



## Delivering on a Security Union: initiatives to fight child sexual abuse, drugs and illegal firearms

Brussels, 24 July 2020

Today the Commission is presenting 3 immediate initiatives to implement the Security Union Strategy: an [EU strategy for a more effective fight against child abuse](#); a new [EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs](#) and an [EU Action Plan on firearms trafficking](#). These threats all require resolute EU-level action as they are cross-border in nature and active both online and offline. They have also been worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, particularly child sexual abuse, demonstrably exacerbated by physical isolation and increased online activity. Fighting drug and firearms trafficking is key to action against organised crime, a top internal security priority across Europe.

Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias**, said: *"Unlike many who have suffered economically from the pandemic, for organised criminals business is booming. Those who profit from causing misery and harm from sales of illicit drugs and firearms or who disseminate heinous child sexual abuse material must be stopped and brought to justice. Internal security is a central pillar of the EU's Security Union Strategy to protect Europeans and promote our way of life and with these three initiatives we are immediately transforming strategic vision into concrete action."*

Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, said: *"Child abuse and sexual abuse online is a repulsive crime. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the problem. Today I can announce we will propose legislation to require online platforms to detect and report sharing of this illegal content. We will also look into the possible creation of a new European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse so that Europe can continue to lead in fighting abuse. At the same time, we are putting forward concrete actions to reinforce our fight against illicit drug and firearms trafficking, both of which are poisons to our society."*

### EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse

It is estimated that 1 in 5 children are victim to some form of sexual violence in Europe. There are indications that the coronavirus crisis has served to exacerbate the problem for many children living with abusers, while reports of online child sexual abuse in the EU have increased from 23,000 in 2010 to more than 725,000 in 2019. [Europol found](#) that the coronavirus pandemic correlates with increased sharing of abuse images online.

To complement and improve existing EU [activities in protecting children from sexual abuse](#), and to address new challenges such as unforeseen risks of end-to-end encryption, the Commission is putting forward a new [strategy](#) to fight child sexual abuse both offline and online.

The strategy proposes **a number of initiatives** for 2020-2025 that focus on:

- **Better coordination** by immediately launching a study to work towards possibly creating a new **European Centre** on child sexual abuse. The centre would build upon best practices from similar centres around the world, such as the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the US](#), and it could receive reports of child abuse from companies, support prevention and help assist victims. In addition, cooperation with industry can continue through the EU Internet Forum and improving protection of children globally by promoting multi-stakeholder cooperation through the [WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online](#) is also a priority.
- **Prevention**, addressing the fact that research into what motivates people to offend is scarce and fragmented, and the communication between research and practitioners is minimal. The Commission will work on setting up a **prevention network**, to support stronger research-practice links (especially on programmes for people who may fear they might offend) and create focused awareness-raising campaigns and media material.
- **A strong legal framework** that includes complete implementation of existing EU legislation on combating sexual abuse and exploitation of children ([Directive 2011/93](#)); identifying legislative gaps, best practices and priority actions; and considering new legislation, particularly to require online service providers to detect and report known sexual abuse material to public authorities.
- **Strengthened law enforcement response** including an **Innovation Hub and Lab** to be set up by Europol; working towards the creation of a European Centre to counter child sexual abuse and

funding to develop digital capabilities of law enforcement authorities in Member States.

## **The new EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025**

The illicit drug market has an estimated retail value of €30 billion per year in Europe alone. The social cost on lives, livelihoods and public health is untold. Drug availability and production in the EU remains high and in our interconnected world, the involvement of organised criminal groups mean that the drug phenomenon is increasingly global. This requires better coordinated action to address the security and health implications of drug trafficking and drug use to better protect Europeans.

The new [EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025](#) sets out the political framework and priorities for action in the next 5 years and include **a number of strategic priorities of the EU Agenda on Drugs**. The main focus of the Agenda will be:

- **Enhanced security measures** that focus on all aspects of illicit trafficking of drugs from organised crime groups to external border management and illicit distribution and production.
- **Increased prevention** including awareness raising of the adverse effects of drugs, notably the intersection between drug use, violence and other forms of criminality; and
- **Addressing drug related harms** through access to treatment, risk and harm reduction, and a balanced approach to the issue of drugs in prisons.

The EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs will **reinforce the evidence-based, integrated and balanced approach to demand and supply reduction of drugs**, through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary lens that covers the scientific, environmental, socio-political, technological and international dimensions of the issue, while considering the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the drug phenomenon.

## **The new Action Plan on firearms trafficking**

The proliferation and availability of illicit firearms increase the danger posed by serious and organised crime, including terrorist attacks and is often linked to illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, smuggling of migrants, counterfeiting, environmental crime or organised property crime. The EU has been coordinating [activities to counter firearms trafficking](#) for several years, but new threats continue to emerge that require new actions. The new [Action Plan on firearms trafficking](#) focusses on 4 priorities:

- **Securing the legal framework** to reduce risks of diversion of firearms from the legal to the black market;
- **Improving knowledge of the threat**, addressing the lack of comparable statistics on firearms events and seizures across the EU;
- **Reinforcing law enforcement** to stop the traffickers;
- **Stepping up international cooperation**, with a strong set of activities focusing on south-east Europe.

## **Background**

These initiatives adopted today are part of the [Security Union Strategy](#). The objective is to create a multidisciplinary, coordinated and integrated approach to security. This strategy sets out strategic and inter-dependent priorities on security to be taken forward at EU level in 2020-2025.

## **More Information**

[Questions and Answers](#): Delivering on a Security Union

[Press release](#): EU Security Union Strategy: connecting the dots in a new security ecosystem

[Communication](#) on the EU Security Union Strategy

## **On the fight against child sexual abuse:**

- [Communication](#) on the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse
- Commission [activities in protecting children from sexual abuse](#)
- [Directive 2011/93/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA.
- [WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online](#)

## **On the fight against illicit drugs:**

- [Communication](#) on the EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025

- [Final evaluation](#) of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2017-2020 and [Executive summary](#)

- [Commission activities to fight against illicit drugs](#)

**On countering firearms trafficking:**

- [Communication](#) on the 2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking

- Commission's [activities in countering firearms trafficking](#)

IP/20/1380

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