

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT (SOCTA)

Identifying the priorities in the fight against major crime

ABOUTSOCTA UPDATES

SOCTA 2017 report
(PDF)

SOCTA 2017 online
version

SOCTA 2017
leaflet

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.

Europol's current SOCTA, published in 2017, identifies the following eight **priority crime threats**:

- › cybercrime
- › drug production, trafficking and distribution
- › migrant smuggling
- › organised property crime
- › trafficking in human beings
- › criminal finances and money laundering
- › document fraud
- › online trade in illicit goods and services.

CORNERSTONE

The SOCTA is a strategic assessment and, as such, is the cornerstone of the [European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats \(EMPACT\)](#) policy cycle, which was established by the EU in 2010.

From the formulation of strategic priorities to operational actions, the multi-annual policy cycle ensures that an intelligence-led approach is taken to tackling the major criminal threats facing the EU.

The EMPACT cycle also seeks to ensure continuity in the fight against serious international and organised crime through cooperation among national law enforcement agencies, EU institutions and agencies, and other relevant partners.

STARTING POINT

At the start of the policy cycle, the SOCTA delivers analytical findings that inform political priorities, strategic goals and operational action plans. It identifies and assesses threats to the EU and analyses points of vulnerability to crimes as well as the opportunities for criminals create to commit them.

In preparing the first SOCTA, Europol analysed trends and patterns in current crime data, but it also scanned the environment for other factors that can be expected to influence the commission of crimes and the ability of law enforcement to stop them. This provides the basis for its forecast of future threats to EU internal security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report delivered a set of recommendations based on an in-depth analysis of the major crime threats facing the EU. The Council of EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers used these recommendations to define priorities for the 2014 to 2017 period. The analysis underpinning the development of priorities also supports the planning of operational actions.

The SOCTA is produced by Europol's Operations Directorate, which draws on extensive contributions from:

- › Europol from its work files on serious and organised crime
- › external partners, including Member States, third countries and organisations
- › [Eurojust](#)
- › [Frontex](#)
- › a number of academics, who lent support to the development and implementation of the methodology used in the SOCTA.

STRUCTURE

The SOCTA builds on the work that went into the five EU Organised Crime Threat Assessments (OCTAs) that were produced from 2006 to 2011. In line with a new methodology developed in 2011 and 2012, Europol published the inaugural edition of the SOCTA in 2013.

As it uses a new methodology, the SOCTA is structured differently to its OCTA predecessor. The SOCTA 2017 comprised the following chapters:

- › Foreword of the Executive Director
- › Introduction
- › Key judgments
- › Understanding organised crime
- › Assessing organised crime
- › Conclusions
- › Annex.

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