

Commission Presents 2021-2025 EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime



Anna Pinggen

News

On 14 April 2021, the European Commission presented the new [EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime](#). The new strategy is part of the [EU Security Union Strategy](#) (→ [euCRIM 2/2020, 71–73](#)), which aims to protect European citizens from terrorism and organised crime. It also significantly draws upon Europol's 2021 report [Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment \(SOCTA\)](#).

The strategy addresses the threat that organised crime poses to European citizens, state institutions, and the economy as a whole: organised crime groups can be found across all Member States, and the business model of these groups – both online and offline – can be quite complex, as shown by the investigation that [dismantled EncroChat](#) in 2020 (→ [euCRIM 1/2021, 22-23](#)) The situation is exacerbated by the ability of organised groups to quickly adapt to the changing socio-economic environment. For example, some organised crime groups have been capitalising on the COVID-19 pandemic with the sale of counterfeit vaccines.

The vice-president in the Von der Leyen Commission with the portfolio of European Commissioner for Promoting the European Way of Life, *Margaritis Schinas*, confirmed that the strategy will help *undermine the business model of organised criminal groups, which thrives on the lack of coordination between states*.

The new strategy is built upon the following four pillars:

(1) Boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation

The Commission will:

- Expand and modernise the 2010 European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EM-PACT) and establish it as the EU flagship instrument to fight organised and serious international crime. EMPACT aims to bring together all relevant European and national authorities to identify priority crime threats and address them collectively;
- Propose strengthening the 2010 Prüm framework, which allows law enforcement authorities to search for DNA, fingerprints, and vehicle registration in the databases of other Member States during their investigations;
- Propose the creation of an EU Police Cooperation Code;
- Start negotiations for agreements on cooperation between Eurojust and third countries and step up negotiations on cooperation between Europol and third countries.

AUTHOR

Anna Pinggen 

Researcher
Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Crime, Security and
Law

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(2) Supporting more effective investigations to disrupt organised crime structures, focusing on specific serious crimes

The Commission will:

- Revise the [Environmental Crime Directive](#);
- Establish an EU toolbox against the counterfeiting of medical products.

Member States are urged to:

- Join and strengthen the [@ON Network](#), which aims at improving the cooperation between law enforcement authorities, including Europol, on mafia-type organised crime groups.

(3) Eliminating profits generated by organised crime and preventing their infiltration into the legal economy and legal businesses

The Commission will:

- Propose a revision of the 2014 [Confiscation Directive](#) and the 2007 [Council Decision on Asset Recovery Offices](#), in order to expand the scope of criminal offences covered;
- Assess the suitability of the existing EU anti-corruption rules countering existing criminal practices.

(4) Making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age

The Commission will:

- Identify technical and legal solutions to ensure lawful access by law enforcement authorities to encrypted information within the context of criminal investigations.
 - Encourage the participation of Member States in the e-Evidence Digital Exchange System (e-EDES).
 - Develop, through its Joint Research Centre, a monitoring tool to gather intelligence on illegal activities developing in the Darknet.
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