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NOTE

From: Europol
To: Delegations
Subject: Proposals to further strenghten the fight against migrant smuggling

Delegations will find in the Annex proposals by Europol to further strengthen the fight against migrant smuggling, as presented at the informal meeting of COSI on 2 July 2018.

1. Background

At the COSI meeting of 26 June 2018, Europol presented the activity report of the European migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC). During the subsequent thematic discussion on migrant smuggling, Europol was requested to prepare a short presentation with proposals how to further strengthen the fight against migrant smuggling. This presentation was made at the informal COSI meeting in Vienna on 2 July 2018.

This paper outlines the proposals presented by Europol for further consideration.

2. Proposals

1. A strategic interoperability roadmap for JHA Agencies' support to migration efforts

JHA Agencies should work closely together and develop a roadmap to ensure interoperability of their systems/capabilities with the large-scale EU systems (SIS, VIS, EURODAC, EES, ETIAS and ECRIS-TCN).

This roadmap should facilitate the full integration of JHA Agencies into the EU security architecture within their respective mandates and improve their capabilities to support Member States to tackle the internal security aspects of migration.

2. Law enforcement-led response: disrupting the criminal networks

While the protection of the external borders of the EU is very important, at the same time more attention needs to be paid to the criminal business behind migrant smuggling. A strong and coordinated law enforcement-led response should address the fact that 46% of migrant smuggling networks are poly-criminal and that secondary movements within the EU need to be closely followed.

Europol will use its capabilities to support MS operations, under the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime and beyond, to integrate and cross-check available criminal intelligence in a structured way, to ensure a timely and secure information exchange and continuously monitor the threat picture.

New investigative measures like undercover operations in migrant smuggling investigations or innovative forms of multilateral cooperation should be promoted.¹

3. Enhanced focus on secondary movements

Facilitators of illegal immigration are also active on secondary movements and cater to increasingly diverse target groups with different final destination countries in the EU. They offer a variety of tailor-made facilitation services, frequently including the provision of fraudulent documents and accommodation en route. This requires enhanced intra-EU action.

4. Direct link between front-line information and Europol analysis

While a lot of information is available, the access to this information has to be further improved. Front line law enforcement officers should be provided with the possibility to access Europol data directly for cross-checking in real time and on-the-spot.²

5. Full intelligence picture by data fusion

The Information Clearing House (ICH), currently under implementation by Europol, should provide a multi-stakeholder platform at the EMSC involving key partners (such as Frontex, Interpol, Eunavfor Med) to enhance the quality of information gathering and ensure a more accurate response to and anticipation of new criminal developments and trends.

¹ Example: Operation Blue Sentinel, a US-led effort to target illicit networks engaged in facilitating the cross-border movement from conflict zones to Europe and the US is currently investigating several document forgery networks operating in Turkey and revealed links to individuals suspected to support Daesh. Taking out some of the globally acting document fraud networks would have a serious impact on migrant smuggling networks. Europol has deployed an analyst for several months with good operational results. Europol's social media and financial intelligence capabilities played a significant role mapping the criminal structures.

² Special attention should be given to the implementation in MS of the Europol-led project "Querying Europol Systems" (QUEST).

Information collected and analysis provided jointly can disrupt the chain of criminal networks, and facilitates the identification of links to other crime areas, engines of crime and terrorism.

6. Joint Liaison Task Force on migrant smuggling at Europol

MS and operational partners from third countries should be invited to second dedicated Liaison Officers to Europol with expertise in migrant smuggling. This follows the best practice of similar networks established in the areas of counter-terrorism and cybercrime (JLT and J-CAT).

This Joint Liaison Task Force would help identify new cases, support the ICH and facilitate the creation of Operational Task Forces involving investigators and Liaison Officers from MS and third countries to tackle high-value targets in the EU and beyond.

7. Coordination and support of regional operational rooms on migration

Specialised joint operational centres like the JOO in Vienna and Task Forces with a regional focus are good tools to facilitate the exchange of information and analysis.

Europol should be involved in such operational initiatives from the beginning to support the flow of information and have a coordinating role to make best use of synergies between various regional initiatives.

8. Europol embedment in future disembarkation platforms

Europol will of course continuously support MS on the spot. We are also prepared to be embedded on the spot in possible future regional disembarkation platforms/reception centres in the EU or third countries e.g. by seconding guest officers to check the possible criminal background of persons arriving in the EU.

9. Europol liaison officers in MENA (and Sahel) countries

Europol will support the internal security related EU partnership initiatives with Africa. Europol will reinforce its links with CSDP missions (following the Crime Information Cell model, e.g. in Mali or Niger) and EU-led operational platforms in third countries, including through the possible secondment of Europol liaison officers.

10. Exchange of operational information with third countries

The possibilities for the exchange of operational information provided under the Europol Regulation should be used in line with MS operational needs.

Europol is ready to support the Commission in the preparation of agreements on data exchange with third countries.
