

THREAT ASSESSMENT

ITALIAN ORGANISED CRIME

The Hague, June 2013
FILE NO: EDOC#667574 v8

This Europol product analyses and evaluates the threat posed by types of serious or organised crime. The assessment of threats is based on defined indicators.

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1 KEY JUDGEMENTS

Mafia-type Italian organised crime is a clear and present threat to the European Union (EU). The basis of the power of the Italian Mafias resides in their control and exploitation of the territory and of the community. The contextualised concepts of **family, power, respect and territory** are fundamental to understanding the dynamics of the Mafias. The Mafias are capable of manipulating elections and installing their men in administrative positions even far away from the territories they control. From that perspective, the threat they pose is unparalleled by any other European Organised Crime Group (OCG). Exploiting legislative loopholes and using the services of corrupt administrators and professionals, they launder money and manage it through front companies and straw men. The four Italian Mafia-type organisations – Sicilian **Mafia**, Calabrian **'Ndrangheta**, Neapolitan **Camorra** and **Apulian Organised Crime** – present common traits but also specific individual characteristics that need to be appreciated. When operating outside their territory of origin, the Mafias modify their behaviours and *modi operandi*.

Cosa Nostra is the oldest, most traditional and widespread manifestation of the Sicilian Mafia. Its international expansion has mainly been directed towards North America. In the EU its emissaries facilitate criminal operations and money laundering. Cosa Nostra's present strategy of keeping a low-profile is valid both within the territories it controls and outside them. Cosa Nostra is increasing its involvement in cocaine trafficking, often cooperating with other Mafias. Extremely skilled Cosa Nostra money launderers manage legitimate business structures and have infiltrated the economy of some target countries, including **South Africa, Canada, USA, Venezuela and Spain**.

Other Sicilian Mafia groups not affiliated to Cosa Nostra include the **Stidda** and the **Cursoti** and **Laudani** clans. They also present a threat at an EU level because of their involvement in violent crime, including hit-and-run armed robberies.

The **'Ndrangheta** is among the richest and most powerful organised crime groups at a global level. It has a dominant position on the European cocaine market due to excellent relations with the producers. The 'Ndrangheta is trying to colonise new territories and attempts to exert its influence over Calabrese migrant communities. It reproduces abroad perfect copies of its operational structures, the *'Ndrine* (or Clans) and the *Locali*, which still fall under the supreme authority of the Calabrian *Crimine*. The 'Ndrangheta has a hierarchical structure and has repeatedly proven its skill in infiltrating political and economic environments and its remarkable capacity for corruption. Through the shrewd use of its immense liquidity (of criminal origin) in legitimate business structures it has been able to achieve a position of quasi-monopoly in selected sectors, such as construction, real estate and transport. The 'Ndrangheta is mainly present in **Spain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, the USA, Colombia and Australia**.

The **Camorra** is for the most part a horizontal cluster of Clans and Families engaged in constant internal strife. Their presence on the territory has a very high impact. Unlike their Sicilian and Calabrian counterparts, Camorra bosses tend to have a very high profile, with a flashy lifestyle and extravagant expenses. Outside its territory the Camorra is mainly involved in drug trafficking, cigarette smuggling, illicit waste dumping and particularly in the sale of counterfeit products, either procured via Chinese OCGs or directly manufactured by the Clans. It is also among the principal producers of counterfeit Euros, then sold to and placed on the market by other OCGs. The Camorra is present in **Spain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Eastern Europe, the USA and Latin America**.

Apulian Organised Crime is frequently and wrongly identified with the **Sacra Corona Unita** (SCU), which is one of its components but by no means the only one. The **Società Foggiana**, the **Camorra Barese** and the **Gargano's Mafia** are other criminal clusters belonging to Apulian Organised Crime. Traditionally engaged in smuggling, Apulian organised criminals evolved from trafficking cigarettes to human beings, drugs, weapons and illegal waste disposal. Outside of Italy, Apulian Organised Crime is present mainly in **the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Albania**.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Italian organised crime is known all over the world, to the point that the term 'Mafia' is now understood across the globe as referring to the organised criminal underworld. Literature on the subject is abundant, ranging from history, sociology and criminology to fiction and plain entertainment. The distinctive character, looks, habits, idiosyncrasies and jargon of the *Mafiosi* have been described, analysed, explained and imitated. Apparently, everybody is familiar with Italian organised crime.

Nevertheless, a document analysing the overall scope of Italian organised crime at an international level from the law enforcement (LE) perspective, and the threat it poses in the EU and beyond, does not exist. This document is intended to fill that important information gap.

This is a public report intended for a wide audience, based on a more detailed strategic assessment prepared for law enforcement purposes.

The extreme difficulty in collecting information of the required quality confirmed the particular nature of Italian OC, which tends to operate 'under the radar' whenever it acts outside its territory.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

The restricted version of this document, made available to the EU law enforcement community, aims at explaining the nature and structure of the four Italian Mafias: **Sicilian Mafia**, **Calabrian 'Ndrangheta**, **Neapolitan Camorra** and **Apulian Organised Crime**. It analyses their international dimension, the different attitudes they assume when operating outside their territory, the well-practised and new *modi operandi* used in their criminal operations, and their trans-national strategies. It also attempts to anticipate their next moves, and indeed to identify possible vulnerabilities and the course of actions necessary to successfully combat Mafia activity.

The decision to produce a report focusing on these OCGs was based on an intelligence gap recognised by Europol in the production of the 2011 Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) and confirmed in the production of its successor, the 2013 Serious Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA). This is in line with Europol's role in the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime, which foresees the production of regional or thematic threat assessments to address identified intelligence gaps.

This public report aims to summarise the restricted document in a manner which affords the reader a good understanding of the nature of Italian Organised Crime and an appreciation of the very real threat they currently pose to the European Union, and the challenge facing law enforcement agencies as a result. The much longer restricted report includes extensive details of up-to-date case examples, with relevant citations, which cannot be included here for reasons of confidentiality.

3 ITALIAN ORGANISED CRIME: COMMON FEATURES

The origin of Italian Mafia-type criminal organisations is the subject of abundant literature. Many theories are provided in the vast array of varied and often conflicting explanations of how, when and where the Mafia was born. These range from myth and legend, often mixed with Hollywood glamorisation and media speculation.

The present report is a threat assessment, not a historical study. Research on the genesis of the Mafias and narration of their evolution is not the objective. However, there are a few **fundamental** and **interconnected tenets** that must be seriously considered whenever the Italian Mafias are involved: **family, power, respect** and **territory**.

3.1 Family

In virtually every culture, family is considered the basic element of society. It provides food, shelter and education to the newborn, manages internal dynamics and settles possible disputes. Several families and individuals constitute a community, where interpersonal relations are ruled by law (*ubi societas ibi ius*). Laws are made by the state exercising sovereignty on the territory where the community reside, and the state 'upholds the claim to the monopoly of the use of physical force in the enforcement of its order'¹.

Family bonds and obligations vary according to cultural and historical differences. In areas historically affected by a strong presence of Italian organised crime, the emotional and affectionate character commonly attributed to Mediterranean people, combined with a secular mistrust towards the state,² amplified the role and the power of the family in the community.

Governed by distant and foreign powers that preserved obsolete feudal rights far into the 19th century, local communities in Southern Italy were deprived of a consistent network of social, economic, industrial and political structures that, in the rest of Western Europe, marked the progress of modern states since the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The state was often seen as a greedy and hostile entity imposing taxes without providing services, and the extended family was considered the only reliable point of reference.

That sense of belonging to the family is often stretched to the point of superseding the rule of law governing the community of reference, leading to actions for the benefit and aggrandisement of the family and its members, even to the detriment of the community.

That overpowering sense of family, which has been romanticised in cinema and literature, is a formidable obstacle to the normal evolution of the community. In fact, no one affected by it will further the interests of the community, except when it is to his (or his family's) private advantage to do so. In such cases, the expectation of material gain is the only motive for involvement in public affairs.

This sentiment provided the ideal base on which the Mafias built their power: total commitment to (and total control of) a closely knit group; tremendous emotional impact boosted by centuries of local traditions; induced self-victimisation to justify abusive behaviours (*'everybody is against us, but we will defeat them all'*); mistrust of the state and of its laws (*'the family only recognises and follows its own rules'*); incessant reinforcement of family 'esprit de corps'; strict systems of reward and punishment; overbearing emphasis on an adapted concept of honour; and ruthless treatment of members considered as traitors.

3.2 Power

Hunger for power is the essence of the Mafias. In common with all other OCGs, economic power is of paramount relevance to Mafia-type organisations, but it is by no means the only form of power they seek, and possibly not even the most important.

¹ Max Weber, *'Politics as a vocation (Politik als Beruf)'*, Munich, Jan. 1919

² Southern Italy has never been independent. Sicily, for instance, has been under the following foreign dominations: Greeks (750 - 242 BC), Romans (242 BC - 440 AD), Vandals (440 - 488), Ostrogoths (488 - 552), Byzantine (552 - 902), Arabs (902 - 1091), Normans (1091 - 1198), Hohenstaufen (1198 - 1266), Anjou (1266 - 1282), Aragon (1282 - 1713), Savoy (1713 - 1720), Habsburg (1720 - 1734), Bourbon of Spain (1734 - 1860). Even the unification with the Kingdom of Italy (1860) was seen by many as yet another foreign domination.

When two of the Sicilian Mafia's 'Capi di tutti i capi' were arrested (in 1993 and 2006 respectively) they were living in very modest conditions despite their immense wealth accumulated through crime. They could have easily organised a 'golden retirement', living in extreme luxury in any part of the world, but in their minds the prospect of enjoying spectacular mansions, fancy cars and glamorous company could not match the addictive thrill generated by power over the Families and the territory.

The need to exercise absolute power over the territory is a defining aspect of the Mafias, and it explains the very strict links that Mafia groups operating abroad keep with their regions of origin. In fact, like an umbilical cord the link with the Family or Clan of reference in Italy constantly nourishes and fortifies the offshoots operating out of the territory. If, for whatever reason, that cord is cut, the offshoot often dies.

Because of the power they exercise on the territory, the Mafias have frequently been defined as 'anti-state'. Such a definition is imprecise and even misleading: direct opposition to the legitimate state is uncharacteristic of the Mafias. The only real example of such behaviour was the attack on the Italian state conducted by the Sicilian Mafia led by the 'Corleonesi' clan in the 1980s and early 1990s. Normally the Mafias tend to coexist with the legitimate state, infiltrating its local structures in order to weaken its action and to misappropriate public funds.

Defining a state as an entity exercising sovereignty on a territory and on the communities resident there, the Mafias can be defined as 'para-state' or 'shadow-state' rather than anti-state. The use of physical force – normally the prerogative of the state, but employed by the Mafias to pursue their agendas – is yet another trait of the Mafias that makes them a parallel state, or a substitute for it.

Almost like a sovereign state, in their territory of influence the Mafias legislate – albeit informally – and administer justice, levy taxes and excises (through extortions), provide services and social security, reward the faithful and punish those who are not, and exert control on the labour market, trade and productive activities.

Unlike a sovereign state, the Mafias do not plan, fund and build the infrastructures needed for the functioning of a modern state, although through infiltration, corruption or violence they can manage them. That can be accomplished in many ways, from administering national and international subsidies to exacting tolls for passage along national roads³ and for distribution of water and electricity in popular quarters⁴.

However, while the state would fare far better without the presence of the Mafias, the latter could not survive without the existence of the state. The Mafias are parasitic in nature, hosted and nourished by the healthy parts of the community. In the areas under their control they carefully regulate the impact of their criminality on productive activities, perfectly aware that an excessive strain on them could eventually stifle the production, leading to the death of the healthy socio-economic organism and, with it, its parasite. A parasite killing the organism that nourishes it would be foolish, and Mafias are far from being foolish.

Finally, a typical example of the power exerted by Mafias on their territory of influence is the so-called 'pizzo', whereby legitimate business owners are forced to pay a part of their earnings to guarantee 'protection'. In some cases the 'pizzo' is extorted by imposing the purchase of goods at a higher price: this makes it difficult for Law Enforcement to 'prove' the criminal activity, on further reinforces the idea that the territory is controlled by Organised Crime to the extent they actually interact officially with legitimate business structures. Threats are very often implicit: the power is so strong, that if an affiliate sells a particular brand of coffee to local bars at a higher price he doesn't need to 'threaten' anyone to buy it; his mere presence is enough to guarantee a full purchase.

³ Deposition to the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of Catanzaro, as reported in the annual relation of the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission on the 'Ndrangheta, Rome, 2008

⁴ Emerged during operation 'AddioPizzo 3' as reported in '*Le Mani della Criminalità sull'Impresa*', Roma, Dec. 2011

3.3 Respect

Within the criminal environment moral qualities are distorted according to a self-serving reinterpretation of their essence. That tendency is amplified within the Mafias. The concept of honour, for instance, is stretched and bent beyond recognition to make it fit with the Clan's mentality and its interests. There is clearly no honour in killing defenceless victims, or in extorting money from placid and compliant shopkeepers. However, the imprinting that the Mafias make on their members – often extended to the community in which they operate – is so powerful and long-lasting that such reinterpretation is widely accepted. The fact that Cosa Nostra calls its affiliates 'men of honour' and that the 'Ndrangheta derives its name from the ancient Greek word ἀνδραγαθία (andragathía, meaning heroism, manly virtue)⁵ is evidence of the importance they attach to being considered bearers of virtuous qualities.

The concept of respect also needs to be interpreted. Within the Mafias, respect is tightly connected with power. Having power commands respect, but that kind of respect is generated by fear, not by admiration for personal qualities or abilities. Members of the Mafias aspire to be respected, while they are actually feared. Several Mafia members, turned state witness (commonly known as *pentiti*), declared that a strong pull factor exercised by the Mafias is the respect that automatically derives from being an affiliate. Common criminals are willing to join the Mafias even if that normally implies a substantial reduction of their profits, and that is because of the respect they acquire. Youngsters growing up in areas permeated with that culture are willing to join the Mafias for the perceived social status it will afford them in the neighbourhood. Their affiliation is immediately reflected in their body language and perceived by the community.

That intrinsic connection between power and respect helps to explain the behaviour of the above mentioned 'Capi di tutti i capi' as fugitives from justice, and that of many others. If they had abandoned their territory to seek safe haven elsewhere they would have relinquished their power and, consequently, lost the respect they used to command and, with it, their hold on the Families and the protection provided by their 'men of honour'. They would have been considered nothing more than wealthy expatriate pensioners, with the notable difference of having many determined professionals, both from law enforcement agencies and from criminal groups, trying to locate them with unfriendly intentions.

3.4 Territory

Control of the territory plays an essential part in the definition of Italian organised crime, but it can hardly be defined as an exclusive feature of the Mafias. In fact, many other forms of organised crime – including street gangs – have a strict relationship with the territory and try to exercise their control on it, but they cannot be defined as Mafias.

Ordinary OCGs and street gangs interpret territory as turf, i.e. an area where they assert their authority over the perpetration of all criminal activities. Citizens are only seen as potential victims, and public authorities are the enemy to be eluded.

The Mafias instead aim at being a substitute for the State in the territory. Their relationship with the territory is far deeper and wider: not limited to crime, it encompasses all facets of the resident social community, with a particular emphasis on the local political powers and economic activity.

In a multi-phased vicious circle, through threats, corruption and favours the Mafias are often able to control large amounts of votes in their areas of influence, which can determine the outcome of local administrative elections. Placing their straw men (or members of their Clan) in key positions, they achieve two objectives. On the one hand, they can divert public funds, rig public tenders and despoil the budget and assets of the administrative entity they run. On the other hand, through the planned (or natural) incompetence and inaction of the administrators they support, they corroborate the image of a totally inefficient, cumbersome and distant public bureaucracy, juxtaposed to the far more brisk and efficient management of the Clans.

⁵ The coastal areas of Calabria were part of 'Magna Graecia', so called because of the extensive colonisation by Greek settlers since the VIII century BC. Calabrian Greek was widely spoken until the XV-XVI century AD and it is still used in several areas as a dialect.

That way, citizens are more and more encouraged to view the Clans, and not the state, as a point of reference, further reinforcing the Mafias' hold on the territory.

The connection between Mafias and the territory is widely known, but its misinterpretation has contributed to a false sense of security in political, law enforcement, economic and social environments, whereby the threat posed by the Mafias whenever they operate outside of their territory is often underestimated.

In fact, there is a dual vision on Italian OC, which labels them as Mafia-type groups when on their territory of origin and ordinary OCGs when they operate elsewhere. For historical, social and cultural reasons, communities hosting expatriate Italian organised crime groups are credited as being impervious to mafia attempts at infiltration and influence. For that reason they believe Italian Organised Crime can be dealt with using tools normally effective against other OCGs. While the premise may be partially correct, the conclusion is overly simplistic.

Outside the territory, members of the Mafias cannot and do not *"take advantage of the intimidating power of the association and of the resulting conditions of submission and omertà to commit criminal offences, to manage or in any way control, either directly or indirectly, economic activities, concessions, authorizations, public contracts and services, or to obtain unlawful profits or advantages for themselves or for any other persons, or with a view to prevent or limit the freedom to vote, or to get votes for themselves or for other persons on the occasion of an election"*⁶. The social environment in which they operate would not permit that.

Perfectly aware of that situation, Italian Organised Crime members operating in Northern and Central Italy, and abroad, rarely even attempt to replicate the control of the territory they impose in their areas of origin. They do not even try to get results *'taking advantage of the intimidating power of the association and of the resulting conditions of submission and omertà'*. They are far more subtle than that, and aim to reach their criminal objectives by infiltrating economic sectors and through corruption.

At the same time, they never lose contact with their Clan or Family of reference, which remains the origin of their power. This is both their strength and their weakness.

⁶ Italian Criminal Code, article 416 bis, "Mafia-type Criminal Association"

4 SICILIAN MAFIA

The Sicilian Mafia is probably the world's most famous criminal organisation, and the fact that its name, Mafia, is in common use in all continents to define – often improperly – criminal groups with similar characteristics is further evidence of that.

Part of its fame is due to its extensive characterisation in literature and cinema, often overly romanticising some aspects of the Mafia culture. Mario PUZO's novel 'The Godfather' and Francis Ford COPPOLA's cinematic adaptation contributed to an idealised image of the Sicilian Mafia, generating a new gangster-movie genre that still enjoys a worldwide success. Even the real *Mafiosi* are captured by that narrative: searching the house of arrested members of the Mafia, police constantly find VHS cassettes or DVDs of the 'Godfather' trilogy, and some men of honour even assume the gestures of fictional characters, as did one of the Corleonesi's bosses who, during his 1974 trial, in a bizarre intermingling of roles, imitated Marlon BRANDO's rendition of a Mafia boss.

However, picturesque depictions cannot hide the fact that the Mafia is a powerful, ruthless and cynically efficient criminal organisation that controls large areas of Sicily and heavily influences its political, social and economic life. Such influence is by no means confined to the island, as it reaches all locations in which expatriate communities have established themselves. The Mafia has the capacity to adapt to local restrictions and opportunities, modifying its *modus operandi* accordingly.

'Mafia' is the term that, since mid-19th century, has defined the whole constellation of Sicilian OCGs. It was used as a horizontal and general label until Operation 'Pizza Connection' (1984-1987) and the ensuing trial.

'Pizza Connection' dealt with a vast drug smuggling ring involving Mafia families in New York and Sicily, and with the ensuing money laundering schemes. It certainly was a high level operation, but the number and level of the suspects and the quantities of drugs and money involved do not explain why the subsequent trial marked a definite turning point in the fight against organised crime. 'Pizza Connection' made history because, through the depositions of men of honour turned state witnesses (*pentiti*), it unveiled the real essence of the Sicilian Mafia, its internal structure and the rigid hierarchy governing it.

Among countless invaluable explanations of internal mechanisms, the main *pentito* witness in the 'Pizza Connection' trial made clear that the actual name of the organisation of which he was a sworn member was not Mafia, but 'Cosa Nostra', meaning 'Our Thing'.

The definition 'Cosa Nostra' had first emerged in the testimonies of another well known *pentito* in the early 1960s⁷, but it was believed that it only referred to the American branch of the Mafia. The Operation 'Pizza Connection' witness confirmed that Cosa Nostra is the name of the whole organisation, on both sides of the Atlantic, making it the official definition ever since.

The Sicilian Mafia's expansion beyond its territory is not as widespread as that of other Italian Mafias. Outside of Sicily, the Families cannot take advantage of the conditions of submission and *omertà* they are used to in their territory.

A notable exception was the birth and rise of *Cosa Nostra* in the United States, especially in New York, from the beginning of the 20th century. Among the not yet integrated community of Sicilian immigrants living in Brooklyn's overcrowded 'Little Italy', *Cosa Nostra* was able to replicate conditions very similar to those that in Sicily were conducive to their oppressive hold on the territory. Racketeering, extortions, protection money, usury and total control of all commercial and productive activities characterised the criminal operations of *Cosa Nostra* in New York. Similar situations are nowadays quite common – also in the EU – in closely-knit communities of immigrants (ranging from Chinese to Vietnamese, Nigerian, Russian, Ukrainian, Albanian communities, and more), in which endogenous criminal groups often dominate.

American *Cosa Nostra* evolved in a different way than its older Sicilian branch, and despite the fact that it is still frequently labelled as 'Italian Organised Crime' in the US and elsewhere, it

⁷ Italian-American criminal whose hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the US Senate Committee on Government Operations contributed to shed light on Italian-American organised crime.

must be considered as a separate American OCG. However, over the years links and contacts with Sicily have never ceased, and the historical New York Families provide a strong foothold across the Atlantic frequently used by the Sicilian *Cosa Nostra* in its criminal activities.

With the exception of its unique American experience, and unlike the normal *modus operandi* of other Italian Mafias, the *Cosa Nostra* does not seem to have an expansion strategy aiming to establish working structures abroad. *Cosa Nostra* considers Sicily as the crux of its very existence, and crimes perpetrated beyond the island are only committed to further the aggrandisement of the Families and their power in Sicily.

Transnational activities are managed by emissaries, who benefit from the worldwide reputation of *Cosa Nostra*, which often provides them with the leverage necessary to conclude profitable bargains. These emissaries usually deal with public tenders, drugs brokering and money laundering activities. Members of *Cosa Nostra* do not perpetrate their trademark criminal offences (racketeering, arson, extortion, intimidation, usury) or any other violent crime outside their territory.

Families normally enjoy a wide autonomy in planning and carrying out their criminal operations abroad. However, in some instances overarching strategic choices are made. That was the case, for example, of the pivotal decision taken in the 1970s, when *Cosa Nostra* decided to involve itself in high-level drug trafficking. At the time, heroin was chosen as a preferred market. In order to maximise profits the Families used to buy morphine base from Turkish wholesalers and refine it into heroin in Sicily. Within a few years Sicily became the biggest heroin refinery in the Western world, feeding a big part of the European market and, through New York's Families, up to 80 per cent of the American one.

In more recent years, pushed by shifts in market demand, the Families shifted towards cocaine trafficking. Their emissaries have no problem in dealing with brokers belonging to other criminal organisations, including other Italian OCGs. In fact, cooperation with the 'Ndrangheta and the Camorra is quite common.

A recent international arrest brought to public attention again the phenomenal profit making ability of *Cosa Nostra* and the sophistication of its operations. A powerful emissary of the Families, and mastermind of highly sophisticated financial operations, was arrested on 30/03/2012 in Bangkok on his way to South Africa⁸ from Hong Kong. He now awaits extradition to Italy. A member of a certain crime Family and considered very close to several 'Capo di tutti i capi', he is thought to have invested huge profits not only of his own, but also of other Families, building an impressive reputation as a money launderer par excellence. (According to a US indictment, he is also alleged to have laundered \$1.5 billion, the proceeds of a huge *Cosa Nostra* drug trafficking operation between the US and Europe).

The **Cosa Nostra** is the oldest, most traditional and most widespread manifestation of the Sicilian Mafia, however other Sicilian Mafia groups not affiliated to *Cosa Nostra* also present a threat at an EU level, largely because of their mobility and propensity for violence whilst committing serious crimes (including armed robberies). These include the **Stidda**, **Cursoti** and **Laudani** clans.

5 CALABRIAN 'NDRANGHETA

The escalation of the 'Ndrangheta (also called *Onorata Società*) in the international criminal hierarchy has been constant in recent decades, and now this Calabrian Mafia-type organisation can rightfully be placed among the most threatening OCGs at a global level.

Long underestimated as a rural, backward organisation with limited scope, the 'Ndrangheta is now recognised as a major threat not only in Italy but also in many other countries where it operates, including Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, US, Colombia and Australia.

The evolution of the 'Ndrangheta is not comparable to that of *Cosa Nostra*. Its rural origins are undeniable, and even if its urban dimension – in Reggio Calabria, but also in many cities where

⁸ *Cosa Nostra* has used countries in South and South West Africa, including Angola and Namibia, as privileged channels (among others) for laundering money for many years.

it has expanded outside of Calabria – is significant, the core of its power remains in the hamlets, villages and towns of Calabria.

A number of factors contributed to the rapid expansion of the 'Ndrangheta. First of all, the direct attack by Cosa Nostra on the Italian state in the 1980s and 1990s forced law enforcement and judicial authorities to focus on that clear and present threat, giving less attention to other criminal phenomena. At the same time, the increased pressure on Cosa Nostra forced them to downscale their presence in some markets, and the 'Ndrangheta immediately filled those new gaps. The evolution of the drug markets overturned long standing balances. Heroin was chosen by Cosa Nostra in the 1970s as their main market, forcing the 'Ndrangheta to resort to, then, less lucrative cocaine. When the heroin market declined and left the primacy to cocaine, the 'Ndrangheta was in the ideal position to exploit its consolidated links with producers. The increasing local or regional autonomy in crucial sectors such as the health system and public tenders facilitated the diversion of public funds and was immediately exploited by deeply infiltrated 'Ndrangheta. Consolidated and better integrated immigrant communities of Calabrians all over the world provided fertile ground for external offshoots of the criminal organisation. Moreover, the historical and impenetrable secrecy of the 'Ndrangheta has posed a formidable challenge to law enforcement agencies.

The 'Ndrangheta pursued its expansion in new regions and new markets with shrewd planning and extreme caution. Blood feuds and internecine wars, albeit quite frequent, did not interfere with the trans-national development of the organisation. The successful growth of the 'Ndrangheta in new territories is also due to the solidity, versatility and adaptability of its structure.

'Colonisation' is a term frequently used to illustrate the expansion of the 'Ndrangheta outside its native region of Calabria. It is a brilliant definition, as it clearly marks the difference with other Mafia-type criminal groups. In fact, as outlined above, Cosa Nostra and other Sicilian groups do not try to replicate their basic structures away from Sicily, but they tend to send emissaries. Not so the 'Ndrangheta, which implants perfect copies of its essential structures in territories not under its control, pursuing a long-term strategy of progressive infiltration in new economic and social environments.

The basis of the power of the 'Ndrangheta outside its territory is its enormous financial might, the immense corruptive power thereof and its impact on the legitimate economic and financial environments.

The 'Ndrangheta started building its economic power in the 1970s and 1980s with the ransoms deriving from several kidnappings they perpetrated, mainly in Northern Italy. That extorted money was then invested in drug trafficking, a trans-national business where over the years it reached a leading position. Drug trafficking is still the main source of profits for the 'Ndrangheta, together with the constant diversion of public funds through fraud and rigged tenders.

They are also involved in environmental crime. According to a report published by the *Association Italienne de protection de l'environnement* (Legambiente), 95 'Ndrangheta clans were amongst 296 clans involved in illegal waste dumping. 346,000 tonnes of waste was seized heading for 10 European, 8 African and 5 Asian countries in 2011. (Of the other clans involved: 86 Camorra, 78 Mafia and 23 Apulian).

All profits are skilfully reinvested using sophisticated money laundering techniques. The 'Ndrangheta use legitimate business structures, either as a façade or to facilitate their criminal activities (including money laundering).

An example of the violent nature of this group outside of Italy was the 'Duisburg massacre' in Germany on 15/08/2007, when six Calabrians were murdered in front of a pizzeria in the town. That violent outburst of an old blood feud between two powerful Clans from San Luca, the Pelle-Vottari and the Nirta-Strangio, marked a decisive turning point in international police co-operation against the Italian mafia. A German-Italian Task Force (Deutsch-Italienische Task Force – DITF) was established and, with the indispensable support of other European police forces, succeeded in identifying and arresting the murderers and their accomplices. The investigation also highlighted the extent of the infiltration of the 'Ndrangheta in Germany and across Europe.

6 NEAPOLITAN CAMORRA

The Camorra is not limited to the city of Naples, but it is widespread in the whole region of Campania, of which Naples is the capital. The provinces of Naples and Caserta, however, are those in which its oppressive presence is felt the most. The Camorra is a horizontal cluster of Clans and Families, often associated in alliances or – in case of common interests in trafficking activities – in cartels and is characterised by their extreme volatility in internal and external relationships. The absence of a unified command or, at least, of a higher body regulating controlled territories and areas of influence is a determining factor on the overall appraisal of the Camorra. On the one hand, the lack of a common strategy decreases the level of threat of the Camorra as a whole, especially if compared with other Mafia-type organisations with a hierarchical structure such as Cosa Nostra and the 'Ndrangheta. On the other hand, the total deregulation typical of the Camorra, often bordering on anarchy, imposes a heavier criminal burden on the communities living in the areas of influence of the Clans. In some of the territories controlled by the Camorra, and particularly in the city of Naples, many shopkeepers must pay the 'pizzo' to several different Clans, getting protection from none of them.

The use of extreme violence is a feature of the Camorra. In the 1980's and 90's they applied it internally as two groups, the Nuova Camorra Organizzata (New Organised Camorra) and the Nuova Famiglia (New Family) battled for supremacy. It lasted a number of years and resulted in the deaths of thousands of Camorra members. Internal struggles within the victorious group, the Nuova Famiglia, erupted immediately afterwards, further increasing the murder tally.

Outside of Naples the 'Casalesi Clan' of Caserta province, North of Naples, are currently in the ascendancy. They are involved in extortion, cocaine trafficking, money laundering and, through the use of legitimate business structures in the construction industry, infiltration of public institutions to access public tenders, funds and subsidies. Despite the recent arrests of some of their most charismatic leaders, the Casalesi are still the main power in the province and are displaying a disturbing proficiency in immediately and efficiently filling the gaps opened by high-level arrests.

In Naples, some of the historical Clans are losing power, debilitated by frequent arrests, internecine wars and internal struggles. There is currently a Camorra war in the northern Naples area involving the Di Lauro clan and its opposing factions, generally referred to as *Scissionisti*. The control of that area is crucial from a criminal perspective because it is the most important drug smuggling centre of the city. The situation could therefore have major repercussions on the international dimension of the Camorra, because when a new Clan obtains control of a smuggling market, it needs to supply it with sufficient quantities of drugs, and a change of demand or of suppliers can significantly alter delicate trans-national balances.

Unlike their Sicilian and Calabrian colleagues, the Camorra bosses often tend to have a very high profile reflected by their lavish mansions, designer clothes, custom-made shoes, glamorous mistresses, sport cars and extravagant expenses. Such a flashy lifestyle makes it harder for them to keep a low profile. On the other hand, it is an extremely powerful pull factor for far too many youngsters, for whom the Camorristi are role models. The aura of invincibility carefully nurtured by the Camorristi (and frequently corroborated by the media), combined with their constant mocking of any form of law-abiding and honest lifestyle, is a major corruptive factor on the environment and ensures a steady flow of new recruits for the Clans.

The Camorra is very active in several EU Member States, South America and also the US. The 'U.S. strategy to combat transnational organized crime', presented on 25 July 2011, identifies the Camorra as one of the four most threatening OCGs from a US perspective. In the EU, the Camorra has highly profitable operations in Spain, France, the Netherlands and Germany amongst others. An indication of the wealth they are accumulating would be the hit taken by the Polverino Clan in May 2011 with the preventive seizure of over 100 plots of land, 175 apartments, 19 villas, 141 shops, garages and warehouses, 43 businesses including hotels, jewellery shops and farms, 117 cars, 62 trucks, 23 motorbikes for an overall value of EUR 1

billion approximately.⁹ The arrest of the undisputed boss of the clan and his top lieutenant was carried out on 06/03/2012 in Jerez de la Frontera, Andalucía, Spain.

7 APULIAN OC

Apulian Organised Crime is characterised by heterogeneous structures that pursue different strategies mainly at a local level, with tendencies towards bandit-type behaviour in Bari and more organised forms in the Foggia province and in the Salento area where, respectively, the '**Società Foggiana**' and the '**Sacra Corona Unita**' (SCU) display typical Mafia traits, including infiltration in the local political and economic environments.

The '**Sacra Corona Unita**' was founded in Trani's prison on Christmas night, 1981. Its rituals are derived from those of the 'Ndrangheta, including the use of mystical, religious terminology.¹⁰

Mainly active in the provinces of Brindisi, Lecce and to a lesser extent, Taranto, the SCU is involved in extortion, robbery, cigarette smuggling, weapons and drug trafficking, which is carried out along the same routes and with the same East-European partners that for many years were used for importing contraband tobacco. The exploitation of trafficked human beings in prostitution or agricultural labour is another criminal market in which the SCU operates with profit. In the last few years, strong anti-smuggling measures have noticeably dented the profits of the SCU, pushing it towards more covert criminal activities with a more definite Mafia connotation, such as usury and infiltration in the political and economic sectors. Indeed, the successful strategy of the state through its judicial and law enforcement authorities had the somehow paradoxical consequence of increasing the threat of organised crime. In many areas the SCU try to impose a control of the territory similar to that of Cosa Nostra, the 'Ndrangheta or the Camorra. The high number of arrests and an endemic internal belligerence are delaying that process, but must nonetheless be considered a definite risk.

The '**Società Foggiana**' is the direct result of the decline of the Camorra inspired Nuova Camorra Pugliese (around 1983). The imprinting of the Camorra, however, was still strong and reflected in the ferocity of some executions and in the Mafia-like approach to several criminal activities. The 'Società' in fact, (besides operating in cigarette smuggling, drug and weapons trafficking, commodity counterfeiting and exploitation of prostitution) from the beginning took a domineering position in typical Mafia activities such as racketeering, gambling, usury and extortion. It was a dispute about extortions of funeral parlours (the 'pizzo' is EUR 500 per funeral) that started one of the many bloody wars within Clans (called *batterie*) of the Società. Growing criminal markets exploited by the 'Società' are the illicit dumping of waste (often in exhausted quarries) and fraud on public funding, especially in alternative means of power.

In the province of Foggia, in the Gargano area (the spur of the Boot) two Clans are fighting a never-ending feud, which has provoked more than 35 murders since its beginning in 1978. A third clan has joined in and all involved Clans use extreme violence and, albeit of rural origin, control their territory with Mafia-like methods, i.e. racketeering, extortions, deep penetration in the political and economic sector (especially in the tourism and construction industries), wide use of usury to secure the possession or the control of legitimate business structures and ruthless executions, usually with sawn-off shotguns. This cluster of organised crime groups is known as 'Gargano's Mafia'.

In Bari, capital of Apulia, Clans collectively known as 'Camorra Barese' control the criminal activities on their territory, often with high levels of violence that can lead to fierce inter-clan struggles, frequently leading to murders. Besides the usual markets of drug and weapons trafficking and cigarette smuggling, the Clans are often involved in armed robberies, including against heavy goods vehicles. Extortions, especially in the construction sector, are more frequent confirming an on-going trend towards Mafia practices.

⁹ Operation 'Polvere', Reparto Operativo Carabinieri Naples, May 2011.

¹⁰ A *Pentito* explained the etymology of the SCU name: '*The organization is Holy (Sacra) because the Sacra Corona Unita, if you read its statutes, when it meets or affiliates, someone consecrates and baptizes (like a priest during religious functions); Crown (Corona), because it is like the crown (of beads), that of the Rosary, the kind used in church to do the Via Crucis, side by side; United (Unita) because we have to be united as the links of a chain.*'

Overall, in the last few years Apulian organised crime groups have been weakened by many successful operations carried out by law enforcement agencies, and most of their leading members are now in prison. However, their criminal activities are only partially hampered. In fact, most of the imprisoned bosses manage to direct their Clan or group from prison. Furthermore, young, reckless and ambitious criminals are rapidly filling the gaps, and in some cases they try to take the place of imprisoned leaders, disturbing delicate balances and provoking a usually harsh reaction when they get out of jail. That increases the level of intra- and inter-group violence, but the general public is also endangered by gunfights between criminal groups or factions which often take place in daytime and in crowded places.

Apulian OC has historical links with criminal networks from Eastern Europe, which has been for many years a fundamental transit and storage location for smuggled cigarettes. Co-operating with other Mafia-type organisations such as the Camorra and the 'Ndrangheta has permitted Apulian mobsters to acquire new contacts and expertise, widening their criminal scope that for many years was confined to tobacco smuggling.

Offshoots of Apulian OCGs have been spreading outside the region and abroad for quite some time, although less consistently than other Italian Mafia. Active in particular in the field of drug trafficking and support to fugitives, they are located in areas of strategic interest for the drug trade, such as the Netherlands, Spain and Germany. They are also active in Switzerland and Eastern Europe. On 07/05/2011 operation 'Bamba' was finalised with the arrest of 26 suspects for international drug and weapons trafficking from Switzerland. Among the arrested criminals, were members belonging to the **Padovano–Scarlino–Giannelli** Clans resident in Switzerland.

8 MAIN CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

The foregoing paragraphs highlight how Italian Organised Crime groups commit a vast array of criminal activities. Whilst in their territories of origin these groups enjoy a quasi-monopoly over the perpetration of crimes, outside Italy they tend to favour certain crime fields:

- **Drug trafficking** remains one of the main crimes perpetrated internationally: through a widespread network of brokers and intermediaries, OCGs (especially the 'Ndrangheta) purchase, transport and sell immense quantities of narcotics. For example, a recent study reported how the 'Ndrangheta has a Euro 44 Billion yearly income, 62% deriving from drug trafficking alone¹¹. Needing to guarantee the flow of narcotics from source to destination countries, OCGs deploy emissaries (or in some cases entire branches of a Clan) along the drug trafficking routes, and this explains the many arrests of Italian *Mafiosi* in common transit countries such as The Netherlands and Spain.
- **Money laundering** is another crime perpetrated abroad by these OCGs, often exploiting the possibilities offered by markets such as real estate to invest the high volume of assets derived by their criminal activities. In general terms, all cash driven businesses (such as restaurants, bars, hotels etc.) are potentially vulnerable to infiltration.
- **Use of Corruption, as with** many OCGs, is a key enabling factor for Italian organised crime. The enormous wealth of the Mafias can be used to corruptly exert influence over decision-makers. For example, if brought to bear on the right decision-maker in the right position, a public tender can be easily won. However, money or other material benefits are not the only corruptive tool. In their territories, the Mafias have built their power with the control they have on votes for elected positions, and this control could also be exerted in communities of reference abroad.
- **Counterfeiting** of products, either procured by allied Chinese groups or manufactured in clandestine factories is a key feature of some specific Camorra groups. They are also proficient in currency counterfeiting, and many organised crime groups buy counterfeit Euros from them.

¹¹ EURISPES

- **Trafficking of waste/toxic waste** is and has been an activity perpetrated by all the main Italian OCGs and is attractive for its perceived high return low risk nature.

Other crimes committed include, in no particular order of importance, weapons trafficking, homicides, frauds, rigging of public tenders, corruption, intimidation, extortions, cigarette smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

9 EMERGING TRENDS

To quote a well-known Italian Public Prosecutor, *"Italian OCGs today are the only EU economic competitors that suffer the opposite problem of all other entrepreneurs: too much cash money and not enough possibilities of reinvestment"*. This concept, combined with the ongoing economic crisis, explains the recent trend towards **infiltration in the legal economy**: through sophisticated money laundering schemes and through careful investments in particular sectors, these groups not only attempt to justify their immense wealth, but present themselves on the market as strong competitors who can afford to operate "at a loss", creating in the long run a situation of *quasi-monopoly* that undermines the basic principles of free market.

As mentioned earlier, there are increasing reports of Italian OCGs engaging in the so called '**Alternative or Green Energy**' market, for example investments in wind energy farms. Such projects offer attractive opportunities to benefit from generous MS and EU grant and tax subsidies, but apart from effectively exploiting eco-friendly incentives for their financial gain, they also create possibilities to launder proceeds of crime via legal business structures.

Overall the **phenomenal growth of the Internet** has brought positive developments in everyday life. It offers a wide range of opportunities to business and public alike, including facilitating an unprecedented reach to the wider public and providing secure information exchange (including the use of popular encrypted messaging services such as Skype, Viber, Whatsapp, etc.), These **opportunities** apply equally for Organised Crime, enabling it to engage in highly profitable quasi-legal or illegal services or activities and any effective strategy to counter OC will have to take this key enabler into consideration. Easy profits, low regulatory scrutiny, and possibilities to operate anonymously are an inevitable attraction to Italian Organised Crime groups who, though the nature and scale of the threat is not yet clear, are likely to increase their engagement in this field in the near future, Cybercrime in the wider sense is the new frontier, and the mafias have a pioneering attitude to new markets.

10 CONCLUSIONS

In the national contributions to Europol's last two major EU-wide threat assessments - the 2011 OCTA and the 2013 SOCTA - Italian criminal groups were reported as active only in a handful of Member States besides Italy. The information provided was relatively limited and sometimes of an anecdotal nature. Considering that several other OCGs were reported as active in a greater number of Member States, one might think that Italian organised crime is not a relevant threat for the EU.

This would be a false impression. The fact that the Italian organised crime activities are so clearly under-reported is evidence of the insidious threat it poses to the European Union. Its activities may be less visible than in the case of other major organised crime groups, but the intelligence picture – of a network of contacts and activities throughout Europe – is clear.

The criminal behaviours normally associated with Italian Mafias, i.e. racketeering, extortions, loan-sharking, collection of protection money, all perpetrated in a stifling atmosphere of total control of the territory, while painfully present in their areas of origin, are virtually non-existent in their activities elsewhere: the overall strategy of Italian Mafias when operating abroad is that of keeping a low profile.

The type of control sought by the Mafias when abroad is purely economic, in the wider sense: not limited to the essential goal of making money, but extended to all aspects of the production and consumption of goods and services, the backbone of any country.

To infiltrate the economy Italian OCGs simply offer their goods and services at lower prices, in some cases keeping the quality very high: clearly the competition cannot remain in business for long. In some cases loans to competitors in distress are offered at unreasonably high interest rates, with the ultimate goal of getting hold of the business, which often has a solid history and a good reputation. In other cases a merger is proposed, again with the aim of isolating and *de facto* excluding from any decisional function the partner in difficulty, at the same time exploiting his good name and honest face. Other competitors will be forced to file for bankruptcy, and again the Families and the Clans will be there, ready to acquire their undertaking at a price far below its market value.

The strategy of working at a loss is also used in the constant endeavour of the Mafias to secure public tenders.

Like many other OCGs, Italian Mafias regularly use their corruptive power as an enabling factor. The enormous wealth of the Mafias can be used to exert influence over decision-makers, including those involved in public tenders. Money or other material benefits are not the only corruptive tools: in their territories, the Mafias have also built their power with the influence they have on votes for elected positions. That is the reason why Article 416bis of the Italian criminal code clearly specifies that tampering with the free exercise of voting is a definite Mafia-type behavior (and is punished accordingly).

With regards to the single OCGs, more specifically:

- Sicilian **Cosa Nostra** is mainly focused on its territory, but it permits its member to use its structure and relations to embark in trans-national criminal activities. The Families usually send their **emissaries** to selected areas of interest, and there they set up and carry out their operations. Drug trafficking and money laundering are the most frequent criminal markets in which members of Cosa Nostra are engaged abroad. In their **money laundering** activities they can infiltrate the host country, and their members can reach very high positions at a social, economic and even political level, especially away from Europe. Within the EU, money laundering schemes and shrewd investments mean that criminal profits are complemented with a constant flow of apparently legitimate revenues. A prudent use of selected **straw men** and skilled **professionals** greatly hampers seizure and confiscation processes in Member States with more lenient asset recovery legislation. In Europe Cosa Nostra is mainly present in **Spain, France and Germany**, while its most significant presence outside the EU is in the **United States, Canada, Venezuela and South Africa**.
- The Sicilian **STIDDA** and unaffiliated Clans, unlike Cosa Nostra, do not have a centralised structure, and manage their criminal activities individually. When outside

their territory, their **violent** nature leads to their involvement in criminal activities of greater impact on the host communities, such as armed robberies and other aggressive property crimes. They often carry out hit-and-run raids, returning to Sicily the very same day. Members of the STIDDA have been spotted in Germany.

- The Calabrian **'Ndrangheta** is among the most powerful organised crime groups at a global level. Its **colonisation** strategy is spreading all over the world. The 'Ndrangheta holds a dominant position in the **cocaine** market in Europe, and is involved in many other criminal fields, including weapons trafficking, fraud, rigging of public tenders, corruption, intimidation, extortion and environmental crime. The 'Ndrangheta employs sophisticated money laundering practices to conceal its **immense profits**. The clever use of legitimate business structures created by its Clans permits them to hide the criminal nature of their profits and, combined with corruption, to **infiltrate** the economic and political environments in which they operate. In Europe the Clans are mainly active in **Spain, France, the Netherlands, Germany** and **Switzerland**, with some expansion into **Eastern Europe**. The 'Ndrangheta is also very powerful in **Canada, the United States, Colombia** and **Australia**.
- The **Camorra** lacks a unified structure and the constant belligerence of its Clans renders commitments and alliances ephemeral. That has repercussions on their territory, where their presence has a very high impact on the community, and can also affect host countries where internecine outbursts of violence can erupt. The Clans of the Camorra when operating outside their territory are mainly involved in drug trafficking, cigarette smuggling, illicit waste dumping and sale of counterfeit products, either procured by allied Chinese groups or manufactured in clandestine factories near Naples. They are also proficient in currency counterfeiting, and many OCGs buy counterfeit Euros from them. Money laundering activities include construction companies and real estate investments. Far more flashy and flamboyant than their Sicilian and Calabrian counterparts, Camorra members tend to have a high profile and to live dangerously. **Spain** is the EU country of preference for many, but they have also been found operating in **France, the Netherlands, Germany** and **Switzerland**. The Camorra is also present in the **USA**, where it has been listed among the four main trans-national criminal threats.
- **Apulian** organised crime is frequently identified with the Sacra Corona Unita (SCU), but the situation is far more complex and fragmented, with a mixture of Camorra and 'Ndrangheta origins and traits. The SCU is dominant in the Southern part of Apulia, and, within Apulian organised crime, is the cluster with the widest international dimension. Historically linked with cigarette smuggling, the Clans are now also trafficking in human beings, drugs, weapons and waste. They are involved in fraud, including of EU subsidies. As with the Camorra, internal struggles and blood feuds are quite common, impacting violently on their territory. Outside Apulia the Clans are not as widespread as other Italian Mafias. Some members have been arrested or spotted outside Italy, mainly in the **Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland** and **Albania**.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Families and Clans posing the highest threat at EU level must be identified, prioritised and methodically targeted, tackled and dismantled. Intelligence-led policing combined with trans-national operations are required to effectively tackle the Italian organised crime phenomenon.
- Being a member of a Mafia-type organisation must be considered as a crime *per se*. Anti-Mafia legislation must be harmonised at EU level, and extradition requests for fugitive *Mafiosi* should be prioritised by receiving competent authorities.
- Member States in implementing their respective national intelligence cycles need to consider including regional/continental intelligence in their collection phase to avoid important information gaps on organised crime affecting the EU generally.
- Consideration needs to be given to the establishment of a specific EU funding mechanism to support international Law Enforcement cooperation in priority investigations. Law enforcement agencies are finding it increasingly difficult in these austere times to adequately fund operations demanding in personnel, travel and transport, technical and communications resources, informant handling, etc.
- New and more effective provisions should be introduced in order to realise third-party confiscation, extended confiscation and non-conviction based confiscation. Procedures based on civil law should also be considered whereby the burden of providing evidential proof is lessened. Experience demonstrates that the value of the assets confiscated could largely exceed the possible EU funding mentioned above.
- All criminal investigations on Families and Clans need to be accompanied by parallel financial investigations from an early stage. Straw men and professionals aiding and abetting must be considered as affiliates to the Clan or Family they knowingly help.
- It is relatively straightforward to arrange the extradition of a suspect but it is rather more complex to restrain assets of criminal origin that are located abroad. This paradox should be removed. Information concerning legal persons and legal arrangements as well as the beneficial owner and control structure of these entities must be directly accessible within the EU by the law enforcement authorities of the Member States in order to facilitate asset tracing activities.
- Mafias raise and launder huge amounts of money. While EU anti-money laundering legislation has reached a consistent level of harmonisation there are still obstacles to the effective exploitation of the financial intelligence contained within the suspicious transactions reports. This intelligence not only facilitates the detection of the corporate vehicles used to launder money, the straw men representing them and the vertices of the criminal groups, but could also support the tracking of fugitives. The globalisation of financial markets and the transnational nature of these groups' activities require a comprehensive approach at EU level, to connect financial information with criminal intelligence collected by competent Law Enforcement Authorities.
- Many investigations are successfully conducted in Italy against Mafias every year. Many of them contain links to groups, clans, fugitives, straw men, professionals and companies located abroad. These links should be systematically exploited in a coordinated way through Europol's dedicated projects.
- International co-operation is necessary to fight and dismantle the most threatening Clans and Families, but a stronger central police function is needed: it should be possible to require Member States to commit resources to tackle targets posing the highest threat at EU level, even if at a national level it may seem a lesser problem (EU priorities must also become national priorities).