

EMSC Report



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News

In April 2018, Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) published its two-year [Activity Report](#) covering the period from January 2017 to January 2018.

The EMSC was established in 2016 in order to support cross-border investigations in the disruption and prosecution of organised criminal groups (OCGs), with a focus on migrant smuggling.

According to the report, 46% of the OCGs active in migrant smuggling are poly-criminal and consequently also involved in other crimes, e.g., money laundering, THB, drug trafficking, organised property crime, etc. Because there is a relatively low level of risk, migrant smuggling is highly lucrative and, hence, OCGs previously involved in other criminal activities often add migrant smuggling to their crime portfolios.

Looking at the *modus operandi* of these OCGs, the report finds that sophisticated and often life-threatening concealment methods are used to smuggle migrants across borders. Furthermore, fraudulent or fraudulently obtained travel and identity documents being increasingly used. Another method often applied is the abuse of visa-free travel schemes that several non-EU Balkan countries offer and visa-free arrangements that many countries have with the EU.

The report finds that migrant smugglers are increasingly using diverse means of transportation such as lorries containing large groups of migrants, leisure vessels, international freight and passenger trains, and light aircraft.

One of the key enablers of migrant smuggling is document fraud. Criminals use high-quality counterfeit (entirely fabricated) documents and forged (altered/modified) documents. They also abuse genuine ID/travel documents with lookalikes. Another key issue is the use of social media to advertise smuggling services. In order to counter these methods, Europol established a Horizontal Expert Group (HEG) on Document Fraud in 2017, which offers operational support, forensic support, on-the-spot technical support, and an enhanced intelligence picture to the Member States.

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