Outlaw motorcycle gangs are considered a national threat and a national policing priority in 17 EU Member States and six Europol partner states.

While most members of motorcycle clubs around the world are law abiding, a small percentage are not. Styling themselves “outlaws” or “one-percenter”, they wear a patch on their jackets showing a 1 % sign inside a diamond shape. This means that they belong to an outlaw motorcycle gang, such as the Hells Angels, Bandidos or Outlaws.

Since 2005, there has been steady growth in the membership of such gangs worldwide. In Europe, the number of clubs has more than doubled. The main threat to public safety from outlaw motorcycle gangs stems from their propensity for extreme forms of violence. This includes the use of firearms and explosive devices such as grenades. In general, the use of intimidation and violence is intrinsic to the subculture of outlaw motorcycle gangs and serves to exert control over group members, rival gangs and others, such as victims of extortion.

**PROJECT MONITOR**

To assist its partners more effectively, Europol follows strategic and operational priorities that have included investigating the expansion of outlaw motorcycle gangs into new areas of Europe, their recruitment from the right-wing hooligan scene, and street gangs.

A special Europol project, Analysis Project Monitor, plays a key role in combatting the criminal activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Following a multidisciplinary and horizontal approach, the project focuses on organised crime groups rather than just on the crimes committed by outlaw motorcycle gangs. The project does this by:

- identifying the structures and members of these gangs;
- identifying new phenomena within this subculture and detecting new trends through strategic analysis;
- informing the public and law enforcement about threats;
- supporting partners in policing major biker events such as the HAMC World Run, Harley Davidson Superrally, Bulldog Bash; carrying out other operational activities through the use of Europol’s mobile office;
- organising expert conferences and training courses throughout Europe;
- providing high-level support to law enforcement management, and judicial and government authorities;
- supporting the Europol Platform for Gang Experts.

**INCREASE IN CONVICTIONS**

Europol’s support has resulted in significant successes in Member States and cooperating states. In 2013, for example, there was a marked increase in the number of criminal convictions of members of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

In the same year, Operation Casablanca resulted in the arrest of 25 Hells Angels members in Spain suspected of serious offences across a number of European countries. The two-and-a-half-year investigation, which extended to Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, was supported by Europol and Eurojust.

The gang was suspected of committing assault and attempted murder, trafficking in human beings for prostitution, kidnapping, threats, extortion, drug trafficking illegal possession of firearms, money laundering, fraud, the forgery of documents and corruption.
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