

Policy Brief

Addressing Organized Crime:

EU's 10 Priorities for 2022-2025



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Addressing Organized Crime: EU's 10 Priorities for 2022-2025

Executive Summary:

The Council's adoption of conclusions on the 2022-2025 EU priorities for combating serious and organized crime signifies a crucial step in enhancing security within the European Union. However, while the outlined priorities offer a strategic framework for action, there remain significant challenges and complexities in their implementation.

Keywords

organized crime, security, money laundering, EU strategy, EU priorities

Key Priorities according to the Council of the EU

1. High-risk criminal networks: Efforts will focus on identifying and disrupting criminal networks engaging in corruption, violence, firearms, and money laundering. However, dismantling these networks requires addressing underlying socio-economic factors that sustain their operations.
2. Cyber-attacks: Targeting cybercriminals is imperative, yet the rapid evolution of cyber threats demands continuous adaptation and innovation in cybersecurity measures.
3. Trafficking in human beings: While disrupting trafficking networks is essential, greater emphasis must be placed on victim protection and support services to prevent re-victimization.
4. Child sexual exploitation: Combating online child abuse necessitates robust cooperation between law enforcement agencies, internet service providers, and civil society organizations. Moreover, addressing root causes such as poverty and social inequality is critical in preventing exploitation.
5. Migrant smuggling: Efforts to combat migrant smuggling should prioritize humanitarian assistance and legal pathways for migration, alongside law enforcement actions, to address the underlying drivers of irregular migration.
6. Drugs trafficking: Targeting drug trafficking networks requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both supply and demand factors, including public health initiatives and harm reduction strategies.
7. Fraud, economic, and financial crimes: While targeting financial crimes is essential, regulatory loopholes and cross-border complexities pose significant challenges. Enhanced international cooperation and regulatory harmonization are crucial in tackling these crimes effectively.
8. Organized property crime: Prevention measures, such as improving urban planning and enhancing security infrastructure, must complement law enforcement efforts to combat organized property crime effectively.
9. Environmental crime: Addressing environmental crime necessitates strengthening regulatory frameworks and enhancing corporate accountability to prevent exploitation of natural resources.
10. Firearms trafficking: Efforts to combat firearms trafficking should be complemented by measures to address illicit arms production and proliferation globally.

Challenges and Considerations

- EMPACT represents a commendable effort in fostering cooperation and coordination among EU member states and relevant stakeholders in combating organized crime. However, sustaining momentum and ensuring accountability in the implementation of EMPACT's objectives remain key challenges. The cyclic

nature of EMPACT's implementation allows for periodic evaluation and adaptation of strategies. However, there is a need for greater transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes, involving civil society and affected communities in shaping anti-crime initiatives.

- **Ensuring Universal Adoption:** The success of the strategy hinges upon its effective implementation across all member states. However, achieving this goal requires navigating through the complexities arising from differences in national legislation and operational capacities. Harmonizing legal frameworks and enhancing cooperation mechanisms are essential steps towards fostering a unified approach to combating organized crime within the EU.
- **Allocation of Adequate Resources:** Adequate resource allocation to law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, and other relevant actors is imperative for the successful execution of the strategy. This includes not only financial resources but also investments in training, technology, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Strengthening the operational capabilities of these entities will enhance their capacity to detect, investigate, and prosecute organized criminal activities effectively.
- **Engagement with Civil Society:** Civil society organizations play a pivotal role in augmenting the efforts to combat organized crime. By engaging in awareness-raising campaigns, prevention programs, and victim support initiatives, they provide valuable contributions to the overall strategy. Their grassroots networks and community outreach efforts can help in identifying vulnerable populations, disseminating crucial information, and fostering cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities.
- **Adaptability to Technological Advancements:** Organized crime groups are adept at leveraging technological advancements to further their illicit activities. Hence, the strategy must remain agile and adaptable to address emerging threats in the digital realm. This entails staying abreast of evolving cybercrime trends, enhancing cybersecurity measures, and fostering innovation in law enforcement techniques. Collaboration with tech industry experts and academia can facilitate the development of proactive strategies to counter the ever-changing tactics employed by organized crime syndicates.
- **Enhanced International Cooperation:** Organized crime knows no borders, making international cooperation indispensable in the fight against it. Strengthening partnerships with non-EU countries and international organizations is essential for disrupting transnational criminal networks and dismantling their operations. This involves fostering mutual trust, sharing intelligence, coordinating joint operations, and harmonizing legal frameworks to ensure a seamless response to cross-border criminal activities.
- **Prevention and Rehabilitation Initiatives:** While law enforcement efforts are crucial, a comprehensive strategy must also prioritize prevention and rehabilitation initiatives. Investing in education, social welfare programs, and community development projects can address the root causes of organized crime, such as poverty, social exclusion, and lack of opportunities. Additionally, providing

rehabilitation and reintegration support to former offenders can help break the cycle of crime and reduce recidivism rates.

- **Promotion of Ethical Business Practices:** Combatting organized crime requires addressing its infiltration into legitimate business sectors. Promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical business practices can mitigate the risk of criminal infiltration and money laundering. Regulatory measures, such as enhanced due diligence requirements and stricter financial oversight, can deter criminals from exploiting legal entities for illicit purposes.
- **Empowerment of Vulnerable Communities:** Vulnerable communities, including migrants, refugees, and marginalized groups, are often targets of organized crime exploitation. Empowering these communities through access to education, employment opportunities, and social services can reduce their susceptibility to criminal exploitation. Furthermore, fostering community resilience and solidarity can create a protective shield against organized crime influences, strengthening social cohesion and solidarity within society.
- **Investment in Research and Innovation:** Investing in research and innovation is essential for staying ahead of organized crime trends and developing effective counter-strategies. Supporting academic research, technological innovation, and data analytics capabilities can enhance the intelligence-gathering and predictive capabilities of law enforcement agencies. Moreover, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between academia, law enforcement, and industry stakeholders can stimulate innovation and foster the development of cutting-edge solutions to combat organized crime effectively.

Conclusion

The EU's commitment to combating organized crime through EMPACT underscores the imperative of collective action in addressing complex transnational threats. However, realizing the outlined priorities requires a nuanced understanding of underlying drivers and sustained efforts in fostering cooperation and innovation across multiple sectors. **Critical Comments:** While the outlined priorities offer a framework for action, their effectiveness hinges on the ability of member states and stakeholders to address systemic challenges and adapt strategies to evolving criminal dynamics.

Further Reading

- Council conclusions setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022 – 2025 ([link](#))