depending on the nature of the measure and the applicable procedural rules under the CPL. Where the request involves coercive measures, judicial authorization or judicial review is required and Hungarian authorities must apply domestic procedural safeguards when executing the foreign order.[40]

Affected persons, including third parties with a legitimate interest, may seek judicial remedies under Hungarian criminal procedure. Courts must ensure the protection of defence rights and third-party interests in accordance with Hungarian law.[41]

Note: The Requesting State is strongly encouraged to maintain close communication with Hungarian authorities during the execution phase, particularly where clarifications or supplementary information may be required.

Asset Management

When Hungary seizes or freezes assets in response to an MLA request, their handling follows the CPL and the applicable provisions of Act XXXVIII of 1996. Competent judicial authority orders the measure, while the physical custody and safeguarding of seized assets are carried out by the investigating authority or by a court-appointed custodian in accordance with the CPL.[42]

Seized or frozen assets must be secured and preserved to maintain evidentiary integrity and economic value. Movable property is placed in official custody, while bank accounts and financial instruments are frozen once the financial institution is notified of the order, and the bank must keep the assets blocked until the freeze is lifted or a final confiscation order is recognized or issued.[43]

If assets are perishable or risk losing value, the CPL allows for their sale or other value-preserving measures. The proceeds are kept in custody until a final decision is made regarding confiscation or return.[44]

Follow-Up and Communication

Hungarian authorities typically coordinate and respond through the designated central authority. During execution, communications may also be made directly by the competent authorities responsible for carrying out the requested measure, depending on applicable treaties. Hungarian authorities may:[45]

- Provide updates or court orders
- Request clarifications or additional information
- Expect prompt follow-up to avoid delays

Note: Engaging proactively with the designated focal point in Hungary could improve efficiency.

V. Transmission of Evidence to the Requesting State

Once the requested measures have been executed, the competent Hungarian authority transmits the collected evidence to the Requesting State.[46]

Judicial Transmission

Evidence and case documents generated during execution are first retained by the competent authority that carried out the measures. Under Act XXXVIII of 1996, evidentiary material is normally transmitted abroad, through the designated central authority. The executing competent authority therefore forwards the material to the central authority, which then arranges the formal transmission to the Requesting State through the channel provided in the applicable treaty or, where no treaty governs the request, through the appropriate official channel.[47]

Upon receiving the evidence, the Requesting State should verify that everything requested is included and, if needed, request additional follow up.

Another important aspect is the authentication of evidence. If the Requesting State requires the evidence to be certified or accompanied by an affidavit to be admissible in court, it should be specified in the MLA request.

Use Restrictions

Hungary applies the use-limitation conditions in line with UNCAC and UNTOC. Evidence may only be used for the purposes stated in the MLA request. Any secondary use, for example, in another proceeding or shared with third parties, requires Hungary's prior consent.[48]

Note: It is advisable to specify in the MLA request the intended use in the request to mitigate any concerns of possible misuse.[49]

VI. Confidentiality and Proportionality

The Requesting State may ask Hungary to treat the MLA request confidentially, particularly where early disclosure could jeopardize an investigation, facilitate asset flight, or lead to evidence being destroyed. Measures sought must be proportionate and should not unduly affect third parties.

Proportionality and Public Order

Hungary executes MLA requests in accordance with the CPL and Act XXXVIII of 1996, which require that coercive measures requested through MLA comply with the same safeguards that apply in domestic criminal cases. Judicial authorities must be satisfied that the measure has a proper legal basis, is supported by adequate factual grounds, and respects defence rights and the rights of third parties.[50]

Under Act XXXVIII of 1996, Hungary may decline assistance where execution would violate public order, sovereignty, security, or the fundamental principles of Hungarian law. Assistance may also be refused where the request concerns a political or military offence, where dual criminality is not met for coercive measures, or where execution would raise concerns regarding due process, fair-trial guarantees, or the protection of bona fide third-party rights. Hungarian authorities may request clarification where the requested measure appears insufficiently justified or risks infringing protected rights.[51]

In politically sensitive matters, the Requesting State should confirm that the case is a bona fide criminal proceeding.[52]

Confidential Handling of Requests

Requesting States may ask Hungary to treat an MLA request and its contents confidentially where disclosure could compromise an investigation or enable asset dissipation. Under multilateral treaties, Hungary is required to maintain the confidentiality of MLA requests, their contents, and supporting documents unless disclosure is necessary for execution.[53]

During execution, confidentiality is reinforced by the CPL, which protects the secrecy of ongoing investigative measures and restricts access to case information. Limited disclosure may be required to obtain judicial authorization, notify a financial institution in order to implement a freezing measure, or comply with procedural rights under Hungarian law.[54] Once transmitted, the Requesting State is also required to maintain the same level of confidentiality.[55]

VII. Asset Disposal and Return

Under UNCAC, the return and disposal of confiscated assets is a core principle of international cooperation. Hungary gives effect to international cooperation obligations, including those in UNCAC, through Act XXXVIII of 1996 and domestic criminal procedure rules.[56]

Once a confiscation order is final, Hungary may dispose of or return the assets in accordance with its domestic law and the relevant treaty framework, including UNCAC or arrangements based on reciprocity.[57]

Any return takes place only after completion of all judicial proceedings and available remedies, and Hungarian authorities must ensure compliance with domestic safeguards, including respect for defence rights and protection of *bona fide* third parties.[58]

Where assets are to be transferred to the Requesting State, Hungary's central authorities coordinate the process in accordance with Act XXXVIII of 1996 and the applicable treaty or reciprocity framework, which determines the conditions of return.[59]

Note: The UNCAC encourages pre-request consultations regarding the possible sharing of assets.[60]

To facilitate asset return and build trust, it is advisable for the Requesting State to include in the MLA request a brief explanation of how the returned assets would be managed or monitored. This may include victim compensation or specified public projects. It is also good practice to indicate transparency and oversight measures that would be put in place, for example, through the involvement of an independent civil society organization.[61]

In practice, some Requested States are cautious about returning the confiscated assets to the Requesting State fearing that the funds could be misused after repatriation. Highlighting how returned assets will be handled in a transparent manner aligns with international best practices for asset recovery, can help streamline cooperation and avoid delays.[62]

Annex

I. MLA Checklist

1. Preliminary Consultation

- ☐ Identify focal point(s) in Hungary and hold preliminary discussion about case, including intention to submit an MLA request – ask focal point for what Hungary may need to see included in any MLA request.
- ☐ Confirm the appropriate transmission channel for the MLA request.
- ☐ Clarify formal requirements, including format, certifications, and supporting documentation.
- ☐ Confirm any specific requirements for coercive measures (e.g., freezing, seizure, searches).
- ☐ Identify any potential grounds for refusal under the Requested State's law.
- ☐ Where relevant, clarify the legal and procedural framework governing the return or disposal of assets.

2. Legal Basis

- ☐ Identify the applicable legal basis for the request (bilateral treaty, multilateral convention, or reciprocity).

3. Central Authorities

- ☐ Identify the competent central authority of the Requested State responsible for receiving MLA requests.

4. Official Language and Translations

- ☐ Confirm the language requirements of the Requested State.
- ☐ Attach required translations of the request and supporting documents where applicable.

5. Scope of Assistance Requested

- ☐ Identification of assets (bank accounts, real estate, companies)

- ☐ Investigative measures requested, such as:

  - ▶ Gathering of evidence (bank records, property deeds, corporate documents)
  - ▶ Taking of witness statements
  - ▶ Conducting searches or seizures

☐ Asset-related measures requested, such as:

- Freezing or seizure of assets
- Enforcement of a foreign confiscation order
- Return of assets following confiscation

6. Description of the Case

☐ Provide a clear, concise summary of the relevant facts of the case.
☐ Explain the link between the facts of the case and the assistance requested.

7. Offences and Legal Qualification

☐ Describe the offences in factual terms.
☐ Identify the relevant legal provisions, where appropriate.
☐ Address dual criminality requirements, where applicable.

8. Confidentiality and Proportionality

☐ Clearly state the purpose of the request.
☐ Explain why the requested measures are necessary and proportionate.
☐ Request confidential handling of the request, where necessary to protect the investigation.

9. Asset-Related Requests (if applicable)

☐ Clearly identify and, to the extent possible, locate the assets concerned.
☐ Explain the link between the assets and the offence.
☐ Indicate the status of confiscation proceedings (e.g., final confiscation order issued or pending).
☐ Include a request for asset seizure, confiscation and/or, when appropriate (if needed in a subsequent request), return of the assets.

10. Supporting Documentation

☐ Attach relevant supporting documents, such as court orders, warrants, judgments, or evidence summaries required for the execution of the request.

II. Offences Recognized by Hungarian Law, and Which are Often Linked to the Issue of Asset Recovery[63]

Corruption and Bribery
Embezzlement, Misappropriation, Breach of Fiduciary Duty
Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing
Fraud and Deception Offences
Economic and Property Crimes
Organized Crime and Participation in Criminal Groups
Counterfeiting and Intellectual Property Offences
Property and Economic Crimes
Tax and Customs Offences

III. Template:

While no national template is provided, Hungary adheres to international practice. Requesting States may use widely accepted MLA templates, such as the Basel Institute's, to ensure completeness.

It is recommended to consult the relevant central authority.

IV. Contacts:

Hungary:

Ministry of Justice
info@kim.gov.hu

Prosecutor General's Office
info@mku.hu

Other useful contact email addresses:

Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN)
carin@europol.europa.eu

International Centre for Asset Recovery (ICAR)
info@baselgovernance.org

INTERPOL
To contact INTERPOL, complete the form available here.

Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR)
starinitiative@worldbank.org

United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
unicri.assetrecovery@un.org

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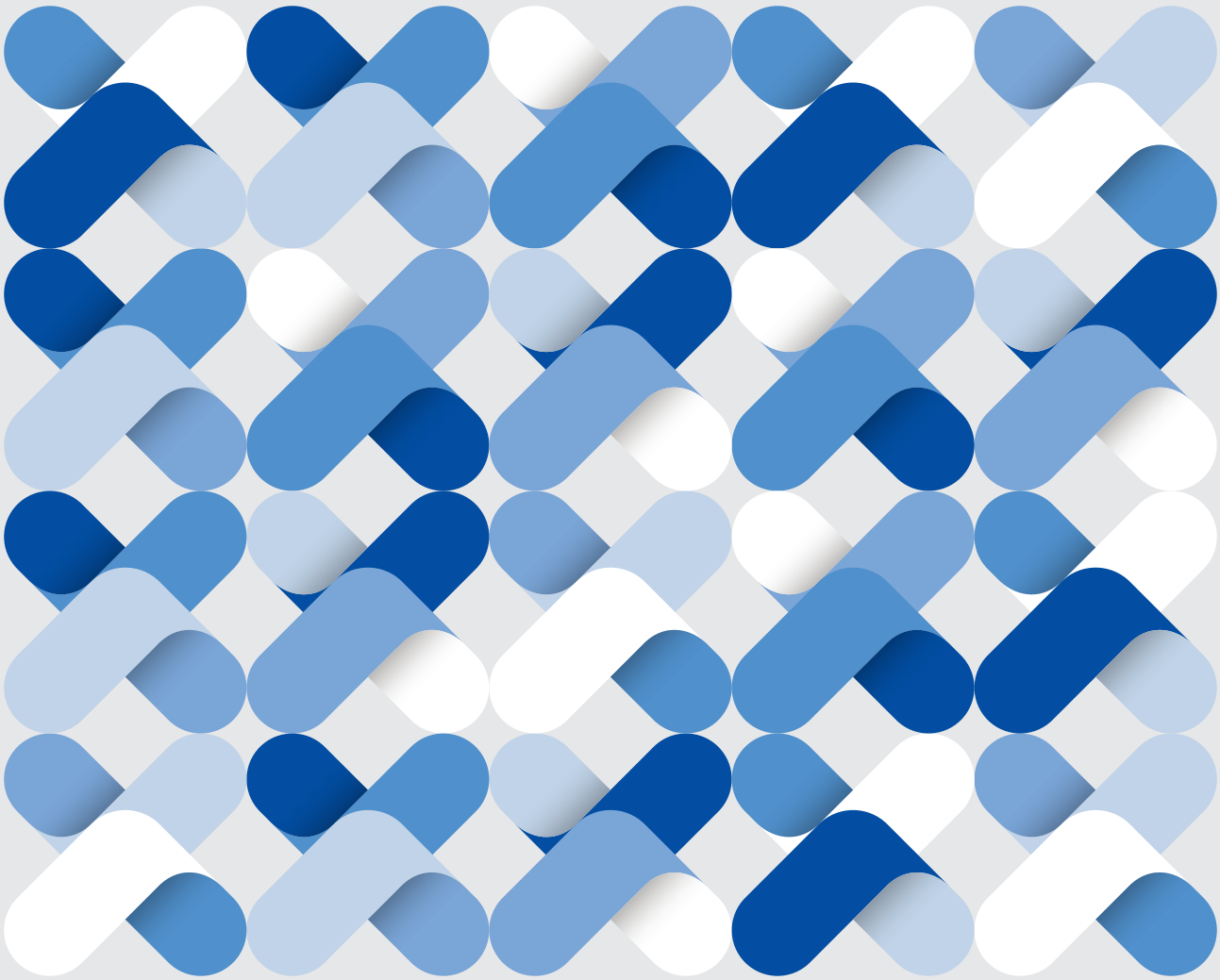
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