THE EU POLICY CYCLE TO TACKLE ORGANISED AND SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CRIME
The policy cycle is a methodology adopted in 2010 by the European Union to address the most important criminal threats affecting the EU. Each cycle lasts four years and optimises coordination and cooperation on chosen crime priorities. The criminal threats are identified on the basis of criminal intelligence and then agreed at political level. During the cycle, all concerned services and stakeholders, at national and EU level, are invited to allocate resources and mutually reinforce efforts. Emerging threats are also monitored so that they can effectively be responded to.
POLICY CYCLE STEPS

Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA)

Europol delivers the SOCTA based on data from member states’ (MS) law enforcement authorities, its own databases, data from other EU agencies such as Frontex, Eurojust and EMCDDA, from Europol third partner countries and third private partners, as well as data from open sources. The SOCTA contains:
- an analysis of the present and future threats posed by serious and organised crime to the EU,
- a set of recommended crime priorities.

Choice of crime priorities and Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs)

The Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) examines the SOCTA recommended priorities. On that basis, the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministers in the Council adopt the EU crime priorities for that policy cycle (i.e. for the next four years) taking into account comments from member states, agencies and the Commission, as well as other relevant assessments and policies.

Subsequently, the Commission convenes a meeting of representatives from the member states, the JHA agencies and EU institutions to draft a four-year multi-annual strategic plan (one MASP per priority and a general horizontal MASP to strengthen the consistency and facilitate the MASP drafting). The MASP contains a list of general objectives ('strategic goals') that should be achieved during the cycle. These MASPs are approved by COSI.
Operational Action Plans (OAPs) and Drivers reporting

The MASP s are implemented by Operational Action Plans (OAPs), usually one per priority and per year. They are drafted by representatives of the participating member states, EU institutions and agencies. These OAPs are approved by COSI.

The OAPs include joint member states/agencies actions, but also agencies’ actions and national actions. The joint actions are carried out as EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) projects. This framework provides a structured cooperation platform for the relevant member states, EU institutions and agencies, as well as third partners.

The implementation of each OAP is led by a ‘Driver’ from the member state volunteering to lead the priority and the implementation is overseen at national level by National EMPACT Coordinators (NECs).

The EMPACT Support Team (EST) at Europol provides administrative and logistical support to the crime priorities. Europol also designates EMPACT Support Managers to ensure operational support to all crime priorities.

COSI approves the OAPs and will monitor their implementation on the basis of a six monthly reporting by the Drivers via the EST.

Commission review and interim assessment

Annual reporting by the Drivers and an interim assessment by Europol provide opportunities to adapt/modify the MASP s, or the priorities if necessary. COSI also carries out both a mid-term and final assessment of the results of the actions to measure the achievement of the strategic goals with a view to improving the operational implementation. The Commission conducts a thorough and independent evaluation at the end of the policy cycle. The lessons learnt from this evaluation serve as input for the next policy cycle.
• Cybercrime in particular attacks against information systems, child sexual exploitation, and non-cash payment fraud.
• Production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine, heroin.
• Production, trafficking and distribution of new psychoactive substances and synthetic drugs.
• Facilitation of illegal immigration by providing facilitation services to irregular migrants along the main migratory routes crossing the external border of the EU and within the EU, particularly focusing on those whose methods endanger people’s lives, those offering their services online and making use of document fraud as part of their business model.
• Organised property crime committed by highly mobile organised crime groups carrying out organised thefts and burglaries across the EU.
• Trafficking in human beings in the EU for all forms of exploitation, including sexual and labour exploitation as well as all forms of child trafficking.
• Excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud.
• Illicit trafficking, distribution and use of firearms.
• Environmental crime, more particularly wildlife and illicit waste trafficking.
• Criminal finances and money laundering and facilitate asset recovery.
• Document fraud in the EU, in particular organised crime groups involved in the production and provision of fraudulent and false documents to other criminals.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Available on the Council website using the document numbers below:


• Council conclusions on setting the EU’s priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021 (doc 9450/17)
• Council Conclusions on the continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime for the period 2018-2021 (doc 7704/17)
• EU Policy Cycle Terms of Reference (doc 10544/2/17 REV 2)
Contacts:
For communication with Europol in relation to EMPACT projects, use the following address:
empact@europol.europa.eu

For all communication with the General Secretariat of the Council use the following address:
coni@consilium.europa.eu

More information available on:

© European Union, 2018