

Progress Report on the Implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy

News

Anna Pinggen

In 2020, the Commission adopted a new EU Security Union Strategy for the period 2020-2025 (→ [euocrim 2/2020, 71-72](#)). The [2024 Seventh Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy](#), presented on 15 May 2024, provides a comprehensive overview of the progress and achievements since the Strategy's adoption with a focus on five key areas: the protection of the EU's physical and digital infrastructure; the fight against terrorism and radicalisation; the fight against organised crime; the strengthening of law enforcement and judicial cooperation; and cooperation with international partners. The final two chapters deal with the proper implementation of the Security Union and provide an outlook on the security concept after 2025.

Strengthening physical and digital infrastructure

The report emphasizes the need for increased protection and resilience of critical infrastructure in the face of rising hybrid attacks, particularly following the geopolitical instability caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Significant strides have been made with the adoption of new directives, such as the Directive on the Resilience of Critical Entities and the Directive on Network and Information Security (NIS II), which came into force in January 2023. The report also highlights the importance of cybersecurity, noting the introduction of the Cyber Resilience Act and the Cyber Solidarity Act to enhance the EU's cybersecurity framework and response capabilities.

Fighting terrorism and radicalisation

The EU has strengthened its ability to combat terrorism through various initiatives. The EU Agenda on Counter-Terrorism, adopted in 2020, has equipped the EU to better anticipate, prevent, protect, and respond to terrorist threats. The Directive on combating terrorism, implemented across all Member States, criminalizes actions such as training and financing terrorism. However, the report also notes the ongoing challenge of foreign terrorist fighters returning to the EU, with significant efforts being made to address this issue, including systematic checks in the Schengen Information System.

Protecting public spaces from terrorist threats remains a priority. The EU Protective Security Advisor Programme has mobilized experts to assess and enhance the security of public spaces, high-risk events, and critical infrastructures. The EU has also increased funding for protecting places of worship, particularly in response to rising antisemitism.

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Preventing radicalisation is seen as the first step in preventing terrorist attacks. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) plays a crucial role in bringing together policymakers, law enforcement, and researchers to develop best practices to address violent extremism. The creation of the EU Knowledge Hub for the Prevention of Radicalisation in June 2024 is expected to further enhance collaboration among stakeholders. The EU has also established the EU Centre of expertise for victims of terrorism, which provides guidance and support to national authorities and victim support organisations. This center ensures that EU rules on victims of terrorism are correctly applied and promotes the exchange of best practices.

Combating organised crime

Significant progress in the fight against organised crime has been made with the launch of initiatives such as the EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025 and the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025. New measures have been introduced to fight drug trafficking, enhance law enforcement cooperation, and improve cybersecurity. The European Public Prosecutor's Office has also been instrumental in investigating organised crimes affecting the EU budget.

Enhancing law enforcement and judicial cooperation

The Commission has strengthened tools for cross-border cooperation, including the legal framework on police cooperation adopted in 2024. It includes new rules on information exchange, the revision of the Prüm framework, and new regulations for handling electronic evidence in criminal cases. These efforts aim to enhance the EU's capacity to prevent, detect, and prosecute serious crimes. The EU has emphasized strengthening the tools available for effective cooperation and information exchange among police and judicial authorities across EU Member States, which is crucial for maintaining security and managing migration effectively.

To further strengthen cooperation, a new regulation has established a platform for joint investigation teams, providing secure means of communication and information exchange. The introduction of new rules on the transfer of proceedings in criminal matters will help avoid duplication and ensure that cases are prosecuted effectively across borders. Finally, the Digital Justice Package will enable secure and efficient communication between courts, facilitating better judicial cooperation and the fight against crime in the EU.

Enhancing security cooperation with international partners

The EU's swift response to internal security threats from Russia's invasion of Ukraine included establishing structured dialogues on internal security with Ukraine and Moldova and strengthening cooperation on cyber resilience and border management. The EU has also intensified its cooperation with the Western Balkans, especially in counter-terrorism, and has engaged in dialogues with the Middle East, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and other regions to address security challenges. Cooperation with NATO has intensified, focusing on resilience, critical infrastructure, and countering hybrid threats. The EU has also enhanced its cybersecurity efforts, launching dialogues with the USA, Japan, India, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, the EU has reinforced its commitment to counter-terrorism and organised crime through multilateral cooperation with organisations like the UN, NATO, and the Global Coalition against Da'esh. The EU also took steps to protect its internal security from foreign interference, particularly in the context of the European elections, and has addressed the growing impact of climate change on peace and security. The Defence of Democracy package, introduced in December 2023, aims to protect EU democracies from covert interference and to tackle disinformation.

Implementing the Security Union

The report notes that implementation by Member States of EU legislation in the Security Union area is mostly satisfactory, however, the Commission has been vigilant with regard to gaps that triggered infringement proceedings.

The report emphasizes the essential role of EU agencies and bodies, such as Europol, Eurojust, ENISA, and Frontex, in implementing the EU's security policies. These agencies have expanded their roles and capabilities in recent years. For example, ENISA has bolstered the EU's cybersecurity efforts, while Europol's reinforced mandate now allows it to better support Member States in combating terrorism and organised crime, including the direct receipt of data from private parties. Eurojust has enhanced its capacity to coordinate terrorism investigations across Member States and third countries. Frontex, in cooperation with Europol and other agencies, continues to play a significant role in managing EU borders and dealing with cross-border crimes such as migrant smuggling.

Outlook

The report concludes that the concept of security is no longer centred on military and home affairs anymore; security aspects must be embedded in all EU policies and decision-making processes. Economic security will be a key element in the future. In addition, future reflections on security will need to explore how law enforcement can make use of digital technologies, while ensuring that fundamental rights are fully respected when it comes to access to data in areas such as quantum communication infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence and advanced surveillance technologies.

Finally, the report states that the Commission has delivered on all commitments under the Security Union Strategy 2020-2025. Four years into its implementation, the Strategy has consolidated the EU's security toolbox and now provides a powerful foundation for the protection of Europeans in the future.

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