Facilitated illegal immigration is a significant threat to the EU and one of the key priorities of European law enforcement authorities in the fight against organised crime.

In recent months, the facilitation of Vietnamese irregular migrants has increased and the total number of investigations into this, with Europol's involvement, has doubled this year reaching more than 20 cases.

This recent increase is a remarkable change since the number of Vietnamese irregular migrants detected in the EU had decreased considerably following a number of large-scale investigations. A large operation in November 2011 was particularly instrumental in this and resulted in the dismantling of a key Vietnamese illegal immigration network active mainly in France and Germany.

Vietnamese irregular migrants use the whole range of available facilitation services. They are typically helped to enter the European Union illegally along the eastern land borders of the EU. Once on EU territory, they are facilitated onwards to their final destinations such as the UK, France, Belgium and Germany.

Typical prices for intra-EU facilitation range from EUR 4000 from Poland to the UK, to EUR 6000 from Belgium to the UK.

Europol's Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2013 (SOCTA) warns of a further increase in facilitated illegal immigration as irregular migrants are increasingly supported and guided by organised crime groups (OCGs). The OCGs involved in this criminal activity adapt quickly and exploit various vulnerabilities to enable irregular migrants to illegally enter, reside and work in the EU.

Certain OCGs specialise in providing fraudulent documents to facilitate illegal entry and Vietnamese irregular migrants often enter on fraudulently obtained visas of all kinds. OCGs obtain these visas by providing false invitation letters and other false supporting documents, or using corruption. A full package, including invitation and visa, can cost up to EUR 15 000.
Vietnamese irregular migrants have been found working in nail bars, as gardeners in cannabis plantations and as couriers for methamphetamine. Europol works closely with Member State authorities to monitor and follow up on this re-emerging threat and has recently warned them about this latest crime trend.

Visit our new Early Warning Notifications page