

EUROPEAN MIGRANT SMUGGLING CENTRE - EMSC

Tackling the organised criminal groups profiting from migrant smuggling

ABOUT EMSC UPDATES

The EMSC was [established in early 2016](#) following a period of highly dynamic irregular migration, with vulnerable migrants travelling largely unrestricted in sizeable groups across the Mediterranean Sea, external land borders and further on, into Europe towards their desired destination countries.

Europol established that many migrants had their journey [facilitated by a criminal organisation](#), at least for the initial sea-journey into Europe. These facilitation services often took the shape of a risky sea crossing in a completely unsuitable and overcrowded vessel. Migrant smuggling quickly evolved into a very lucrative form of criminal enterprise, which circumvents and abuses sea border countermeasures deployed in solidarity by EU Member States and Agencies.

Tackling this multi-billion-euro trade thus became an essential part of the EU's response to the migrant crisis. Indeed, the EU's [Agenda on Migration](#) (2015) identifies the fight against migrant smuggling as a key priority.

Supporting police and border authorities to coordinate highly complex cross-border anti-smuggling operations therefore became the primary objective of the EMSC, which brought together some of the best investigators in Europe. The EMSC closely cooperates with its partner EU Agencies dealing with judicial cooperation ([Eurojust](#)) and border management ([Frontex](#)).

SCORING SUCCESSES

Building on the experience and expertise that Europol has gained over the last decade or so in supporting cross-border investigations in related crime areas, the EMSC achieved considerable progress in its first year of operation.

In 2016, it received almost 12 000 messages via Europol's SIENA secure communication network – a 34 % increase when compared to 2015. The operational messages contained data on over 17 400 migrant smuggling suspects and helped launch over 2000 bi- and multilateral cases, including over 490 investigations into identity fraud, an area that received special attention in 2016 and which is expected to further shape the future work of the EMSC.

In their first year, the 45 EMSC specialists and analysts also worked extensively on

- › document and identity fraud
- › e-smuggling (migrant smuggling content in social media)
- › financial investigations and recovery of criminal assets.

The centre incorporates the Joint Operational Team (JOT) Mare, which is made up of specialists seconded from seven Member States. These Member States exchange vital information in real time to disrupt smuggling networks operating from Turkey, as well as from Libya and other North African countries.

Expanding on the activities of JOT Mare, the EMSC provides:

- › tailored analytical products;
- › leads on the activities of organised crime groups;
- › facilities for cross-checking the data in various Europol databases;
- › forensic and technical support;
- › other expertise.

Among the key products that EMSC can offer its law enforcement partners are:

- › a list of vessels of interest
- › investigation initiation documents
- › intelligence notifications on new trends and on links with other crime areas
- › early warning notifications.

Acting as an information hub, the EMSC supports the EU Regional Task Force offices in Italy and Greece, which assist national authorities in the following areas:

- › identification

- › asylum support
- › intelligence sharing
- › criminal investigations
- › the prosecution of criminal people-smuggling networks.

The EMSC also provides enhanced operational and strategic support to EU Member States, including through the deployment of investigation support teams and analytical support teams.

The goal of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) is to support EU Member States in targeting and dismantling the complex and sophisticated criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling.

CRIME AREAS
GENERAL TERMS

[Facilitation of Illegal Immigration](#)
[Law Enforcement](#)

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