EU POLICY CYCLE SOCTA EMPACT

EUROPOL

Europol is the law enforcement agency of the European Union. Our aim is to help achieve a safer Europe by supporting the law enforcement agencies of the EU member states in their fight against international serious and organised crime and terrorism. Europol uses its unique information and analysis capabilities and the expertise of more than 700 staff to identify and track the most dangerous criminal and terrorist networks in the EU.

THE POLICY CYCLE

In 2010, the EU established a multi-annual policy cycle . Its aim is to ensure that in the fight against serious international and organised crime there is:

•   effective cooperation between Member States law enforcement agencies, EU Institutions, EU Agencies and relevant third parties; delivering
•   coherent and robust operational action targeting the most pressing criminal threats facing the EU.
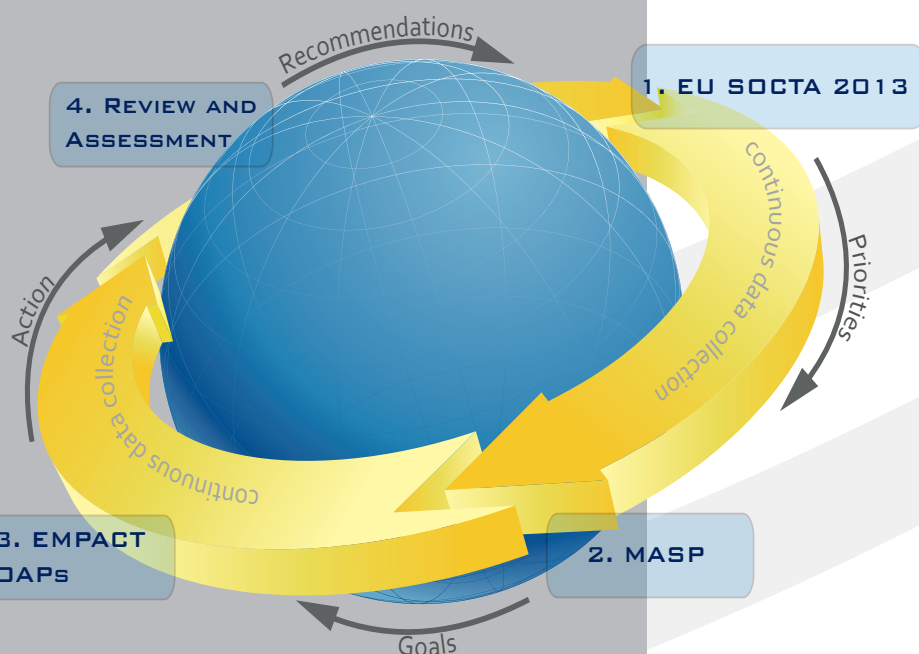
The full policy cycle has commenced in 2013 and will last for four years. It consists of four key steps, which are:

Step 1: SOCTA – the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment, developed by Europol, delivered a set of recommendations based on an in-depth analysis of the major crime threats facing the EU. The Council of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers used these recommendations to define its priorities for the next four years (2013-2017).

Step 2: MASP - Multi-Annual Strategic Action Plans will be developed from the priorities in order to define the strategic goals for combating each priority threat.

Step 3: EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats) – These projects will set out operational action plans (OAPs) to combat the priority threats.

Step 4: Review and assessment – the effectiveness of the OAPs and their impact on the priority threat will be reviewed by COSI . In 2015, an interim threat assessment (SOCTA) will be prepared by Europol to evaluate, monitor and adjust (if required) the effort in tackling the priority threats.

The EU Policy Cycle

SOCTA

The SOCTA has a core role in the policy cycle. From strategic priorities through to operational action, it will ensure an intelligence-led approach will be at the heart of tackling the major criminal threats facing the EU.

In preparing the SOCTA, Europol analyses trends and patterns in current crime data but also looks further, scanning the environment for other factors that will influence crime during the four years of the policy cycle. This provides the basis for an evidential forecast of future threats to EU internal security.

The analysis underpinning the development of priorities also supports the planning of operational actions.

EMPACT - where are we today

The SOCTA2013 provided the basis on which Council agreed nine SOC priorities for 2013-2017. Each one of these priorities will be translated into Multi-annual Strategic Plans (MASP) defining the strategic goals to achieve. In order to achieve these Strategic Goals, Operational Action Plans will be designed, and nine EMPACT projects are launched to coordinate actions by Member States and EU organisations against the identified threats. The nine EMPACT projects are:

■ **Facilitation of Illegal Immigration** – aiming to: disrupt OCGs involved in facilitation of illegal immigration operating in the source countries, at the main entry points to the EU on the main routes and, where evidence based, on alternative channels. To reduce OCGs' abuse of legal channels for migration including the use of fraudulent documents as a means of facilitating illegal immigration.

■ **Trafficking in Human Beings** – aiming to: disrupt OCGs involved in intra-EU human trafficking and human trafficking from the most prevalent external source countries for the purposes of labour exploitation and sexual exploitation; including those groups using Legal Business Structures to facilitate or disguise their criminal activities.

■ **Counterfeit goods** – aiming to: disrupt the OCGs involved in the production and distribution of counterfeit goods violating health, safety and food regulations and those producing sub-standard goods.

■ **Excise and MTIC Fraud** – aiming to: disrupt the capacity of OCGs and specialists involved in excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community fraud.

■ **Synthetic Drugs** – aiming to: reduce the production of synthetic drugs in the EU and to disrupt the OCGs involved in synthetic drugs trafficking.

■ **Cocaine and Heroin** – aiming to: reduce cocaine and heroine trafficking to the EU and to disrupt the OCGs facilitating the distribution in the EU.

■ **Illicit Firearms Trafficking** – aiming to: reduce the risk of firearms to the citizen including combating illicit trafficking in firearms.

■ **Organised Property Crime** – aiming to: combat organised property crime committed by Mobile Organised Crime Groups.

■ **Cybercrime** – aiming to: combat cybercrimes committed by OCGs and generating large criminal profits such as online and payment card fraud, cybercrimes which cause serious harm to their victims such as Child Sexual Exploitation, and cyber-attacks which affect critical infrastructure and information systems in the EU.

Improvements in cooperation are already being seen in the current priority areas, with joint operations and investigations now being run.
Information from these investigations returns to Europol via its secure system, SIENA, to be analysed via Europol's unique analysis system of the Analysis Work Files (AWFs) The intelligence derived from these investigations will inform the review phase of the Policy Cycle and the interim assessment in 2015.