



Home Office

Policy paper

Calais Group Priority Plan on Countering Migrant Smuggling for 2025

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The Calais Group partners of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Kingdom of Belgium, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Overview

United Kingdom Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and German Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Nancy Faeser chaired the fourth meeting of Calais Group Interior Ministers on 10 December 2024 in London, with Belgium, France and the Netherlands, to discuss strengthening efforts and policies to tackle irregular migration and migrant smuggling, in the presence of the European Commission and its agencies, Europol and Frontex.

In the previous 6 months joint investigations through Europol, Eurojust and Calais Group law enforcement agencies have resulted in dismantling numerous criminal networks through arrests, including of a suspected significant supplier of small boats equipment to migrant smugglers and at least 20 people linked to one of Europe's most significant migrant smuggling networks in cross continent raids, and seizures of small boat equipment, including 600 dangerous life jackets destined for channel crossings.

Despite significant successes in tackling this shared problem since the Calais Group last met on 4 March 2024, we continue to see too many devastating tragedies along migratory routes into Europe, at sea and in the Channel and vulnerable migrants being exploited, notwithstanding the significant resources devoted to rescue at sea by the concerned states. The migrant smuggling criminals only care about profit and continue to deploy more dangerous tactics putting lives at risk.

Due to the urgency of the situation Calais Group partners agreed to convene this vital forum to build on excellent joint working and existing structures to dismantle the business models of these criminal networks and bring them to justice through an agreed five-point priority plan for 2025.

Priorities

The Calais Group priorities for 2025 are:

1. Coordinate preventative communications to realise upstream disruption in source and transit countries

Partners will work closely together and with Western Balkan, Asia and Middle East and North and East Africa partners to coordinate delivery of awareness raising communication campaigns to deter irregular migrants from paying organised crime groups (OCGs) to facilitate high risk irregular journeys across routes into Europe and dangerous journeys across the Channel. Partners will jointly decide in early 2025, a pilot region of focus to coordinate.

2. Strengthen enforcement capability and law enforcement cooperation through Europol to enhance targeting and disruption of prominent OCGs and their criminal supply chains

Partners will continue important joint enforcement efforts and adjust their methods where necessary, to target the criminal networks and supply chains operated by OCGs which profit from dangerous, life-threatening journeys and keep pace with their evolving business model, including by:

- Ensuring that there are effective and robust legislative frameworks criminalising the small boat supply chain to demonstrate to these criminal networks that they have nowhere to hide and enable effective disruption of their supply chains, such as through seizures of dangerous small boats equipment.
- Enhancing reciprocal information sharing, using existing Europol channels, to enable refinement of valuable intelligence on methods and evolving threats and trends of OCGs profiting from the supply chain of unsafe small boat equipment to increase investigative and disruptive action.
- Deepening intelligence sharing through existing channels and joined up law enforcement action to hone in on the evolving methods and tactics of the OCGs profiting from this trade and ensure these OCGs face the full force of the law. Particularly targeting the end-to-end criminality of the Kurdish / Iraqi OCGs involved in the smuggling of migrants into and across Europe.

3. Disrupt OCGs use of illicit finance through joint research and analysis to generate valuable tactical intelligence to enhance targeted preventative and investigative activity

Partners will take advantage of all existing resources and expertise,

including through Europol structures, to optimise joint law enforcement cooperation to target the illicit finance of migrant smuggling networks who use informal value transfer systems, including Hawala banking, to fund and move profits from their criminal activities. This work will strengthen joint analytical and targeting capability through optimised tactical intelligence development which will direct joint enforcement action to disrupt the use of this banking system and confiscate profits.

4. Tackle OCGs use of social media to recruit and advertise dangerous journeys across Europe and the Channel

Partners will intensify collaboration on tackling the use of social media by OCGs to advertise their criminal migrant smuggling services for profit and facilitate the movement of people across international borders. This includes sharing intelligence on key issues of concern on social media platforms sharing best practice on approaches to target criminal networks and developing innovative ways to disrupt OCGs use of social media. This will prevent and make it more difficult for people smuggling networks to recruit and make profit from migrants online.

5. Explore the possibilities to enhance operational and technical cooperation, collectively and with other relevant partners such as Frontex, to tackle irregular migration

The timely reciprocal exchange of pertinent information on migration flows into and across Europe, and other priority issues related to border security will benefit (joint) analytical work and allow partners to better respond to emerging trends and target enforcement action.



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