

SCAN POLICY BRIEF

Impact of Mexican OCGs on the OC situation in Europe

Over the last decade, Mexican Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) have developed a central role in the international Organised Crime (OC) landscape. They have become global market coordinators in the trafficking of **cocaine** for the North American and European markets, as well as in the production and trafficking of **synthetic drugs** for the North American, Asian and European markets. Groups such as *Los Zetas* have been reported for their involvement in **Trafficking in Human Beings** (THB) from North East Europe to Mexico for sexual exploitation. In the framework of bartering systems related to the cocaine trade, Mexican OCGs are reportedly also involved in trafficking **firearms** from South East Europe to supply OCGs operating in Central South America. In evaluating the possible future impact of Mexican OCGs on Europe, the key findings are:

- Mexican OCGs have significantly increased their role along the **cocaine** supply chain and now form direct agreements with producers in South America (e.g. *BACRIM* and *Narco-FARC*), transshipment facilitators in Central America (e.g. *MS13*) and Africa (e.g. Nigerian OCGs) and buyers in Europe (e.g. *'Ndrangheta'*).
- Although a recent attempt by the *Sinaloa Cartel* to settle in Europe for the purpose of wholesale **cocaine** distribution was averted as a result of a timely, intelligence-led intervention, Mexican OCGs are expected to continue to expand their role along the supply chain towards Europe to increase their profits.
- Mexican OCGs have an extremely violent operating culture and the capacity to rapidly resort to violence. However, only an isolated number of cases related to the use of **violence** – including murders carried out by the so-called *'sicarios'* –, have been attributed to members of these groups in Europe, to date.

Recommendations designed to respond to the anticipated threat of Mexican OCGs operating in Europe:

- New initiatives to combat the trafficking of precursors or synthetic drugs by Mexican OCGs with an impact on Europe should draw on prior experiences related to the use of Europe as a transit point for illicit goods (e.g. AIRPOL-led Cross-Border Action *'GOODEYE'*), and coordinate existing initiatives (e.g. Interpol's project *'WHITEFLOW'*) and relevant EMPACT projects – i.e., *'Synthetic Drugs'*, *'Containers'* and *'West Africa'*.
- Agencies such as US DEA maintain an extensive knowledge-base, including descriptive data for recognising members of Mexican OCGs and best practices for investigating and managing the risks in combating them. A manual to support law enforcement in Europe should be produced that draws on these existing insights.



Dismantled illicit lab and seizure of 15 tons of methamphetamine worth €3 billion in Guadalajara, Mexico (02/12)