

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT (SOCTA)

Identifying the priorities in the fight against major crime

ABOUT SOCTA UPDATES

[EU SOCTA 2021
report](#)

Serious and organised crime is an increasingly dynamic and complex phenomenon that requires robust, intelligence-led response by EU law enforcement.

While traditional crime areas such as international drug trafficking remain a principal cause of concern, the effects of globalisation in society and business have facilitated the emergence of significant new variations in criminal activity.

Criminal networks exploit legislative loopholes, the internet and conditions associated with the economic crisis to generate illicit profits at low risk, for example.

One of Europol's flagship reports, the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) updates Europe's law enforcement community and decision-makers on such developments in serious and organised crime and the threats it poses to the EU.

Informed by its analysis of the prevailing threats, the SOCTA identifies a number of high priority crime areas that the operational response in the EU should focus on.

METHODOLOGY

The SOCTA methodology allows Europol to understand and assess serious and organised crime holistically. The SOCTA analyses and describes criminal markets and crime areas in the EU; the criminal networks or individual criminals carrying out these criminal activities; as well as the factors in the broader environment that shape the nature of serious and organised crime in the EU. Europol uses a mixed method approach involving qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques and a set of clearly defined indicators, to identify and specify the most threatening criminal phenomena in the EU. Europol arrives at the recommended priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT based on this methodology. The SOCTA methodology ensures transparency and reliability providing decision-makers with a solid basis for their deliberations.

DATA AND SOURCES

The findings of the SOCTA 2021 are the outcome of detailed analysis of intelligence gathered as part of the largest data collection on serious and organised crime ever undertaken in the EU. Europol relied heavily on the operational intelligence held in its databases on serious and organised crime to provide a thorough and extensive analysis of the criminal threats facing the EU. Member States, cooperation partners outside the EU and institutional partners contributed almost 4 000 questionnaires on criminal activities and criminal networks. The amount of data provided for the SOCTA 2021 has increased by around 60 % compared to the SOCTA 2017.

The SOCTA is a product of close cooperation between Europol, the law enforcement authorities of the Member States and third parties such as EU agencies, international organisations and countries outside the EU with working arrangements with Europol. The involvement of these crucial stakeholders is also reflected in the SOCTA's role as the cornerstone of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Crime Threats (EMPACT) in the EU.

EMPACT

EMPACT provides a robust framework that brings together the law enforcement authorities of the Member States, Europol and a wide range of multi-disciplinary partners in the fight against serious and organised crime. EMPACT translates strategic objectives at European level into concrete operational actions against serious and organised crime.

EMPACT is an instrument adopted by the European Union in 2010 to address the most significant criminal threats facing the EU. It optimises coordination and cooperation on the crime priorities agreed by all Member States. During the cycle, all concerned services and stakeholders, at national and EU level, are invited to allocate resources and mutually reinforce efforts. Considering the rapidly evolving nature of crime, Europol also prepares a mid-term review of new, changing or emerging threats, in cooperation with Member States and relevant EU agencies.

PRIORITIES

Relying on the analytical findings of the SOCTA 2021 and considering other strategic papers, assessments and policies, the Council will decide on the priorities

in the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT from 2022 to 2025. These priorities will determine the operational work carried out in the framework of EMPACT for the next four years. The crime priorities agreed at European level in the context of EMPACT are reflected in operational activities at Member State level.

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