

# Commission and High Representative Propose EU Sanctions against Migrant Smuggling and Organised Crime

Joscha Kanstinger

On 9 July 2026, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy [proposed a new horizontal EU sanctions regime](#) targeting migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and other serious forms of organised crime, including drug trafficking and related illicit activities, the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms, and money laundering. Announced by Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* in [her 2025 State of the Union address](#), the initiative aims to disrupt criminal networks' operations and deprive them of financial resources.

The framework would target illicit activities originating outside the EU that pose a serious threat to the Union's values, the security of the EU and its Member States, or international security because of their widespread, systematic or organised nature. Individuals and entities involved in these activities could be listed, including those who lead, direct or support them or benefit financially from them.

The envisaged measures are asset freezes, prohibitions on making funds or economic resources available to listed persons or entities, and travel bans for listed individuals. The Commission stresses that the measures would be temporary, reversible, proportionate and subject to regular review. Migrants, asylum seekers and persons in need of international protection, as well as legitimate humanitarian activities, would not be targeted.

The regime would complement existing frameworks, including the [Libya sanctions regime](#) and the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime under [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/1998](#). It would provide a horizontal basis for targeting actors involved in serious organised crime irrespective of the region concerned, where existing sanctions regimes do not apply.

The initiative also complements the EU's criminal-law and law-enforcement response to migrant smuggling. It will sit alongside the proposed [Facilitation Directive](#) ([→eucrim 3/2023, 257–258](#)) and [Regulation \(EU\) 2025/2611](#), which strengthens Europol's support and police cooperation against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings ([→eucrim 4/2025, 268](#)). Separately, [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1226](#) requires Member States to criminalise specified intentional violations of EU restrictive measures, including their circumvention.

The proposal will now be discussed in the Council, where Member States must adopt the law by unanimity.

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