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Delegations will find in the Annex the above-mentioned draft report for discussion at the COSI Support Group and COSI meetings.

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1. Summary

This is the fifth report to the European Parliament and national Parliaments in accordance with Article 71 TFEU and Article 6(2) of Council Decision 2010/131/EU¹ establishing the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI), which provides that the Council shall keep the European Parliament and the national Parliaments informed of the proceedings of the Standing Committee.

The COSI proceedings² over the 18-month reporting period (1 January 2016 - 30 June 2017) focused on the implementation of the Renewed EU Internal Security Strategy (ISS) (2015-2020)³. The main priority areas of the EU ISS were the fight against terrorism and closely related to this enhancing information exchange and information management, the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle 2014-2017 and the adoption of the EU Policy Cycle 2018-2021, the further development of the administrative approach to prevent and fight serious and organised crime and strengthening the links between internal and external security. Various other actions of the renewed EU ISS were discussed in other Council preparatory bodies such as the implementation of the EU Cybersecurity Strategy, which was discussed in the Horizontal Working Party on Cyber issues.

¹ 2010/131/EU

² Eleven COSI meetings were organised under the Netherlands-Slovak-Maltese trio of Presidencies, including joint meetings with CATS (1) and SCIFA (1). An informal COSI meeting was held on 27-28 April 2017. Representatives of COSI continued to meet with Interpol representatives once per Presidency. In addition three meetings were held with the Political and Security Committee (PSC), including one official and two breakfast meetings. From 1 January 2016 to June 2017, the COSI Support Group was convened twenty two times.

³ 9798/15, 10827/17

As in previous years, the fight against terrorism remained a priority issue in the COSI proceedings. COSI continued to monitor the implementation of the operational measures of the Council conclusions on Counter-Terrorism of 20 November 2015 and the European Council conclusions of 17-18 December 2015⁴. The work of the European Counter-Terrorism Centre and the activities of the Internet Referral Unit (IRU) within the ECTC were reported to COSI. COSI also discussed the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator's findings regarding Member States' approaches to dealing with accompanying family members of foreign terrorist fighter returnees, in particular children⁵. Special attention was also given to improving law enforcement access to battlefield information and to achieving a more comprehensive and future-oriented terrorist threat picture based on six monthly reports by Europol and EU IntCen assessments. COSI also provided input to the Council conclusions on the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism.

Enhancing information exchange and information management was considered crucial and following preparatory work in COSI, the Council at its meeting of 9-10 June 2016 endorsed the Roadmap to enhance information exchange and information management including interoperability solutions in the Justice and Home Affairs area⁶. This Roadmap provides an analysis of key challenges in relation to the EU information architecture in the JHA area and lists dedicated actions to address those challenges. COSI monitored the progress in the implementation of this Roadmap and two implementation reports were presented to the Council on the basis of discussions in various Council preparatory bodies on 18 November 2016 and 8-9 June 2017. At the Council meeting on 8-9 June 2017, the Council also adopted conclusions on the way forward to improve information exchange and ensure the interoperability of EU information systems⁷ welcoming the final report of the High-Level Expert Group on information systems and interoperability, set up by the Commission, and suggesting how to bring them forward.

⁴ 14406/15, EUCO 28/15

⁵ 6900/17 + ADD 1

⁶ 9368/1/16 REV 1

⁷ 10151/17

COSI was regularly updated about the work of the High-Level Expert Group and decided to set up the DAPIX (Friends of the Presidency) - Interoperability of EU information systems format in order to follow-up the work of this Expert group. This dedicated forum works under the strategic guidance and close monitoring by COSI and is expected to contribute to updating the Roadmap on information exchange taking into account the recommendations of the High-Level Expert Group. The first meeting was held on 26 July 2017.

COSI continued to monitor and provide guidance to the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle against serious and organised crime which remained a recurrent theme at every COSI meeting. Targeted Joint Action Days (JADs) were again performed in 2016, taking into account the experiences learned from operation "Archimedes" in 2014 and operation "Blue Amber" in 2015. The JADs in 2016 (operation "Ciconia Alba") consisted mainly of three operations: an anti-labour-exploitation JAD, global airport action days and large-scale JADs. The overall results of these JADs 2016 were presented to the Council on 18 November 2016⁸. COSI provided strategic guidance for these operations, which were carried out by Member States' law enforcement authorities and supported by Europol. The operational actions resulted in the dismantling of organised criminal networks, seizures of firearms and of illicit drugs and with the arrests of migrant smugglers and traffickers in human beings.

The implementation of the 2013-2017 Policy Cycle was closely monitored on the basis of regular reporting. Special attention was given to the funding of the operational actions. COSI provided strategic guidance and called on Member States to optimise the use of funds made available. It also requested all actors involved to ensure that adequate funding is timely made available to support the operational actions and allow them to start at an early stage.

⁸ see also Europol press release for concrete figures:
<https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/global-operation-ciconia-alba-delivers-major-blow-to-organised-crime>

The 2013-2017 Policy Cycle is coming to an end in 2017 and in accordance with the Policy Cycle methodology an independent evaluation was carried out in 2016. The final report of the evaluation study, prepared by an independent external evaluator in close cooperation with a monitoring group of Member States' experts was submitted by the Commission to the Council on 1 February 2017⁹. Building on the results of the evaluation and the experiences gained by Member States in the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle, COSI agreed to introduce some amendments to make the EU Policy Cycle more effective, efficient and streamlined, and to balance the burden placed on different categories of stakeholders. On 27 March 2017 the Council decided to establish a new EU Policy Cycle for the period 2018-2021¹⁰.

On 9 March 2017 Europol issued the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2017, which showed that more than 5,000 organised crime groups (OCGs) operating on an international level were under investigation in the EU and that the criminal markets were increasingly complex and dynamic with the emergence of smaller groups and individual criminal entrepreneurs in specific criminal activities, notably those online. On the basis of this SOCTA and taking into account priorities set out in other strategic documents, COSI reached agreement on ten new EU crime priorities 2018-2021, which resulted in the adoption of these priorities by the Council on 18 May 2017¹¹. Three new priorities compared to the previous Policy Cycle were introduced: "criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery", "document fraud" and "environmental crime".

COSI also focused on the so-called administrative approach, the cooperation between administrative authorities, which is an important element of a comprehensive approach in preventing and fighting organised crime. This resulted in the adoption of Council conclusions of 9 June 2016 and COSI was instructed to coordinate, support, monitor and evaluate the implementation and future development of the administrative approach.¹²

⁹ 5652/17 + ADD 1 (EU RESTRICTED)

¹⁰ 7704/17

¹¹ 9450/17

¹² 9935/16

The migration pressure continued in 2016-2017 and disrupting the activities of organised crime groups involved in the facilitation of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings therefore continued to be a priority in COSI, notably within the framework of the EU Policy Cycle. The crime priorities "illegal immigration" and "trafficking in human beings" were reaffirmed as EU crime priorities for the 2018-2021 Policy Cycle. Discussions on security checks on irregular migrants resulted in the adoption on 8 June 2017 of Council conclusions recommending security checks in the case of irregular migration¹³. COSI also discussed Council conclusions on addressing trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation, which were agreed on 9 June 2016.¹⁴ Work also started on the Commission recommendation on proportionate police checks and police cooperation in the Schengen area. Disrupting human smuggling/trafficking networks was also discussed at joint COSI meetings with the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA) as well as with the Political and Security Committee (PSC).

Strengthening the links between external and internal security, notably in the fight against terrorism and in migration, remained a priority file over the last 18 months. Closer internal/external security cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism was discussed by COSI and Political and Security Committee (PSC) on 16 May 2017 and at the joint lunch of the Home Affairs and Defence Ministers on 18 May 2017, notably the collection of battlefield data and the information exchange between Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and JHA Agencies.

A large number of other issues were also reported to and discussed in COSI, including firearms with the development of the firearms matrix and the final report of the study of a the Finnish Police University College.

Representatives from the JHA agencies - in particular the Director of Europol, the President of the College of Eurojust, the Director of Frontex and the Director of CEPOL - were consistently involved in the Committee's proceedings for the items relating to their area of competence. In addition, representatives from the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) occasionally attended meetings.

¹³ 10152/17

¹⁴ 9938/16

2. Activities

2.1. Renewed EU Internal Security Strategy 2015- 2020

The implementation of the renewed EU Internal Security Strategy was a recurrent theme under the NL, SK and MT trio Presidency with reports and programmes on the implementation of the renewed EU Internal Security Strategy (ISS) 2015 - 2020 by every Presidency using the template developed under Luxemburg Presidency¹⁵. At its informal meeting in Malta on 27-28 April 2017, the Committee started discussions on the mid-term review of the renewed ISS, both on the content as well as its procedure, which were continued under Estonian Presidency. The Council Conclusions of 16 June 2015 on the renewed EU ISS¹⁶ had tasked the Council to carry out this mid-term review, in close cooperation with the Commission and, where appropriate, by involving other relevant actors such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) and JHA Agencies.

The implementation reports drafted under NL, SK and MT Presidencies¹⁷ as well as the Commission Progress reports towards an effective and genuine Security Union showed that substantial progress, including by operational, strategic and legislative measures, was made in implementing the renewed ISS. The Commission also carried out a comprehensive assessment of EU security policy of which the final report was issued on 27 July 2017. This comprehensive assessment looks back at 15 years of EU security policy and whilst the assessment is positive and confirms the relevance of the main instruments of EU security policy, it also identifies challenges and gaps for the effective cooperation.

¹⁵ The implementation paper of the renewed ISS contains 40 different measures under the headings "improving information exchange", "improving operational cooperation", "supporting actions", "tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation" and "disrupting organised crime"

¹⁶ 9798/15

¹⁷ 5298/1/16, 8587/16, 9151/16, 11001/1/16, 15277/1/16, 5645/2/17 REV 2 + COR 1

On the legislative front various legislative proposals were adopted such as the Directive (EU) 2017/541 of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism, the Directive (EU) 2017/853 of 17 May 2017 amending Council Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, Regulation (EU) 2017/458 of 15 March 2017 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/399 as regards the reinforcement of checks against relevant databases at external borders, Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) or Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard.

Substantial progress was made on other legislative files: the Council agreed on a general approach on the proposed European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) at its meeting on 8/9 June 2017. A general approach was also reached on the draft Directive on countering money laundering by criminal law and on the draft Regulation on the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office. A political agreement was also reached on the text of the New Psychoactive Substances Directive. Discussions continued on the draft Regulation establishing an entry-exit system (EES), which in the meantime have resulted in a political agreement between the co-legislators, and the draft Regulation on the mutual recognition of freezing and confiscation orders.

Regarding the strategic and operational measures the following can be highlighted;

1. Information exchange and interoperability of EU information systems in the JHA area

Improving the information exchange and information management have been absolute priorities for the NL-SK-MT Presidencies. This resulted in:

- The Roadmap to enhance information exchange and information management including interoperability solutions in the Justice and Home Affairs area which the Council endorsed at its meeting of 9-10 June 2016,
- Two Roadmap implementation reports were prepared allowing the Council to closely monitor the progress at its meetings on 18 November 2016 and 8 June 2017¹⁸,

¹⁸ 13554/1/16 REV 1, 8433/17

- Council conclusions on the way forward to improve information exchange and ensure the interoperability of EU information systems which were adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8 June 2017¹⁹,
- The work of the High-Level Expert Group on information systems and interoperability and its recommendations. COSI decided to set up the DAPIX (Friends of the Presidency) - Interoperability of EU information systems format at its meeting on 21 June 2017 in order to: follow-up the work of the High-Level Expert Group on information systems and interoperability, feed into the preparatory work by the Commission in the drafting of the legislative proposal on interoperability, update the Roadmap on information exchange based on the outcome of the High-Level Expert Group, under the strategic guidance of COSI.

2. *Fight against Terrorism (see also point 2.2)*

- Threat assessments: The Europol reports and INTCEN threat assessments on terrorism were presented in COSI and the Terrorism Working Party. On the basis of these reports and assessments a set of conclusions and policy recommendations was prepared in the Terrorism Working Party and endorsed by COSI in 2016. The state of implementation was reviewed under MT Presidency and the set of policy recommendations was updated. The EE Presidency will undertake an evaluation of this threat assessment follow-up process.

¹⁹ 10151/17

- Information sharing (see above)

The implementation of the measures set out in the Roadmap on information exchange was mainly discussed in the relevant working parties (SIS/SIRENE Working Party, DAPIX, TWP, SCIFA) and monitored by COSI. The High Level Expert Group on information systems and interoperability examined legal, technical, financial and operational requirements to pursue interoperability solutions of information systems and presented its final report on 11 May 2017²⁰. Following the findings of this Expert group, the Commission presented specific ideas on the way forward in its Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on the Security Union on 16 May 2017. The Council, adopted Conclusions on the way forward to improve information exchange and ensure the interoperability of EU information systems at its meeting on 8 June 2017.

- Internal - external security

Closer CSDP/JHA cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism, in particular the collection of battlefield data and the role of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, was discussed by COSI and Political and Security Committee (PSC) on 16 May 2017 and at the joint lunch of the Home Affairs and Defence Ministers on 18 May 2017. COSI also discussed the draft which led to Council conclusions of 9 December 2016 on strengthening the EU internal security's external dimension in the Western Balkans including via the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG)²¹ which were adopted by Council.

Disrupting smuggling and trafficking of migrants as well as the CT cooperation with Algeria were also discussed at a COSI - PSC meeting on 3 March 2016.

²⁰ 8434/1/17 REV 1

²¹ 15413/16

- Countering radicalisation and violent extremism

As a follow-up to the Commission Communication supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, the Terrorism Working Party and COSI provided input to the Conclusions on prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism²² that were eventually adopted by the Council (EYCS) at its meeting on 21-22 November 2016.

The Committee was updated on the functioning of the EU Internet Forum, the EU IRU, the RAN Centre of Excellence, including RAN's external engagement. Regular updates were also provided from the European Strategic Communications Network (former SSCAT).

3. *Borders*

- Revision of the Schengen Borders Code: Regulation EU 2017/458 of 15 March 2017, which amended Article 8(2) of the Schengen Borders Code was adopted.
- The European Border and Coast Guard Regulation was adopted on 14 September 2016 and entered into force on 6 October 2016. It will better enable Frontex to contribute to fight against terrorism and organised crime.
- A general approach was reached on the draft Regulation establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to allow for advance security checks on visa-exempt travelers.
- Discussions on the Entry/Exit System have now been concluded.
- COSI held an orientation debate on the Commission Recommendation on proportionate police checks and police cooperation at its meeting on 20 June 2017.

²² 14276/16

4. *Customs*

- During the NL Presidency the 8th Action Plan for 2016-2017 was adopted with a focus on cooperation with law enforcement authorities. The synergies and the opportunities for coordination with the EU Policy Cycle were discussed and COSI agreed on a number of coordination measures²³. A joint COSI SG - CCWP was held on 24 February 2016.
- Council Conclusions on the Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Strategy and Action Plan for customs risk management were drafted and adopted during the ECOFIN Council of 6 December 2016²⁴.

Finally, discussions took place in COSI to improve the procedure of the reporting on the implementation of the renewed ISS. As a follow-up to the discussions on enhancing the role of COSI, it was agreed to create a joint EU ISS implementation paper from the outgoing and incoming Presidency. The MT and EE Presidency drafted a joint paper which reported on the progress achieved in the implementation of the ISS under MT Presidency and gave an overview of the activities planned to be carried out under EE Presidency²⁵.

²³ 6015/1/16 REV 1

²⁴ 14288/16

²⁵ 10827/17

2.2. Terrorism

The years 2016 and 2017 continued to witness terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism measures remained a priority item on the COSI agendas. The attacks highlighted some weaknesses in the EU's internal security architecture, in particular shortcomings in information management and the need to improve the interoperability between information systems for border control and security. Progress was to be made with regard to soft target protection, the fight against firearms trafficking, borders checks, the fight against the financing of terrorism, the prevention and countering of radicalisation, combating the terrorist content online as well as the external dimension of countering terrorism. Various measures were discussed in COSI and other Working Parties and regular reporting by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (EU CTC) took place.

The EU CTC presented the state of play of the implementation of the operational measures foreseen in the EC Declaration of 12 February 2015, the Council Conclusions of 20 November 2015 and the Conclusions of the European Council of 18 December 2015 at the COSI meeting on 8 November 2016. This report, drafted in consultation with Commission services, the EEAS, Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, eu-LISA and Interpol²⁶ contained a detailed description of recent and planned CT related activities as well as a shorter paper with recommendations for future actions²⁷.

Information exchange

The aforementioned Roadmap on information exchange, in particular its Chapter III provides a list of specific, practical short- and medium-term actions and long-term orientations for enhancing information exchange and information management aiming to contribute to tackling terrorism-related challenges. The work of the Working Parties responsible for implementing those actions, in particular TWP and the SIS/SIRENE Working Party, have been reflected in the two Roadmap implementation reports discussed by COSI. Among those actions implementing a consistent three-tier information sharing approach regarding foreign terrorist fighters by making optimal and consistent use of SIS, the Europol Information System (EIS) and the relevant Focal Points at Europol could be mentioned. Such information has been increasingly shared and the number of queries of the Europol Information System has more than doubled from 2015 to 2016 to 1,4 million queries. The use of the Schengen Information System and the number of alerts have also substantially increased.

²⁶ 13627/16

²⁷ 13627/16 + ADD 1

Development of a structured and multidisciplinary approach and cooperation in CT threat analysis

The discussions on the development of a structured and multidisciplinary approach on CT in COSI resulted in the creation of a master document covering the most relevant Counter Terrorism (CT) actions. This document was inserted in the six monthly reporting of the implementation of the renewed ISS. COSI also discussed strengthening the cooperation on CT threat analysis and agreed that every semester a coordinated, comprehensive and future-oriented threat assessment picture would be submitted to COSI. It would consist of Europol reports and EU INTCEN future-oriented threat assessments on terrorism together with a set of conclusions and policy recommendations, which would be prepared, where appropriate, by the Presidency at the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) in cooperation with the Member States, the EU CTC, the Commission and the EEAS, and submitted to COSI. At the COSI meeting of 28 September 2016 and the TWP meeting of 13 September 2016, EU IntCen and EUROPOL presented their future-oriented threat assessments and reports on terrorism. On the basis of these assessments and reports, the Presidency prepared a set of conclusions and policy recommendations²⁸ which were agreed by COSI on 19 December 2016. At its meeting on 20 June 2017 COSI endorsed the update on the conclusions, recommendations and way forward on the mechanism for the INTCEN threat assessments and Europol reports²⁹. Due to the fact that the findings did not point towards any major new developments, the six recommendations agreed in December 2016 remained valid.

The executive summary of the threat assessment on internet-facilitated organised crime (iOCTA) 2016³⁰ (was presented to COSI on 28 September 2016 and Member States, Europol and participants of the relevant 2017 Operational Action Plans were invited to take into account the iOCTA findings, where appropriate, when drafting the next OAPs for 2017.

Europol also published the TE-SAT 2016 on 20 July 2016 and the TE-SAT 2017³¹ on 6 June 2017. Both were presented to COSI. Also the work of the European Counter-Terrorism Centre and the activities of the IRU within the ECTC were reported to COSI.

²⁸ 14555/2/16 REV 2

²⁹ 6699/2/17 REV 2

³⁰ 12526/16

³¹ 10177/17

Firearms

The adoption of the Firearms Directive 2017/853³² on 17 May 2017 was a major step in the fight against illicit trafficking of firearms. On the operational side COSI reaffirmed firearms trafficking as an EU crime priority for the EU Policy Cycle 2018 - 2022. This would allow Member States to build upon the important work which is already being carried out within the Operational Action Plans (OAP) on firearms trafficking for the Policy Cycle 2014-2017 (with 22 participating Member States and a broader involvement from the customs authorities.)

On 17 May 2016 COSI decided that a firearms matrix should be created to obtain a comprehensive and clear overview of all actions to fight against firearms trafficking³³ with a view to facilitating the monitoring of the progress of those initiatives. Europol presented this matrix, which is available on the European Platform for Experts (EPE), to the COSI Support Group on 12 December 2016.

The final report of the Finnish Police University project on firearms, which focuses on the evaluation of the operational cooperation for the prevention of illicit trafficking, supply and use of firearms, was submitted to COSI on 20 June 2017. The Committee invited all participants in the OAP Firearms to take the findings of this report into account when discussing the MASPs and OAPS on Firearms in the framework of the EU Policy Cycle.

Prevention of radicalisation

As a follow-up to the Commission Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism COSI discussed a draft of Council conclusions on prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism that were eventually adopted by the Council (EYCS) at its meeting on 21-22 November 2016.

Regular updates were received on the activities of the EU Internet Forum, which was launched on 3 December 2015 to put in place effective mechanisms between government and industry to reduce accessibility to terrorist material online, and to deliver effective alternative narratives online. A Senior Officials meeting of the EU Internet Forum was held on 27 June 2017.

³² OJ L 137, 24.5.2017, p. 22

³³ 6130/16

COSI also discussed the EU CTC's findings regarding Member States' approaches to dealing with accompanying family members of foreign terrorist fighter returnees, in particular children at its meeting on 14 March 2017. These discussions continued in the relevant Working Parties with a view to contributing to the content of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) handbook on good practice on how to manage returnees.

The state of implementation of the PNR Directive was presented by the Commission in COSI on 8 November 2016.

2.3. Implementation of the 2014-2017 EU Policy Cycle and preparation of the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle

The ongoing implementation of the fully fledged 2014-2017 EU Policy Cycle³⁴ and the preparation of the upcoming 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle were core priorities for COSI in 2016 and the first semester of 2017. This period was a challenging one as many activities pertaining to the implementation of the current cycle and the preparation of the upcoming one were taking place concurrently.

a) Implementation and monitoring of the 2014-2017 EU Policy Cycle

Following the previous monitoring exercises in the two first years of the cycle (2014 and 2015), the first six-month monitoring of the 2016 OAPs took place at the Committee meeting on 21 June 2016 at which COSI exchanged views on the findings contained in the Europol Director's report³⁵ and the summary report of the National EMPACT³⁶ Coordinators' (NEC) meeting³⁷, which was held at Europol on 24, 25 and 26 May 2016 and at which the NECs defined the roles of the Co-Driver and Action Leader, both of whom are crucial to the successful implementation of the Policy Cycle. These definitions were subsequently included in the new EU Policy Cycle Terms of Reference (ToR)³⁸ adopted by COSI by silence procedure on 26 June 2017.

³⁴ 15358/10

³⁵ 9926/1/16

³⁶ The abbreviation EMPACT stands for the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats

³⁷ 9927/1/16

³⁸ 10544/17

The second six-month monitoring exercise for the 2016 OAPs took place in COSI at its meeting on 19 December 2016. Reports from the Drivers of 13 OAPs were examined, together with the outcome³⁹ of the six-monthly meeting of the NECs held on 22 and 23 November 2016, and the Europol Director's report⁴⁰. At this latter COSI meeting, the Committee also adopted the OAPs for 2017, the last year of the 2014-2017 Policy Cycle.

The number of Policy Cycle actions in the OAPs for 2016 decreased to 206, compared to 281 in 2015 and 260 in 2014. This trend continued in 2017, with the number of actions decreasing to 198 while their main operational focus of the actions remained. Moreover, 101 funded actions of the 2016 OAPs, as well as a large number of non-funded actions, remained yet to be implemented in 2017. At the meeting on 19 December 2016, delegations once again welcomed the multidisciplinary nature of the OAPs, but it was pointed out that there was room for improvement. The need for more dynamic NEC meetings was also underlined.

Finally, the first six-month monitoring of the OAPs for 2017 took place at the Committee meeting on 20 June 2017, at which COSI took note of the six-monthly monitoring report and some of the main operational results of the OAPs in 2017⁴¹ and the report from the NEC meeting which took place on 23 and 24 May 2017⁴².

Two strategic questions raised by the Presidency⁴³ regarding the 2017 OAPs and Member States' commitment were discussed by the Committee at its meeting on 21 June 2016. Regarding the 2017 OAPs, various Member States were of the opinion that the OAPs should focus on finalising the 2016 OAP actions and that possible new actions should be finished by the end of 2017. However, a pragmatic and flexible approach could be considered, taking into account the changing crime situation. Regarding Member States' commitment, delegations agreed that better sharing of the workload was needed. It was pointed out that Member States' participation in the OAPs is voluntary and that Member States should commit to actions that are also national priorities. Limiting the number of actions was welcomed by several Member States because these actions have a significant impact on national resources.

³⁹ 15217/16

⁴⁰ 15213/16

⁴¹ 10010/17 + COR 1 + ADD 1 RESTREINT UE

⁴² 10064/17

⁴³ 9926/1/16 (cover page)

b) *Joint Action Days*

Targeted Joint Action Days (JADs) were performed within the Policy Cycle in 2016 (Operation Ciconia Alba), following the JADs performed in 2014 (Operation Archimedes) and in 2015 (Operation Blue Amber).

In 2016 COSI agreed on the definition of the Joint Action Days⁴⁴ (the definition was subsequently slightly amended⁴⁵ by COSI by silence procedure on 16 December 2016). JADs target criminal networks affecting the EU by addressing one or two strategic, horizontal or geographic aspects of crime related to multiple priority crime areas as defined in the EU Policy Cycle. JADs are a Member States-led initiative supported or coordinated by Europol and, whenever appropriate, by other JHA agencies, and take place within the EU Policy Cycle framework. The definition also sets out a key role for COSI, as the Committee is to provide strategic guidance to the planning of JADs and must be regularly updated by Europol on the state of play of the planning and the implementation of JADs. Furthermore, the new EU Policy Cycle ToR includes a chapter on JADs to reflect the importance of these operational activities and their results within the EU Policy Cycle.

An initial discussion on the concept of the 2016 JADs took place during the COSI meeting on 3 and 4 March 2016. After the presentation by Europol of a detailed explanatory note⁴⁶, the Committee approved the concept of the Joint Action Days 2016⁴⁷ on 18 April 2016. On 21 June 2016, COSI also agreed on the Media Strategy for the 2016 JADs⁴⁸. The preliminary results of Operation Ciconia Alba were presented by Europol to COSI on 28 September 2018 and the overall results on 8 November 2016⁴⁹. The results of Operation Ciconia Alba were subsequently presented to the Council on 18 November 2016. These results included 559 989 entities (individuals and vehicles) having been checked, more than 600 suspects arrested, 529 human trafficking victims identified, 745 migrants intercepted, and 2.38 tonnes of cocaine seized.

⁴⁴ 8127/16 The definition was subsequently slightly amended by COSI by silence procedure on 16 December 2016.

⁴⁵ 5167/17

⁴⁶ 6016/1/16 REV 1 (EU RESTRICTED)

⁴⁷ 8069/16 (EU RESTRICTED)

⁴⁸ 10109/16

⁴⁹ 13857/16

The Committee agreed on 8 November 2016 on the strategic guidance for the planning of the 2017 JADs based on the Presidency proposal⁵⁰, namely: the 2017 JADs would be composed of a series of smaller JADs combined with one large-scale JAD, building on the experience gained from the Operation Ciconia Alba, and would prioritise illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, drugs (in particular synthetic drugs), cybercrime, firearms, organised property crime and excise fraud. The strategic guidance led to the definition of the concept of the 2017 Joint Action Days⁵¹, which was validated by COSI on 14 March 2017.

Furthermore, COSI took note of the Europol report 'Geographical hotspots for crime in the EU'⁵² at its meeting on 8 November 2016 and encouraged actors involved in the EU Policy Cycle to use this document in the preparation of the 2017 JADs.

c) Funding

COSI played a significant role in providing strategic guidance on funding issues and, in particular, on the decision regarding the distribution of funds. In this regard, at the COSI meeting on 3 and 4 March 2016, the French delegation stressed COSI's strategic role in the discussions on funding and stated that COSI should have a strategic debate before grants were allocated. Europol has been regularly reporting to the Committee about the state of play regarding funding issues.

Following the call for proposals which had been launched in 2015, 14 grants were awarded in support of the OAPs 2016 (totalling EUR 3.83 million). Furthermore, at the COSI meeting on 21 June 2016, delegations supported the launch of a mini-call to allow competition between different priorities to reallocate the unspent money from the 2015 grants (19 grant agreements had been signed for a total of EUR 4.19 million in support of the OAPs 2015). The Committee also called on the OAP participants to make full use of the money allocated under the Delegation Agreement⁵³.

⁵⁰ 13555/16

⁵¹ 6373/1/17 REV 1 (EU RESTRICTED)

⁵² 13304/16 (EU RESTRICTED)

⁵³ The signing on 22 December of 2014 of the EMPACT Delegation Agreement (DA) between the Commission (DG HOME) and Europol, provided EUR 7 million of ISF (Police) funding to support the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle in 2015 and 2016

The Committee took note on 8 November 2016 of the state of play regarding the abovementioned mini-call launched by Europol on 20 September 2016. Four applications were submitted (two for Facilitated Illegal Immigration and two for Trafficking in Human Beings) by the deadline and the total budget requested was EUR 345 880 of the EUR 485 640 available.

Regarding financial support for the 2017 OAPs, the new Europol Regulation allows Europol to award grants to provide financial assistance by funding operational meetings. The Regulation entered into force on 1 May 2017, which is when the money (EUR 4 million assigned to the EU Policy Cycle for 2017) would be available, but the preparatory work was done before its entry into force.

COSI discussed funding issues in a number of meetings (21 June 2016, 28 September 2016, 8 November 2016 and 19 December 2016) and agreed on the strategic guidance for future funding in 2017 as proposed by the Presidency⁵⁴, namely:

- to follow a two-track approach for awarding grants, composed of a traditional call for proposals and fast-track grants for ad hoc needs.
- to distribute the EUR 4 million budget for 2017 as proposed by Europol (1/2/1) – EUR 1 million for operational meetings at Europol, EUR 1.95 million for the traditional call for proposals, and EUR 1.05 million for the fast-tracks grants.
- to allow a certain degree of prioritisation for the allocation of money under the traditional calls for some OAPs depending on the political priorities. COSI agreed on 19 December 2016 to equally distribute the EUR 355 000 available among the five priorities preferred by Member States, namely Facilitation of Illegal Immigration, Illicit Firearms Trafficking, Trafficking in Human Beings, Organised Property Crime and Child Sexual Exploitation.
- to disregard the 'first come first served' approach for awarding fast-track grants. The alternative to this approach – i.e. to set a short deadline for the implementation of the action after submission of an application – was also agreed by COSI.

⁵⁴ 13555/16

The implementation of this strategic guidance is taking place in 2017. Therefore, since the beginning of 2017, Europol has been supporting Member States directly from its budget by funding the OAP-related meetings taking place in its premises. This includes both operational and strategic meetings, bridging the funding gap in the first months of 2017 until the entry into force of the Europol Regulation.

Regarding the high-value grants scheme (traditional calls), the five abovementioned OAPs prioritised by COSI could apply for enhanced support up to EUR 196 000 and the remaining eight OAPs could receive grants up to EUR 125 000⁵⁵. Therefore, a call for proposals for an overall budget of EUR 1.98 million was launched in April 2017, as a result of which 11 applications were submitted and 10 grants awarded. A call for proposals for low-value grants (fast-track grants) was prepared during the first semester of 2017 with a view to being launched in July 2017.

d) Independent evaluation mechanism for the 2014-2017 EU Policy Cycle

Action 43 of the EU Policy Cycle for the period 2014-2017 provided for an independent evaluation to start in 2016. Following the preparatory work carried out in 2015, COSI was kept informed throughout 2016 about the progress made in the evaluation. The information was mostly provided by the Commission but also by the leading expert of the Member State (Belgium) which had volunteered to lead the monitoring group.

At the COSI meeting on 3 and 4 March 2016, COSI took note of the state of play regarding the independent evaluation. On 18 April 2016, the Commission informed COSI that the evaluation had been assigned to the company Ernst & Young, together with RAND Europe and the Centre for International Legal Cooperation (CILC). A kick-off meeting was held on 12 April 2016, which was attended by the leading expert of the monitoring group.

The interim report of the evaluation⁵⁶ was presented by the Commission at the COSI meeting on 8 November 2016. The report included interim conclusions regarding MASPs, OAPs, monitoring and evaluation, and the results and impact of the EU Policy Cycle, but it did not include final recommendations, which were expected to be included in the final report.

⁵⁵ EUR 355 000 were available to be equally distributed (€71,000 each) among the 5 OAPs prioritised

⁵⁶ 13606/16

The final report of the evaluation study on the 2014-2017 EU Policy Cycle, prepared by the independent external evaluator, was submitted by the Commission to the Council on 1 February 2017⁵⁷, and discussed by the COSI Support Group on 8 February 2017. Apart from a number of conclusions regarding the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the EU Policy Cycle, the evaluator's report set out 10 recommendations; one on the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs), one on the Operational Action Plans (OAPs), two on monitoring/evaluation and six on horizontal issues. The general aim of these recommendations was to make the EU Policy Cycle lighter and more streamlined, and to balance the burden placed on different categories of stakeholders. Furthermore, each of these 10 recommendations consisted of between one and five actions, yielding a total of 28 potential actions in the evaluator's report.

e) Preparation of the new 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle

The preparation of the new 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle has been one of the main topics for COSI during this 18 month period and in particular in the first semester of 2017.

Following the submission of the final evaluation report by the Commission to the Council on 1 February 2017, the Presidency prepared a document⁵⁸ to frame the discussions and identify which should be the main strategic changes for the new EU Policy Cycle. These discussions took place in COSI Support Group meetings in February and March 2017 and helped to prepare the draft Council conclusions on the continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for the period 2018-2021, which were agreed by COSI on 14 March 2017 and eventually adopted by the Council on 27 March 2017.

The main changes in this new Policy Cycle are designed to make it more effective, efficient, and streamlined than the 2014-2017 Policy Cycle. For instance, the reporting by Drivers and Action Leaders will have a different schedule and methodology, a common set of horizontal strategic goals for all crime priorities will be drafted to improve consistency and facilitate the drafting of Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MAPS), and the OAPs may include actions which last longer than one year.

⁵⁷ 5652/17+ADD 1 EU RESTRICTED

⁵⁸ 5653/17

Another important change will see COSI conduct a mid-term and final assessment of the results of the actions to measure the achievement of the strategic goals, with the aim of improving operational implementation. These assessments will be carried out after the OAPs have been implemented for two years and at the end of the cycle.

The Council conclusions on the continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for the period 2018-2021 instructed COSI to amend the relevant EU Policy Cycle documents, including the Policy Cycle Terms of Reference (ToR) and the MASP and OAP templates for the EU Policy Cycle.

Therefore, after a number of COSI and COSI Support Group meetings and also at the NEC meeting, COSI agreed on the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle ToR⁵⁹ on 26 June 2017. The ToR includes the key features, steps and other relevant general elements of the EU Policy Cycle, in particular EMPACT, the OAPs, the JADs, the fact sheet of results⁶⁰ and training. It also spelt out the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved, such as Drivers, Co-Drivers, Action Leaders and Participants, and these roles were described in a more comprehensive and detailed way than in the previous Terms of Reference. The document devoted an entire chapter (chapter 2.9) to the involvement of relevant third countries and international organisations and partners. This chapter received special attention during discussions in COSI, COSI Support Group and NEC meetings.

Furthermore, the COSI Support Group agreed on 12 June 2017 on the MASP and OAP templates to be used for the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle⁶¹ and on the guidelines prepared by Europol on designing SMART⁶² key performance indicators to measure the progress and results of Operational Actions for the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle⁶³.

⁵⁹ 10544/17

⁶⁰ The fact sheet will be prepared annually by Europol to show the main operational results of the different OAPs. The fact sheet will follow specific guidelines provided by COSI and will be based on structured and relevant data collected in the Drivers' reports according to the reporting collection mechanism.

⁶¹ 10242/17

⁶² SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound

⁶³ 10244/17

The process of identifying the EU crime priorities for the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle started in COSI on 14 March 2017, when the Committee took note of the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2017 as presented by Europol and had an initial exchange of views on the recommended priorities (five specific and three cross-cutting)⁶⁴. Overall, delegations stated that the SOCTA was a very good and solid basis for discussions on the new priorities to be identified by the Council.

The Presidency and the Commission developed a Policy Advisory Document (PAD)⁶⁵ on the basis of the EU SOCTA and taking into consideration other strategic papers, assessments and policies.

The draft Council conclusions on setting the EU's priorities for the 2018-2021 Policy Cycle⁶⁶ were subsequently agreed at COSI level and were adopted by the Council on 18 May 2017. These conclusions identified the following 10 EU crime priorities (in no particular order): cybercrime; drugs – notably cannabis, cocaine, heroin, synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS); illegal immigration; organised property crime; trafficking in human beings; excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud; firearms; environmental crime, in particular wildlife and illicit waste trafficking; criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery; and document fraud.

⁶⁴ 6886/17 + ADD 1 (EU RESTRICTED)+ ADD 2 (EU RESTRICTED)

⁶⁵ 7824/1/17 REV 1

⁶⁶ 9450/17

In addition to the general Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP), which identifies the common horizontal minimum strategic goals, a number of specific 4-year MASP will be developed in order to achieve a multidisciplinary, integrated and integral (covering preventive as well repressive measures) approach to effectively address these prioritised threats. Furthermore, annual OAPs will also developed to be aligned to the strategic goals which have been determined in the MASP, to address the prioritised threats⁶⁷.

f) *Policy Cycle - other related activities*

COSI has also taken the following initiatives related to the EU Policy Cycle:

- COSI took note of the executive summary of the Europol Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA)⁶⁸ 2016 at its meeting on 28 September 2016.
- Following a joint COSI Support Group-Customs Cooperation Working Party (CCWP) meeting held on 24 February 2016, COSI discussed on 4 March 2016 possible coordination measures⁶⁹ to explore synergies and avoid duplication between the 2016 OAPs and the Eighth CCWP Action Plan. The Presidency welcomed the broad support for its proposals and invited the COSI Support Group and the CCWP to follow up on these discussions.

⁶⁷ One MASP and one OAP will be developed for each of the three strands in cybercrime (attacks against information systems, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, and non-cash means of payment). One MASP and one OAP will be developed for each of the two strands in drugs (cannabis/cocaine/heroin and synthetic drugs/New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)) and one MASP and one OAP will be developed for each of the two strands in excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud. One MASP and one OAP will be developed for each of the other priorities (illegal immigration; organised property crime; trafficking in human beings; firearms; environmental crime and criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery). The priority document fraud will be developed neither in a specific MASP nor in an OAP since this priority will be implemented as a cross-cutting priority in the general MASP as well as through the OAPs for the relevant crime priorities.

⁶⁸ 12526/16

⁶⁹ 6015/1/16 REV 1

- A number of draft Council conclusions which included elements related to the EU Policy Cycle were – following in some cases, preparation in the relevant Council preparatory bodies – presented and discussed in COSI, such as the following:
- i) Council conclusions on migrant smuggling⁷⁰, agreed in COSI on 3 and 4 March 2016 and adopted by the Council on 10-11 March 2016. These conclusions invited Member States to use fully the resources made available through the Operational Action Plan on illegal immigration under EMPACT, and share all relevant information including data from social media;
 - ii) Council conclusions on addressing trafficking in human beings (THB) for labour exploitation⁷¹, which were briefly discussed in COSI on 18 April 2016 and adopted by the Council on 9 June 2016. The conclusions invited Member States to strengthen multidisciplinary national and cross-border cooperation and information exchange against THB for labour exploitation, including within the EU Policy Cycle, by – among other things – involving a wide range of stakeholders in the activities regarding this subject included in the Operational Action Plan for the EU crime priority THB;
 - iii) Council conclusions on organised domestic burglary. Following a presentation by the German and French delegations of their proposal for a draft European initiative to combat organised domestic burglary⁷² at the COSI meeting on 3 and 4 March 2016, COSI agreed on the draft Council conclusions on organised domestic burglary⁷³, which were adopted by the Council on 13 October 2016. The conclusions stated that for as long as organised property crime (OPC) remains an EU crime priority, the EMPACT-Platform will be used as the key coordinative instrument, coordinating efforts and making sure integration/alignment is achieved between OPC-related projects of other EU networks and organisations involved (EUCPN, Informal network for administrative approach, CEPOL);

⁷⁰ 6995/17

⁷¹ 9938/16

⁷² 5303/3/16 REV 3

⁷³ 13268/16

- iv) Council conclusions on the way forward with regard to financial investigation⁷⁴. The Council conclusions were discussed and prepared at the Law Enforcement Working Party (LEWP) and were adopted by the Council on 9 June 2016. The conclusions included in annex an Action Plan in which action 4 ('Embedding financial investigation in EU policies and frameworks') invited COSI to give special attention to financial investigation as a possible horizontal theme when preparing the Council conclusions setting the new EU crime priorities 2018-2021. COSI did indeed do this, as mentioned above.
- COSI also had the opportunity to discuss matters relating to the EU Policy Cycle on the basis of Member States' experiences in implementing the Operational Action Plans. For instance, at the COSI meeting on 21 June 2016, the Spanish Driver of the OAP Firearms presented what he had gained from the implementation of this OAP. The successes he referred to included the development of a concrete legislative framework for the NEC in Spain allowing effective coordination, the significant increase in contributions to the Focal Point Firearms, and the successful development of JADs. Two of the challenges identified were the need to improve the interoperability of the different firearms-related databases, and the need to continue increasing Member States' commitment.

2.4. Strengthening cooperation in the field of internal and external security

COSI continued to discuss with the PSC the possibilities for strengthening EU internal and external cooperation and coordination. Two breakfast meetings (8 November 2016 and 16 May 2017) and one joint meeting (3 March 2016) were held.

At the joint meeting, both Committees exchanged views on disrupting the smuggling and trafficking of migrants and the counter-terrorism cooperation with Algeria. This meeting was followed by a breakfast meeting, organised by the PSC on 8 November 2016. At this meeting Commissioner Julian King exchanged views with PSC and COSI delegates on the main elements for a European Security Union.

⁷⁴ 10125/16 + COR 1

On 16 May 2017 COSI and the PSC discussed the closer CSDP/JHA cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism to prepare the discussions at the joint lunch of the Home Affairs and Defence Ministers on 18 May 2017. These discussions focused on enhancing military and law enforcement cooperation and information exchange. Following this meeting COSI discussed the access to battlefield data in the field of counter-terrorism and the added value CSDP missions can bring to internal security at its meeting on 20 June 2017 in order to prepare the ground for the next discussions in COSI/PSC in September 2017. The discussions touched upon legal and procedural challenges such as the mandates of CSDP missions, the assent of the host state and appropriate training.

COSI also discussed Council conclusions on strengthening the EU internal security's external dimension in the Western Balkans including via the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) which were adopted by Council on 9 December 2016. Within the IISG three areas would be prioritised: the prevention of violent extremism and fight against terrorism (WBCTi), the fight against serious and organised crime (WBCSCi) and border security (WBBSi).

A Special Adviser to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented to COSI the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy and its internal dimension on 14 March 2017. Some examples of the close links between internal and external security (migration, CT, EU Policy Cycle, strategic communications) were presented. The Committee invited the European External Action Service (EEAS) to work closely with all those involved to speed up the measures listed in the Malta Declaration implementation plan and to enhance the coordination between internal and external tools in the fight against serious and organised crime.

Cooperation with Interpol remained important for COSI to strengthen the EU's internal security and outreach to third countries. Over the reporting period, three meetings of the EU JHA Senior Officials with OIPC Interpol were held (20 June 2016, 28 November 2016, 23 June 2017). These discussions focused on information exchange and collection, notably within the framework of counter terrorism as well as capacity building/funding and support to third countries cooperation with Interpol. Member States' contribution to and use of the Interpol databases was discussed.

A recurrent theme was also the cooperation on migrant smuggling and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Malta Declaration. A second Europol and Interpol Operational Forum on Countering Migrant Smuggling Networks was held on 22 and 23 February 2016. This Forum discussed concrete operational actions in key areas related to migrant smuggling, including: illicit money flows and money laundering; the use of social media by smuggling networks; the links between migrant smuggling and other criminal activities such as trafficking in human beings and child exploitation, identity and document fraud, and patterns of travel facilitators.

2.5. Migration

A COSI - SCIFA meeting was held on 18 April 2016 to discuss the IT systems for security and borders as well as measures against migrant smuggling. The Commission Communication "Stronger and Smarter Information Systems for Borders and Security" and the Proposal for a Regulation establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) and the Proposal for a Regulation amending the Schengen Borders Code were presented to this meeting.

Both irregular migration and trafficking in human beings were identified as EU crime priorities for the new EU Policy Cycle 2018-2022. The implementation of the operational actions set out "Operational Action Plans" in 2016 and 2017 was monitored by COSI. COSI ensured coordination between the relevant OAPs and the European Agenda on Migration as well as with recent developments in the migratory field. In this regard, the Committee agreed on 3-4 March 2016 on draft Council conclusions on migrant smuggling, which were adopted by the Council (6995/16) on 10 March 2016.

The Committee also took note of a joint Europol-INTERPOL report on migrant smuggling networks affecting the EU, which was presented by both Europol and Interpol.

2.6. Administrative approach

The administrative approach was one of the priorities of the NL Presidency which resulted in Council conclusions on the administrative approach to prevent and fight serious and organised crime which were agreed by COSI on 17 May 2016 and adopted by the Council on 9 June 2016. The conclusions invited Member States to favour the use of administrative instruments, in addition to the criminal justice-based approach, to prevent and fight serious and organised crime within the actions agreed in the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs) and the annual Operational Action Plans (OAPs) for each priority in the EU Policy Cycle, in particular actions relating to trafficking in human beings, organised property crime, money laundering, smuggling of migrants, and crimes involving close network-based groups, such as mafia-style organised crime groups or crimes relating to OMCG's. COSI was instructed to coordinate, support, monitor and evaluate the implementation and future development of the administrative approach. The reporting on the progress of EU actions on the development of the administrative approach was done in the framework of the GENVAL Working Party under MT Presidency.

The results of a questionnaire on an administrative approach to tackle outlaw motorcycle gangs⁷⁵ were presented to COSI on 17 May 2016.

⁷⁵ 8641/16

2.7. Follow-up

- JHA Agencies cooperation: one meeting of the Heads of JHA agencies was held during the reporting period, on 14 November 2016 (hosted by FRA)⁷⁶. The Committee took note of the report on the Agencies' activities and key findings regarding their cooperation, as well as of the scorecard on the Agencies' multilateral cooperation. The themes of migration and security – which also address key fundamental rights – were at the centre of discussions. The meeting also addressed the specific issue of children and the need for Agencies to focus attention on effective collaboration to help ensure that child protection is improved across the EU. In this regard, participants strongly reaffirmed their commitment to these and other areas of cooperation, which will be taken forward by the Network in 2017 under the Chair of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).
- Europol's work programme 2016 and the Europol Strategy 2016-2020 were also presented to COSI.
- Following the Commission's Communication on an EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking⁷⁷ of 26 February 2016, Council conclusions on the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking⁷⁸ were adopted on 20 June 2016 by the Council (Environment). COSI contributed to these Council conclusions which invited Europol to consider the wildlife crime threats when preparing its next EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA). Following the publication of the SOCTA and subsequent discussions in COSI, environmental crime, more particularly wildlife and illicit waste trafficking, was adopted as an EU crime priority for the 2018-2022 EU Policy Cycle.
- The 2017 Frontex Risk Analysis was presented to COSI on 14 March 2017. Frontex was looking forward to developing further its cooperation with COSI as it is increasingly engaged in fighting different types of cross-border crime, including drugs, the smuggling of stolen vehicles and excise goods, arms trafficking and the issue of returning foreign terrorist fighters.

⁷⁶ 15579/16 and 15580/16

⁷⁷ 6570/16

⁷⁸ 9721/17

- The Committee took note of information by the French delegation on the state of play of the preparations for EURO 2016, which posed a number of challenges for the law enforcement authorities considering the exceptional nature of the event.
- The summary and recommendations of the 2016 European Police Chiefs Convention held on 14 and 15 September 2016 were presented to COSI⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ 13178/15

3. Conclusion

COSI remained committed to its central role in ensuring that operational cooperation on internal security is promoted and strengthened within the Union, as well as in developing, implementing and monitoring the renewed EU ISS 2015-2020 in cooperation with the Commission. As a response to the ongoing migration crisis and the terrorists attacks in 2016 and 2017 a series of legislative measures were adopted such as Directive on combating terrorism, the Directive on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons or the Regulation amending the Schengen borders code to reinforce checks against relevant databases at external borders. These legislative measures were also accompanied by a large number of strategic and operational measures which focused on the prevention and countering of terrorism, fighting radicalisation, fighting serious and organised crime and especially improving the information sharing and the interoperability of EU information systems in the JHA area. The outcome of the Commission's Comprehensive assessment of the EU Security policy has contributed to the identification of new challenges in the field of internal security on which work will be taken forward in the coming years.

COSI continued to monitor the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle. Based on the experiences gained from the EU Policy Cycle 2014-2017 and considering that EU Policy Cycle had been effective in achieving its objectives and in implementing the key features of its approach and brought EU added value to Member States, the Council decided to continue with a new Policy Cycle 2018- 2022 which will be the EU's key tool in the fight against organised and serious international crime for the coming four years. Operational actions will be launched as of 2018 to strengthen the EU's capacity in fighting ten EU crime priorities: cybercrime; drugs – notably cannabis, cocaine, heroin, synthetic drugs and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS); illegal immigration; organised property crime; trafficking in human beings; excise fraud and Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud; firearms; environmental crime, in particular wildlife and illicit waste trafficking; criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery; and document fraud.

Strengthening the nexus between internal and external security policies will be a priority for the coming years. Building on the outcome of discussions in previous months notably regarding the information sharing between the CSDP missions and JHA actors, it will be important to make further progress in ensuring greater coherence between internal and external actions in the field of security.
