

SOC  
TA

2017

EUROPEAN UNION

# SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT

Crime in the age of technology

**The European Union (EU) Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2017** is a detailed analysis of the threat of serious and organised crime facing the EU providing information for practitioners, decision-makers and the wider public. Europol is the EU's law enforcement agency and assists the 28 EU Member States in their fight against serious international crime and terrorism. For the SOCTA 2017, Europol has undertaken the largest-ever data collection on serious and organised crime in the EU. Europol relied on thousands of contributions by Member States, Europol's operational and strategic partners outside the EU and our institutional partners as well as operational intelligence held in Europol's databases to produce the most detailed assessment of the nature and scale of criminal threats facing the EU and its Member States.

Serious and organised crime in the EU features a great variety of criminal activities, which are increasing in complexity and scale. Criminals quickly adopt and integrate new technologies into their *modi operandi* or build brand-new business models around them. The use of new technologies by organised crime groups (OCGs) has an impact on criminal activities across the spectrum of serious and organised crime. This includes developments online, such as the expansion of online trade and widespread availability of encrypted communication channels.

The SOCTA 2017 can be accessed on the Europol website

[www.europol.europa.eu](http://www.europol.europa.eu)

# CRIME MARKETS



**CURRENCY COUNTERFEITING**



**CYBERCRIME**  
Child sexual exploitation  
Payment card fraud  
Cyber-dependent crimes



**DRUG PRODUCTION TRAFFICKING AND DISTRIBUTION**



**ILLICIT WASTE TRAFFICKING**



**TRAFFICKING OF ENDANGERED SPECIES**



**FRAUD**  
Excise fraud  
Investment fraud  
Mass marketing fraud  
Payment order fraud  
Value Added Tax fraud



**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME**



**MIGRANT SMUGGLING**



**ORGANISED PROPERTY CRIME**



**SPORTS CORRUPTION**



**TRAFFICKING OF FIREARMS**



**TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

## ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS



**5,000**  
international groups currently under investigation

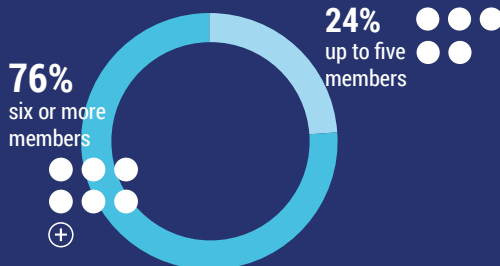


**>180**  
nationalities involved

## STRUCTURE



## COMPOSITION



## INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION AND MOBILITY

**7 out of 10**  
OCGs are typically active in more than three countries



## TRENDS

### ▲ Poly-criminality

**45%**

of the OCGs reported for the SOCTA 2017 are involved in more than one criminal activity

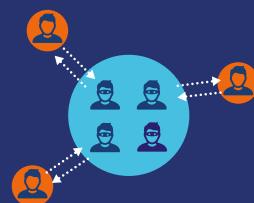


Many OCGs have expanded their crime portfolio in response to the sustained high level of demand for smuggling services during the migration crisis.



### ▲ Sharing Economy

An increasing number of individual criminal entrepreneurs come together on an ad hoc basis for specific criminal ventures or to deliver crime-as-a-service.



▲ = increasing

# ENGINES OF ORGANISED CRIME

Document fraud, money laundering and the online trade in illicit goods and services are the engines of organised crime. These cross-cutting criminal threats enable and facilitate most, if not all, other types of serious and organised crime.



# ONLINE TRADE IN ILLICIT GOODS AND SERVICES

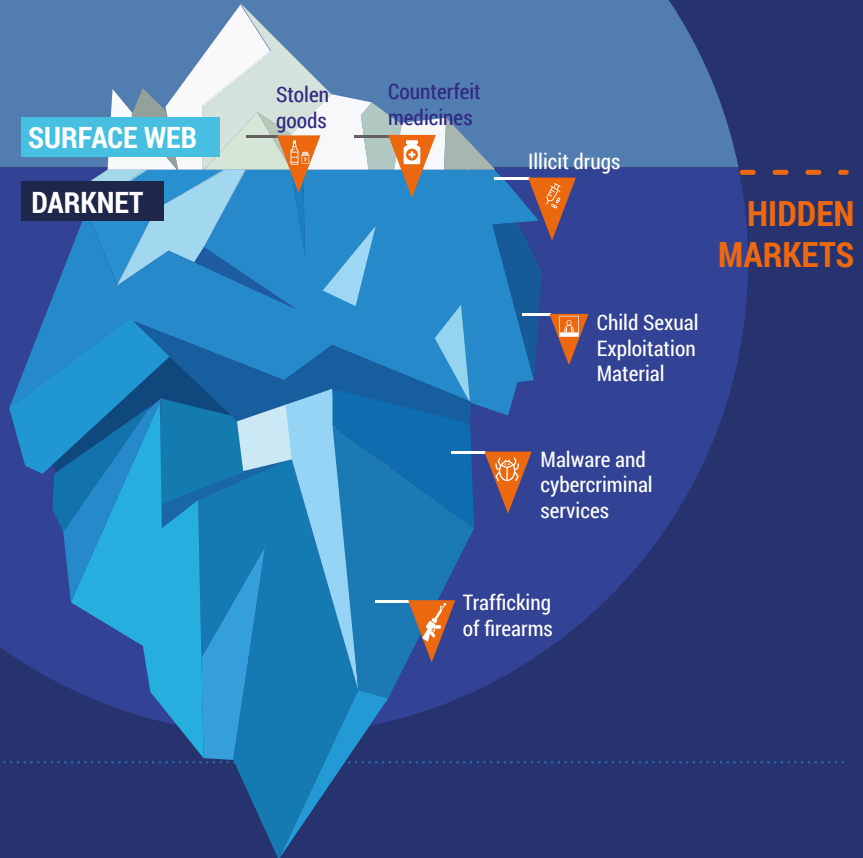


**85%** of internet users feel at risk of becoming a victim of cybercrime



## CRIME-AS-A-SERVICE (CaaS)

The CaaS model provides easy access to tools and services across the entire spectrum of cyber-criminality, from entry-level to top-tier players, including those with other motivations such as hackers or even terrorists. This allows even entry-level cybercriminals to carry out attacks of a scale disproportionate to their technical capability. Criminal forums and marketplaces within the deep web or Darknet remain a crucial environment for cybercriminals to communicate and are a key component for CaaS.



## CYBERCRIME

Cybercrime continues to grow as society becomes increasingly digitised.



### Malware and ID theft

Malware typically steals user data such as credit card numbers, login credentials and personal information from infected machines for subsequent use by criminals in fraud.



### Cryptoware

Cryptoware (ransomware using encryption) has become the leading malware in terms of threat and impact. It encrypts victims' user generated files, denying them access unless the victim pays a fee to have their files decrypted.



### Network attacks

Network intrusions that result in unlawful access to or disclosure of private data (data breaches) or intellectual property are growing in frequency and scale, with hundreds of millions of records compromised globally each year.



### Payment order fraud

Criminals use fraudulent transfer orders to defraud private and public sector organisations. Fraudsters heavily rely on social engineering techniques and malware to carry out this type of fraud.



### Payment card fraud

Compromised card data is readily available and easy to obtain on forums, marketplaces and automated card shops in the deep web and Darknet.



### Online sexual exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation Material is increasingly produced for financial gain and distributed through the Darknet. Coercion and sexual extortion are increasingly being used to victimise children.

# DRUG TRAFFICKING



## THE LARGEST CRIMINAL MARKET IN THE EU

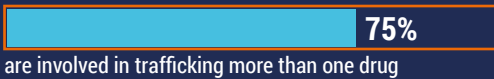


Drug market generates  
**~24 EUR** billion/year  
in profits



**>35%**  
of the criminal groups active in  
the EU are involved in the drug  
market

OCGs linked to drugs



are involved in trafficking more than one drug



are involved in other criminal activities



**419**  
previously undetected New  
Psychoactive Substances reported in  
the EU for the first time over the past  
five years.

## TRENDS

**SYNTHETIC DRUGS**  
The market for synthetic drugs  
continues to be the most  
dynamic of the drug markets in  
the EU.



**ONLINE TRADE**  
Online marketplaces on the  
Darknet are now a key  
platform used to advertise  
and sell all types of drugs.



**CUTTING - EDGE TECHNOLOGY**  
Technical innovation and  
sophisticated equipment  
allow OCGs to maximise the  
production output.



**TOXIC WASTE**  
The production of synthetic  
drugs generates large quantities  
of highly toxic and dangerous  
waste. Dump sites often remain  
contaminated for a significant  
period of time and their  
recovery is costly.



**LIBYA**  
Libya is emerging as a new  
distribution hub for cannabis  
resin trafficked to the EU across  
the Mediterranean Sea.



# MIGRANT SMUGGLING

▲ **The demand for smuggling services has grown significantly since 2014.**

More than 510,000 illegal border crossings between border-crossing points at the external border of the EU were registered in 2016. Nearly all of the irregular migrants arriving in the EU along these routes use the services offered by criminal networks at some point during their journeys.

Armed conflicts, economic and population pressures in Africa and the Middle East will continue to act as the main push factors for irregular migrants travelling to the EU.

▲ **Migrant smuggling to and within the EU will remain a key criminal threat.**



## FACILITATION SERVICES

Migrant smuggling networks offer their services including **transportation**, **accommodation**, the **provision of fraudulent documents** and **information** on contact points in other countries. This crime does not require access to significant resources and OCGs can rely on their existing knowledge of routes and infrastructure used to smuggle goods across borders.



### TRANSPORTATION & ACCOMMODATION

Migrant smugglers pass irregular migrants from one network to another along the route of the migrants' journey.

EU suspects typically work as drivers transporting irregular migrants within the EU to destination countries.



### COMMUNICATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Migrant smugglers widely rely on **social media** and use online platforms such as **ride-sharing websites**, or **Peer to Peer (P2P)** accommodation platforms, to arrange facilitation services.



### DOCUMENT FRAUD

Document fraud has emerged as a key criminal activity linked to the migration crisis.

The abuse of genuine passports by look-alikes continues to be the main modus operandi used by document fraudsters.

## LINKS BETWEEN MIGRANT SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS (THB)

OCGs involved in the trafficking of human beings (THB) often exploit existing migratory routes to traffic victims within the EU. While the migration crisis has not yet had a widespread impact on THB for labour exploitation in the EU, some investigations show that traffickers are increasingly targeting irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the EU for exploitation. Irregular migrants in the EU represent a large pool of potential victims susceptible to promises of work even if this entails exploitation.

### LABOUR EXPLOITATION



### SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



### CHILD TRAFFICKING



# TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The trafficking of victims within the EU remains a key threat. The traditional trafficking flow from Eastern Europe to Western Europe has been replaced by multiple and diverse flows of victims all over the EU.



- ▲ The migration crisis has resulted in an increase in the number of potential victims of THB.
- ▲ A growing number of **vulnerable adults and unaccompanied minors** in the EU are likely to be targeted by traffickers.

Traffickers continue to rely on the use of social media, Voice-over-IP (VoIP) and instant messaging applications at all stages of the trafficking cycle.



## LABOUR EXPLOITATION



- ▲ **THB for labour exploitation** is increasing in the EU.

Traffickers continue to target less regulated industries as well as those featuring seasonal demand for workers.

Vulnerable sectors include agriculture, catering, cleaning, construction, entertainment, fishing, hospitality, retail and transportation.



## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



Sexual exploitation no longer relies mainly on the use of violence and coercion.

- ▲ OCGs have further increased the **use of legal businesses** that can conceal exploitations such as hotels, nightclubs and massage parlours.



## CHILD TRAFFICKING



Traffickers often specifically target underage victims, both male and female, to sexually exploit them.

In some cases, underage victims are trafficked for the purpose of producing Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM), which is traded on online platforms.



# ORGANISED PROPERTY CRIME

Organised property crime encompasses a range of different criminal activities carried out predominantly by mobile OCGs operating across the EU. Organised burglaries, thefts and robberies as well as motor vehicle crime and the trafficking of cultural goods all fall into this broad category of criminal activity.



Online marketplaces have made it easier to sell stolen goods. These marketplaces are now used extensively to sell stolen goods, particularly phones, tablets and other electronic equipment.

## ORGANISED BURGLARIES AND THEFTS



▲ OCGs make use of various online services to facilitate their burglaries. This includes checking on social media platforms whether individuals are away from targeted residences and scouting targeted neighbourhoods using free online navigation tools.



The scale and level of organisation of pickpocketing raids across many Member States suggests that mobile OCGs are heavily involved in many pickpocketing cases.

## MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME



▲ OCGs increasingly rely on technical tools and expertise to overcome new vehicle security measures. Some OCGs steal specific vehicles to order for clients based in destination countries.

## CULTURAL GOODS TRAFFICKING



▲ The conflicts in Libya, Syria and Iraq are thought to have resulted in the intensified trafficking of cultural goods from this region to the EU.

SOC  
TA

EUROPEAN UNION  
SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME  
THREAT ASSESSMENT

@Europol  
facebook.com/europol  
youtube.com/europoltube

europol.europa.eu

EUROPOL



To download the report, scan this QR code or type into your browser <https://goo.gl/Gw89Cy>