

The global extent of their criminal operations ensures that Italian organised crime groups are among the most threatening in Europe.

The three main Italian mafia-style groups – the Cosa Nostra, Camorra and Ndrangheta – operate worldwide but keep a very low profile outside of Italy, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to detect these organised crime groups.

The power the Italian mafias have resides in their control and exploitation of territory and community. The concepts of family, power, respect and territory are fundamental to understanding the dynamics of the mafias. They are capable of manipulating elections and installing their people in administrative positions even in places far from the territories they control.

Money laundering and large-scale drug trafficking are the criminal focus of these groups. However, they are also involved in corruption, currency and goods counterfeiting, and the trafficking of toxic waste.

IMMENSE ASSETS

Particularly in periods of economic crisis, mafia groups can use their immense assets to easily infiltrate the legitimate economy. For instance, the Calabrian Ndrangheta takes in almost EUR 44 billion a year (2013). These huge sums allow the groups to inject much-needed liquidity into struggling businesses.

No legitimate business can afford to compete with criminal companies that can produce goods and services at a loss as part of a long-term strategy to take over markets. Thus, mafia groups have extended their presence into parts of Italy and Europe not historically affected by organised crime, a development that could have serious negative implications for the EU economy in the long run.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

A 2013 threat assessment on Italian organised crime, which followed two years' work by Europol intelligence analysts, underlined the importance of a pan-European approach and of increased cooperation to tackle these dangerous criminal groups.

The assessment concluded with a series of recommendations for law enforcement authorities and policymakers:

- the identification, targeting and dismantling of the most dangerous mafia families and clans;
- the harmonisation of anti-mafia legislation in the EU, so that mafia membership is criminalised and extradition requests made easier;
- a regional/continental intelligence focus by Member States in implementing their national intelligence cycles in order to avoid important information gaps on organised crime affecting the EU generally.

Europol also set up an operational project, Analysis Project ITOC, dedicated to tackling Italian organised crime groups. The project is fully supported by Italian law enforcement and judicial authorities, who have contributed their in-depth experience in the field. Many other Member States, non-EU countries and organisations such as Eurojust are also involved in the project.

SYNERGIES

In 2016, the Italian Carabinieri, in close cooperation with Europol, arrested in Sicily two leading members of the Ceusi mafia clan, an affiliate of the Cosa Nostra criminal group, for weapons smuggling. Their arrest followed an investigation, coordinated by the local district anti-mafia directorate, that relied on the French National Police, intelligence analysis provided by Europol's Analysis Project Firearms and Italian investigators.

NUMBER OF ITEMS FOUND: 43

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TARGET GROUP



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