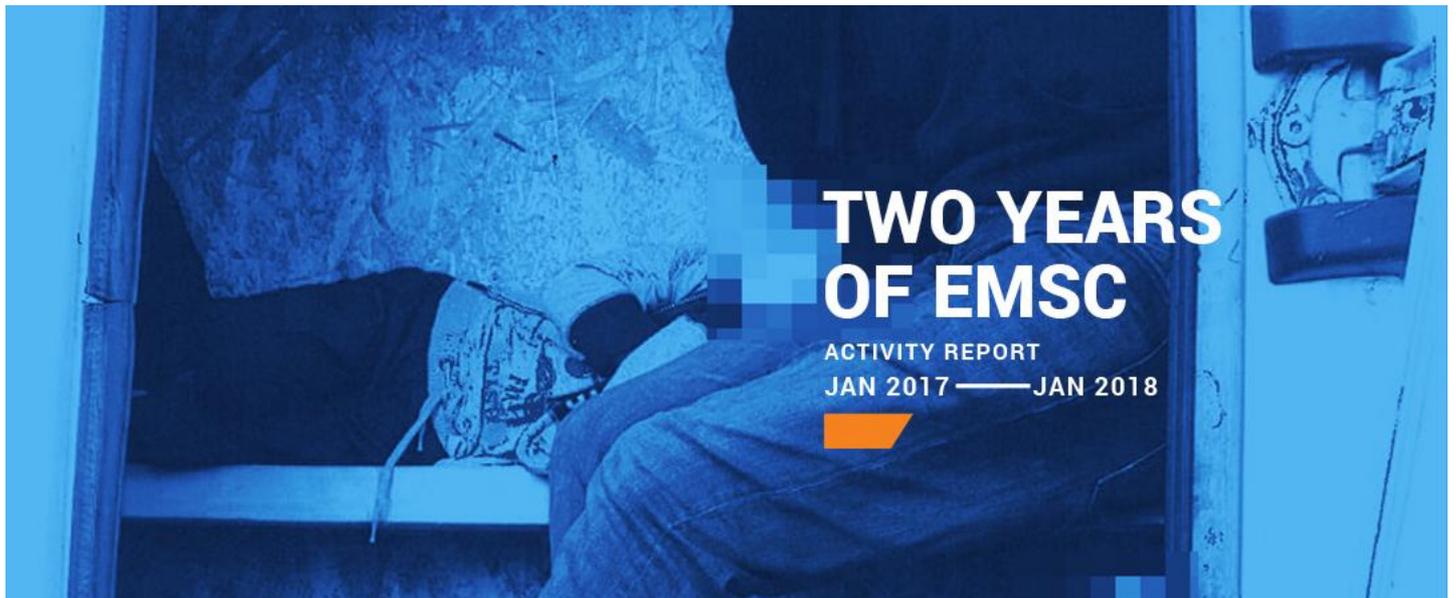


ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MIGRANT SMUGGLING IN THE EU

20 Apr 2018

[Press Release](#)

Despite the significant decrease in the number of irregular migrants arriving in Europe, migrant smuggling remains a profitable and widespread criminal activity for organised crime in the European Union (EU). Europol's two-year activity report from the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) provides a detailed overview of the developments and trends in migrant smuggling. The report was published to mark the Annual Conference of Heads of Migrant Smuggling Units, hosted by Europol in The Hague.



Two years of EMSC. [Download the report.](#)

Since the migration crisis in 2015 the migrant smuggling business has established itself as a large, lucrative criminal market and migrant smuggling continues to represent a highly-profitable business in which criminal syndicates enjoy low risk of detection. The business model of criminals involved in this crime is continuously evolving and responding to the dynamics and the needs of the migratory flows. Many factors, including policy developments, law enforcement activities, as well as budget and travel preferences of irregular migrants, have an impact on the migration routes and modi

operandi used by migrant smugglers. Criminals quickly adapt to changes and show great versatility in the means of transport and technologies they use. They are becoming more and more organised, establishing sophisticated professional networks, operating transnationally from source towards destination countries.

2017 AT A GLANCE

MIGRANT SMUGGLING



12 300
SIENA messages
contributed to AP
Migrant Smuggling



1 700
new cases
initiated



32 005
contributions containing
references to documents



27 075
contributions concerning
suspects



700
contributions containing
social media accounts



27
Action Days
supported by the EMSC



93
high-priority
supported by the EMSC



58
operational meetings
supported by the EMSC



338
operational analytical products
delivered



60
Migrant Smuggling
Monitoring Reports
produced and disseminated



1 240
migrant debriefings
received via the Frontex PeDRA
channel and processed by the EMSC



1 050
vessels of interest
reported to EMSC's Joint
Operational Team (JOT) Mare



1 750
days of deployment
of Europol staff
to EURTFs in Greece and Italy



10 000
days of deployment of
Europol's Guest Officers



45
dedicated
EMSC staff

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS



4 749
SIENA messages
contributed to AP
Phoenix



1 063
new cases
initiated

The head of the [European Migrant Smuggling Centre](#), Robert Crepinko said: *"Migrant smuggling to and within the EU is likely to remain a key criminal threat. In order to fight this crime more effectively, it is important to anticipate the developments of new modi operandi and shifts in the criminal market. Among others, use of advanced technology, especially related to document fraud, increased use of genuine documents by lookalikes, and abuse of visa-free travel, are expected to significantly impact the migrant smuggling landscape in the future."*

Main areas of focus of the EMSC report

- **Document fraud** is a key enabler for migrant smuggling. Fraudulent or fraudulently-obtained documents increasingly provided by smugglers allow irregular migrants to enter and move within the EU, as well as to change from irregular to legalised residence status under false pretences or by using fake identities.
- **Abuse of visa-free travel:** Irregular migrants attempt to enter the EU via non-EU Balkan countries by air, using visa-free travel schemes. Several Balkan countries introduced visa liberalisation for citizens of, among others, China, Guinea Bissau, Iran or Turkey which allows them to enter a country as tourists with the right to stay up to 30 days.
- **Social media** continues to be widely used to advertise smuggling services. Criminals employ various marketing techniques, for example offering discounts for additional migrants, such as family members, or providing entire smuggling packages with fraudulent travel and identity documents.
- **Modi operandi:** Sophisticated and often life-threatening concealment methods are used by criminals to smuggle migrants across borders. Cases of irregular migrants being detected in purpose-built, airtight compartments and even spaces behind engines in vans, lorries, cars and cargo trains are increasingly reported to Europol.
- **Poly-criminality:** The share of the poly-criminal organised crime groups involved in migrant smuggling and other criminal activities is significant. The reason for the high poly-criminality is related to the nature of migrant smuggling. It is a hugely lucrative criminal business with relatively low levels of risk.

Migrant smuggling routes:

- **Central Mediterranean route:** Libya continues to be the main departure point towards Europe, with an overall number of **118 962 irregular migrants** detected in 2017 (-34%, EBCGA). New departure points have been established in Tunisia and Algeria.

- **Western Mediterranean:** The number of irregular migrants on this route more than doubled in 2017, with 23 143 detections comprising mostly of nationals from Morocco, Algeria and Ivory Coast (EBCGA).
- **Western Balkans:** Migration routes across the Western Balkans region are often a reflection of increasingly restrictive border control measures or migration/visa policies. The smuggling networks operating in the region quickly adapt to changes and are capable of dynamically shifting the routes.
- **UK-France border:** Organised crime groups operating in Belgium and France provide smuggling services to migrants attempting to enter the United Kingdom (UK). Albanian OCGs are especially well-established in this region and play an important role in smuggling mostly their own nationals.

The European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC)

Europol's 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 beyond into the EU. Europol established that many migrants had their journey facilitated by criminal organisations. The core task of the EMSC is supporting cross-border investigations to disrupt and prosecute organised crime groups.

[Download the report>](#)



EN [Two years of EMSC / Activity report Jan 2017-Jan 2018](#) [4.48 MB]

CRIME AREAS

[Facilitation of Illegal Immigration](#)

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[Press/Journalists](#) •

[Other](#)

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