

Policy Brief



Neapolis University Pafos, Cyprus
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Jean Monnet Center of Excellence



Tackling Organized Crime in the EU:

An Analysis of the 2021-2025 Strategy

NUP Jean Monnet/UNESCO Policy Briefs

18/2024



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Neapolis
University
Pafos

UNESCO Chair in Human
Development, Security & the
Fight against Transnational
Crime and Illicit Trafficking in
Cultural Property



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Copy Editor: G. Pavlidis

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Neapolis University Pafos, School of Law

Pafos, 8042, Cyprus

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Frontpage picture: Generated with AI (Bing Image Creator)

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Tackling Organized Crime in the EU: An Analysis of the 2021-2025 Strategy

Executive Summary:

The European Union (EU) faces a significant threat from organized crime, with activities ranging from drug trafficking and human smuggling to cybercrime and money laundering. Recognizing this threat, the EU adopted a new strategy in 2021 to combat organized crime for the 2021-2025 period. This strategy represents a significant step forward in the fight against organized crime. While challenges remain, the strategy's focus on collaboration, targeted interventions, and international cooperation offers a promising approach to disrupting criminal activities, protecting citizens, and fostering a safer Europe. This brief examines the key pillars of this strategy and assesses its potential impact on the fight against organized crime in the EU.

Keywords

organized crime, drug trafficking, human smuggling, money laundering, EU, EU strategy

Key Pillars of the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025

- The strategy emphasizes collaboration across member states, promoting information sharing, joint investigations, and harmonized legal frameworks.
- The strategy focuses on disrupting key criminal markets, including drugs, firearms, trafficking, and cybercrime, by utilizing intelligence-led investigations and asset recovery measures.
- The strategy aims to tackle corruption within the EU and enhance financial crime investigations, including by strengthening the legal framework and improving cross-border cooperation.
- The strategy recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups, such as migrants and children, and proposes measures to protect them from exploitation by organized crime networks.
- The strategy highlights the importance of global partnerships and collaboration with non-EU countries to effectively tackle organized crime networks operating across borders.

Potential Impact

The EU Strategy to tackle Organized Crime 2021-2025 has the potential to significantly improve the EU's ability to combat this threat. By focusing on collaboration, intelligence-led investigations, and targeting key criminal markets, the strategy could disrupt criminal activities and dismantle criminal networks. Additionally, addressing corruption and financial crime, protecting vulnerable groups, and promoting international cooperation are crucial steps towards a more comprehensive approach to tackling organized crime.

Challenges and Considerations

- Effective implementation of the strategy across all member states is crucial for its success. This requires overcoming challenges such as differences in national legislation and operational capacities.
- Adequate resources must be allocated to law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, and other relevant actors to ensure effective implementation of the strategy.
- Engaging civil society organizations in awareness-raising, prevention, and victim support initiatives can provide valuable contributions to the fight against organized crime.
- Organized crime groups are continuously adapting and utilizing new technologies. The strategy needs to be flexible and adaptable to address emerging threats posed by technological advancements.

Evolving Landscape and Emerging Threats

The EU Strategy rightly acknowledges the constantly evolving nature of organized crime. While traditional areas like drug trafficking and human smuggling remain significant concerns, novel threats like cybercrime, crypto-currency abuse, and environmental crime are rapidly growing. The strategy needs to be continuously evaluated and adapted to address these emerging threats. Investing in intelligence-gathering capabilities, fostering public-private partnerships in cyber security, and developing regulatory frameworks for crypto-currencies are crucial steps in this regard.

Role of Technology and Innovation

Technology can be a powerful tool not only for criminals but also for law enforcement agencies. The strategy encourages leveraging big data analytics, advanced forensics tools, and secure communication platforms to enhance investigations and intelligence gathering. Additionally, promoting innovation in areas like blockchain technology for secure and transparent financial transactions can contribute to disrupting money laundering activities. However, ethical considerations and robust data privacy safeguards are essential when utilizing these technologies.

Measuring Success and Ensuring Accountability:

Evaluating the effectiveness of the EU Strategy requires establishing clear, measurable objectives and indicators. Monitoring progress across member states and ensuring transparency in implementation are crucial. Regular evaluations and reports can identify areas for improvement and adapt the strategy to respond to emerging challenges. Holding relevant actors accountable for implementing the strategy effectively is also vital for achieving its long-term goals.

Conclusion

The EU Strategy to tackle Organized Crime 2021-2025 offers a comprehensive and dynamic framework for combating this complex and persistent threat. By fostering collaboration, targeting key criminal markets, and embracing innovation, the strategy has the potential to significantly improve the EU's capacity to dismantle criminal networks and protect its citizens. However, addressing implementation challenges, adapting to evolving threats, and ensuring accountability are crucial for realizing the full potential of this strategy. Continued commitment and collective action from all stakeholders are essential for creating a safer and more secure European Union.

Policy makers must consider the dynamic nature of the fight against organized crime and the importance of adapting to evolving threats by embracing technological advancements. They must also consider the need for robust evaluation and accountability mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of the strategy.

Further Reading

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025, COM (2021) 170 final
- Commission Presents 2021-2025 EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime: <https://eucrim.eu/news/commission-presents-2021-2025-eu-strategy-to-tackle-organised-crime/>