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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	National Parliaments
Subject:	Report to the European Parliament and national Parliaments on the proceedings of the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) for the period January 2022 to June 2023

The Presidency of the Council has submitted to the Council the annexed Report to the European Parliament and national Parliaments on the proceedings of the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) for the period January 2022 - June 2023¹.

In accordance with Article 71 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 6(2) of the Council Decision establishing the Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI), the Council hereby transmits, through its Secretariat, the Report to the national Parliaments.

¹ Available in all official languages of the European Union on the Council public register, doc. [13444/23](#).

**Report to the European Parliament and national Parliaments on the proceedings of the
Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) for the period
January 2022 to June 2023**

Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**2. INTERNAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION
AGAINST UKRAINE**

1. Mobilisation of EMPACT
2. Threat picture
3. Internal Security Dialogue with Ukraine
4. Imposition of sanctions

3. TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Access to data for effective law enforcement
2. EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security
3. Digital files

4. FIGHTING SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

1. EMPACT
2. Drug trafficking
3. Trafficking in cultural goods
4. Internal security challenges linked to migration

5. COUNTERTERRORISM

1. Counterterrorism threat assessments
2. Foreign Terrorist Fighters and the Schengen Information System
3. Countering radicalisation

6. STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL / EXTERNAL SECURITY NEXUS

1. Formalising JHA/CSDP cooperation
2. Cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations

7. COORDINATION OF THE JHA AGENCIES

1. JHA Agencies' Network
2. Individual activities of JHA agencies

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) foreseen in Article 71 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) was set up within the Council in 2010² to facilitate, promote and strengthen coordination of operational actions of the authorities of the Member States competent in the field of internal security. Under the Trio Presidency of the Czech Republic, France and Sweden, COSI continued to fulfil its mandate as a monitoring, advisory and decision-making body, comprising senior representatives and experts from all EU Member States, the Commission and, where necessary, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and relevant Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies, creating synergies between police, customs, border guards and judicial authorities as well as other relevant actors. COSI plays a significant role at the interface between strategic and operational levels to ensure coherence between strategic recommendations and operational action, hereby contributing to the implementation of the Security Union Strategy³. COSI has been preparing internal security matters for consideration by the JHA Council configuration, considering the work of other Council structures. While COSI meets usually twice every semester for formal meetings and once per semester for an informal meeting, a COSI Support Group (SG) is in place to prepare discussions for COSI and facilitate its work at technical level.

² 16515/09

³ 10010/20

During the reporting period from January 2022 to June 2023, COSI dealt as a matter of priority with the internal security implications of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Work on technological developments including through the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security continued and culminated in the establishment of a High-level Group on access to data for effective law enforcement. In the area of serious and organised crime, the new European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) cycle 2022-2025 has started under the strategic guidance of COSI with ten EU crime priorities tackled through 15 Operational Action Plans (OAPs). During the reporting period, COSI paid specific attention to the fight against trafficking in illicit drugs. COSI continued to monitor developments related to terrorism by issuing regular recommendations based on the evolving threat picture, and by drawing particular attention to the matter of radicalisation. Another major area of work has been the nexus between internal and external security, including through joint meetings with the Political and Security Committee (PSC), comprising discussions about the establishment of the new Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) compact and the civilian mission in Moldova. Finally, COSI has monitored the activities of JHA agencies and of their network, helping to create synergies and contributing to ensure the consistency of their work.

2. INTERNAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine has been a major concern for COSI throughout the Trio Presidency, as the war has the potential to ignite new and exacerbate existing internal security threats to the Union.

2.1 Mobilisation of EMPACT

In March 2022, Member States were invited to mobilise EMPACT to facilitate operational cooperation to counter the threats posed by the war. The proposal by the French Presidency and the European Commission was supported at the extraordinary Council meeting on 28 March, where a 'fast track procedure' was introduced to adapt whenever necessary the existing EMPACT OAPs, to strengthen the intelligence picture and monitor the evolving situation and related operational responses. The changes proposed by the Drivers of OAPs and agreed by COSI, included the creation of new operational actions relating to trafficking in human beings, high-risk criminal networks, synthetic drugs and criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery.

2.2 Threat picture

Over the course of the war, COSI has received regular updates on the evolving threat picture. In April 2022, Europol and Frontex outlined the main security threats emerging from the war within their remit, while the French Presidency provided a complementary global assessment of the criminal threats in the context of the war including trafficking in human beings, trafficking in cultural goods, firearms trafficking, cyber threats and spread of disinformation, the re-activation of criminal networks, the presence of violent extremist foreign fighters on both sides of the conflict, and threats at the EU external borders. Member States have been encouraged to share all relevant information to allow JHA agencies, including Europol, Eurojust and Frontex to properly monitor and assess the situation.

During the September 2022 meeting of COSI, the Committee took note of the JHA Agencies' Network joint paper on their contributions to the EU's solidarity with Ukraine⁴. In May 2023, COSI noted Europol's assessment report, indicating an increase in cyber-attacks and money laundering activities as a consequence of the war. Member States continue to express concerns for the medium- and long-term potential for firearms trafficking to occur. Therefore, the monitoring of operational changes and potential future risks remains a priority for COSI.

2.3 Internal Security Dialogue with Ukraine

The need for a structured dialogue with the Ukrainian authorities to step up operational cooperation, was evoked at the informal meeting of Home Affairs Ministers in July 2022 and confirmed at the informal COSI meeting under the Czech Presidency in July 2022. Information exchange in relation to the operation of the firearms control system, the setup of an overall critical infrastructure protection system, and border security were identified as priority areas of cooperation with Ukraine. In November 2022, following a meeting with the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (EU CTC), the Commission, the EEAS, Europol and Frontex informed COSI on the latest developments regarding the internal security dialogue with Ukraine. Member States welcomed the outline of the structured dialogue with Ukraine and the detailed action table prepared by the Presidency on internal security implications of the war as a practical tool to facilitate follow-up on the work strands which was updated for the COSI meeting in May 2023. In February 2023, COSI was updated on the potential terrorist threat, focusing on potential risks due to the return of foreign volunteers. In May 2023, COSI took note of the developments, including the establishment of a list of actions to counter firearms and other small arms and light weapons diversions in the context of Russia's aggression war against Ukraine, prepared jointly by the Commission and the EEAS, including a regular contribution of information of lost and stolen firearms in Ukraine to Europol. Further to this, Europol has been granted access to Interpol's iArms database, marking a major step forward. COSI will continuously monitor the developments of the internal security dialogue with Ukraine and the progress made in implementing the specific actions.

⁴ 8065/23, 11905/1/22 REV 1

2.4 Imposition of sanctions

The potential for Russian and Belarusian circumvention of sanctions and the need to impose effective penalties has been emphasised by COSI under the Czech Presidency. The potential for a fragmented enforcement of sanctions across Member States was an area of concern considering the varying competences of national authorities and the risk of a disjointed interpretation of the sanctions. COSI welcomed the Commission's proposal to include the violation of sanctions in the list of EU crimes under Art. 83 TFEU⁵.

COSI welcomed the contribution of Europol through the operation OSCAR (with the support of the EMPACT community through an operational action of the OAP Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery), which supports financial investigations carried out by Member States targeting criminal assets owned by individuals and legal entities sanctioned in relation to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. COSI also discussed the potential for Europol to contribute to an analysis of trends and patterns concerning the circumvention of sanctions, including information exchange with the private sector. Member States indicated that a mapping of various initiatives/fora/meetings relating to sanctions enforcement at EU level would be welcome, including the establishment of a cooperation network between competent law enforcement authorities as well as judicial authorities.

⁵ 9641/22

3. TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Facing the challenges to internal security in a world that is becoming technologically and digitally more dependent is a cross-cutting theme on COSI's agenda.

3.1 Access to data for effective law enforcement

Retaining and accessing relevant information, analysing and acting upon it within legally prescribed powers and in compliance with fundamental rights is a core element of law enforcement work. This is exacerbated by the exploitation of technological developments by criminals, as highlighted by the operations against Encrochat and SkyEcc. It is essential to ensure the capacity of criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies to access data in a digital environment, as they do offline. During the French Presidency, the French ministry of interior organized an event on data access, which took place in Paris on 21 April 2022 (first edition of the "Forum des îles"). The aim of this symposium was to address, in an open manner and with all the stakeholders involved (police and judicial authorities, MEPs, magistrates, civil society, private sector, etc.), the issue of data access by police and judicial authorities in the context of the digital transformation of society. The symposium highlighted the challenge for authorities to keep up to speed and provide effective responses online, the urgent need for all stakeholders to have greater legal certainty and a framework adapted to current and future technological developments, the difficulty of analysing big data at the Member State level, and the need to develop a common European police culture to effectively address these issues. The discussions also showed that a dialogue was possible, beyond differences in approach, and that the protection of fundamental rights was an objective commonly shared. The participants agreed that such an informal and open discussion framework was essential to rebuild confidence between stakeholders and build a European consensus on access to data. Building on these discussions, the Swedish Presidency organised the second edition of this informal forum in Balsta on 27 April 2023.

Moreover, the Swedish Presidency launched a debate on the challenges related to the access to digital data for the purpose of fighting crime at the informal meeting of JHA ministers on 26 January 2023. The “Going Dark” initiative seeks to support the rule of law by addressing the growing challenge for judicial and law enforcement agencies to access information and evidence in e.g. encrypted communications, enhance international cooperation to ensure that lawful access to evidence is possible also in the cross-border nature of digital services, develop a clear framework for data retention, design effective instruments and methods to address the volatility of electronic information, and address jurisdictional concerns engendered by the loss of location.

During the informal JHA Council in January 2023, ministers discussed the need to create a dedicated forum for addressing the growing challenges for law enforcement to fulfil their functions, and tasked COSI with providing concrete proposals. The Swedish Presidency prepared a proposal for the creation of a High-level Group co-chaired by the Presidency and the Commission, including a scoping paper further defining the mandate of that group⁶ for discussion at the informal COSI meeting of 30-31 March. Following the Commission’s formal decision to establish the group, the first plenary meeting of the High-level Group on access to data for effective law enforcement took place on 19 June 2023. The group is expected to conclude its work by mid-2024.

3.2 EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security

The EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security is a collaborative network under the strategic guidance of COSI, working to coordinate innovation initiatives among JHA agencies and disseminate effective solutions to support the work of internal security actors in the EU and its Member States. Since its inception, COSI has monitored the progress of the Hub, receiving regular updates from the co-chairs of the Hub’s Steering Group and the JHA agencies involved in its activities, and providing a forum for Member States to share their ideas for the Hub.

⁶ 8281/23

In September 2022, the co-chairs of the Hub's Steering Group presented the 2021 Annual Report, emphasising the achievements against COSI priorities such as darknet monitoring, artificial intelligence (AI) and encryption. Europol presented the outcomes of the 2022 Hub Annual Event. A mapping of the common innovation picture provided by the Hub was presented to COSI at its November 2022 meeting.

In February 2023, COSI took note of the 2022 Annual Report and the Multi-annual planning of activities 2023-2026 of the Innovation Hub and confirmed the priorities identified. The Commission was invited to present more information on available EU funds for research and innovation.

Member States were encouraged to bring relevant projects under the umbrella of the Hub. JHA agencies were invited to consider earmarking funds for the Hub in their budget programming activities in 2024 and beyond. In May 2023, COSI endorsed the new composition of the Hub's Steering Group with Spain and Hungary co-chairing the group for nine months consecutively together with the Commission.

The importance of involving Member States in the Hub has continually been emphasised by COSI. The contributions of Member States' practitioners are vital to successfully identify priorities for the Hub, ensure more stable funding for its activities, and guarantee staffing resources, mainly through seconded staff.

3.3 Digital Files

Due to the increasing proliferation of digital policies across multiple sectors and the potential ramifications these may have on internal security, the status of several horizontal digital files being negotiated within and outside the JHA sector are of interest to COSI.

At the informal COSI meeting in July 2022, the Czech Presidency organized a working session on technologies for the detection of new and known child sexual abuse material and grooming in unencrypted and encrypted communications. Member States emphasised the importance of the fight against child sexual abuse, and the intertwined nature of the online and offline environment.

At the November 2022 COSI meeting, the Czech Presidency provided a detailed overview of the state of play of digital files. The Presidency also informed delegations about the outcomes of the Presidency conference on the online dimension of counterterrorism that took place on 15-16 September 2022 in Prague, and that the draft Conclusions on the Action Plan for the European Forensic Science Area 2.0 will be submitted to the Council for approval⁷.

COSI continued to receive regular updates on the status of digital files under the Swedish Presidency. During the COSI meeting of February 2023, the Presidency emphasised the need for Member States to consolidate their internal security positions within other Council preparatory bodies, e.g. to have the voice of the JHA communities heard in the AI Act discussions taking place in the Working Party on telecommunications and information society and stressed the importance of better integration of internal security considerations in the overall regulatory framework.

Discussions continued at the May 2023 COSI meeting with a Europol presentation on AI from a law enforcement perspective, focusing on their creation of a sandbox environment for training, developing, and validating AI tools, the risks and opportunities associated with the use of ChatGPT and other large language models⁸, and the launch of the accountability principles for AI (AP4AI)⁹ framework. Member States supported the creation of a sandbox environment, while indicating the need for a common strategic approach in this area.

⁷ 7152/23
⁸ 8535/23
⁹ <https://www.ap4ai.eu>

4. FIGHTING SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

4.1 EMPACT

The European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) tackles the most important threats posed by organised and serious crime affecting the EU. EMPACT strengthens strategic and operational cooperation among national authorities, EU institutions and bodies, and international partners. EMPACT is an intelligence led, multi-disciplinary instrument, running in four-year cycles focusing on common EU crime priorities. EMPACT develops, implements, and monitors 15 biennial Operational Action Plans (OAPs) in line with the 10 EU crime priorities: high-risk criminal networks, cyber-attacks, trafficking in human beings, child sexual exploitation, migrant smuggling, drugs trafficking, fraud, economic and financial crime, organised property crime, environmental crime, and firearms trafficking. The OAPs are built according to pre-determined common horizontal strategic goals.

In 2022, EMPACT celebrated its 10th anniversary, an occasion marked by the French Presidency at a COSI working lunch. Member States complimented EMPACT as an efficient and effective instrument to fight organised and serious international crime. They praised its flexibility and called for further efforts to simplify its methodology. The French EMPACT coordination team organised a seminar to achieve a better integration of common horizontal strategic goals in the EMPACT OAPs.

The resources allocated to the dedicated EMPACT funding are rather limited given the scale and the ambition of the instrument. In addition, the number of operational actions in EMPACT has increased in the past years. Therefore, it was not always possible to fund all operational actions from the EMPACT budget, and other funding sources had to be used. In this regard, the European Commission increased its supporting role to EMPACT, notably by further articulating the relevant EU strategies, agendas or action plans with EMPACT and by increasing its financial support through the Internal Security Fund (ISF). However, further reflections on the future of EMPACT funding will be needed.

During the Czech Presidency, the EMPACT reporting mechanism was revised to reduce the administrative burden related to the reporting, to streamline the data collection, to capture the main results and reflect on the recent developments such as the establishment of the coordinators of common horizontal strategic goals. Also, the mechanism for the sharing of OAPs with relevant third countries and parties was revised to reflect the increasing interest of partners to participate in EMPACT.

The Council conclusions on the permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime: EMPACT 2022+¹⁰ and on setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022-2025¹¹ were revised on 9 March 2023 in order to address the possibility to include new operational actions and amend existing actions in case of emerging situations/threats (such as war in Ukraine or COVID-19), as well as to allow the introduction of biennial OAPs.

The Swedish Presidency revised the EMPACT Terms of Reference in order to reflect the recent changes in EMPACT, such as the introduction of biennial OAPs from 2024 onwards, a Joint Communication Strategy, the possibility to adjust OAPs in emergency situation/threats, as well as to clarify the terminology, and the roles and responsibilities of different actors¹².

At the May 2023 meeting of COSI, the Swedish Presidency referred to the results of the 2022 EMPACT Operational Action Plans.¹³

¹⁰ 7100/23

¹¹ 7101/23

¹² 8975/23

¹³ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/65450/2023_225_empact-factsheets-2022_web-final.pdf

4.2 Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking has serious implications for the internal security of the European Union and the health of its citizens, and the criminal groups involved have developed cross border structures across Europe, taking advantage of maritime transport and innovative technologies to move and market illicit drugs and fuel other types of crime. The Trio Presidency made drug trafficking their priority, organising thematic discussions on the topic.

At the January and February 2022 meetings of COSI SG and COSI, discussions centered on the state of play of drug trafficking in Europe. Contributions from the Commission and JHA agencies highlighted the ongoing project on the monitoring of Darknet under the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security and relevant operations such as Encrochat. Member States showed concern for the accelerating ‘uberisation’ of drugs, and the need to address cryptocurrencies in this regard, highlighting the recurring themes related to law enforcement in the digital environment.

In March 2022, ministers demonstrated their willingness to strengthen the dialogue with third countries and regional structures (EU-Western Balkans, EU-Latin America, etc.), in particular by supporting the establishment of the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI) and its specific Counter-Narcotics Task Force dedicated to the fight against drug trafficking.

Building on this, in April 2022, delegations further discussed the fight against drug trafficking. Frontex delivered a presentation on maritime surveillance and vessel tracking in the fight against drug trafficking activities. The French Presidency reflected on the connection between drug trafficking and its financial component proposing the creation of a shared database to contain the IBANs of bank accounts used for criminal activities.

During the informal COSI meeting in France, Member States participated in an interactive operational discussion on the four main work streams related to drug trafficking, developed under the French Presidency: trafficking by sea, online trafficking, seizure and confiscation of criminal assets, and international cooperation. Considering the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025¹⁴, in May 2022, the ‘Roadmap to Combat Drug Trafficking’ was prepared featuring a table compiling the outcomes/operational measures identified throughout the French Presidency. Discussions on the topic of drug trafficking continued during the Czech Presidency. At the September 2022 meeting of COSI, the Chair of the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG) presented the Presidency’s priorities, focusing on an evidence -and human rights- based approach and health and prevention aspects. COSI discussed two matters: trafficking in the virtual environment and via postal parcels, as well as new methamphetamine trends in Europe. In May 2023, the Swedish Presidency put on the agenda the detection of illicit wholesale trafficking of drugs and drug precursors at EU points of entry and exit¹⁵. Discussions revolved around the need to focus efforts on both big and small ports, the presence of criminal networks within ports and the need to screen employees at ports, the growing threat posed by pin-code fraud, and the need to improve public-private partnerships with harbor companies. During that meeting, COSI welcomed the updated mandate of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the subsequent establishment of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA).

¹⁴ 14178/20

¹⁵ 8873/23

4.3 Trafficking in Cultural Goods

Trafficking in cultural goods featured on the COSI agenda to raise awareness of the organised looting, illicit trafficking, sale and destruction of cultural heritage due to armed conflict, and to support ongoing work by the Commission. COSI SG considered the topic in January 2022, and Member States contributed to the preparation by the Commission of the European Action Plan on trafficking of cultural goods published in December 2022¹⁶. As a follow-up, in May 2022, the French National Criminal Police's 'Office Central de lutte contre le trafic des biens culturels (OCBC)' presented its police register of cultural goods and the Netherlands presented its digital register. COSI showed broad support for strengthening the EU CULTNET network's capacity by creating a permanent contact point/correspondent to support the steering of the network and its interaction with other entities.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine further highlighted the need to address cultural goods trafficking. The potential for an unprecedented destruction and trafficking of Ukrainian cultural goods was discussed at the informal COSI meeting under the French Presidency. The meeting highlighted potential emergency measures the Union could take to prevent this, including through support for the "Emergency Red List" (to be established by the International Council of Museums in cooperation with the Ukrainian government), and the inclusion of a specific order on the sanctions list for Russia was also considered. Potential roles for the EU action plan against trafficking in cultural goods, the CULTNET network, and enhanced operational action under EMPACT were discussed in this regard.

During the Czech Presidency, COSI benefited from a presentation of the Leonardo database against cultural goods trafficking by the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Under the Swedish Presidency, Council Conclusions on the fight against trafficking in cultural goods were adopted in June 2023¹⁷, based on the EU action plan against cultural goods trafficking adopted by the Commission in December 2022.

¹⁶ 16107/22

¹⁷ 10249/23

4.4 Internal Security challenges linked to migration

In March 2022, the French Presidency organised a seminar relating to the external dimension of migration, echoing the initial discussions on the digital dimension of migrant smuggling that took place at the COSI meeting in November 2021. In May 2022, delegations had an exchange of views regarding the monitoring of operational measures in response to migrant smuggling.

Under the Czech Presidency, COSI supported a strengthened response to the increase in migrant smuggling activities in 2022. COSI noted that maintaining a comprehensive intelligence picture and enhanced information exchange with relevant actors in and outside the Union, addressing the poly-criminal and digital dimension of migrant smuggling, as well as the increasingly violent nature of the smuggling networks were key elements in the fight against migrant smuggling. The outcomes of this discussion were presented to the Council in December 2022.

In September 2022, COSI, reinforced by the Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP), discussed migration and internal security challenges along the Silk Route in a holistic manner. Member States underlined that the migratory situation is changing and that having a good intelligence picture of the overall situation is paramount, focusing on trafficking networks that might exploit migratory flows along this route. Member States emphasised that a comprehensive approach to migration and/or prevention of relevant security threats requires not only an internal, but also an external perspective and a functioning relationship with the countries along the route. They also highlighted challenges faced on specific migration routes, in particular migration from Afghanistan and the Western Balkans.

5. COUNTERTERRORISM

Under the Trio Presidency, COSI continued to prioritise counterterrorism and provided strategic direction to operational cooperation to help prevent and combat terrorism at the EU level.

5.1 Counterterrorism threat assessments

Each semester, COSI endorses recommendations stemming from the regularly updated EU threat assessment in the field of counterterrorism, based on the situational analysis carried out by both Europol and EU IntCen. The recommendations, endorsed by COSI in May 2023, echo the earlier findings reporting that the threat level in the EU remains unchanged, while highlighting the need to address violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms, taking into consideration the increasing polarisation in society. The recommendations also cover the potential mid- and long-term threats posed by the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the growing threat posed by violent right-wing extremism.

Regarding violent right-wing extremism, COSI took note during its meeting in May 2023 of the stocktaking exercise by the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) and endorsed an update of the work strands to give direction to the continued efforts of tackling this threat.

5.2 Foreign Terrorist Fighters and the Schengen Information System (SIS)

The SIS is the largest information sharing system available to law enforcement authorities for the purpose of security and border management in Europe. Under the previous Trio Presidency, a process for evaluating and possibly entering information from third parties or Member States on third country nationals suspected of being jihadist terrorists (Foreign Terrorist Fighters) was endorsed. This coordinated approach was reviewed after two years taking into account the practical experience gathered in order to align it with the amended Europol Regulation as well as the amended SIS Police Regulation. Based on work done in TWP, a revised coordinated approach was endorsed by COSI in February 2023.

5.3 Countering radicalisation

Following a request from the European Council in 2020 to enhance measures to prevent radicalisation and address the ideologies behind terrorism and violent extremism, countering radicalisation became a key priority under the French Presidency, with COSI acting as a forum for Member States to share their experiences and best practices in this area. Member States discussed national, including legislative, measures to prevent radicalisation¹⁸, and preparations for the application of the Regulation on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online (TCO). Areas for improvement were highlighted including the need to undertake more field research to better understand the eco-systems of radicalisation and ensure that religious education and training are in line with fundamental rights and European values. Difficulties in identifying violent right-wing extremists and borderline content were also highlighted. Several tools and initiatives available to Member States were discussed, including the EU Knowledge Hub to strengthen the EU policy to prevent and counter radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism, currently being set up by the Commission. At the COSI meeting in April 2022, Member States broadly supported the establishment of an EU Knowledge Hub on the prevention of radicalisation. Member States agreed that the Knowledge Hub should be a one-stop-shop that gathers all stakeholders, and that it should not include activities beyond prevention.

Countering radicalisation was also a major theme at the informal COSI under the French Presidency, where Member States heard the testimonies of two victims of radicalisation, and were given a presentation on combatting extremist ecosystems, which play a role in the radicalisation of Muslim communities and violent right-wing extremists.

COSI also monitored the Counterterrorism Action Plan and its implementation and approved in May 2022 the simplified 'Procedure for enhanced security checks on persons crossing or having crossed the EU's external borders following events in Afghanistan'.

¹⁸ 9997/22

6. STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL-EXTERNAL SECURITY NEXUS

In recent years, internal security threats have increasingly acquired a transnational dimension. Hybrid and cyber threats, radicalisation and terrorism, irregular migration facilitated by criminal networks, and organised crime constitute threats with clear external dimensions. Therefore, COSI has had discussions on the need to foster the internal-external security nexus through a strengthened dialogue with relevant partners in this area. The onset of war at the EU's external borders, and the potential impact this may have on the internal security of the Union has brought a renewed sense of urgency to this conversation over the course of this Trio Presidency.

6.1 Formalising JHA/CSDP Cooperation

The CSDP enables the European Union to take a leading role in peace-keeping operations, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of international security. In 2018, Member States agreed upon the Civilian CSDP Compact, which highlights the civilian aspects of CSDP missions and aims to strengthen the EU's capacity to reinforce the police, rule of law and civil administration in fragile and conflict settings, through better cooperation with other EU instruments, including JHA actors¹⁹. Increasing cooperation between the externally focused civilian CSDP and the internally focused JHA, two related, yet distinct dimensions of the internal-external security nexus is a fundamental step towards a sustainable and long-term approach towards the internal security of the Union.

Work has been done at both COSI and COSI SG level in this regard. In April 2022, two informal meetings of the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) were held in conjunction with COSI SG with the intention of progressing the mini concept files for the civilian CSDP missions related to organised crime. These mini concepts form the basis of a wider response to tackle security challenges in line with the Civilian CSDP Compact. The meeting discussed mini concepts relating to cultural heritage, security challenges linked to irregular migration, cybersecurity and cybercrime, and counterterrorism and the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism. COSI SG later reinforced an additional mini concept on civilian CSDP support to host states in the fight against environmental crime and the reduction of internal security forces' environment footprint.

¹⁹ 14305/18

JHA/CSDP cooperation was further reinforced in February 2023, when under the Swedish Presidency a joint COSI-PSC meeting was held for the first time since September 2021. The meeting centred on the need for increased JHA/CSDP cooperation in addressing security threats with both an internal and external dimension considering Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Several tools for enhanced cooperation were identified, including the need for the JHA community, in line with its mandate, resources and operational needs, to increase its role in the new Civilian CSDP Compact, as well as in the planning and review of CSDP missions. Subsequently, COSI SG delegates were invited to participate in discussions at CIVCOM concerning the establishment of a civilian CSDP mission in Moldova²⁰, and the new Civilian CSDP Compact which was agreed upon in May 2023, enhancing the role of JHA actors in CSDP missions²¹. COSI regularly receives updates highlighting potential areas for JHA support to CSDP missions and the work done by these missions to counter internal security threats. Missions of interest to COSI include EUCAP Niger, EUAM Ukraine and the new EUPM Moldova. CSDP missions are participating in EMPACT OAPs (trafficking in human beings, migrant smuggling, high risk criminal network and firearms trafficking). Given the positive experience, further involvement of missions is likely to be sought.

6.2 Cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations

COSI receives updates concerning developments related to internal security and the JHA community in non-EU countries and international organisations, and on ongoing dialogues with countries, groups of countries and organisations in this regard. COSI has noted the presence of Overseas Chinese Police Stations in several Member States, the conclusions from the EU-MENA Ministerial International Conference in Lisbon on 13 and 14 February 2023²², and the 2022 joint declaration between the EU and the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI)²³.

²⁰ 10790/23

²¹ 9588/23

²² 7052/23

²³ 6762/22

COSI received regular updates about the senior officials meetings between the European Union and Interpol (SOMEI)²⁴. Relevant topics covered in these meetings throughout the Trio Presidency included the war in Ukraine, safeguard procedures for red notices, child sexual abuse and trafficking of cultural goods.

7. COORDINATION OF THE JHA AGENCIES

7.1 JHA Agencies’ Network (JHAAN)

Each year, the Union agencies holding the presidency of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies’ Network (JHAAN) update COSI on their activities in the previous year and present their priorities for the following year. In 2022, Frontex presented the 2021 activity report. As the JHAAN celebrated its tenth anniversary, this was used as an opportunity by COSI to evaluate the work of the network and propose recommendations. At the beginning of 2023, COSI took note of the annual report for 2022 presented by CEPOL and of the EU Asylum Agency’s (EUAA) network presidency priorities for 2023 comprising digitalization, the Green Deal, information provision in mixed migration situations, cyber security and JHAAN communication and promotion²⁵.

7.2 Individual activities of the JHA agencies

JHA agencies informed COSI regularly about their individual activities. Topics noted at COSI include the revision of the Europol mandate, the outcome of the 18th JITs (Joint Investigation Teams) network annual meeting at Eurojust on 5 and 6 October 2022²⁶, and the conclusions of the European Police Chiefs Convention at Europol on 4 and 5 October 2022. COSI further took note of presentations from CEPOL on the EU Strategic Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA), which seeks to define strategic and EU-level training priorities for the law enforcement community for 2022-2025, and from Frontex on the functioning of regional maritime information fusion centers.

²⁴ 8370/23, 14860/22, 10220/22
²⁵ 5608/23
²⁶ 16201/22