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NOTE

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 2019 - June 2020

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 2019 - June 2020¹.

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 the said report to the national Parliaments.

¹ Available in all official languages of the European Union on the Council public register, doc. [11413/20](#).

**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 2019 to June 2020**

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This is the seventh 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 must keep the European Parliament and the national Parliaments informed of the proceedings of the Standing Committee.

This report presents **COSI's activities during the period January 2019 - June 2020** under the Presidencies of Romania, Finland and Croatia.

1. SUMMARY

Under the Presidency trio of Romania, Finland and Croatia, COSI has continued to fulfil its mandate to **facilitate, promote and strengthen the coordination of operational cooperation** between the EU Member States in the field of internal security. In this capacity, COSI has acted as a monitoring, advisory and decision-making body, with senior representatives and experts from all EU Member States and, where necessary, the relevant JHA agencies, creating synergies between police, customs, border guards and judicial authorities as well as other relevant actors.

COSI has witnessed many developments, advancements and concrete operational results under the Presidency trio but has also encountered and handled the challenges of dealing with the current COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulties this has entailed.

During the period from January 2019 to June 2020, COSI has guided the development and progression of several **horizontal matters**.

The overarching debate on **the future of the EU's internal security** marked the Committee activities in the reporting period in implementation of the Strategic Agenda 2019 - 2024 in the field of Justice and Home affairs. It was initiated in the first half of 2019 under the Romanian Presidency², developed in detail under the Finnish Presidency in the second half of 2019 and followed up during the Croatian Presidency in 2020. A series of thematic debates on a number of horizontal work strands steered by COSI took place in preparation of the Council discussions in the second half of 2019, including enhancing the operational cooperation framework for law enforcement, the impact of new technologies and hybrid threats on internal security, the role of the EU JHA agencies as well as information management and automation, and training for LEA.

² 9393/19

In December 2019, the Council confirmed the horizontal work streams set out in the Finnish Presidency Report³ in view of guiding future developments in the area of internal security. Stepping up the integrated approach to security with an emphasis on enhanced interagency and cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as addressing the necessity and potential means to support law enforcement authorities across the Union regarding digital transformation were underlying themes, underpinned by respect for fundamental rights and rule of law.

The **role of EU JHA agencies** was a cross-cutting theme on a number of key topics such as, technological developments and the impact of disruptive technologies, consolidating the information management framework for internal security with a focus on enhancing data analysis capacities as well as strengthening the framework for law enforcement operational cooperation.

COSI has addressed the challenges that internal security faces in a world that is progressively more technologically and digitally enabled. With this in mind, law enforcement needs to be able to keep up with these developments. As part of the general reflection on the future of the EU's internal security, MSs expressed their support for the creation of a **JHA innovation hub** at Europol, for which Ministers granted a mandate at the JHA Council in October 2019. In 2020, COSI was invited to confirm and operationalise the main principles for the establishment of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security, building on the Council mandate for a comprehensive focus on internal security, a multi-agency approach drawing on the complementarity and synergies of existing capabilities, inclusiveness and collective delivery with a view to addressing the needs of security actors and identifying opportunities for driving innovation

The COVID-19 pandemic has immensely impacted our society and naturally brought changes for law enforcement and internal security. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, COSI quickly reoriented its agenda in order to follow closely and examine the impact that the pandemic had on internal security. With the support of the JHA agencies, a very good situational awareness about crime landscape developments was ensured and regularly monitored. Preserving operational continuity was the other aspect where particular attention was given with a clear call by the MSs for consolidating an EU framework for operational cooperation and developing EU-wide IT solutions for increased connectivity and fostering information exchange in the future.

³ 14297/19

Furthermore, COSI continued to monitor, advise and assist in decision-making during the pandemic by means of alternative working methods such as using written procedures for COSI SG and written procedures as well as video conference calls with delegations for COSI meetings.

Counter-terrorism remained a reoccurring standing priority on COSI's agenda.

Next to the CT threat assessment, specific attention was given to the developments regarding **foreign terrorist fighters**, including returnees. The potential terrorist threat which they pose is a major concern at both political and operational level. COSI discussed the outline of a process for entering information on suspected FTFs received from trusted third countries into the SIS, which allowed to gain a better understanding about the existing possibilities under EU and national legislation and identify aspects which could be streamlined further.

Further to indebt expert discussions in TWP in the second half of 2019, COSI consolidated the framework for a more streamlined response to **right-wing violent extremism** in preparation of the Council debate, which led to the approval of a matrix of priority actions to address this issue.

COSI continued to exercise its central role in steering the **EU Policy Cycle** on organised and serious international crime /EMPACT. As set out in the EU Policy Cycle terms of reference, COSI assisted by its Support Group in the Council continued to evaluate the implementation of the OAPs, monitoring the participation of MSs as well as other relevant actors in order to ensure their commitment and the required allocation of human and financial resources. The Committee further continued to monitor the progress of the OAPs, twice a year, on the basis of Europol's findings on the implementation of OAPs and reports by the Drivers and the National EMPACT Coordinators.

During the reporting period, the focus was placed on simplifying the reporting mechanism with a view to ensuring more streamlined OAP implementation reports for better monitoring of the implementation. A new reporting mechanism was produced in February 2020. During this period, COSI also paved the way for the adoption of the next EU SOCTA that will define the **EU crime priorities for the period 2022- 2025**. Under this echelon, COSI discussed and agreed upon **EU SOCTA - customer requirements**⁴ as well as a revised **EU SOCTA - methodology**⁵.

⁴ 9038/1/19 REV 1
⁵ 13732/1/19 REV 1

Further emphasis was placed on the necessity to enhance the **visibility of the EU policy cycle** in order to highlight the solid operational results obtained in the fight against organised and serious international crime. A **communication roadmap** to improve the visibility of EMPACT in the long term will be developed. To bring the EU policy cycle/EMPACT operational results closer to the public, the operational results **factsheets**⁶ were made public along with the annual **promotional video**⁷.

With regard to **organised and serious international crime**, COSI focused on several thematic work strands. Orientation debate was held on **enhancing financial investigations** with a view to countering serious and organised crime highlighting the need for a more comprehensive approach to financial investigations, covering measures on asset recovery and confiscation, on cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and the role of Europol in that cooperation, on cash and virtual payments.

In light of this debate, work on the set of Council conclusions was carried in the LEWP which were adopted in June 2020⁸.

COSI held a thematic debate in light of the **EU Drug Markets Report 2019**, noting that the EU drugs market is increasingly complex, adaptive and innovative highlighting the necessity to explore the policy strands that could be further developed in order to strengthen the response to the ever evolving illicit drug trafficking landscape. The threat it represents for European security and the challenges posed to policy-making and to law enforcement were addressed highlighting the need for renewed attention to illicit drug trafficking in the framework of an integrated, balanced and evidence-based policy on drugs, informed by foresight. Based on the guidance provided by COSI the HDG reinforced by LEWP was invited to identify specific steps that can be taken to improve the EU's response to illicit drug trafficking⁹. In May 2020 COSI endorsed a **strategic and operational set of measures to enhance the response to drug trafficking**¹⁰.

⁶ 7623/20

⁷ <https://newsroom.consilium.europa.eu/embed/219485>

⁸ 8605/20

⁹ 5756/20

¹⁰ 7743/20 which was subsequently revised pursuant to COSI 7743/1/20 REV 1

Enhancing **the response to migrant smuggling networks** continued to be a close focus of COSI work.

As a follow-up to the informal Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meeting on 23 January 2020, COSI exchanged views in the light of the joint report by Europol, Frontex and EASO on **tackling migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans**. Delegations supported the development of a enhanced exchange of information in the Western Balkans that could be modelled on existing EU mechanisms. The increased presence of EU agencies in the region was considered to be beneficial, in certain cases, while the need for closer coordination between the various EU actors was underlined. Building on the good operational results, the Committee encouraged a stronger engagement on the part of Western Balkan partners in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT.

Following the adoption of the Civilian CSDP Compact, efforts relating to cooperation and strengthening of the synergies and complementarity between civilian CSDP structures and JHA actors have continued. Under the **internal - external nexus**, COSI and PSC focused in this period on the implementation of the Civilian CSDP Compact. Three separate mini-concepts on the security challenges identified in the Compact have been presented to joint meetings of JHA-CSDP- Council working bodies so far and work is well underway. There is general support for the mini-concept approach in operationalising the Civilian Compact through concrete projects and pilots in respect of the missions of interest.

Hybrid threats were addressed by COSI in the form of the outcome of a scenario-based policy discussion held at the informal ministerial meeting in Helsinki in July 2019. Delegations agreed that a multi-sectoral, national and EU approach should be taken and highlighted the role played by EU agencies in support of MS's efforts. In light of the discussion, a policy debate was held by the Council in October 2019.

Cooperation with the Western Balkans continued to be a **priority** brought before COSI. Bringing Western Balkan partners closer to the EU's operational standards and mechanisms is important for the security of Europe as a whole, as outlined by the HR Presidency.

Information management was addressed by COSI as one of the thematic debates on the future of internal security. In the interests of end-users, delegations called for a comprehensive policy framework on information management covering the entire circuit of data from access to effective exchange and use, data quality, data analysis, automation and measures to ensure structured progress. COSI confirmed the need for further automation, especially in the context of big data analysis. The implementation of Interoperability was unanimously referred to as an absolute priority with a call for continuous EU support to address not only the technical implementation, but also the need to build the necessary ‘mind-sets’ to operate it in practice. Some called for more caution in extending Interoperability to decentralised systems before the full implementation of the package is secured.

Enhancing the contribution of customs to internal security continued to be in the close focus of attention of the Committee. COSI discussed possible ways forward to further strengthen such cooperation, which is seen as crucial in the fight against organised crime¹¹. Delegations stressed the positive cooperation of customs with the EU policy cycle on organised and serious international crime /EMPACT and encouraged deeper synergies with the 10th Customs Action Plan.

With regard to **EU law enforcement training**, another horizontal theme from the future of internal security debates, support was expressed for the development of standardised curricula for training activities across the EU, taking into account national differences, with proposals to establish quality certification standards. Unanimous support was shown for further developing exchange programmes.

COSI has been regularly updated of the cooperation and interaction between the JHA agencies, for example through the reports on the activities of the **JHA agencies Network**. Europol and Eurojust hold the chairmanship of the Network and 2019 and 2020 respectively.

The **COSI SG** once again provided stable support in facilitating COSI’s work, notably within the framework of the EU Policy Cycle on organised and serious international crime. It prepared discussions for COSI, either by concluding certain more technical items or by streamlining and preparing discussions for COSI.

¹¹ 7664/1/20 REV 1

2. HORIZONTAL MATTERS

2.1 Future of EU internal security

In June 2019, the Council held a policy debate on ‘**The future of EU Policing**¹²’ as part of the collective reflections on the future direction of internal security.

Building on the EU’s strategic agenda, the FI Presidency enhanced discussions including through a series of thematic discussions on various aspects of internal security, migration and justice. The objective was to consolidate the outcome of the discussions by the end of the year and to confirm the Council’s position on the future direction in the JHA area.

Specific focus was given to challenges and needs faced in relation to effective implementation of adopted measures, technological developments, information management, training of law enforcement, operational cooperation, role of EU JHA agencies, etc.

Subsequent discussions were launched in July 2019, at the informal COSI meeting, in preparation for the informal JHA Council, by raising a number of key horizontal topics. Thematic discussions also took place in the relevant working parties, such as LEWP, TWP and the Working Party on Information Exchange (DAPIX IE) (IXIM), and were further prepared at COSI for ministerial debate. A number of the topics that were addressed in detail include enhancing the operational cooperation framework for law enforcement, the impact of new technologies and hybrid threats on internal security, the role of the EU’s JHA agencies, information management and automation as well as training for LEA.

As part of the series of debates brought to COSI in September 2019, one focused on new technologies and internal security¹³. It outlined the impact of technological developments in relation to law enforcement, and COSI expressed its full support for the creation of an ‘**Innovation Hub for internal security**’ whereby the needs of law enforcement should be systematically taken into account in deploying new technologies.

¹² 9027/19
¹³ 12224/19

The outcome of the different thematic discussions was summarised in a Presidency Report submitted to the Council in December 2019¹⁴ whereby four key issues were outlined.

A **proactive approach to new technologies** by law enforcement authorities with support from the recommended innovation hub was advocated with an emphasis on taking the needs of law enforcement authorities into account.

A comprehensive **effective information management** framework, in order to ensure that all the necessary existing information is accessible, processed, **analysed** and exchanged quickly and efficiently so that it gives rise to action in an intelligence-led way.

The need to review the legal framework for cross-border law enforcement cooperation and Europol's mandate in order to adapt it to current realities and future challenges was advocated with reference to **multidisciplinary cross-border cooperation**.

A **comprehensive approach to security** was recommended in order to address various threats to internal security. The importance of working across all relevant policy sectors and among relevant actors in a more strategic, coordinated and coherent manner was underlined.

Throughout this debate there was a broad convergence of views on the need to ensure a sustainable financial outlook for EU JHA agencies and Europol in particular, as well as adequate allocation of resources for internal security priorities in the context of an ever evolving and rapidly changing security landscape. In this context, delegations took note of the state of play of negotiations of the next MFF 2021-2027¹⁵ and agreed on the necessity to liaise with Ministries of Finance at national level to make sure that the need for proportionate allocation of funds for internal security priorities is taken into consideration in the negotiations of the General MFF Regulation.

¹⁴ 14297/19

¹⁵ 9034/19

2.2 Technological developments and internal security

2.2.1 EU Innovation Hub for internal security

In preparation for the Council debate on new technologies and internal security¹⁶, the Committee held an exchange of views in September 2019 as part of the general reflection on the future of the EU's internal security. Delegations gave their support for the creation of a **JHA innovation hub** hosted by Europol, while also underlining the need to ensure **adequate funding** for its functioning. The Council in October granted a broad mandate to that effect.

In order to advance work towards the establishment of an EU innovation hub, COSI was invited in February 2020 to confirm the main principles¹⁷ for the establishment of the EU innovation hub for internal security, building on the Council mandate, i.e. a comprehensive focus on internal security, a multi-agency approach drawing on the complementarity and synergies of existing capabilities, inclusiveness and collective delivery with a view to addressing the needs of security actors and identifying opportunities for future developments. The Committee underlined the need to further develop the operational and financial model of the hub. Relevant JHA Agencies were invited to present pilot projects, which can showcase the added value of an inter-agency approach through the EU innovation hub.

COSI held an informal VTC discussion in May 2020 to further clarify the main principles for the establishment of the EU innovation hub for internal security¹⁸ following the broad agreement on the Hub framework at the COSI meeting in February.

Europol, supported by the Commission, will coordinate the required administrative arrangements, including the drafting of rules of procedures on the functioning of the steering group, with a view to endorsement by COSI.

¹⁶ 12224/19

¹⁷ 5757/20

¹⁸ 7829/20

2.2.2 NAI Council Conclusions

Further to the broad support expressed by Ministers at the Informal JHA Council in January 2019 for the Presidency's initiative on **Novel Actionable Information (NAI)**, COSI exchanged views on the main elements of the concept put forward by the Presidency¹⁹. COSI underlined the urgency for a more streamlined process to support law enforcement authorities across the Union in understanding, developing and using technologies and tools in the area of digital data, including research and innovation initiatives. Europol presented a roadmap for the development of a knowledge-sharing platform²⁰ in a follow up to this debate and **the Council adopted conclusions** in June 2019²¹.

2.3 Impact of COVID-19 on internal security and maintaining operational continuity.

COSI has placed the **impact of COVID-19 on internal security** and maintaining operational continuity for law enforcement in the centre of its agenda in Spring 2020²². This discussion was a follow-up to the informal video conference of Home Affairs Ministers in April 2020, at which the security aspects of the crisis were highlighted.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought changes and new trends in serious and organised crime, not only in the EU but globally. Following lockdowns and restrictions on travelling across borders, OCGs have adapted to the new circumstances and are tailoring their activities to the specificities of the pandemic. OCGs have massively increased their online presence, targeting victims and customers on the internet, social networks and the darknet. The pandemic and the lockdown itself have stimulated criminal and fraudulent activity related to medical goods and services. Criminal activity has swiftly adapted to the pattern of demand in the global market under the new circumstances of COVID-19.

In the wake of the crisis, the Union has mobilised its capacities to ensure that the evolution of the criminal landscape and the impact of COVID-19 on internal security are continuously monitored in order to anticipate developments and provide responses.

¹⁹ 9035/19
²⁰ 13731/19
²¹ 9720/19
²² 7828/20

In this context, there is an even more evident need to provide law enforcement and judicial authorities with skills adapted to the new environment. There is an acute need of flexible and robust IT solutions, increase level of new areas of expertise and adequate financial resources. Preserving operational continuity was another aspect where particular attention was given. During the confinement, continuity in operational cooperation and information exchange has been maintained where IT solutions, connectivity between authorities and secure communication channels were available. There is a clear call by the MSs for consolidating an EU framework for operational cooperation and developing EU-wide IT solutions for increased connectivity and fostering information exchange in the future.

3. COUNTER-TERRORISM

Although 2019 and 2020 witnessed a decline in the number and impact of terrorist attacks, CT remained a high priority on COSI's agenda, requiring a multidisciplinary approach to tackle this threat to the EU's internal security.

3.1 The EU's response to terrorism

In preparation for the Council debate in spring 2019, COSI took stock of the progress made²³ since 2015 in preventing and combating terrorism at EU level and indicated possible directions for future action. The European Parliament (EP), as co-legislator, played an important role, not only in the adoption of numerous legislative files but also in the extensive work of the Special Committee on Terrorism²⁴ that led to the adoption in December 2018 of a comprehensive report on CT, including 227 recommendations for future work in this area. The Presidency launched a reflection process on the way forward in this area, bearing in mind that 2019 had been a year of many changes for the EU, which could affect the EU's internal security policy, including with regard to counter-terrorism efforts.

The Committee held an exchange of views, noting the need for the implementation of adopted measures and addressing practical shortcomings. Furthermore, it stressed the need to enhance links and to further develop the internal/external security nexus in the area of counter-terrorism.

²³ 5569/19

²⁴ WK 15093/2018

3.2 Battlefield information

PSC and COSI discussed the issue of **battlefield information** on the basis of a paper and presentation from the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator²⁵. The exchange focused on the need to accelerate the availability of battlefield information for three purposes: border control, investigation and prosecution. Delegations welcomed the progress which had been achieved since the last discussions in July 2017 and underlined the cross-cutting nature of the collection and use of battlefield information involving a number of actors and aspects: military, law enforcement and judicial.

3.3 Returning FTFs

The situation of FTFs, including returnees, and the potential terrorist threat which they pose have become a major concern at both political and operational level. Following Turkey's military action in North-East Syria and given the persistently volatile situation in that region, concerns regarding the potential undetected return of suspected FTFs have become more acute. It is critical that non-European FTFs be detected should they try to cross the EU external borders and that action be taken upon receipt of intelligence regarding the identity of suspected non-European FTFs. COSI held an exchange on the outline of a process for entering information on suspected FTFs received from trusted third countries into the SIS,²⁶ which allowed to gain a better understanding about the existing possibilities under EU and national legislation and identify aspects which could be streamlined further.

²⁵ 6336/19 EU RESTRICTED / RESTREINT UE + ADD 1 EU RESTRICTED / RESTREINT UE + ADD 2

²⁶ 7741/20

3.4 Right-wing violent extremism

It was deemed timely and relevant to bring this debate forward for a high-level political discussion, following recent attacks motivated by this form of terrorism. In preparation for the Council debate in December 2019 and further to discussions that had been held at the TWP, the Committee underlined the need to monitor and record developments concerning right-wing violent extremism and terrorism²⁷. The exchanges highlighted the different approaches in Member States which may lead to having only a partial and insufficient threat picture available, furthermore the role of the internet, and the need to reflect further on how to counter online terrorist propaganda, irrespective of the underlying ideology, was deemed a priority.

3.5 EU CT threat assessment

According to the established procedure²⁸, each semester COSI endorsed the recommendations at EU level of the EU threat assessment in the field of counter-terrorism^{29 30 31}. Among others, the recommendations in May 2019 stressed the need to address politically or ideologically motivated violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms, also taking into consideration the increasing polarisation of society.

3.6 CBRN threat

The Committee welcomed the presentation by the Commission regarding the EU's response to CBRN risks and the possible way forward, especially with a view to addressing the reported increased risk in the potential use of chemical and biological weapons.

²⁷ 12225/19
²⁸ 13414/1/17 REV 1
²⁹ 9044/1/19
³⁰ 13709/1/19 REV 1
³¹ 7740/20

3.7 Combating antisemitism: state of play and next steps

Further to the attack on 9 October 2019 on a synagogue in Halle (DE), the Commission informed the Committee about ongoing work in this field. Further to the declaration on combating antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe, as approved by the Council on 6 December 2018³², the Commission established a working group on the implementation of the Council declaration, with the participation of MSs and Jewish communities. To support implementation, funds were made available under the ISF-Police.

³² 15213/18

4. THE EU POLICY CYCLE ON ORGANISED AND SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CRIME/EMPACT

In 2010, a four year policy cycle was set up by the EU in order to create a sustainable framework of continuity with regards to the fight against organised and serious international crime. This became the main framework for operational cooperation across the EU to tackle the main criminal threats affecting the internal security at EU level.

One of the key features of the EU policy cycle is its integrated multidisciplinary character, in terms of both using and aligning the complementary contribution of all multi-disciplinary and multi-agency actors, and integrating different types of tools and activities to tackle EU crime priorities³³.

This multi-disciplinary approach reduces obstacles that would otherwise be difficult to overcome such as the difference in competence, mandate and working methods of the various players involved at national and EU level and in the context of internal or external action as well as the complex cross-border nature of serious and organised crime, which requires the use of a vast range of tools and approaches in order to counteract it effectively.

The achievements of the EU Policy Cycle are demonstrated by solid operational results (annex III)³⁴, as reported regularly by the Operational Action Plan Drivers and also generated through the JADs. Equally important, the EU Policy Cycle has brought a new dimension of cooperation across the established structures at national and EU level and has provided opportunities to develop new approaches based on its multidisciplinary setting.

In 2019, it delivered tangible results with 8 000 arrests including high-value targets, more than 1 400 victims of human trafficking and online child pornography identified, the prevention of fraud in the EU's interest (EUR 400 million), criminal assets seized or frozen (EUR 77 million), and 75 tonnes of drugs and chemicals and 6 000 firearms seized³⁵.

³³ 14884/1/18 REV 1

³⁴ [7623/20](#)

³⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/44281/information-note-empact.pdf>

4.1 Implementation and review of the EU Policy Cycle on organised and serious international crime

COSI has a central role in steering the EU Policy Cycle process. As set out in the EU Policy Cycle terms of reference (ToR)³⁶, COSI closely evaluates the implementation of the OAPs, including the participation of Member States and other actors in order to ensure their commitment and the required allocation of human and financial resources. The Committee monitors the progress of the OAPs twice a year on the basis of Europol's findings on the implementation of OAPs, reports by the Drivers and the NECs³⁷.

The main element highlighted during the Presidency trio in relation to the implementation of the EU policy cycle was recognition of the need to update the reporting mechanism with a view to ensuring further streamlining of the OAP implementation reports³⁸. This was followed through and a new reporting mechanism was produced in February 2020³⁹, which will be explained in detail at a later stage. The excellent operational results were also presented, as well as the enhanced cooperation with non-EU partners/ countries, the maturing of the EU policy cycle as well as its efficiency and success.

4.2 EU SOCTA 2021

The Council conclusions on the continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime for the period 2018-2021⁴⁰ tasked Europol, together with the Member States, the Commission and other JHA Agencies, with preparing for the EU SOCTA 2021 - customer requirements for validation by COSI before July 2019 and they were endorsed by COSI⁴¹ in May 2019.

³⁶ 14884/1/18 REV 1
³⁷ 8686/19
³⁸ 9036/19
³⁹ 5002/20
⁴⁰ 7704/17
⁴¹ 9038/1/19 REV 1

In the evaluation of the EU SOCTA 2017 and its methodology, several improvements had been suggested by Member States and Europol. Updates were reflected in the EU SOCTA 2021 - customer requirements document and provided guidance for the update of the **EU SOCTA 2021 - methodology** such as the inclusion of environmental scanning to identify trends and vulnerabilities to the data collection and analysis. The revised EU SOCTA 2021 methodology⁴² was endorsed by COSI in January 2020.

4.3 Independent evaluation

An independent evaluation⁴³ of the EU Policy Cycle 2018-2021 has been launched, as called by the Council conclusions on the continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime for the period 2018-2021⁴⁴ to serve as an input for the next EU Policy Cycle.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an overall assessment of whether, and to what extent, the EU Policy Cycle 2018-2021, including EU SOCTA, has met its overall objective of tackling in a coherent and methodological manner the most important serious and organised crime threats affecting the EU by encouraging cooperation between all the relevant actors⁴⁵, and to suggest concrete measures to improve the next EU Policy Cycle(s).

The independent evaluation will provide an overview of the achievements obtained and the obstacles encountered during the 2018-2021 cycle, and the reasons for this. It will identify best practices and concrete measures in the form of actionable recommendations to streamline and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the next EU Policy Cycle(s)⁴⁶.

Member States and JHA agencies are involved in the evaluation by various means, including questionnaires and interviews, and possibly study visits, and, if deemed necessary, by other ways of monitoring function.

⁴² 13732/1/19 REV 1

⁴³ 10993/19

⁴⁴ 7704/17

⁴⁵ 15358/10

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/117583.pdf

⁴⁶ 11163/19

In July 2019, COSI SG delegations were invited to exchange views on the main elements of the evaluation outlined in the Commission paper as well as on the aspects regarding the monitoring of the evaluation as put forward in the paper. As a result, an advisory group was set up to assist the evaluation, and the Commission paper was revised on the basis of the written comments following the COSI SG meeting⁴⁷.

A working paper was submitted to COSI SG in April 2020 and delegations took note of the preliminary findings of the evaluation study and the activities performed up to April 2020⁴⁸. The evaluation remains on track despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4 Funding

There has been a continuous effort to streamline the funding of the EU policy cycle. In May 2019 COSI SG delegations exchanged views on the outcomes and recommendations from the 3rd workshop of the expert group on funding indicating aspects that they viewed should be given priority, to be further processed by COSI.

In 2019 of the overall EMPACT budget of EUR 4 million, EUR 3 million was allocated to high value grants and EUR 1 million to low value grants⁴⁹. Further to the debate held at COSI SG in relation to the proposed budget for 2020 in September, it was agreed more funds to be allocated to LVG given the very good absorption rates and flexibility provided.⁵⁰ Additionally pursuant to the COSI debate the horizontal priority of document fraud received direct funding for the first time of EUR 100, 000. COSI will continue to monitor the allocation of funding. COSI took note of substantive specific funding from other EU institutions / agencies / networks⁵¹ underlining the commitment of these partners to support EMPACT.

⁴⁷ 1163/1/19 REV 1

⁴⁸ WK 4357/20

⁴⁹ 10992/19

⁵⁰ 10992/1/19 REV 1

⁵¹ 7409/1/20 REV 1

4.5 Reporting mechanism

In February 2020, delegations were presented with a revised draft of the **reporting mechanism**⁵² for the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle following recommendations made by NECs during a dedicated working group meeting hosted by Europol on 26 June 2019 and a workshop at the NEC Meeting on 30 October⁵³ 2019.

Delegations discussed the revised document with a view to its adoption and there was general consensus regarding the new planning and reporting template, which was deemed more user-friendly and streamlined⁵⁴.

4.6 Visibility

COSI also provided guidance on strengthening the identity of the EU Policy Cycle in May 2018 and adopted a set of recommendations in order to improve the communication of the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT⁵⁵ based on the reflections and discussions of Member States' national media contact points. The set of recommendations was operationalised in the revised terms of reference of the EU Policy Cycle⁵⁶ and, with due regard for the comments received from NECs⁵⁷, a follow-up to the implementation of the media recommendations⁵⁸ was presented to COSI SG in May 2020. Based on the contributions received, the group recommended the drafting of a **Communication Roadmap** which would improve the visibility of EMPACT in the long term⁵⁹.

A further measure that has been taken to increase the visibility of the EU Policy Cycle and promote the tangible results of the OAPs and the work of COSI / COSI SG was to make the **factsheets**⁶⁰ presenting the results public, along with the annual **promotional video**⁶¹.

52 5002/20

53 WK 12513/19

54 5002/1/20 REV 1

55 7909/18

56 14884/1/18 REV 1

57 WK 4395/20

58 7434/20

59 7434/1/20 REV 1

60 7623/20

61 <https://newsroom.consilium.europa.eu/videos/127612-empact-2019-results-20200602>

4.7 Joint Action Days

At the COSI SG meeting in November 2019, delegations took stock of the assessment of the JADs 2019 as presented by Europol, and provided strategic guidance on the objectives and crime priorities that should be taken into account in relation to the JADs 2020⁶².

Following on from the strategic guidance provided by COSI, delegations agreed on the draft JAD 2020 concept on the basis of a note prepared by Europol in consultation with FRONTEX⁶³.

⁶² 13737/19

⁶³ 5619/20 EU RESTRICTED

5. ORGANISED AND SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CRIME - THEMATIC FOCUS

5.1 Enhancing financial investigations, including AROs

Following two preparatory discussions in the LEWP in January and February 2020, COSI held a thematic debate on 21 February 2020 on the adoption of a more comprehensive approach to financial investigations, covering measures on asset recovery and confiscation, on cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and the role of Europol in that cooperation, and on cash and virtual payments. Consequently, COSI tasked the LEWP with preparing draft **Council conclusions**, to be further discussed by COSI in May 2020 and approved by the Council in June 2020⁶⁴.

The final text of the Council conclusions highlights the need to enhance cooperation and synergy in conducting financial investigations and exchanging financial information between FIUs, Asset Recovery Offices, customs authorities, tax authorities and law enforcement authorities.

Furthermore, the Council conclusions call upon the Commission to consider strengthening the legal framework on the management of property frozen with a view to possible subsequent confiscation⁶⁵, to include the principle of pre-seizure planning, and to grant AROs additional powers, for example precautionary urgent temporary freezing powers in order to prevent the dissipation of assets. The Commission is also asked to consider further enhancing the legal framework in order to interconnect national centralised bank account registries, to consider the need to further improve the legal framework for virtual assets or to re-engage in a discussion with member states regarding the need for a legislative limitation on cash payments at EU level.

⁶⁴ 8927/20 and CM2664/20 Statement by Austria and Italy.

⁶⁵ Confiscation Directive (2014/42), Art. 10(2).

5.2 Illicit drugs trafficking

At the LEWP meeting held in February, to which the HDG was invited, the Presidency presented a discussion paper on the topic of combating drug trafficking. The focus was enhancement of cooperation with the Western Balkan partners, but reference was also made to the wider context, such as cooperation with the US DEA and the law enforcement agencies of Latin American countries.

Subsequently, COSI held a thematic debate in light of the EU Drug Markets Report 2019 highlighting the need to give the drugs policy greater priority in the political agenda. The delegations agreed that the scale of the threat to EU security justified renewed political attention to the drugs situation, and that efforts should be stepped up to disrupt illicit drug trafficking in the framework of an integrated, balanced and evidence-based policy. Cooperation should be intensified between Member States and between law enforcement, judicial, customs and fiscal authorities. Greater focus was needed on major drug hubs, the use of the darknet and postal services, forensics, new technologies, financial investigation, confiscation of proceeds, and on targeting top-level criminals in order to bring down the whole cycle of criminal activities. Stronger international partnerships should be developed with countries neighbouring the EU and on the main trafficking routes. COSI tasked the **Horizontal Working Party on Drugs**, reinforced by the **Law Enforcement Working Party**, to identify steps that can be taken to improve the EU's response to illicit drug trafficking.

In May 2020 COSI **endorsed a strategic and operational set of measures to enhance the response to drug trafficking**⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ 7743/20 which was revised pursuant to COSI 7743/1/20 REV 1

5.3 Migrant smuggling and THB

Delegations exchanged views on the state of play⁶⁷ of the implementation of a comprehensive and operational set of measures for enhancing the response to migrant smuggling networks⁶⁸, highlighting the importance of the topic and showing strong support for addressing the various operational issues outlined in the debate.

COSI took stock⁶⁹ of the EU's current engagement on the Eastern Mediterranean route to fight migrant smuggling. There was general support for enhancing the EU's capabilities and preparedness and recognition of the excellent results achieved in the EU policy cycle/EMPACT FII.

Following up on the discussions at the informal Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meeting on 23 January 2020, delegations exchanged views in the light of the joint report by Europol, Frontex and EASO on tackling migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans⁷⁰. Delegations supported in principle the development of a mechanism in the Western Balkans for the enhanced exchange of information, e.g. national biometric registration/data-sharing systems on asylum applicants and irregular migrants that could be modelled on EURODAC, as well as further roll-out of SIENA. The enhanced presence of EU agencies in the region is seen as useful in certain cases while the need for closer coordination between the various EU actors was underlined. Building on the positive operational results, the Committee encouraged the stronger engagement of Western Balkan partners in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT. COSI renewed its call to the Commission and relevant agencies to address the issue of the social media monitoring function following the shutdown of the EASO programme, as instructed by the EDPS's opinion.

COSI took note of the FRONTEX Annual Risk Assessment 2020. Based on identified threats and vulnerabilities in the border management, Frontex planned and performed joint operational activities to prevent, detect and combat illegal migration and cross border crime at the external borders and in neighbouring third countries. This measured common effort is where necessary and effective performed on a mid and long term base.

⁶⁷ 13439/19
⁶⁸ 15250/18
⁶⁹ 13974/19
⁷⁰ 5312/20

The development of the standing corps and Frontex operational activities as the development of cooperation between European Border and Coast guard Agencies and extension in the collaboration with Third countries is based on a European Integrated Border Management.

The Commission presented the second progress report⁷¹ published in December 2018 as required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, to the COSI SG. The Report highlighted an increase in internal trafficking, as well as an increase in exploiting the migratory flow for THB. The Report was also presented at the meetings of CATS, SCIFA, as well as the kick-off meeting of OAP THB.

5.4 Mafia-style organised groups

In September 2019, the Italian delegation presented a discussion paper to COSI in relation to the threat posed by increasingly active organisations, which are characterised by the ‘structural flexibility’ and ‘trans-nationality’ of their actions. Specific reference was made to Ndrangheta and several discussion points were brought to the table. Delegations took note of the paper.

5.5 Document Fraud

Document fraud remained a cross-cutting threat and EMPACT priority as it is an enabler for many other crime fields. But especially at the borders where it poses a serious risk for the internal security not limited to irregular migration.

As a core competence of border guards Frontex extended its data/information exchange in a dedicated risk analysis network and created new EDF Dashboards on document fraud for EU MS analysts, delivered situational awareness on strategic level in the form of annual risk analyses focusing on document fraud and generated several thematic handbooks.

Furthermore, for the first time, COSI secured a budget dedicated to this cross-cutting priority which ensured several operational and technical actions supported by Europol and the High Level Group dedicated to document fraud.

⁷¹ 15677/18 + ADD 1

6. INTERNAL - EXTERNAL NEXUS

6.1 CDSP-JHA cooperation: Civilian CSDP Compact

PSC and COSI reverted to the Civilian CSDP Compact, focusing on its implementation. EEAS updated delegates in February 2019 on the Joint EEAS/COM Action Plan and ongoing efforts to strengthen CSDP-JHA cooperation, and stressed the key role played by the National Implementation Plans. The EEAS drew attention to its efforts to work jointly with the Commission, Europol, Frontex and CEPOL to ensure the production of an all-encompassing action plan, which would also envisage the opportunity to develop new forms of cooperation between CSDP and JHA actors. MS agreed on the need for effective implementation of the Compact and for closer collaboration between CSDP and JHA actors.

In terms of the implementation of the Civilian Compact, there was general support for the mini-concept approach in terms of operationalising the Civilian Compact through concrete projects and pilot schemes at the missions of interest. PSC and COSI discussed the potential establishment of a pilot project in Niger on the Organised Crime Coordination Platform (OCCP) on the basis of an EEAS paper⁷². The debate illustrated the need to clarify a number of issues before deciding upon such a project.

6.2 Hybrid threats

The Committee welcomed the Presidency report⁷³ as well as a presentation on the outcome of a scenario-based policy discussion held at the informal ministerial meeting in Helsinki in July 2019. Delegations agreed that a multi-sectoral, national and EU approach should be taken. Delegations also highlighted the role played by EU agencies in support of MS's efforts. In the light of the discussion a policy debate was taken to the Council in October 2019.

⁷² WK 10339/19

⁷³ 12226/1/19 REV 1

COSI and PSC held a joint discussion on countering hybrid threats on the basis of a Presidency discussion paper⁷⁴. There was a broad convergence of views among delegations on the scope and need for an EU approach in this area, which also requires the introduction of internal and external tools. The role of CSDP missions in addressing hybrid threats within their field of operation was highlighted.

⁷⁴ WK 10276/19

7. COOPERATION WITH WESTERN BALKAN PARTNERS

Strengthening cooperation with the Western Balkan partners was among the main priorities of the HR Presidency and was a cross cutting theme in a number of debates held at working party level and at COSI in relation to prominent internal security areas such as illicit drugs, migrant smuggling and operational cooperation.

With reference to the complex overlapping nature of security threats, including the illicit drug market and OCGs, it was advocated that a necessary measure to address illicit **drug trafficking** and the illegal activities of OCGs would be to further enhance cooperation between the EU and the WB partners with the recommendation of achieving this via the EU policy cycle / EMPACT, providing a multi-disciplinary platform to target certain regions and OCGs. Other aspects were also brought before COSI such as the idea to further strengthen operational cooperation between the Police, Border Guard and Customs authorities of the Member States and of third countries and in particular the WB partner, as well as providing more EU 'know how' to the WB in the form of technical support and support in dealing with obstacles in organisational, legislative and procedural frameworks.

As a follow-up to the discussion at the informal Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meeting on 23 January 2020, delegations exchanged views in light of the joint report by Europol, Frontex and EASO on migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans (5312/20)

Delegations supported in principle the development of mechanism in the Western Balkans for enhanced exchange of information, e.g. of national biometric registration/data-sharing systems on asylum applicants and irregular migrants system that could be modelled on EURODAC, and further roll-out of SIENA. Enhanced presence of EU agencies in the region is seen useful in certain cases, while the need for stronger coordination between the different EU actors was underlined. Building on the good operational results, the Committee encouraged a stronger engagement of Western Balkans partners in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT. Frontex remained committed to a long-standing cooperation with WB-RAN partners. This cooperation provides an up-to-date situational awareness and enhanced analytical capabilities that can guide the most suitable strategic-level and operational responses to common threats. COSI renewed its call to the Commission and relevant agencies to address the issue of the social media monitoring function following the shutdown of the EASO programme, as instructed by the EDPS opinion.

8. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

In the second semester of 2019 the FI Presidency initiated a detailed discussion on the topic in the context of the ongoing reflection on the future of EU internal security⁷⁵. MSs underlined that **information management** should remain on the Council's agenda with an emphasis on the necessity to look at the whole cycle of data, from access, to effective exchange and the use of data, in order to ensure a systematic approach. MSs additionally highlighted the end user perspective for further developments as well as the importance of using existing tools (legal, technical) to their full extent. Strengthening Europol's role as an information hub was also addressed. Automation was confirmed to be crucial to tackle increasing data flows with standardisation as a prerequisite.

In November 2019, eu-LISA gave a presentation to COSI on ‘**Artificial intelligence** in the operational management of large-scale IT systems’⁷⁶; the topic received a positive reaction from the floor, with some quite lengthy contributions. Several ideas were put forward, such as the need to develop common algorithms in specific areas across the EU, with standardisation being an initial priority. Several references were made to the previously discussed innovation hub at Europol. It was also stressed that it is only once these items have been addressed at expert group level that political decisions should be taken to adopt measures. There was overall appreciation of the role that AI can play in terms of internal security from both a strategic and a practical point of view, and an acknowledgement that it is an area that needs to be further explored subject to stringent safeguards framework.

⁷⁵ 13510/19

⁷⁶ 12783/19

The two new **Interoperability Regulations** ((EU) 2019/817 and (EU) 2019/818) entered into force on 11 June 2019 and the implementation of those regulations had been one of the key priorities of the FI Presidency. Operational procedures and the impact of Interoperability on end-users (Member States' authorities) is important work that needs to be discussed within the Council's structures in order to optimise the operational added value of the Interoperability framework. A Presidency paper was submitted to COSI in September 2019 outlining the various aspects of the implementation of the new Interoperability Regulations, while putting several issues to COSI that would need to be further defined in the context of the implementation of those regulations. The debate illustrated the need for further effort to address the various stages of implementation of Interoperability legislation.

There was overall consensus that keeping COSI updated on the state of play of implementation and issues that might need to be addressed could contribute to reinforcing the timely implementation of the Interoperability framework.

9. CUSTOMS: ENHANCING THE CONTRIBUTION OF CUSTOMS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

COSI continued to address cooperation with customs authorities as one of its priorities during the reporting period. The Committee took note of the adoption of the updated strategy for future cooperation between customs and law enforcement. On the basis of the discussion paper⁷⁷, COSI took stock of the extensive work carried out by the Presidency to enhance the contribution of customs to internal security and discussed possible ways forward to further strengthen, in the frame of established competences and according to the national legislation, such cooperation, which is seen as crucial in the fight against organised crime. Progress made by Frontex on bridging border guard, customs and police under the umbrella of Frontex operational activities targeting cross-border crime has been noted.

There has been a continuous growing presence of customs authorities within EMPACT and in 2020 customs authorities were involved in ten actions of the 2020 OAPs, co-leading two of them⁷⁸. Delegations stressed the positive cooperation of customs with the EU policy cycle and encouraged deeper synergies with the Customs Action Plan. A roadmap was presented at the meeting of the CCWP on 26 November 2019 on customs integration in SOCTA.

COSI examined the opportunities for cooperation between EU policy cycle OAPs and the 10th CCWP Action Plan in order to achieve synergies and endorsed the suggested way forward⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ 13975/19
⁷⁸ 7069/20
⁷⁹ 7664/1/20 REV 1

10. TRAINING

Law enforcement training, provided by relevant EU agencies, completed the series of thematic debates in relation to the future of EU internal security. In November 2019, COSI held an animated and engaged debate on the training of law enforcement within the framework of discussions on the future of EU internal security⁸⁰. There was general agreement on the strategic importance of training and the need to invest more in it, especially as regards new technologies. MS indicated the need for more training in areas such as cyber-crime and Interoperability.

Broad support was expressed for the development of standardised curricula for training activities across the EU, taking into account national differences, with proposals to establish quality certification standards. There was unanimous support for further developing exchange programmes including students, recalling existing examples: FR-ES mutualised training, BG-DE student exchange programme. One delegation reiterated the call to create an education pillar at the innovation lab and, along the same lines, the calls for CEPOL to play a greater role in R&D and to forge stronger links with Academia.

There were calls to adequately fund CEPOL and to update CEPOL's mandate if required to include any additional tasks identified, including involvement in basic training.

There is a need to map efforts in training to avoid overlapping and to coordinate EU, regional and national training activities. There was general agreement on the need to engage more with customs and justice in law enforcement training to increase awareness.

The Presidency concluded by stressing the strategic importance of training, the need to develop CCC, the usefulness of further developing the exchange programmes and the important role played by CEPOL and FRONTEX⁸¹.

⁸⁰ 13973/19

⁸¹ Frontex plays an essential role in building up and harmonising the education of the border management community, by promoting common standards and best practices for tackling the current and emerging challenges at the external border. Frontex training programmes pursue inter-agency cooperation and foster modern ways of working, integrating the newest large IT scale systems and state of the art technologies, enabling border management community to collect relevant information and intelligence and act in anticipation of potential risks and threats to the common internal security.

- JHA Agencies Network

The Committee took note of the presentations by EIGE on the activities of the JHA Agencies Network⁸² in 2018 and by Europol regarding the key priorities of the JHA Agencies Network in 2019 with a focus on Interoperability, ICT, cyber and innovation. One year later, Europol presented the most relevant activities of the JHA Agencies Network in 2019⁸³, while the main priorities for 2020 were presented by Eurojust.

11. ROLE OF THE COSI SUPPORT GROUP

The COSI SG facilitates and supports COSI's work, notably within the framework of the EU Policy Cycle. It should prepare discussions for COSI, either by concluding certain (often technical) items that can be dealt with at COSI SG level or by streamlining discussions for COSI. Issues that require further guidance from COSI or issues of a strategic nature are presented to COSI for discussion.⁸⁴

12. CONCLUSIONS

COSI remained committed to its central role of ensuring that operational cooperation on internal security was promoted and strengthened within the Union. COSI continued to monitor the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle and steer further developments. The Policy Cycle 2018-2021 continues to constitute a key tool for the EU in the fight against organised and serious international crime over the next four years, providing a solid multidisciplinary platform for operational cooperation between a multitude of actors. COSI will play a significant role in the next steps with regard to setting up and implementing a renewed policy cycle starting in 2022.

Furthermore, COSI will continue to play an important role in the development of and necessary responses to challenges within EU internal security with regard to a multitude of topics that will fall under the next Presidency trio (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia).

⁸² 6422/19

⁸³ 5972/20

⁸⁴ 8900/17

13. ANNEX I - COSI & COSI-PSC MEETINGS JANUARY 2019 - JUNE 2020

MEETING	DATE	AGENDA	OOP
COSI SG	4/02/2019	CM 1318/1/19 REV 1	
COSI	21/02/2019	CM 1319/19	6655/19
COSI-PSC	21/02/2019	CM 1607/19	
COSI SG	2/05/2019	CM 2629/1/19 REV 1	
COSI SG	8/05/2019	CM 2777/19	
COSI	14/05/2019	CM 2632/1/19 REV 1	9401/19
COSI SG- CIVCOM	12/06/2019	CM 2626/19	
COSI SG	22/07/2019	CM 3245/19	
COSI SG	11/09/2019	CM 3886/1/19 REV 1	
COSI-PSC	25/09/2019	CM 3875/1/19 REV 1	
COSI	26/09/2019	CM 3876/2/19 REV 2	12662/19
COSI SG	11/11/2019	CM 4549/1/19 REV 1	
COSI	19/11/2019	CM 4550/19	14696/19
COSI SG	6/02/2020	CM 1286/1/20 REV 1	
COSI	21/02/2020	CM 1383/20	6658/20
COSI SG	11/05/2020	CM 2092/20 (written contributions on ongoing files)	9025/20
COSI	15/05/2020	CM 2142/1/20 REV 1 (Request for contributions)	9026/20
Informal VTC COSI	15/05/2020	WK 4775/20	

14. ANNEX II- ABBREVIATIONS

- AI: Artificial Intelligence
- ARO: Asset Recovery Office
- CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
- CCC: Common Core Curriculum
- CCWP: customs cooperation working party
- COSI: Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security
- CSDP: Common Security and Defence Missions
- CT: Counter-terrorism
- EEAS: European External Action Service
- EIGE: European Institute for Gender Equality
- EIS: Europol Information System
- EMPACT: European multidisciplinary cooperation platform against criminal threats
- EU CTC: EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator
- EU SOCTA: European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment
- FTFs: Foreign Terrorist Fighters
- ISF: Internal Security Fund
- HVG: High Value Grant

- JADs: Joint Action Days
- JHA Council: Justice and Home Affairs Council
- LEA: Law Enforcement Agency
- LEWP: Law Enforcement Working Party
- LVG: Low Value Grant
- MFF: Multiannual Financial Framework
- NEC: National EMPACT Coordinators
- OAP: Operational Action Plan
- OCGs: Organised Crime Groups
- OCCP: Organised Crime Coordination Platform
- PSC: Political and Security Committee
- SIS: Schengen Information System
- THB: Trafficking in Human Beings
- TWP: Terrorism Working Party
- US DEA: United States Drug Enforcement Administration
- WB-RAN: Western Balkans - Radicalisation Awareness Network

15. ANNEX III - EMPACT GENERAL FACT SHEET OAPS 2019

EUROPOL PUBLIC INFORMATION



GENERAL FACTSHEET OAPS 2019

CRIMINAL FINANCES, MONEY LAUNDERING AND ASSET RECOVERY



49 arrests
Seized: €6 800 104 in cash.
Other: **18** vehicles, **165** cannabis plants
Assets seized: 200 bank accounts frozen

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OP CARTON ROUGE

2 HVTs identified

CYBERCRIME – ATTACKS TO INFORMATION SYSTEMS



22 arrests
7 international investigations/operations supported
5 EMPACT action days executed
1 OCG and **9** high-value targets (HVT)
40 000 victims' data recovered, and **16** proxy servers identified; over **€550 000** in cash and cryptocurrencies
Taken down: multi-million euro cryptocurrency laundering service Bestmixer, illegal online platform The Wall Street Market, illegal online platform Valhalla Marketplace

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: TAKE DOWN OF MULTI-MILLION EURO CRYPTOCURRENCY LAUNDERING SERVICE BESTMIXER

Bestmixer was one of the three largest mixing services for cryptocurrencies. Achieved a turnover of at least **\$200m** (approx. 27 000 bitcoins) in one year, guaranteeing customers' anonymity

CYBERCRIME – CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



58 arrests
39 victims identified
Seized: 21 childlike sex dolls
50% increase of non-content files and warning files compared to 2018
22.3% reduction in child sexual abuse material/files thanks to non-content files and warning files uploaded

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: VICTIM IDENTIFICATION TASKFORCE

19 victims identified and safeguarded, **1 914** series created and shared, **355** intelligence packages created

CYBERCRIME – NON-CASH PAYMENT FRAUD



475 arrests/detentions
1 306 international investigations supported/contributed
3 international operations supported/contributed
1 OCG dismantled
Identified: 60 HVTs, **1 370** fraudsters, **386** herders, **3 383** money mules, **4 757** victims
€17.9m fraud prevention
Seized: €40 000 in cash
Other: 120 fake university diplomas and other counterfeit documents, computers, luxury watches and other jewellery
Taken down: 300 Instagram accounts

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: E-COMMERCE ACTION (ECOMM 2019)

60 arrests
Fraudulent transactions reported for a value of **€5 164 392.60**

DOCUMENT FRAUD



165 arrests
4 print shops dismantled
Seizures: 3 655 fraudulent documents
Involved in: 9 JOINT ACTION DAYS

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OP MARKO

(Large-scale forgery of documents for migrant smuggling networks), **1** arrest, **1** fully equipped print shop dismantled
198 passports + **3 200** biodata single pages of original Greek and foreign passports, **172** identity cards, **90** driving licences, residence permits. Equipment: paper laminating and cutting devices, ink, etc

DRUGS - CANNABIS, COCAINE AND HEROIN



283 arrests
Seized: 37.2 tonnes of cannabis resin, **10 tonnes** of cocaine, **8 tonnes** of acetic anhydride for heroin production, **500 kg** of heroin, **10 kg** of fentanyl, **€7m** in cash
Other: **4** yachts, **1** vessel, **103** vehicles
Assets seized: 800 bank accounts frozen, **€27m** in properties and luxury goods

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OPERATION BEAUTIFUL

4 tonnes of cocaine seized, **€2m** in cash seized, **800** bank accounts frozen, luxury goods worth **€6m**, properties worth **€20m**
Other: **3** yachts, **77** vehicles, **4** firearms

DRUGS – NPS/SYNTHETIC DRUGS



555 arrests
Seized: 11.3 tonnes of pre-precursors (MAPA), **2.4 tonnes** of cocaine, **2.5 tonnes** of cannabis, **682 kg** of MDMA, **229 000** ecstasy pills, **247 kg** of methamphetamine, **€7.5m** in cash and cryptocurrency
Other: **57** firearms, **16** cars and luxury goods
7 illicit laboratories dismantled

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: LARGE SCALE JAD

11.3 tonnes of pre-precursors, **1.3 tonnes** of cocaine, **19 000** ecstasy pills, **10 kg** of amphetamine, **6 kg** of MDMA
€60 000 in cash. Other: **6** firearms, **16** cars



FACILITATED ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION



2 601 arrests
86 OCGs identified/dismantled
Identified: **19** facilitators, **508** over-stayers, **34** irregular migrants
Seized: **2 875** documents, **€1.2m** in cash. Other: **3 556** mobile phones, **1** vessel, **37** vehicles, **2** trucks, **2** vans, **21** tractors, **7** boat engines, **57** firearms, **983** pieces of ammunition, **200 000** cigarettes, drugs

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: INVESTIGATION CASE

13 arrests, **86** OCGs identified/dismantled, **70** HVTs identified
19 facilitators identified, **34** irregular migrants found,
508 over-stayers detected, **12 534** entry refusals, **4** print shops identified and dismantled, **1 081** internet referrals, **389** criminal proceedings against sham marriages, mobile phones and documents seized

ORGANISED PROPERTY CRIME



1 251 arrests
23 mobile organised crime groups dismantled
Seizures and assets seized: value of the seizures and assets seized: **€4 444 424**

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OP PANDORA IV

64 arrests, **28 000** cultural goods seized, **158** criminal investigations initiated

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS



825 arrests
94 OCGs identified/dismantled
Identified: **1** HVT, **8 824** suspects, **1 307** potential victims (including 69 minors)
Seized: **€173 000**, **\$2 500**. Other: **6** vehicles, computers, mobile phones
Assets seized: **€1.5m** frozen

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: LABOUR EXPLOITATION

273 arrests, **323** potential victims identified, **100** new investigations

MTIC FRAUD



31 arrests
12 OCGs identified/dismantled
Tax evasion prevented: **€8.7m**
Seized: **€2.2m** in cash, **15** tonnes of goods. Other: **1** truck
Assets seized: **€6.8m** seized/frozen

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: BALTIC REGION

9 OCGs investigated, **€2.2m** in cash seized, vehicles and real estate worth **€1.8m**

EXCISE FRAUD



444 arrests
Seized: **5 215 710 kg** of designer fuel, **7 880 litres** of mineral oil, **32 571 kg** of ethanol-like liquid, **956 866 kg** of tobacco, **348 272 731** pieces of cigarettes, **12 965 litres** of vodka, **235** pallets of alcoholic beverages and soft drinks, **€979 234** in cash. Other: **104** trucks, **78** trailers, **58** cars, **3** vans, **75** forklifts, **11** ISO containers, **4** weapons, IT equipment, machinery, large quantity of ingredients for fuel laundering
254 illicit tobacco production/storage/distribution facilities dismantled
Assets seized: machinery/equipment for illegal production of tobacco (**137** production lines, **75** packaging lines, **61** cutting machines, **22** generators and huge quantities of precursors), illegal fuel filling stations and equipment for fuel distribution, real estate, luxury vehicles worth **€1.6m**, **186** bank accounts frozen
Tax evasion prevented: **€370 361 417**

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OPS CHAIN BRIDGE III/IV

59 arrests, **5200 tonnes** of designer fuel, **€330 000** in cash and other assets seized, **186** bank account frozen
 Other: **78** trucks, **78** trailers

FIREARMS



1 069 arrests
Seized: **6 072** weapons, **59** weapon parts, **31 369** pieces of ammunition and **121** cartridges, **15** explosive improvised devices, **99** hand grenades, **4** blocks of TNT, **9** sticks of dynamite, **€2 774 305** in cash, **€4m** in cryptocurrency, **€35 000** in gold. Other: **299.5 kg** of drugs, **25 866 kg** of cocaine, **188 000** pills, **80 kg** of heroin
Taken down: **50** dark web accounts

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OP ARMES 72 AND WARDOGS

152 arrests, **4 490** weapons seized, **9** sticks of dynamite, **€470 000** in cash

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME



148 arrests
3 OCGs identified/dismantled
977 suspected individuals/legal entities identified
Seized: **30 tonnes** of contaminated fishes, **2 471 kg** of illegal fisheries, **240 kg** of glass eels, **13** fishing boats, **4** boats, **1 030** tonnes of lead acid batteries (+ **9 630** tonnes under investigation), **224 207** batteries, **50 511kg** sets of solar batteries, **1 783.65 kg** of used batteries, **130** lithium batteries, **22** truck batteries, **12** car batteries, **340 kg** of waste, **23 394m³** of timber. Other: **3** tanks, **12** vehicles, **3** engines
Assets seized: **€2 691 648** illicit profit

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHT: OPS END OF LIFE BATTERIES

15 arrests, **1** OCG dismantled, **5** potential HVTs identified
Seized: **1 030 tonnes** of lead acid batteries (+ **9 630 tonnes** under investigation), **224 207** batteries, **50 511 kg** sets of solar batteries, **1 783.65 kg** of used batteries, **130** lithium batteries
22 truck batteries, **12** car batteries