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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From:	Europol
To:	Delegations
Subject:	General Report on Europol's activities in 2011

1. Article 37(10)(c) of the Europol Decision¹, reads:

"Each year the Management Board shall adopt:

(...)

- (c) a general report on Europol's activities during the previous year including the results achieved on the priorities set by the Council.*

Those documents shall be submitted to the Council for endorsement. The Council shall forward them to the European Parliament for information."

2. The General Report on Europol's activities in 2011 adopted by the Management Board and submitted to the Council for endorsement by a letter dated 15 May 2012 is set out in annex.

¹ OJ L 121, 15.5.2009, p. 37.

3. On this basis the LEWP is invited to take note of the report as set out in annex and to submit it to COREPER and Council for endorsement.

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Releasable to the Europol Management Board**



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**EUROPOL REVIEW
GENERAL REPORT ON EUROPOL ACTIVITIES**

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Foreword

The activities of organised crime networks are now more complex, diverse and international than they have ever been. Terrorists are increasingly inspired by events far from home, and conspire across borders to prepare attacks. Internet-facilitated organised crime will continue to increase in line with uptake of broadband internet and mobile devices, finding new offenders and victims in areas of the world where internet access was previously limited. Despite the best efforts of local and national law enforcement agencies throughout the EU, they cannot succeed in isolation. A multilateral approach is indispensable and Europol's crucial role is increasingly recognised.

The Europol Review 2011¹ provides the opportunity to take stock of our achievements but also to consider the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead. I have the impression that Europol is gaining momentum, with increasing engagement from our operational partners combined with increasing attention from our strategic stakeholders.

The opening of our new headquarters in The Hague stands out as a high point of 2011. This fantastic new building was purpose-built to provide state-of-the-art facilities, including for our operational centre, which is responsible for coordinating the exchange of criminal intelligence with our international law enforcement partners. Our new facilities received their first real test when the tragic July attacks in Norway prompted us to activate the 'First Response Network', convening counter-terrorist experts from eight EU Member States to provide dedicated support to the Norwegian investigation.

That was just one example of Europol's core activity: to provide EU law enforcement authorities with 24/7 operational support. In 2011, we did this for more than 13 500 cross border cases - an increase of over 17% compared to 2010. Close cooperation with our international law enforcement partners has resulted in many successful operations and organised crime networks being dismantled, some of which you can read about in this Review.

The inaugural European Police Chiefs Convention, which brought together Ministers, senior law enforcement officers, experts and representatives from our partner agencies was timed to coincide with the opening of our new headquarters. Following extensive debate, joint conclusions and future guidelines for combating and preventing serious organised crime and terrorism in Europe were agreed upon. These were broadly reflected in the conclusions and recommendations found in Europol's EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA). This

¹ The presentation of the *Europol Review – General Report on Europol Activities* is done in accordance with Article 37(10)c of the Europol Council Decision. The report is submitted to the Council of the European Union for endorsement and the Council forwards it to the European Parliament for information.

provided the basis for the first set of priorities agreed via the new EU policy cycle for serious international and organised crime, in which Europol fulfils an important role. January 2012 sees EU Member States and partner EU agencies start to implement multilateral operational action plans to tackle these priority crime areas.

The European Commission is about to propose a new legal status for Europol, based on Article 88 of the Lisbon Treaty. I believe this is a great opportunity to further improve Europol's democratic accountability and also to make Europol more effective as an agency. As a first step, an independent evaluation of the implementation of Europol's current legal basis, the Europol Council Decision (ECD), is now underway. This evaluation should draw the necessary lessons from the implementation of the ECD and identify further opportunities for improvements in Europol's work.

Whatever the future holds, disrupting international criminal and terrorist networks remains Europol's core business. The information contained in the Europol Review 2011 shows that we are better able than ever before to meet today's law enforcement challenges and thus better prepared to face those of the future.

Rob Wainwright

Director of Europol

Executive Summary

Europol's role is to support EU law enforcement authorities, providing a platform for the exchange and analysis of criminal intelligence, in order to achieve a safer Europe for all EU citizens.

The annual Europol Review informs Europol's wide community of stakeholders about the agency's activities and achievements. These include supporting Member States and the EU institutions in achieving policy objectives, developing as an organisation and, most importantly, disrupting the activities of organised criminals and terrorists.

1. About Europol

From an organisational perspective, the most important event of 2011 was the move into a new headquarters. This report will record the movement of Europol's staff and operations to the new building, a massive operation involving extensive logistical planning and management in order to maintain full operational capacity throughout the move. The new facilities and professional equipment at its disposal are in line with Europol's requirement to be forward-thinking and proactive in the areas of technology and innovation which can make a difference in law enforcement.

2. How Europol works

Law enforcement expertise

This report will outline the development at Europol of new collaboration tools such as the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE), which provides online platforms for expert practitioners in areas such as witness protection, kidnapping and homicide. Such tools enable online collaboration and exchange of ideas. New online platforms in further fields of expertise, which are currently in development, are also listed in this report.

Europol's network of advisory teams (EuNAT) provides a permanent link to law enforcement agencies to enable immediate cooperation in response to emergency situations. Such teams cover areas such as kidnapping, informant handling, witness protection etc. Further details can be found in this review.

Europol's 24/7 operational centre is the hub for data exchange between Europol, the Member States and third parties. This report provides further details of this centre and Europol's new operations rooms.

All Europol's operational and ICT services are continuously available to Member States. A mobile office is additionally available for on-the-spot support to Member States' operations, providing a live connection to Europol's databases and platforms for experts.

In 2011, the provision of operational support services saw a 17% increase from the previous year. Europol received excellent feedback from investigators whose operations had been supported by Europol. Specific details and statistics relating to operational support are to be found in Section 3 of this report.

Communications

The most important platforms with which Member States and operational partners can engage with Europol are the Europol Information System (EIS) and the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). This review explains how the various communication tools provided by Europol support the Member States in their law enforcement objectives.

Analysis

Europol's analytical capabilities are based on highly trained analysts using the best available technology, put at the disposal of law enforcement authorities across the EU and beyond. This review covers the Europol Analysis System (EAS) and Computer Forensic Network (CFN) as the main components of the operational analysts' toolbox.

Strategic analysis is also a cornerstone of Europol's approach. The most important reports are the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend report (TE-SAT) which informs the European Parliament and the Council on the terrorism situation; and the EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA), which is a key component of the European Criminal Intelligence Model, providing the basis for identifying EU crime priorities. The OCTA in its current form was published for the last time in 2011, and work started on a revised methodology for a Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) as part of the new EU policy cycle for serious and organised crime.

3. Europol's Operational Activities

During 2011, Europol supported law enforcement authorities throughout the EU on crime fighting activities in all its mandated areas. Chapter 3 of this report outlines results and specific information on the type of support given and the outcome of many police operations throughout Europe and sometimes further afield.

3.1 Drugs

Europol's operational support includes the coordination and initiation of criminal drugs investigations as well as on-the-spot assistance to EU law enforcement agencies during dismantling of illicit drug production facilities and collation of evidence. The Europol Illicit Laboratory Comparison System (EILCS) and the Europol Synthetic Drug System (ESDS) are two of the tools used for these operations and are mentioned in this report. Drugs seized by authorities include cocaine, amphetamines, cannabis, ecstasy and heroin.

Significant operational successes in fighting drugs are further outlined in detail in this review including **Operation De-Bads** (amphetamines, cannabis, ecstasy), **Operation Aigle 35/Vortice Due** (cocaine), **Operation Salonica** (cocaine and cannabis), **Sub-project Watani** (heroin) and **Operation Mango** (cannabis and counterfeit Euros).

3.2 Trafficking in Human Beings

In 2011, Europol actively supported 22 high-level human trafficking investigations. In some of these cases, on-the-spot operational support was provided via the mobile office. One notable example was **Operation Veerde**, involving the Czech Republic and the UK, which resulted in 11 arrests.

3.3 Facilitated Illegal immigration

During 2011, Europol supported nine major European operations targeting criminal networks facilitating illegal immigration. These operations included **Operation Cestia** (smuggling Afghan nationals), **Operation Schwarz/White** (Vietnamese nationals) and **Operation Truck** (Chinese nationals). Additionally Europol is part of two Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) on facilitated illegal immigration. Further details can be found in this review.

3.4 Europol Cyber Crime Centre

Europol's High Tech crime centre was established in 2002 and was broadened to incorporate expertise in further specialist areas to form the **Europol Cyber Crime Centre** in 2011. This move enables online crime specialists to provide more targeted and effective countermeasures in the areas of child sexual exploitation, payment card fraud and cybercrime – crime areas in

which the internet plays a key role. In 2011, Europol supported major cybercrime operations **Crossbill** (malware) and **Mariposa II** (Butterfly bots). In the area of online child exploitation, Europol supported **Operation Rescue** in a successful bid to take down a worldwide network of child sex-offenders. This was a highly publicised case involving 14 countries and investigations are still ongoing. **Operation Icarus** is another such operation involving 23 countries.

3.5 Intellectual Property Crime

Europol is involved in support, training and awareness for the Member States in the field of intellectual property rights (IPR) infringement which covers such areas as counterfeit food and pesticides. The success of **Operation Opson** (10 countries) involving counterfeit food and drink is outlined in this review. **Operation Leatherface** (Spain) was also supported by Europol.

3.6 Cigarette Smuggling

Europol supports law enforcement agencies in the struggle against the illegal manufacture and distribution of cigarettes and tobacco products, which costs the EU about 10 billion Euros annually in lost revenues. **Operation Tsar** (6 countries) resulted in the break-up of a large criminal network smuggling counterfeit cigarettes from Ukraine to the UK.

3.7 Euro Counterfeiting

Europol has the mandate to prevent and combat the forgery of money and to this end, offers a wide range of products and services which are outlined in this review. **Operation Gazeta** (Poland) resulted in the dismantling of one of the biggest counterfeit print shops in Europe and **Operation Chipmunk** had a successful outcome for the Belgian authorities. Europol also participated in the Joint Investigation Team **Limón**, to tackle euro counterfeiting and card skimming.

3.8 VAT Fraud

It is estimated that value-added tax (VAT) fraud costs EU Member States approximately 60 billion Euros annually. Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) Fraud is a form of organised tax fraud to attack the VAT regimes of Member States. The Europol Analysis Project on MTIC Fraud provides the only EU-level database for criminal information on this phenomenon. During 2011 Europol supported **Operation Jacquo** on VAT fraud.

3.9 Money Laundering and asset tracing

Organised crime generates massive illicit revenues and Europol provides support to Member States in the areas of preventing and combating money laundering as well as tracing criminal assets. **Operation Spectre II** was one such operation supported by Europol in 2011 and features in this report.

3.10 Mobile organised crime groups

Mobile organised crime groups (MOCGs) have increasingly come to the public attention in 2011 and they are primarily involved in property crime and fraud. Europol supported four cross-border operations against MOCGs for both EU and non-EU States in 2011, details of which are to be found in this review.

3.11 Outlaw Motorcycle gangs

Europol's specialist project Monitor helps prevent and combat the criminal activities of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs). Europol supports law enforcement partners in policing major biker events, such as the 2011 HAMC (Hells Angels Motorcycle Club) World Run in Laconia, USA.

3.12 Terrorism

Terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to the European Union. In 2011 Europol continued to assist Member States in their fight against terrorism by providing them with a range of products and services. Support is available in the form of analysis and analytical products, threat assessments, information exchange and the annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), which presents facts and figures on terror arrests in the EU, as well as new trends in terrorist activity.

This review provides further information on Europol's First Response Network, the European Explosive Ordnance Disposal Network (EEODN) and the EU Bomb Data System (EBDS). Additional specialist areas include the Terrorism Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP) and Check the Web.

4. Europol's Reach

Europol has a live 24/7 connection with the Europol National Units in all 27 EU Member States and organises regular awareness and training events, road shows and seminars to enhance knowledge of its services and expertise.

Europol additionally cooperates externally with 18 non-EU countries, nine EU bodies and agencies and three other international organisations (all listed in this report). Cooperation with Interpol and EU agencies such as Eurojust, CEPOL and Frontex greatly enhances Europol's overall reach.

5. Moving Forward

The Europol Strategy 2010-2014 continues to be the frame of reference for daily business, ensuring the best support for EU law enforcement cooperation.

Europol is more consistently involved in implementing EU internal security policy, due changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, Europol's new legal status as an EU agency since 2010, but also thanks to the agency's own strategy and improved capabilities.

In 2011, an evaluation of the Europol Council Decision implementation and Europol's activities was initiated under the supervision of the Management Board. This exercise, once finalised in 2012, will support the production of the European Commission's impact assessment and ultimately a proposal for a future Europol Regulation to replace the Council Decision.

Regardless of new policy possibilities, Europol's primary purpose remains to support the EU law enforcement community, to disrupt and dismantle serious organised crime and terrorist groups. The law enforcement community as a whole needs to continue innovating tools, tactics and policies to keep pace with global developments and stay ahead of the criminals.

In view of the ever-increasing sophistication of criminal activity, local or even national efforts to tackle international organised crime and terrorism alone can only enjoy limited success. However, together with EU Member States and partner organisations, Europol can play an increasingly prominent role in safeguarding EU internal security.

A stronger Europol means more successful investigations and better protection for EU citizens against the threats of serious international crime and terrorism.

1. About Europol

1.1 Mission, vision and priorities

As the European Union's law enforcement agency, Europol's mission is to support its Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious international crime and terrorism. Its role is to help achieve a safer Europe for the benefit of all EU citizens by supporting EU law enforcement authorities through the exchange and analysis of criminal intelligence.

Large-scale criminal and terrorist networks pose a significant threat to the internal security of the EU and to the safety and livelihood of its people. The biggest security threats come from terrorism, international drugs trafficking, trafficking in human beings, counterfeiting of products, euro currency and payment cards, fraud, corruption and money laundering, as well as other activities related to the presence of organised crime groups in the economy. New dangers are also accumulating, in the form of cybercrime, VAT fraud and other sophisticated crimes which abuse modern technology and the freedoms offered by the EU internal market. Many of these have been declared priority areas by the EU's Council of Ministers and Europol is pioneering new responses to these dangers.

Europol's vision is to contribute to a safer Europe by providing the best possible support to law enforcement authorities in EU Member States. It will achieve this by delivering a unique set of operational services for the European Union developing as the principal:

1. Support centre for law enforcement operations
2. Criminal information hub, and
3. Centre for law enforcement expertise.

As well as following the priorities of the EU Policy Cycle, for Europol the EU Internal Security Strategy (ISS) is a vital document, shaping long-term EU policy in the field of law enforcement. The Strategy maps out the different aspects of Europe's internal security policy and lists strategic guidelines for action. The Strategy has been supplemented by the European Commission's Communication,² meant to foster the Strategy's implementation. It identifies five objectives in the area of security. Three of them - namely the disruption of criminal networks, prevention of terrorism and security of cyberspace - are extensively covered by Europol's mandate.³ Actions proposed by the Commission to meet the objectives mirror

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe. COM (2010) 673 final.

³ As detailed in the Annex to the Council Decision of 6 April 2009 establishing the European Police Office (Europol) (2009/371/JHA).

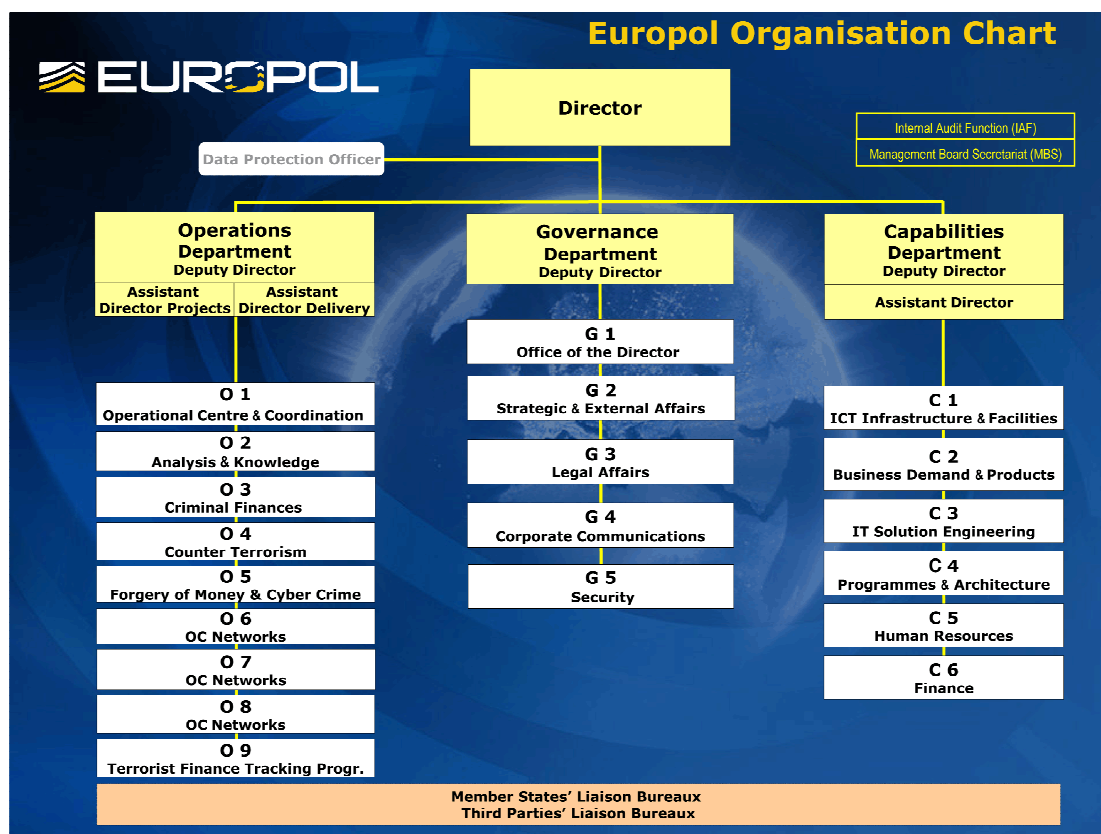
Europol's well-established fields of expertise. The two documents give Europol a key implementing role and provide a significant opportunity for further development in the coming years with intelligence-led policing as one of the leading concepts.

Europol contributed jointly with Frontex and Eurojust to the first annual review of the Internal Security Strategy presented in November 2011.

1.2 Resources

Europol uses its unique information capabilities and the expertise of 777 personnel, including 92 analysts, to identify and track the most dangerous criminal and terrorist networks in Europe. Law enforcement agencies, represented at Europol by 145 Europol liaison officers working in conjunction with Europol's 24/7 high-security operational service centre and its secure databases, have been successful in disrupting many criminal and terrorist networks, arresting thousands of dangerous criminals, recovering millions of euros and rescuing hundreds of victims of crime, including trafficked and abused children.

Europol is financed from the EU community budget. The Council of the European Union and the European Parliament decide Europol's budget, based on proposals from the European Commission and the Europol Management Board. In 2011 the Europol budget was EUR 84.8 million.



Basic facts about Europol (2011)

Headquarters: The Hague, the Netherlands

Staff: 777 personnel at headquarters,
including 145 Europol liaison officers

Budget: EUR 84.8 million

Servicing: 27 EU Member States, 500 million EU citizens

Supporting: 13 697 cross-border law enforcement cases.

1.3 New Europol headquarters

On 1 July 2011, Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands officially opened Europol's new headquarters in The Hague. Hundreds of senior law enforcement personnel, VIPs and dignitaries attended the opening ceremony, alongside Europol's staff members and other invited guests.

Queen Beatrix unveiled a plaque to commemorate the official opening and was taken on a tour of the new premises, guided by Europol's Director, Rob Wainwright, visiting the Drugs Laboratory and Cyber Crime Unit.

The new headquarters are situated in the international zone of The Hague, with neighbours including the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The building, with a surface area of 32 000 m², was commissioned by the Netherlands' Government Buildings Agency and was designed by Quist Wintermans Architects.

The facilities and state-of-the-art equipment in our new premises are in line with Europol's ambition to be a modern and dynamic organisation, created to help and serve EU citizens, via the support we provide to our law enforcement partners.

European law enforcement memorial

EU law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty were honoured in 2011 with a new European law enforcement memorial at Europol.

The steel sculpture, which is prominently positioned in our new headquarters, was created by the Hungarian artist Apolka Erős and donated to Europol by the National Police of Hungary during the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The monument was unveiled during Europol's European Police Chiefs Convention and was followed by one minute of silence, observed by around 250 chiefs of police and senior law enforcement officers from all over Europe who attended, and Europol staff.

2. How Europol works

International criminal and terrorist groups operate worldwide, making use of the latest technology. To ensure an effective and coordinated response, Europol needs to be equally flexible and innovative, ensuring its methods and tools are up-to-date. Europol maintains state-of-the-art databases and communication channels, offering fast and secure facilities for storing, searching, visualising, analysing and linking key information. The gathering, analysis and dissemination of this information entails the exchange of large quantities of personal data. In discharging these functions, Europol adheres to the highest standards of data protection and data security.

All Europol databases and services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We also send experts and make our services available via an on-the-spot mobile office, whenever requested by a Member State.

Europol's 24/7 operational centre is the generic point for data exchange between Europol, EU Member States and third parties. The operational centre performs five main functions:

- Centralised cross-checking service: incoming data is quickly cross-checked against all existing data. Operational information is processed within the Europol system using analysis work files (AWFs), which focus on a given area of crime. If there are hits, this information is consolidated into one analytical report, and rapid feedback, highlighting the links, is given to the providing party so that new trends and developments within the EU's crime landscape can be identified. Around one quarter of operational requests sent to Europol already involve the operational centre
- The operational centre can store certain data for a limited period of time with a view to determining whether such data is relevant to Europol's tasks and can be included in the Europol Information System or analysis work files
- Analysis support in 'thematic' cases: Investigative data which cuts across several existing analysis projects can now be promptly analysed by Europol
- Third party communication: The operational centre processes all information exchanged with third parties, ensuring that the data is forwarded to the correct project for further processing, and that the original provider receives a timely and accurate reply
- Support for policing major events: The operational centre coordinates the support that Europol can provide for policing major events, i.e. those internationally prominent sporting, economic, political or cultural gatherings which present a target or opportunity for crime and terrorism. In 2011 this included providing support connected to the Ice Hockey World Championship in Slovakia, EuroBasket in Lithuania preparing for the upcoming UEFA EURO 2012 football championship in Poland and Ukraine and the Olympic Games in London.

New operations rooms

Just two weeks after staff moved into the new Europol headquarters on 1 June, a coordination centre for Operation Truck was hosted in one of the new operations rooms. The operation targeted a Chinese network involved in the facilitation of illegal immigration into the UK. Officers from France, Portugal and Eurojust joined Europol staff in a brand-new working environment, one of three purpose built operations rooms that provide Europol with increased capacity to host operations and provide other operational support.

During the operation, six arrests were made in France, and in Portugal premises were searched, valuable evidence recovered and six more arrests made. Property seized included documents, money, bank statements, mobile phones and other supporting evidence.

Many more operations have subsequently been hosted in the Europol operations rooms. Perhaps the most ambitious operation so far was Operation Night Clone led by Italy and supported by Bulgaria, Poland, Spain and the USA. This operation targeted an organised crime group based in Bulgaria but operating on a global scale that was responsible for fraud estimated at around EUR 50 million.

On 6 July, Europol hosted the command team for the day of action which saw more than 200 police officers deployed across Europe. Europol staff, equipped with a Europol mobile office, were in Bulgaria to facilitate the rapid and secure exchange of intelligence. During the action day Bulgarian authorities conducted the arrest of the suspected criminals, searches of vehicles and houses and evidence recovery. More than 60 people were arrested, and an organised crime group that operated throughout Europe, America and Africa dismantled.

2.1 Europol National Units (ENUs)

Each EU Member State has a designated Europol National Unit (ENU), which is the liaison body between Europol and the competent authorities of EU Member States. The Heads of Europol National Units (HENUs) meet on a regular basis to advise Europol and the Europol Management Board on operational matters and other issues.

Each ENU seconds at least one liaison officer to Europol, who is hosted at our headquarters in their own liaison bureau. The liaison bureaux are part of their countries' national unit and represent the interests of their country at Europol in accordance with the national law of the seconding Member State.

Member States' liaison officers ensure a live 24/7 link between Europol headquarters in The Hague and 27 Europol National Units in the national capitals of EU Member States. This unique network of 145 liaison officers play an important role in everyday law enforcement activities by facilitating the exchange of information, as well as providing support and coordination for ongoing investigations.

Europol also hosts liaison officers from 10 non-EU countries and organisations who work together with Europol on the basis of cooperation agreements.⁴

This network is supported by secure channels of communication provided by Europol. In addition, Europol has two liaison officers seconded to Washington DC and one to Interpol's headquarters in Lyon, France.

2.2 Europol Management Board

Europol's Management Board, gives strategic guidance and oversees the Director's performance and the implementation of Europol's tasks. It comprises one high-ranking representative from each Member State and the European Commission. It takes decisions by two-thirds majority, with each member having one vote.

The Management Board meets several times a year to discuss a wide range of Europol issues which relate to its current activities and future developments. Each year the Management Board adopts Europol's final budget, work programme of future activities and this general report on activities carried out during the previous year, all of which are submitted to the Council for endorsement and later to the European Parliament for information.

2.3 Secure communication infrastructure

In order to support its operations and deliver a growing range of operational and strategic services to the Member States, non-EU countries and third parties, Europol constantly maintains and develops a technically-advanced, reliable, efficient and secure telecommunications infrastructure.

⁴ Albania, Australia, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Interpol and the following United States' law enforcement agencies: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms And Explosives (ATF); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Secret Service (USSS); Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI); Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

The backbone of this infrastructure is the Europol Secure Network. This connects law enforcement agencies in all Member States, and a growing number of non-EU countries and third parties with which Europol has cooperation agreements. 2011 saw new secure network interconnections established with Interpol, Colombia and Switzerland.

The security of the network's infrastructure is of primary concern to Europol. Since state-of-the-art security is the basis for maintaining trust among all the parties that share information and intelligence with and through Europol.

2.4 Europol Information System (EIS)

The main objective of the Europol Information System (EIS) is to be the reference system for offences, individuals involved, and other related data to support Member States, Europol and its cooperation partners in their fight against organised crime, terrorism, and other forms of serious crime.

EUROPOL INFORMATION SYSTEM

December 2011

Content:

183 240 objects

41 193 'person' entities

An increase of **5%** on 2010

Major crime areas:

Drug trafficking, 25% of all objects

Trafficking in human beings, 23%

Forgery of money, 18%

Robbery, 10%

Fraud and swindling, 5%.

Usage:

111 110 searches
were run through the system in 2011.

Germany provided most data into the EIS, followed by Belgium, France, Spain and Europol (on behalf of third parties). It should be noted that the vast majority of data in the EIS is inserted by means of automated data loading systems. In 2011 the data collection approach by Member States was changed, moving the focus more towards objects that can be cross-matched (e.g. persons, means of communication, means of transportation). This change, reflected also in updated data quality reports, improved the overall quality of the EIS content. An example would be the large upload of UK data in August 2011 which resulted in a relatively high number of hits (1 hit per 200 objects).

A new version of the EIS was developed in 2011. The most important feature is the hit/no-hit search possibility for Designated Competent Authorities. This is the first time that access to the EIS can be granted beyond the Member States' Europol National Units to frontline law enforcement officers.

In addition, progress was made to support Member States' implementation of automated data loaders. In 2011, Lithuania implemented their automatic data loading system, increasing the total number of Member States now having the capability to automatically upload data to Europol's systems to 13. Several other countries are preparing to implement this tool.

A significant improvement was also achieved in terms of interoperability of core information management systems. In October 2011 a new function, the Europol Links Manager (ELM), went live. Within the boundaries of the Europol legal framework it enables automated cross-checking of analysis work files, 10.4 repository, the EIS, and the Enhanced Risk Entities Solution (ERES). The latter is a repository containing open source data purchased by Europol from a commercial intelligence provider. Compared to the previous cross-checking arrangement the ELM widens the range of data sources, enhances usability and flexibility, and addresses several important data protection issues.

HANDLING CODES

Handling codes are a means of protecting an information source. The codes ensure security of the information and its safe and adequate processing, in accordance with the wishes of the owner of the information, and with full respect to the national legal rules of the Member States. The handling codes indicate what can be done with given information and who has access to it in the future.

City of London Police, Operation Theo

Operation Theo was launched in March 2011 to combat rising bank cash machine (ATM) crime in the City of London. The operation was soon successful, with early arrests and the seizure of equipment used to tamper with the machines.

However as Operation Theo continued, though, somewhat contradictorily, so did the attacks - night after night at various locations for the following three weeks - leading to a total of 29 Romanian nationals arrested and charged. Part of the process of dealing with each suspect was to run their details through a number of intelligence data bases including the EIS which the City police had recently been trained to use.

This training soon proved its worth when it was found that three of those detained during Operation Theo featured as 'nominals' on the EIS. They were of interest for similar offences in other European countries and one was also suspected of being involved in the trafficking of human beings for the purpose of prostitution, and another for robbery offences in a number of countries. All were members of international organised crime groups.

The intelligence provided by the EIS was extremely useful to the operational teams and allowed the prosecution service to make strong applications for the subjects to be remanded in prison. The ability of the EIS to provide good intelligence and at the same time produce it both in a written report and a pictorial chart made it easy for officers to understand and to establish links with associates and other crimes.

City of London Police now check all European nationals who are detained by the force against the EIS, and since Operation Theo they have seen a number of other successes which would not have been identified before the force received training and access to the system.

Information supplied by the City of London Police

2.5 Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA)

The Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) is a next generation tool designed to enable swift, secure and user-friendly communication and exchange of operational and strategic crime-related information and intelligence between Europol, Member States and third parties that have cooperation agreements with Europol.

In the design and functioning of SIENA, significant emphasis was put on data protection and confidentiality, to ensure compliance with all legal requirements. Equally, security is deemed vital and all necessary measures have been taken to enable the secure exchange of restricted information. Furthermore, best practice in law enforcement information exchange has been taken into consideration, with a high degree of reliability, and use of handling and evaluation codes that specify conditions for use. In 2011:

- SIENA was rolled-out to the following cooperation partners with an operational agreement: Australia, Croatia, Iceland and Norway
- In the context of the European Drugs Pact, Europol was tasked to make SIENA available for the regional platforms in West Africa. To this end, solutions were developed and the regional platforms in Accra (Ghana) and Dakar (Senegal) now have SIENA remote access facilities. SIENA has also been made available for the exchange of information with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).
- SIENA was adjusted to support the follow-up of searches in the Europol Information System (EIS) by designated competent authorities. The automated feeding of contributions to the Europol Analysis System (EAS) is also now in place, which is a major time saver for Europol analysts as well as an important security improvement.
- SIENA was also adjusted so that it can be extended to cooperation partners with strategic agreements like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey
- Preparations were made for extending SIENA access to these countries in 2012 including training and secure network extensions. Preparations are also ongoing to connect Switzerland in 2012.

Furthermore, work is ongoing to connect SIENA directly to national case management systems, allowing police officers to use one system for both national cases and cases that require international communication.

Information Exchange via SIENA in 2011

13 697 new cases were initiated

Monthly average: 1141

(**Increase of 17%** compared to 2010)

30% of new cases were related to drugs,

followed by fraud and swindling (14%),
terrorism (10%), forgery of money (9%) and robbery (9%)

330 633 operational messages were processed

between Member States, Europol and third parties

Monthly average: 27 553

103 competent authorities were configured in SIENA

at the request of Member States,
making 287 competent authorities in total

2.6 Crime analysis

2.6.1 Operational analysis

Analysis is the cornerstone of all modern intelligence-led law enforcement activities and critical to all Europol activities. Our analytical capabilities are based on advanced technology adjusted to the needs of law enforcement. Analysts employed at Europol use the latest methodologies and techniques to identify missing links in cross-border EU investigations. They work with subject-focused analysis work files (AWFs) to provide information to ongoing operations in EU Member States. This information can often provide a breakthrough for many international investigations.

The **Europol Analysis System (EAS)** is the operational information system hosting data contributed by Europol's stakeholders.

The different components of the system offer the following benefits:

- Centralisation and management of information
- Analytical capabilities through a wide range of analysis tools.

Europol continuously assesses its analytical capabilities and technology to ensure that Europol analysts have the best possible technical support for their work.

Computer Forensic Network (CFN)

Europol is in the final stages of implementing a state-of-the-art facility to extract and analyse crime-related information from digitised data – the CFN.

The ability to efficiently identify relevant information from vast amounts of computer data, while preserving its judicial validity, is becoming a crucial weapon in fighting crime.

Through this new technical solution, Europol can now offer a high-quality service to the European law enforcement community, which identifies and processes this information, with dramatic improvements in the quantity of data that can be obtained.

This centrally-delivered service is complemented by the possibility of support through the local deployment of an expert-operated mobile toolkit for computer data forensics. The CFN forms a robust technical platform for the activities carried out by the Europol Cyber Crime Centre.

2.6.2 Strategic analysis

Strategic analysis is another important aspect of Europol's analytical activities. Thanks to Europol strategic analysis products such as the OCTA, ROCTA, OCTA-WA and TE-SAT,⁵ more support is given to decision-makers identifying specific priorities in the complex area of organised crime and terrorism. Based on political guidelines, law enforcement officers can then tailor their operational work nationally, regionally and locally. They can also use existing regional cooperation mechanisms supported by Europol, like the Baltic Sea Task Force.⁶

Under the Lisbon Treaty the significance of comprehensive threat assessments is steadily increasing, thus making Europol an important contributor to the policy-making process.

EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)

In 2011, Europol produced its fifth annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT). Since 2007, the TE-SAT has been informing the European Parliament and the Council on the phenomenon of terrorism in the EU from a law enforcement perspective.

The TE-SAT is a public document based on information provided by EU and non-EU countries, and partner organisations like Eurojust, SitCen and Interpol.

The 2011 report showed a continuing decrease in the number of terrorism-related attacks in the EU, but warned that the threat from terrorism remains high in the EU and is diversifying in scope and impact. It also detailed how international cooperation between terrorist and extremist groups in and outside the EU is increasing. Moreover, the TE-SAT reported that a diverse spectrum of actors pose a risk, from organised terrorist groups to radicalised individuals, as demonstrated by the attack in Norway in 2011.

Another trend that was reported in the TE-SAT 2011 is that the professionalism of their propaganda shows that right-wing extremist groups have the will to enlarge and spread their ideology and still pose a threat in EU Member States.

⁵ EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA); Russian Organised Crime Threat Assessment (ROCTA); Organised Crime Threat Assessment on West Africa (OCTA-WA); EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT).

⁶ The Baltic Sea Task Force is a network of countries and organisations taking part in law enforcement cooperation initiatives to tackle organised crime in the Baltic Sea region. Participating countries are: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. In addition there are permanent representatives from Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, Interpol and the European Commission.

EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA)

The OCTA is the most important strategic analysis document produced by Europol. It is the document on which the Council of Ministers of the EU (Council) base their priorities and recommendations for the fight against organised crime in Europe. Drafted in accordance with intelligence-led policing principles, the OCTA is acknowledged as a pioneering project, and in its short life, since 2006, has introduced innovative concepts such as the criminal hubs and organised crime group typology. The 2011 report presented the following key findings:

- Organised crime is changing and becoming increasingly diverse in its methods, groups structures, and impact on society.
- Criminal groups are increasingly multi-commodity and poly-criminal in their activities.
- An increasingly collaborative atmosphere exists between different organised crime groups, transcending national, ethnic, and business differences, with the practice of barter increasing.
- Criminal groups widely exploit commercial and passenger transport infrastructure, especially container shipments.
- The knowing cooperation of specialists is a notable facilitating factor for organised crime.
- The ongoing effects of the global economic crisis have brought EU citizens into closer proximity with organised crime.
- In the market for illicit drugs, fluctuating prices and purity levels of cocaine and heroin, along with shortages of synthetic precursors, has prompted the emergence of 'legal highs' and other substitutes.
- Internet technology has now emerged as a key facilitator for the vast majority of offline organised crime activity.
- Nigerian, Albanian speaking, Turkish and former Soviet Union criminal groups are seeking to expand their interests in the EU, exploiting possible opportunities.

- The North West criminal hub⁷ retains its role as the principal coordination centre for drug distribution. The North East hub remains a focus for transit of illicit commodities to and from the former Soviet Union and a base for violent poly-criminal groups with international reach. The leading role of the South West hub in cocaine and cannabis resin transit and distribution persists and it currently serves also as a transit zone for victims of THB for sexual exploitation. The Southern hub continues to be prominent in criminal entrepreneurship, as a centre for counterfeit currency and commodities, a transit zone for victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) and illegal immigrants, and a base for some of the best resourced criminal groups in Europe. The South East has seen the greatest expansion in recent years, as a result of increased trafficking via the Black Sea, proliferation of numerous Balkan routes for illicit commodities to and from the EU, a significant increase in illegal immigration via Greece, and the formation of a Balkan axis for trafficking to the EU, consisting of the Western Balkans and South East Europe.

Already a key component of the European Criminal Intelligence Model (ECIM), the OCTA takes on added significance since the adoption of Council Conclusions on the creation and implementation of an EU policy cycle for serious international and organised crime. This policy cycle identifies the OCTA as the basis for the identification of EU crime priorities and, thereafter, a coherent EU response to address those priorities. The political priorities for 2011 - 2013 have been identified as:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • West African organised crime | • Western Balkan organised crime |
| • Illegal immigration | • Synthetic drugs |
| • Container shipment smuggling | • Trafficking in human beings |
| • Mobile organised crime groups | • Cybercrime. |

Europol organised a three-day workshop in 2011, which brought together a total of 164 delegates representing all 27 EU Member States, the Council Secretariat, CEPOL, European Commission, EMCDDA, Eurojust, Frontex and Interpol. Eight groups discussed the priority crime areas above, bringing ideas and suggestions together to form one coherent plan for future work. Europol staff facilitated the workshops and provided operational input about the scope of the different crime areas and the range of Europol products and services available to support Member States' efforts to counter them.

⁷ See Annex 1 for criminal hub definitions.

Scanning, Analysis and Notification

Europol's Scanning, Analysis and Notification (SCAN) Team provides EU national competent authorities with an additional strategic organised crime (OC) product: early warning notices of new organised crime threats. In 2011, the team delivered four OC-SCAN threat notices,⁸ covering the following subjects:

- **Illegal waste trafficking and disposal.**⁹ Driven by the perception of an exceptionally low risk and high profit, and spurred by economic growth and globalisation, cross-border illegal waste trafficking and disposal has become one of the fastest growing areas of organised crime in the EU. Criminals and organised crime groups exploit the high costs associated with legal waste management and are making substantial profits from illegal trafficking and disposal activities, circumventing environmental legislation.
- **Illegal trading of stolen rhino horn.**¹⁰ Europol intelligence has identified organised criminals illegally trading rhino horn, a high value rare commodity. Stolen from antique dealers, auction houses, art galleries, museums, private collections and zoos, a rhino horn can be worth between EUR 25 000 and 200 000, depending on the size and quality of the specimen. Rhino horns are used for decoration, to produce luxury products and also used in traditional medicine, despite being proved ineffective.
- **Trafficking of endangered species.**¹¹ EU organised crime groups are illicitly trading endangered species of wild fauna and flora in return for extremely high global revenues. With the use of false documents, exotic and rare animals and birds, corals, valuable plants, tiger skins and more are being smuggled into Europe, often via routes also used for illegal immigration and drugs trafficking.
- **Growing trade in counterfeit pesticides.**¹² A growing trade in illegal and counterfeit pesticides has been detected across Europe, organised by highly sophisticated criminal networks who have developed complex global supply chains and exploit legal companies to camouflage their activities. More than 25 percent of the pesticides in circulation in some EU Member States are estimated to originate from this illegal market. Such chemicals threaten the health of farmers and consumers, and pose a risk to the natural environment. Due to the lack of traceability, there is also a danger that these illegal pesticides could be used as precursors for home-made explosives.

⁸ Available to download from Europol's website.

⁹ Threat notice produced at the request of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU and was based on data gathered during the Belgian Presidency-led project Augias.

¹⁰ Threat notice produced by Europol experts working in collaboration with Irish law enforcement authorities.

¹¹ Threat notice a result of a collaborative effort between Europol and Interpol experts.

¹² Threat notice produced following a joint assessment by Europol experts and the European Commission.

As well as producing the above crime threat notices in 2011, the SCAN team launched the online collaboration system E-SCAN,¹³ which serves as a point of reference for fields such as environmental and cybercrime.

Working with Europol experts, the SCAN team also developed three risk profiles for the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, supporting a Europe-wide joint police operation on motor vehicle crime. Law enforcement authorities from 14 EU countries participated in Operation EuroCar, alongside Europol, Frontex and Interpol.

2.6.3 Analysis training

Europol offers a two-week analysis training course called Operational Integrated Analysis Training. To meet increasing requests from Member States, the analytical training team have developed two separate versions of the training - one for analysts and specialists working at Europol and one with a 'Train-The-Trainer' concept in mind. The latter was specifically designed for potential trainers in the Member States, to cover the essential elements of the intelligence cycle and to focus especially on analysis.

Europol has already delivered six courses to a total of 68 trainees from 28 different countries in Europe, as well as Australia and the United States. Many Member States have used the material, methods and exercises from the Europol training to develop their own operational analysis courses. During 2011, re-designed financial analysis and strategic analysis training courses were given to Europol's operational staff and to analysts in EU Member States. In addition, a new five-day social network analysis (SNA) course was developed and five such courses were delivered to 50 operational analysts, with more courses planned for 2012.

Over 50 Europol liaison officers and more than 120 law enforcement colleagues from EU and non-EU countries also attended the new Europol three-day course in Strategic Analysis Training for Early Warning Capabilities (SAT-EWC) in 2011.

¹³ E-SCAN: for environmental scanning, analysis, notification and early warning.

2.7 EU centre for law enforcement expertise

In order to strengthen its position as a platform for specialist areas and to facilitate knowledge sharing and communication between various expert communities, Europol has developed the **Europol Platform for Experts (EPE)**. The vision for the EPE is to be a secure environment for specialists from a variety of law enforcement areas, enabling them to share – within their respective communities - knowledge, best practices and non-personal data on crime. It has been developed not only for the publication of documents but it is also meant to encourage authorised users to work together online thanks to a series of collaboration tools.

In 2011, Europol launched the following online platforms for experts:

- Special Tactics:
 - Witness Protection
 - EuNAT (Kidnapping, hostage taking and extortion)
 - Europol Homicide Working Group
- E-SCAN.
- European Anti Corruption Training.
- EnviCrimeNet.
- European Platform for Gangs Experts.
- North Africa and Middle East Uprising.
- European Law Enforcement Communicators Platform.
- UMF2 (Universal Messaging Format).

A number of additional platforms are in preparation:

- Cybercrime (I-FOREX).
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Special Tactics Cross-border surveillance and controlled deliveries, as well as ISLE¹⁴
- Money counterfeiting and payment card fraud (PaySafe).
- Prüm implementation.

The migration of three existing ad hoc websites to the EPE is also in preparation:

- Financial Crime Information Centre.
- Atlas Communication Platform to the EPE for special operations and counter terrorism units.
- ENFSI Crime Scene website.

¹⁴ International Special Law Enforcement - the European high-level expert group on 'covert entry'.

2.7.1 European Network of Advisory Teams

The European Network of Advisory Teams (EuNAT) consists of advisory teams and crisis management units from law enforcement agencies providing strategic and/or tactical advice, coordination and support to kidnapping, hostage taking and extortion investigations.

EuNAT permanently links the advisory teams to Europol, to facilitate immediate international cooperation in response to life-threatening risks. The network shares good practices and develops standards in this specific field throughout the EU. In this context, Europol is currently preparing the translation and distribution of a brochure on prevention and coping strategies for kidnapping, hostage taking, extortion and acts of violence, which aims to inform organisations and companies deploying personnel in high-risk areas.

2.7.2 Best practice for handling of informants

The informant is a crucially important aspect of police activities. Involvement of an informant early in the criminal intelligence gathering process is likely to result in a successful outcome for the investigation. The quality of intelligence gathered is directly proportional to the quality of the informant.

Serious organised crime is not restricted by national boundaries so informants may provide intelligence to support law enforcement in a number of countries. The current legal situation within the EU is not uniform with regard to using informants, although cooperation with informants is a common and widespread practice.

- Europol coordinates a network of experts on informant handling or Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS), to share best practices and experience in this sensitive field.
- We also provide a (restricted) manual on the use and handling of informants which is a commonly-developed document and used by European CHIS units to develop and harmonise associated issues in their countries.
- In cooperation with CEPOL¹⁵, Europol provides an annual training course on informant handling, based on Member States' experiences and needs.
- A dedicated platform for the EPE is in development for specialised informant handling units, which will allow them to share knowledge and communicate directly with their European law enforcement counterparts.

¹⁵ European Police College (CEPOL).

2.7.3 Best practice for cross-border surveillance and controlled deliveries

The use of covert surveillance is one of the key modern investigative tools for obtaining decisive information on criminal structures. However, due to the transnational nature of modern organised crime groups, law enforcement authorities are increasingly confronted with cases of cross-border observation and surveillance which creates issues at both legal and operational levels.

Europol is a member of the Cross-Border Surveillance Working Group, whose purpose is to encourage international cooperation and provide a forum for the development of safe and effective law enforcement surveillance techniques.

Another key investigative tool is the deployment and systematic operational use of covert surveillance methods in conjunction with controlled deliveries. A CD-ROM compilation of the different Member States' legislation on controlled deliveries is available to inform experts about problems that might occur in cross-border cooperation.

2.7.4 Best practice for witness protection

Witness protection is one of the cornerstones in the fight against organised crime and terrorism, and Europol's witness protection network is the largest worldwide. Europol's witness protection services include the:

- Harmonisation of different national programmes
- Development of new witness protection units and programmes
- Standardisation of processes such as the relocation of witnesses
- Education of witness protection officers, including the provision of a unique two-week higher-education course, which started in 2011.

2.7.5 Europol Homicide Working Group (EHWG)

The Europol Homicide Working Group (EHWG) aims to share expert knowledge on the criminal investigation and forensic aspects of homicide. Focus is on intensifying international cooperation between European law enforcement authorities on this subject and covers murders related to organised crime, serial killings, transnational homicide or murder involving a specific *modi operandi*, such as honour killings or those with ethnic, cultural or religious connections.

Chaired by the UK's Metropolitan Police, the EHWG is the expert authority on cross-border homicide-related issues and offers support to European homicide investigators by:

- Providing a forum for the discussion and development of specialist knowledge on investigation procedures as well as technical and forensic methods relating to murder by organised crime groups, serial killings or transnational homicide
- Facilitating and encouraging international cooperation, the sharing of best practice and ensuring a close working relationship with Europol, Eurojust and Interpol within this arena
- Researching and analysing strategic intelligence and information on cross-border homicide for the detection of new trends or the development of new practices and investigative or forensic tools
- Acting as a source of advice to law enforcement authorities on the investigative, forensic or judicial aspects relating to transnational homicide investigation.

As part of its supporting role, Europol will host the 2012 Senior Investigating Officers Conference on Homicide, in cooperation with CEPOL. Also, working with the UK's Christ Church University in Canterbury, Europol is compiling details of national practices on homicide investigations, with a view to potentially producing a European manual on the subject.

2.8 Data Protection Officer

Europol has one of the most robust data protection regimes in the area of law enforcement. Europol's Data Protection Officer (DPO) ensures compliance, in an independent manner, within the data protection framework, including the processing of data related to Europol staff. The main task of his work is to supervise a tailor-made legal framework which serves the needs of the operational units and, at the same time, protects the fundamental rights of the data subjects. In addition the DPO acts as the main contact point with the Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) and assists in their inspections.

The framework for auditing activities is defined in the Europol Data Protection Audit Policy. Furthermore, in this context, the DPO established a 'Policy on Control of Retrievals' which provides details on control mechanisms for legality of retrievals of personal data from Europol's systems. As called for in Article 18 of the Europol Council Decision (ECD), the policy defines precise requirements for data protection audit logs and audit trails. On the basis of those policies the DPO has conducted audits and prepared relevant reports for the EIS, analysis work files (AWFs) and other systems processing personal data.

During the last year, the DPO has participated in all important projects involving the processing of personal data by drafting the data protection requirements and/or coordinating cooperation with the JSB whenever necessary. During 2011 one of the most important projects was the development of a new analysis work file (AWF) concept.

The DPO continued preparing data protection reports for the third parties with which Europol intends to conclude operational cooperation agreements. Europol also conducted two data protection visits (Albania, Serbia) in order to check the administrative practice in the candidate countries.

For staff-related data, the DPO focused on processing operations that are likely to present specific risks with respect to the rights and freedoms of staff, in particular for personnel and security issues. The DPO supported Europol units in drafting data protection notifications and, last year, paid particular attention to the security systems of Europol's new headquarters. Furthermore the DPO continued to notify the JSB of processing operations which are subject to prior checking by them.

As foreseen by the Europol Council Decision (ECD), the Data Protection Officer has presented his annual report to the Management Board and the Joint Supervisory Body.

3. Europol operational activities

One of Europol's key goals is to provide EU law enforcement authorities with 24/7 operational support. The support is delivered in mandated areas¹⁶ and also those crossing several criminal areas.

Operational support can be extended by deploying the Europol mobile office, with dedicated analysts and experts, to provide on-the-spot assistance in the Member States.

Europol mobile office

Live connection to Europol's centralised databases and platforms for experts

Europol has developed a powerful mobile office solution that allows Europol officers to access the full range of information retrieval and analysis tools from any remote location, using the highest security standards.

Europol's mobile office was **deployed 84 times in 2011** to support EU law enforcement colleagues - over 150% increase on 2010 (31 times).

Europol plays a vital role in the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle for Organised and Serious International Crime. This multi-annual cycle aims to tackle the most important serious criminal threats to the EU in a coherent way.

¹⁶ As detailed in the Annex to the Council Decision of 6 April 2009 establishing the European Police Office (Europol) (2009/371/JHA).

Europol prepared the OCTA 2011, on the basis of which eight strategic priorities were identified by Council. After the setting of strategic goals for each of the priorities, Europol hosted a workshop to develop Operational Action Plans, which translate political objectives into concrete operational actions. Europol is entrusted with the EMPACT [European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats] Support Unit which supports and monitors all EMPACT projects¹⁷.

Europol contributed jointly with Frontex and Eurojust to the first annual review of the Internal Security Strategy (ISS) presented in November 2011.

2011 in figures

- Europol used its information capabilities and operational expertise to support authorities in EU Member States in 13 697 cross-border cases - a 17% increase over 2010
- To support Member States' investigations, Europol produced:
 - 716 hit notifications
 - 984 cross match reports
 - 376 knowledge products
 - 340 operational analysis reports.

The number per type of operational support service provided to Member States' investigations is shown in Table 1 below. In most areas, large increases in the delivery of these services were recorded in 2011 over the previous year. This confirms a general trend inspired by the Europol Strategy of concentrating on operational activity and impact.

Table 1: Type of operational support provided to Member States in 2011

Type of operational support (number of times provided)	Total 2011	Total 2010
Forensic/technical support	594	543
Financial support to operational meetings	142	60
Financial support to investigations (euro counterfeiting)	28	35
Operational/coordination meetings hosted	214	56
Mobile office (on the spot analysis)	84	31
24/7 on call	26	-

¹⁷ EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary platform against Criminal Threats), EU institutions and agencies, third countries and organisations (public and private) who address a pan-European or regional threat of serious international and organised crime which has been prioritised by the Council based on the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (from 2013 on). This is done by means of a Multi-Annual Strategic Plan or strategic goal developed by an ad hoc expert group of the mentioned actors elaborating concrete problem-oriented solutions to effectively tackle the prioritised threat.

Table 2: Percentage of operations supported by Europol in 2011 by crime area

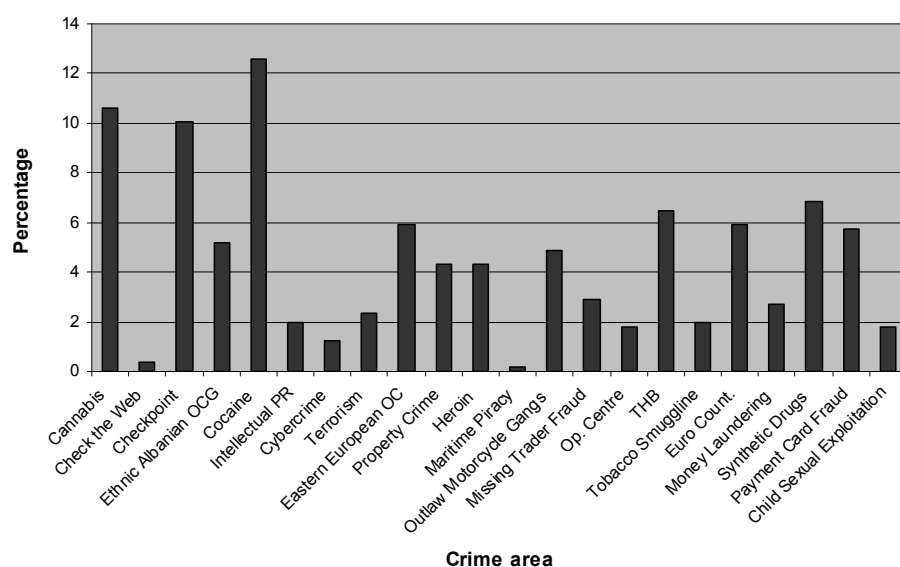
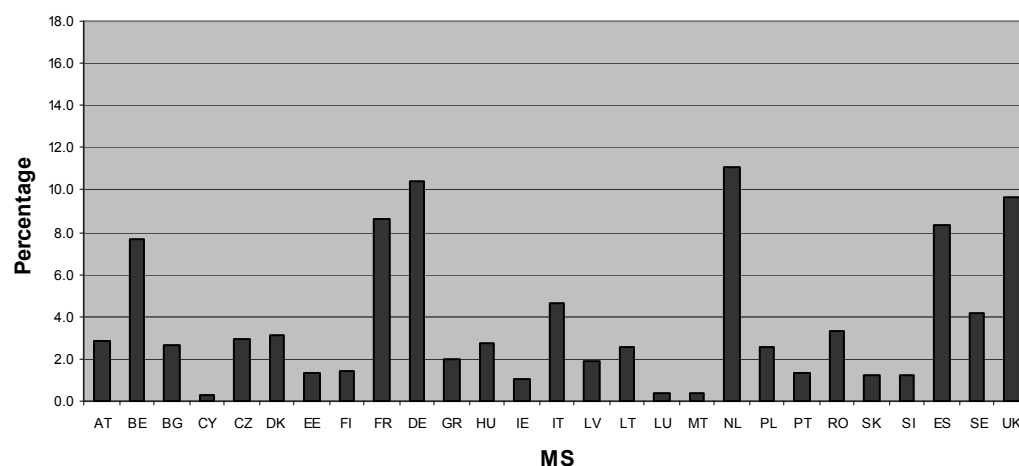


Table 3: Percentage of operations supported by Europol in 2011 per Member State



Satisfaction survey

In 2011, Europol again requested direct feedback from lead investigators whose operations had been supported by Europol. The feedback from this process showed that Europol analysis products were valued. Comments included:

"The intelligence reports were awesome – both the contents and formats were excellent."

"... the analysis reports are already very good in relation to the timelines and completeness. The structure and contents of the reports allowed for easy comprehension and use by the investigators."

Respondents also reported that the quality of expertise and advice given by Europol was also valued and that they were very satisfied with the different types of operational assistance provided, including technical and forensic analysis, financial support for investigations, and expertise provided in the areas of synthetic drugs and cybercrime.

Also rated highly were Europol's facilities in The Hague, action days, financial support for attending operational meetings and on-the-spot analysis. Comments from the investigators surveyed clearly identified that communication, coordination and operational analysis were the most appreciated Europol services.

"The technical support was very much appreciated by the investigators in Lille – it allowed them to save time and effort. The technical reports produced by Europol specialists were directly and immediately used by the investigators while interviewing suspects."

"Technical assistance provided was very good and was a major factor in identifying the 69 000+ suspects of the website. Also to be noted is the effective way Europol were able to disseminate referrals to member countries."

"I believe the expert assistance given by Europol during the technical analysis of printing presses would prove very valuable when pressing charges against those apprehended."

Some improvements to analysis and operational support were suggested by respondents, including more timely analytical reports and the earlier involvement of Europol in investigations.

Table 4: Lead investigators' satisfaction survey 2011

Type of operational support provided	Average score (out of 10)
Other: "AWF Synergy in the field of equipment expertise" "on top of their professional skills I would like to stress the availability of the Europol colleagues who attended the action day in France" "the AWF Twins members in the case. They were permanently in touch with the law enforcement officers in charge of the investigations"	9.5
Technical/forensic analysis (e.g. credit cards)	9.1
Technical investigation on raw material and devices (forgery of money)	9.0
Financial support to (euro) investigations	9.0
The use of Europol facilities in The Hague	8.8
Action days (coordination by Europol)	8.8
Financial support to attend operational meetings	8.5
On-the-spot analysis	8.2
Assistance in dismantling illicit laboratory	8.0
Assistance in dismantling print shop	6.0

3.1 Drugs

The drugs phenomenon is a major concern for the citizens of Europe because of its impact on both collective and individual health and safety. Fighting drug-related crime has been a priority for Europol since its very beginning. In 2011, over a quarter of the operations supported by Europol were in relation to drugs.

3.1.1 Synthetic drugs

The European Union remains a significant region for the illicit production of synthetic drugs, particularly amphetamine and ecstasy. Each year around 60 to 90 large-scale production sites are identified and dismantled.

Storage sites for potentially dangerous precursor chemicals used in the drug manufacturing process are also often discovered during the course of investigations in Member States. These precursor chemicals are smuggled in from Asia or are self-produced in the EU.

Whilst the production of amphetamine remains stable but high, the manufacture of ecstasy in the EU rose in 2011, after a significant drop in previous years. An emerging trend in the EU is the rapid spread of new psychoactive substances. Published in 2011, the joint report¹⁸ from Europol and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) details how a total of 41 new psychoactive substances were officially notified to the two agencies. This represents the largest number of substances ever reported in a single year and includes synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones and synthetic derivatives of other well-established drugs.

Europol's operational support includes the coordination and initiation of criminal drugs investigations as well as on-the-spot assistance to EU law enforcement agencies during the secure dismantling of illicit drug production facilities and the collection of required evidence. Europol also carries out technical investigations on custom-made and industrial equipment seized from drug production and storage units.

¹⁸ EMCDDA-Europol 2010 Annual Report on the implementation of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA (...) on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances.

The **Europol Illicit Laboratory Comparison System (EILCS)** comprises detailed photographic and technical information on synthetic drug production, storage and dump sites. This enables the identification of matches between seized equipment, materials and chemicals. In addition, the **Europol Synthetic Drug System (ESDS)** includes information on modus operandi and significant seizures. This enables the identification of matches between seizures and helps to profile and target criminal groups.

Operation De-Bads

Main crime area Ecstasy, amphetamine, cannabis & cocaine production & trafficking

Participating countries Belgium, Netherlands

Europol's contribution

- Organised operational meetings to exchange information
- Europol analysts produced eight analytical reports which identified operational links

Scope of the operation

Belgian Police¹⁹ started an investigation into a Belgian-Dutch criminal group who were very active in producing and trafficking synthetic drugs.

After police seized 62 kg of amphetamine in the Ghent area of Belgium, it became clear that those drugs were destined for a local organised criminal motorcycle gang. In close cooperation with the Dutch Police²⁰, the two forces then identified a possible production site in Tilburg, the Netherlands. As a result of this cooperation, arrests were made and substantial quantities of drugs were seized .

As a result of international cooperation:

- 12 arrests were made: 9 in Belgium and 3 in the Netherlands for extradition to Belgium
- Houses searched in Belgium and 36 kg of amphetamines found
- Ten more house searches result in the dismantling and seizure of two cannabis nurseries, 1 kg of amphetamine, 100 ecstasy tablets and 5 litres of amphetamine oil

¹⁹ Belgian Federal Judicial Police of Dendermonde.

- Dutch Police seize half a kilo of cocaine, 30 kg of ecstasy tablets (150 000 tablets), 5 kg of ecstasy powder and 720 litres of chemicals for the production of ecstasy tablets.

3.1.2 Cocaine

After cannabis, cocaine is the second most commonly used illicit substance in Europe. About four million Europeans are reported to have used cocaine in the last year²¹ and it is estimated that around 14.5 million adults (aged 15-64 years old) have used cocaine in their lifetime. This reflects the rapidly growing trafficking flows and spread of cocaine use in Europe. Next to the United States, the European Union remains the second largest consumer of cocaine in the world.

The main source countries for cocaine are Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. Spain and Portugal are the principal EU entry points for the drug with other Western European countries, however an increasing amount enters the EU via the Western Balkans and South East Europe. West Africa is used as a transshipment and storage region for Latin American cocaine destined for Europe.

However it is not only European criminal networks trafficking cocaine into the EU. Criminal groups from Colombia (including FARC), Dominican Republic, West Africa, Western Balkans, Mexico, Russia and the former Soviet Union (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) are active too.

At Europol, cocaine-related organised crime networks come under a dedicated project whose activities include:

- Providing a centralised service for the fast and efficient processing and analysis of data related to criminal cocaine trafficking networks
- Disseminating analytical reports to support Member States' ongoing investigations, which have led to the arrest of high-value targets and the seizure of tonnes of cocaine
- Identifying possibilities for establishing Joint Investigation Teams, common operations and parallel investigations, enabling European-wide law enforcement cooperation
- Providing Member States with tactical and strategic information on key suspects and their associates

²⁰ Dutch Police Nationale Recherche.

²¹ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Annual Report 2011, The State of the Drugs Problem in Europe.

- Tracing the money flows originating from cocaine trafficking and assisting Member States in freezing and confiscating these illegal proceeds, helping to weaken the position of the criminal groups producing and trafficking cocaine
- Initiating and enhancing operational and strategic cooperation as well as information exchange between EU and non-EU countries, focusing on the disruption of the criminal networks.

Within this dedicated project, Europol runs the **Europol Cocaine Logo System** which consists of the Cocaine Logo, Cocaine Punch and Specific Means of Concealment databases.

Operation Aigle 35/Vortice Due

Main crime area Cocaine trafficking

Participating countries Belgium France Germany Italy The Netherlands

Europol's contribution

- Facilitated the organisation of operational meetings
- Coordinated a number of police operations
- Collected large quantities of data and intelligence
- Supported the relevant investigative teams in the Member States with numerous intelligence reports
- In a number of cases the correct identification of key suspects was based upon Europol intelligence.

Scope of the operation

Europol and Eurojust supported measures to bring to justice nearly 100 Albanian-speaking cocaine traffickers active in five EU countries.

The Italian inquiry, which initially focussed on Camorra clans and 'Ndrangheta families', was redirected to Albanian-speaking criminal groups. This activity led to the identification and referral of 76 suspects to the local judicial authorities. 40 of these were arrested while some others remained at large. In addition, four key Albanian criminals were caught in Italy and Belgium, in connection with cocaine trafficking. The key criminals arrested were finally heavily sentenced in 2011.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Dismantling of a significant network of mostly Albanian-speaking criminals involved in cocaine trafficking
- As part of the Italian enquiry, 40 were arrested, 6 kg heroin, 2.5 kg cocaine and various cutting substances, packing materials and equipments were seized
- Four key Albanian criminals were apprehended in Italy and Belgium, in connection with cocaine trafficking
- French police arrested 22 Albanian-speaking suspects, seized of 3.2 kg of heroin and EUR 127 000 in cash.
- The Dutch investigation led to the confiscation of 20 kg of cannabis and the seizure of firearms and weaponry
- In Germany, 7 people were investigated, with 3 detained.
- The investigation in Belgium led to the arrest of 3 people and the seizure of 30 kg of cannabis, drugs cutting agents, packing materials and equipment.

Operation Salonica

Main crime area	Cocaine & cannabis production & trafficking
Participating countries	Albania Austria Belgium Germany Italy Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Serbia Spain

Europol's contribution

- Coordinated analytical support to the operation
- Facilitated the organisation of operational meetings
- Collected data and intelligence for operational analysis
- Europol facilitated the international monitoring operation to follow the truck carrying the consignment through Europe and finally to Albania, where the drugs were intercepted.

Scope of the operation

This international police operation resulted in the dismantling of a criminal organisation made up of Spanish, Moroccan and Albanian citizens who were importing and distributing large consignments of Colombian cocaine and Moroccan hashish into Europe. The criminal network worked with a drugs cartel to obtain cocaine on an industrial scale and had a drugs distribution infrastructure in several European countries.

A huge consignment of cocaine, diluted in 13 tonnes of palm oil had been shipped from Colombia, via Antwerp in Belgium, and was finally seized by law enforcement authorities in Albania.

The criminal group also dealt in various other narcotics. One branch of the organisation cultivated cannabis, another organised the supply of hashish from different sources. The group would also transport hashish from Spain to Italy and the Netherlands by commercial road transport, concealed in the cabs of trucks.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Almost one tonne of cocaine and 160 kg of hashish seized
- International criminal drugs network dismantled, after 22 arrests including some of the key figures
- The criminal group in Albania, in charge of palm oil processing to extract the diluted cocaine, has also been dismantled.

3.1.3 Heroin

The European Union is also a significant market for opiates. Although demand and supply of opiates, mainly heroin, is relatively small when compared to other illicit drugs like cannabis and synthetic drugs, the social, economic and health problems associated with its use are huge. It is therefore considered a major threat to the security and health of European society.

The global heroin trade is dominated by major cultivation and production in Afghanistan, which remains by far the primary source of heroin encountered in the EU. Much of this heroin exits Afghanistan via the borders with Pakistan and Iran, which offer the shortest and most direct routes.

While there is an increase in direct trafficking to some European countries by air from Pakistan, large amounts of heroin also arrive by sea, having transited ports in Africa. There are clear signs that, in recent years, Africa has become a major hub for heroin trafficking to Europe, no doubt in order to avoid the more extensively monitored and checked frontiers along traditional trafficking routes.

From Iran, heroin is smuggled across the border into Turkey and reaches Europe travelling along the so-called Balkan routes, which offer a network of countless smuggling possibilities through the region. While there is a growing diversification of trafficking patterns into Europe due to regional developments in politics, infrastructure and law enforcement activities, it remains the case that it is the Balkans route that is the favoured transport channel. It is estimated that about 100 tonnes of heroin are transported annually through the Balkans, of which 85 tonnes eventually make it to the most lucrative consumer market - Western Europe.

In 2011, Europol was involved in a wide range of operational support activities connected to the trade in heroin, involving predominantly EU, Turkish, West African and Pakistani traffickers. Criminal networks involved in trafficking the critical heroin precursor chemical - acetic anhydride - to Afghanistan were also a priority.

While heroin trafficking is by far the main focus of Europol's efforts, without acetic anhydride it is extremely difficult to manufacture, therefore it is highly sought after by traffickers who attempt to divert large quantities from legitimate commercial chemical companies, including those based in the EU. Europol was involved in several high-profile EU acetic anhydride trafficking cases last year where more than 30 tonnes - most likely destined for use in heroin manufacture in Afghanistan - were seized. The chemical, which is subject to international regulatory control, can be purchased wholesale for \$1 per litre, whilst in southern Afghanistan it can be worth up to 400 times that on the illegal market.

Sub-project Watani

Main crime area Illicit heroin production

Participating countries Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, US DEA²²

Europol's contribution

- Initiated and convened several successful operational meetings to coordinate the ongoing investigations and to exchange information, in cooperation with Eurojust and the US DEA
- Expertise provided, particularly in the fields of operational cooperation and the development of criminal data
- Europol experts assisted Member States' investigations through the analysis of case data and identification of operational links.

Scope of the investigations

This organised crime group had been involved in the trafficking of significant amounts of a critical heroin precursor chemical. Investigations have so far led to four coordinated seizures of acetic anhydride, including one seizure outside of the EU.

As a result of international cooperation:

- A major organised criminal network has been dismantled, who were heavily involved in acetic anhydride trafficking within and outside the EU
- More than 30 tonnes of this critical precursor have been seized so far, which is highly significant in terms of the quantity of heroin that could have been produced with the chemical.

²² United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

3.1.4 Cannabis

On a global level, cannabis is the EU's most prevalent drug in terms of production, trafficking and consumption in its various forms, such as herbal cannabis (marijuana), cannabis resin (hashish) and cannabis oil. The EU is a major consumer of cannabis. Production is also a significant issue in many countries.

Trafficking and production of cannabis is an attractive business for many criminals as it is perceived to be low risk. Consequently many criminal groups are involved in cannabis production, trafficking and subsequent money laundering. However, these criminal networks rarely deal exclusively in cannabis. These activities are often part of a multi-drug business with variables depending on geographical and ethnic parameters or mere opportunity.

Europol initiates, supports and coordinates intelligence aspects of cannabis investigations, whilst enhancing information exchange, knowledge and experience of the cannabis trade. Two sub-projects focus on the wholesale trafficking of cannabis and its cultivation and production. Europol has mainly received intelligence about ongoing investigations related to trafficking of cannabis, focusing on the routes connecting North Africa with Scandinavia.

Europol produces the **Europol Cannabis Cultivation site Comparison System** (ECCCS) and the **Europol Logo System on Cannabis** (ELSC). We are also part of the **European Expert Group on Cannabis** (EEGC), which has already supported several operational cases.

In 2011, dedicated Europol teams supported several investigations through ad-hoc analysis and on-the-spot forensics. Thanks to the Dutch Joint Action Taskforce (JAT) initiative we have seen a significant increase in contributions of intelligence. This has in turn translated into a high number of analytical products that have helped our awareness of the situation in the Netherlands and enabled further identification of links with ongoing investigations in other Member States.

Europol hosted a training course in The Hague on the **dismantling of illicit indoor cannabis cultivation sites**, which was attended by representatives from 20 EU countries.

Two experts from Belgium and the Netherlands presented their knowledge on the methodology and risks involved in law enforcement officers dismantling these plantations. The course provided participants with the information required to safely dismantle the sites and successfully preserve evidence. In addition, experts presented details on Europol's operational capabilities. Subsequently participants travelled to Belgium to carry out practical exercises with simulated indoor plantations.

Operation Mango

Main crime area Cannabis & counterfeit euro trafficking

Participating countries Spain. 20 EU countries affected

Europol's contribution

- As the European central office for the protection of the euro, Europol played an important role in the operation by coordinating investigations among the countries affected by the activities of the counterfeiters.

Scope of the operation

This criminal group were under investigation by the Spanish National Police for some time, for drug trafficking and euro counterfeiting. Spanish authorities dismantled the first part of the criminal network when they seized over a tonne of cannabis and arrested 11 suspects. The investigations then continued, now focusing on euro counterfeiting.

The main counterfeiter was the owner of a canned food distribution company, where the clandestine print shop was found. He used the company as a cover for the illicit print shop, where 50 euro notes were printed. The criminal group also imported fake 20, 50 and 100 euro notes from criminal counterparts in Italy, for further distribution around Europe.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Criminal group dismantled who were responsible for drug trafficking and distributing more than two million counterfeit euros in 20 EU countries
- 1.5 million in counterfeit euro banknotes were seized, as well as materials for the mass production of more counterfeit euro notes
- Over a tonne of cannabis seized
- Machinery and tools to counterfeit Spanish identification documents were also found.

3.2 Trafficking in human beings

In 2011 trafficking in human beings (THB) remained a serious problem in the EU. This form of crime abuses individuals' human rights, and treats people as commodities.

The scale and nature of THB in the EU is not easy to define, not least because it is often hidden within other criminality, such as prostitution, illegal immigration and labour disputes. This often results in instances of trafficking not being recorded or investigated as such.

Inevitably, there are more EU nationals being identified as victims of trafficking. This is a combination of some traditional source countries now being members of the EU, and other EU nationals having more opportunities and freedom to travel and work overseas. Major source countries such as the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, Turkey, Moldova, and the Western Balkans, are now one border crossing away, with their nationals routinely identified in the course of EU law enforcement investigations as either victims or traffickers.

The EU is also an area of operations for trafficking networks from Asia, Africa and South America and the number of people from these continents being identified as victims of trafficking or as suspected traffickers has increased.

Although sexual exploitation is the most widely reported form of trafficking, labour exploitation is also a common crime that is often undetected due to a lack of general awareness of the subject. In 2011, as a result of improved detection rates, a new trend was identified where traffickers make use of the opportunities offered by the internet to advertise sexual services, or to recruit.

Europol actively supported 22 high-level human trafficking investigations in 2011. We provided on-the-spot operational support through the deployment of the mobile office, allowing investigators to access databases and analytical tools directly from the field.

Operation Veerde

Main crime area Human trafficking

Participating countries Czech Republic United Kingdom

Europol's contribution

- This operation was able to tackle a human trafficking network from the initial recruitment phase, through to the exploitation phase, and it was very successful through the use a Joint Investigation Team, including Europol and Eurojust.

Scope of the operation

Parallel Czech and UK investigations were looking into an organised crime group who were trafficking Czech women to the UK, lured with the promise of 30 000 Czech Crowns for sham marriages to UK citizens. Most of the girls never received this money and their newly-issued passports remained in the possession of the OCG, to be potentially re-used for look-alikes.

Upon arrival in the UK, the Czech women were physically abused, raped and forced into prostitution or to marry nationals from Pakistan and India, in order to legalise the men's status. The organised crime group also defrauded the UK social benefits system.

As a result of international cooperation:

- 11 arrests in the UK and the Czech Republic, dismantling the organised crime group.

Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)

Joint investigation teams can be established to further improve police cooperation. The teams consist of judicial and police authorities from at least two Member States. They are responsible for carrying out criminal investigations into specific matters for a limited period of time. Europol and Eurojust can participate in and coordinate the work of JITs.

In 2011, Europol participated in 17 joint investigation teams, and was actively involved in, and supported, several more JITs without a formal arrangement in place.

**Comprehensive, Operational, Strategic Planning for the Police (COSPOL)*
on Western Balkans Organised Crime (WBOC)**

Following intensive law enforcement activity involving international police and judicial cooperation, the COSPOL WBOC group has met one of its key objectives for 2011 and 18 Albanian fugitives have been arrested after having evaded justice for many years.

Using Europol services, the COSPOL WBOC and the NCB²³ Rome, Italian judicial authorities identified key criminals and were able to provide Albanian authorities with intelligence to help locate and apprehend these serious criminals.

A key to this success has been the cooperation of the Albanian authorities, who located and subsequently arrested 18 Albanian criminals wanted for the commission of serious and organised crimes such as belonging to an international criminal organisation, homicide, drugs and weapons trafficking, illegal immigration and exploitation of prostitution.

The arrested persons are being extradited to Italy, based on a new Extradition Protocol between Italy and Albania. This legal instrument greatly facilitates law enforcement interaction between these two countries and it represents a significant milestone for future international police and judicial cooperation in this region.

* The COSPOL project was a multilateral law enforcement instrument created under the European Police Chiefs Task Force (EPCTF). It has now been agreed that the project will be integrated with the new Western Balkans EMPACT project, created as part of the EU Policy Cycle.

²³ Interpol National Central Bureau in Rome.

3.3 Facilitated illegal immigration

The term facilitated illegal immigration covers a number of different serious crimes, all aimed at assisting, for financial gain, the entry into or residence in a country, in violation of that country's laws. Facilitated illegal immigration thus covers the production and procurement of falsified travel documents or permits obtained under false pretences, and the provision of clandestine transport or other assistance, in order to obtain illegal entry or stay - often connected to a number of other criminal activities.

In general, organised crime groups facilitating illegal immigration tend to be structured in loose networks of smaller groups, and most of them have ethnic or other cultural connections to the illegal immigrants they are facilitating. The organised crime groups involved display a high degree of flexibility and the ability to collaborate across borders, regardless of ethnic differences - even in regions where there is a tradition of ethnic conflict. The facilitators are quick to detect and make use of various changes in society, such as law enforcement tactics and changes in legislation or regulations, as well as the opening of new or cheaper transport routes or new border crossing points.

Europol provides analytical support to EU Member States to combat facilitated illegal immigration. The criminal networks involved in the facilitation of illegal immigration are sometimes also involved in other crime areas such as forgery of travel documents, drug trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in human beings and the like.

Europol has divided this subject into sub-projects focusing on specific organised crime groups, nationalities, modi operandi or geographical areas. In 2011 there were nine active sub-projects focusing on facilitated illegal immigration from Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, South Asia, North Africa, China and the production and distribution of falsified documents. Europol is also supporting Italy in combating illegal immigration from North Africa to Italy, and supporting Greece in combating networks active at the Greek-Turkish border.

Europol is part of two Joint Investigation Teams: one on marriages of convenience and one on the facilitation of Sri Lankan nationals into the EU via Finland.

During 2011, Europol supported nine major European operations targeting criminal networks facilitating illegal immigration:

- These operations resulted in 161 suspected facilitators being arrested
- Operational activities were coordinated during meetings organised and facilitated by Europol
- Europol were present at the operational coordination centres and provided support through technical expertise, specialised data extraction equipment and the deployment of the mobile office
- During the investigation phases, Europol officers focused on operational analyses and, in many cases, links to other EU investigations were identified.

Operation Cestia

Main crime area Facilitated illegal immigration of Afghan nationals

Participating countries France Germany Italy

Europol's contribution

- Europol's mobile office was deployed at the Italian Police HQ in Rome for the duration of the live operation, along with an analyst and one illegal immigration specialist.
- Europol experts provided technical expertise and operational analysis support throughout the investigation, prepared several intelligence reports and facilitated the exchange of information.

Scope of the operation

Europol supported an Italian-led day of action targeting a major migrant smuggling network. This cross-border investigation was also coordinated by Eurojust and lasted for almost two years.

The investigation focused on the smuggling of Afghan nationals from Afghanistan via Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Then via Greece, the migrants were smuggled to Rome. From there the three favoured destinations were the UK, Norway and Sweden. The cost to the migrants for the entire journey from Afghanistan to Italy is believed to have been from EUR 3500 to EUR 5000. The journey could take anything from a few days to many weeks. It is estimated that around 200 migrants per month were smuggled from 2008 - 2011 and of those 20% are believed to have been minors. Afghan minors were found during the house searches undertaken during the operation.

The criminal network was well established with cells in many countries. The group also had access to falsified EU identity documents and made use of Hawala banking to transfer money between the various parts of the network based in the UK, France, Italy, Pakistan, Iran and Greece. The main organisers behind the network were resident in the UK.

As a result of international cooperation:

- 26 arrests, mainly in Italy, but also in France and Germany

Hawala (also known as hundi) is an informal value transfer system based on the performance and honour of a huge network of money brokers, which are primarily located in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and South Asia.

In the most basic variant of the hawala system, money is transferred via a network of hawala brokers, or hawaladars. It is the transfer of money without actually moving it. A customer approaches a hawala broker in one city and gives a sum of money to be transferred to a recipient in another, usually foreign, city. The broker calls another hawala broker in the recipient's city, gives disposition instructions of the funds (usually minus a small commission), and promises to settle the debt at a later date.

In some parts of the world it is the only option for legitimate funds transfers, and has even been used by aid organisations in areas where it is the best-functioning institution. The transfers are usually informal and not effectively regulated by governments, which is a major advantage to customers with tax, currency control, immigration, or other concerns.

Operation Schwarz/White

Main crime area Smuggling of Vietnamese illegal immigrants

Participating countries Czech Republic France Germany Hungary UK

Europol's contribution

- Five-country operation supported and coordinated by Europol and Eurojust

Scope of the operation

European police took action against a number of sophisticated criminal networks who were offering their services to potential immigrants to travel illegally from Vietnam to the UK.

The modus operandi was to provide the Vietnamese with false documents, fly them via Moscow, and then smuggle them onwards into the EU via trains, cars or lorries. For those who wanted to go to the UK, a group of Iraqi Kurdish criminal facilitators offered this service from Belgium and France to the UK for EUR 2000 - EUR 3000. They arranged for the immigrants to cross the English Channel concealed in vans or lorries.

The criminal facilitators also offered a more expensive method (EUR 10 000 - EUR 15 000 for guaranteed arrival), by illegally obtaining Hungarian and Czech Schengen visas issued in Hanoi for business purposes. The immigrants were then able to take direct flights to Paris. The immigrants were accommodated in safe houses in Paris arranged by the criminal facilitators prior to the final leg of their journey to the UK. This was a sophisticated network with cells in Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, France, the UK and Vietnam.

Police actions took place in Lille, Paris, London, Prague, Berlin, Munich and Budapest, where several suspected safe houses and apartments were targeted.

France dismantled a transit camp used by immigrants at Grande-Synthe, close to Dunkerque; 38 immigrants (14 of Vietnamese and 17 of various other nationalities) were intercepted in this camp, where they all lived in cramped conditions.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Suspected criminal facilitators arrested in France (19), Germany (8), Hungary (5), Czech Republic (2) and the UK (1)
- In France, an indoor cannabis cultivation farm was discovered.

Operation Truck

Main crime area Chinese network of illegal immigration facilitators

Participating countries France Portugal UK

Europol's contribution

- The coordination centre set up at Europol provided all specialist communication tools necessary for real-time support and coordination. Representatives from all investigative authorities involved were present
- The coordination centre was supported by Eurojust, who provided valuable support at a judicial level
- Europol analysts provided analysis reports on the emerging criminal intelligence.

Scope of the operation

The operation targeted a Chinese network involved in the facilitation of illegal migration into the UK. Customers would pay the criminals up to EUR 23.000 to reach Western Europe from China. In Europe the customers were provided with documents, often using these to travel from France and Portugal to the UK. The Chinese criminals were able to arrange fraudulently-obtained work and residence permits, as well as arrange counterfeit visas, identity and travel documents, legal assistance and accommodation in safe houses.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Police arrest a total of 18 suspects: 10 in France, 6 in Portugal and 2 in the UK
- Simultaneous house searches in France and Portugal, resulted in the seizure of documents, money, bank statements, mobile phones and other supporting evidence
- The investigation confirmed the existence of a well organised criminal network facilitating illegal immigration.

3.4 Europol Cyber Crime Centre

The Internet has revolutionised the way we live and contributed to making society borderless. The 'information superhighway' predicted thirty years ago is now a reality, with the world increasingly dependent on high-tech communications and banking systems. This has provided new opportunities for criminals, and created new illicit commodities, in particular stolen personal and financial information, and illegal digital content.

Early in 2011, Europol's Internet Facilitated Organised Crime Threat Assessment (iOCTA),²⁴ identified a sophisticated 'digital underground economy' in which this data is traded as an illicit commodity. At the same time, untold emotional damage is suffered by the victims of Internet scams and identity theft, with many vulnerable as a result of a lack of experience online. Internet technology has also brought child abuse material to a much larger audience, and made it easier than ever before to distribute.

Europol's High Tech Crime Centre, established in 2002, delivers a high level of expertise by means of three specialist teams focusing on combating **child sexual exploitation, payment card fraud** and **cybercrime**. This expertise is delivered through coordination, training, operational support and operational analysis.

There are clear similarities in the work of the three teams. They all provide specialist digital forensic support to investigations in the Member States and work closely with partners outside of law enforcement, especially in the financial and communications industries. All three crime types are truly global. It is also apparent that criminals active in different parts of the digital underground use the same tools for a variety of purposes, with, for example, websites hijacked for the distribution of child abuse material, and malicious software developed to attack bank cash machines (ATMs).

With this in mind, staff from the three work areas have joined forces to form the **Europol Cyber Crime Centre**. This move enables online crime specialists to better share their technical expertise and develop effective counter measures, thereby providing more effective assistance to Member States and better protecting the citizens of the EU.

²⁴ Available to download from the Europol website.

3.4.1 Cybercrime

Operational developments

In the iOCTA, cybercriminal entrepreneurship, based on malicious software and botnets, was seen as one of the main threats in the cybercrime landscape.

Cybercriminal groups continue to target the financial infrastructure with sophisticated malware attacks. In 2011 Europol supported, amongst others, the following malware-based operations:

- Operation Crossbill, a UK-led operation against a criminal group active in malware driven crime, whose activities included the:
 - spreading of malicious code
 - harvesting of bank credentials, followed by the
 - theft and subsequent laundering of funds from compromised bank accounts.

This was one of the first Joint Investigation Teams in cybercrime and a good example for future cooperation.

- Operation Mariposa II was a follow-up to the takedown by Spain in 2010 of a group of criminals using the 'Butterfly bot'. The use of the BFbot continued to grow, with new groups appearing throughout Europe, exploiting the malware for financial gain. Continued investigations identified more using this malware across the globe. In order to disrupt the BFbot infrastructure, and to coordinate the investigations, an operational workgroup gathered at Europol in Autumn 2011. The core group of EU Member States will continue this work in 2012, in close cooperation with the USA and Australia.
- Operational meetings led to interesting cross-hits with other datasets that will support the evidence gathering in this operation. Furthermore, it will lead to an increased understanding of the cybercriminal business model used by high-level suspects in the cybercrime arena.

Malware operations will in general continue to be supported in 2012, but with specific attention paid to identifying the more sophisticated criminals, such as 'development' groups that create and maintain the more successful types of malicious software found in the digital underground economy.

Networks of money mules are used to channel, layer and 'cash out' the proceedings of cybercriminal enterprise. The dismantling of such networks has been one of the key targets in the past year. So far, analysis of the contributions in this area have led to better insight into money flows and identified several geographical hot-spots for 'cashing out'.

- *Taking its initial inspiration from cooperation with Spain and Eurojust, a project is now underway to map mule networks and identify the main suspects in Europe.*

Besides the continuing threat of financially motivated cybercrime, 2011 has clearly been the year of 'hacktivism'. At the beginning of the year large companies involved in the Wikileaks ban were targeted; later on the attacks spread to governments, law enforcement agencies and political parties. Spin-offs and splinter groups of the original Anonymous movement appeared throughout the Western world.

- In view of attacks by 'Anonymous' and related groups against a number of EU Member States, Europol organised an operational meeting to link the different investigations and plan further action. From the intelligence gathered at this meeting, the nature and the impact of 'Anonymous' and related attacks in Europe is currently being assessed.
- Dedicated intelligence reports have also been issued on both 'Anonymous' and 'Lulzsec'.

Intelligence

The cybercrime intelligence function continues to develop, with an emphasis on the forecasting and demystification of online phenomena. In 2011, research was conducted and distributed on the following phenomena, amongst others:

- Stuxnet: a technical explanation of this sophisticated piece of malicious software.
- The 'Lulzsec' group: the rise of the 'Lulzsec' group and 'Antisec' movement.
- Phone Phreaking: Strategic and operational analysis of mainly Voice over IP (VoIP) abuse, to manipulate a phone system, apparently revitalising the 'Phone Phreaking' concept.
- SSL Denial of Service Attacks: on the possible compromise of secure internet payments through the SSL protocol.

Ongoing research on the evolution of the 'Bitcoin' virtual payment system and criminal misuse of the 'TOR' anonymising network will be published in 2012.

Forensic and operational support

Specific forensic support was given in several of the larger operations, for example Operation Crossbill (above). In general, results from forensic examinations of seized data are also used to map out the groups higher up in the cybercriminal hierarchy, through comparison with other datasets.

Training

Cybercrime training has been developed and delivered through the following activities:

- In a joint effort with Eurojust about 80 prosecutors and judges were trained on malware investigation techniques in Romania.
- Europol hosted two meetings of the European Cybercrime Training and Education Group (ECTEG) and played an active role in the work of this group through the development, coordination and delivery of cybercrime training. Among the members of ECTEG are CEPOL, Eurojust and Interpol, but also key partners from academia and the private sector.
- Europol staff in other work areas were trained in the basics of digital, network and mobile forensics through the delivery of three different accredited courses. The programme provides Europol officials with practical knowledge to better support their specialist activities.
- Europol operational staff have been trained to deploy the Universal Forensic Extraction Device (UFED) mobile forensic kit on the spot.
- Specialist cybercrime staff have supported CEPOL's initiative to develop an online learning system on cybercrime.

Computer Forensic Network (CFN)

The Computer Forensic Network (CFN) is a platform being developed at Europol to support forensic examination of seized data across analysis work files and operations.

In 2011 the CFN project delivered a basic platform to perform digital IT forensics. This platform provides the ability to filter and process relevant information from a large amount of computer data, while preserving the validity of the data as evidence or intelligence. This state-of-the-art capability for the extraction and analysis of crime-related information from digital data will be further developed in 2012.

European Union Cybercrime Task Force (EUCTF)

This year the Europol Cyber Crime Centre hosted two meetings of the EUCTF. This group, formed by the Heads of Member States' Cybercrime Units, the European Commission and Eurojust, gives strategic direction to the EU's fight against cybercrime, and is charged with transforming into operational activities the strategic goals on cybercrime set by the Council's Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI).

3.4.2 Child sexual exploitation

The production and distribution of illegal content depicting the sexual exploitation of children is mainly facilitated by the Internet. The apparent anonymity offered by this means of communication makes the successful identification and location of offenders difficult. The discovery of illegal material is only a part, possibly the beginning, of an investigation into a crime against a child. The tracing and identification of child victims is a priority and an additional challenge for law enforcement.

Once child abuse material reaches the Internet, it constitutes a permanent re-victimisation of the depicted child. The web also provides a platform for other crimes against children, like online grooming²⁵.

A dedicated Europol analysis work file was created in 2001 to prevent and combat the activities of criminal networks involved in the production, sale or distribution of child sexual exploitation material, and associated crimes. To date, thousands of intelligence packages and analytical reports have been disseminated by Europol to law enforcement agencies, allowing the identification of more than 3000 child sex offenders and the identification of a consistent number of victims. Europol has also supported Member States in forensically examining copies of digital material seized by police agencies.

²⁵ Online grooming is the proposal by an adult to meet a child who has not reached the age of sexual consent under national law, with the purpose of engaging in sexual activities with the child.

Current trends

- Child sex offenders travel or migrate to specific countries where children are offered by their families, or facilitators, for exploitation and the production of child abuse material.
- Child abuse material may be self-produced by teenagers or children who underestimate the risks of distributing their images or movie files. In some cases they are convinced or coerced into producing the material by child sex offenders through online grooming.
- Online grooming and the sending of sexual messages to young people using mobile phones and multimedia devices ('sexting') are also noted trends.
- Child sex offenders make use of sophisticated software to protect their anonymity. They utilise online storage and advanced encryption techniques to counteract digital forensic examination by police.
- Criminals seem to focus on using hidden channels where private access is granted only to those who have been 'selected'. This 'selection' derives from the amount and kind of child abusive images that they share.
- Other phenomena have started to appear, like cyber-sex tourism, where the abuse of a child takes place in front of a webcam, following payment.

Operation Rescue

Main crime area	Worldwide child sex offender network
Participating countries	Australia Belgium Canada Germany Greece Iceland Italy Netherlands New Zealand Poland Romania Spain United Kingdom United States

Europol's contribution

- Instrumental to the success was the unique role played by Europol in identifying the members of the child sex abuse network and facilitating operational action by police authorities in multiple jurisdictions.
- In particular it was the work of Europol analysts in cracking the security features of a key computer server at the centre of the network which uncovered the identity and activity of the suspected child sex offenders.
- Europol subsequently issued over 4000 intelligence reports to police authorities in over 30 countries in Europe and elsewhere, which has led to the arrests of suspects and the safeguarding of children.
- Europol's reports also identified links between this network and those featured in multiple other investigations.

Scope of the operation

Known as Operation Rescue, this complex case has run for three years, with Europol supporting and coordinating investigations for the last 1.5 years. Law enforcement authorities have been brought together from 14 countries to track offenders on a truly global scale. Some other countries, although not listed, still have investigations ongoing in which suspects have been identified.

The suspected child sex offenders were members of an online forum – boylover.net – that promoted sexual relationships between adults and young boys. The website operated from a server based in the Netherlands and, at its height, boasted up to 70 000 members worldwide.

The website has now been taken down. It attempted to operate as a 'discussion-only' forum where people could share their sexual interest in young boys without committing any specific offences, thus operating 'below the radar' of police attention. Having made contact on the site, some members would move to more private channels, such as email, to exchange and share illegal images and films of children being abused. Computers seized from those arrested have harvested huge quantities of child abuse images and videos.

At the start of the investigation, UK and Australian police internet teams identified members of the boylover.net site who were assessed as posing the highest risk to children. They also tracked the migration of offenders to other sites where further investigations and risk assessments continued.

As a result of international cooperation:

- 779 suspects have been identified across the world already
- 250 arrests have been made
- 252 children have been safeguarded.
- The number of victims safeguarded is the highest ever achieved from this type of investigation and investigations are still continuing.

Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT)

Europol joined the Virtual Global Task Force (VGT) in April 2011. The aim of the VGT is to build an effective, international partnership of law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations and industry to help protect children from online child abuse. By joining the VGT Europol aims at reaching further intensive cooperation with countries outside Europe in this borderless crime field.

European Financial Coalition (EFC)

Europol holds the chairmanship of the renewed European Financial Coalition (EFC). Focusing on financial transactions, the Coalition combats the online distribution of illegal images of child sexual abuse, aiming to serve as a permanent platform and resource centre for interested parties, including law enforcement agencies, payment system providers, internet service providers (ISPs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Child Sexual Abuse Anti Distribution Filter

The COSPOL²⁶ Internet Related Child Abusive Material Project (CIRCAMP)²⁷ successfully implemented the Child Sexual Abuse Anti Distribution Filter in 2011.

²⁶ The COSPOL project is a multilateral law enforcement instrument created under the European Police Chiefs Task Force (EPCTF).

²⁷ The members of CIRCAMP are: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Europol and Interpol.

To further enhance operational capabilities, a new action plan improved international cooperation. The intelligence generated by investigations is to be analysed by Europol and disseminated via intelligence packages to the involved countries.

Furthermore, Europol coordinates collective action undertaken by participating countries and identifies international cross-links. Operation Icarus is one of the first joint operations within the CIRCAMP framework, coordinated by Europol.

Operation Icarus

Main crime area	Online child sex abuse file-sharing networks
Participating countries	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Croatia Cyprus Czech Republic Denmark Estonia Finland France Germany Ireland Italy Luxembourg Malta Netherlands Norway Poland Romania Slovakia Spain Sweden Switzerland

Europol's contribution

- Coordination of operation involving 23 countries
- Intelligence and additional information was disseminated by Europol through its secure information system to guarantee the integrity of data and to ensure a fast reaction in the concerned countries
- After the collection of intelligence by the Danish National Police, an operational meeting was organised at Europol, to disseminate intelligence packages to the involved countries
- Europol's cooperation network will also facilitate further investigations by involving partners such as Eurojust and Interpol when needed

Scope of the operation

Law enforcement agencies from 23 European countries, supported and coordinated by Europol, carried out a major crackdown against online child sex abuse file-sharing networks.

The operation targeted those sharing the most severe level of video material, which included babies and toddlers being sexually abused. Much of the material seized during house searches awaits forensic examination to assess how deeply involved the suspects were in actual child abuse.

Operation Icarus was initiated during a CIRCAMP meeting at the start of 2011. It was agreed that the National High Tech Crime Unit of the Danish Police (DK NITEC) should be the lead country and carry out the investigations because of its expertise in the peer-to-peer exchange of illegal material through file sharing systems.

As a result of international cooperation:

- So far²⁸ 'Operation Icarus' has helped to identify 273 suspects and arrest 113 suspects, spread across 23 countries
- Previously unknown networks of child sex offenders operating on different internet channels have been uncovered
- Investigations are ongoing and more arrests are expected. Special focus will be on identifying the producers of the material, the molesters and their victims.

Europol training on 'Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet'

The 12th Annual Europol training course on 'Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet', for law enforcement officers and the judiciary, was held in Selm, Germany. This hands-on training builds fundamental skills for investigating online child exploitation and aims to develop participants' knowledge and expertise on combating and dismantling child sex offender networks, as well as safeguarding the children involved.

Project HAVEN — Halting Europeans abusing Victims in Every Nation

Project HAVEN coordinates a common EU effort to address crimes of child sexual abuse being committed by Europeans outside their countries of origin or permanent residence. This includes coordinating international operations run by European law enforcement authorities and beyond. In 2011 a joint operation was organised at some of the main EU airports. The participating countries were Germany (Frankfurt Airport), Netherlands (Amsterdam Airport), and Sweden (Stockholm Airport). Further joint activities are planned for 2012.

In the long term, preventive measures such as permanent notifications or an alert system should be implemented in order to trace travelling sex offenders, limit their illegal activities and safeguard children.

²⁸ 15 December 2011.

3.4.3 Payment card fraud

Payment card fraud is a growing global problem, causing huge financial losses within the European Union (EU). At the same time, these losses constitute assets for organised crime groups and their illegal income is invested in developing other forms of criminal activity.

As a central point for exchanging intelligence on this type of fraud, Europol specialists support investigative activities to protect the EU market and its customers, not only in the EU but also worldwide.

In 2011, Europol supported multiple EU law enforcement investigations into disrupting international payment card fraudsters. Europol focused on the most dangerous organised crime groups producing and deploying illegal equipment to copy, counterfeit and misuse payment cards. Several 'factories' making skimming devices and global networks smuggling equipment, card data and money were disrupted as a result of effective cross-border cooperation.

Via its Payment Card Fraud News, Europol communicates information on new trends, criminal techniques and modus operandi to investigators in Member States and cooperating countries.

Cooperation between Europol and private industry has resulted in the establishment of a **Card Checker database** at Europol, containing global information on payment card issuers (e.g. AMEX, VISA, MasterCard and fuel payment cards). The database is used at Europol on a daily basis.

The mobile office and the mobile forensic toolkit (including the **Card Reader**, the **Universal Forensic Extraction Device** (UFED) and **Card Checker database**) bring additional value, on the spot, to support investigative measures:

- The Card Reader can obtain data from a magnetic strip and chip of a genuine or counterfeit payment card
- Member States send seized cards to Europol to extract data from them
- The Card Reader can also be employed directly at a police raid for the same purpose.
- Data can be retrieved from a mobile phone with the UFED.

The **CCTV catalogue** is a new product launched by Europol in 2011. It contains images of individuals linked with the manipulation of ATMs and the fraudulent misuse of payment cards. The catalogue is being distributed to law enforcement colleagues on a regular basis.

Also in 2011, Europol produced a **Threat Assessment on Payment Card Fraud in the EU**. The report presents the current situation and future trends in criminality for payment cards and card transactions.

This is the first time that such an assessment has been produced. To date, figures and specific modus operandi have not been published so law enforcement agencies and decision makers have not had the full picture. Recognising the growing card problem, the industry decided to combine efforts and provided very sensitive data to Europol for analysis, which led to the production of the Threat Assessment.

The Threat Assessment aims to provide recommendations on countermeasures and specific actions that should be taken on national and EU levels to reduce the level of fraud. The current situation and level of illicit income made by criminals, which exceeds EUR 1 500 000 000, requires urgent and collaborative action.

Skimming: The copying of a payment card's magnetic strip - without the knowledge or consent of the cardholder - usually happens when the card is used at a genuine ATM or Point of Sale terminal. A device ensures that the card's data can be written (cloned) to new cards which are used to make illicit cash withdrawals, often done outside the cardholder's country of residence.

Operation Night Clone

Main crime area Payment card fraud

Participating countries Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Poland and the USA

Europol's contribution

- Besides hosting meetings and running the operational centre, Europol provided key analytical, technical and logistical support
- On the day of action, the arrest of the suspected criminals and searches were conducted by Bulgarian authorities in coordination with Italian and Europol officers who were with a mobile office in Bulgaria.

Scope of the operation

Following an extensive investigation over many months a major police operation began to round up the members of one of the largest criminal gangs known to have been active in this field in the last five years.

The key figures behind this organised crime group, suspected of defrauding thousands of EU citizens and copying more than 15 000 payment cards in a sophisticated scam, were successfully apprehended. Simultaneous arrest operations were mounted in affected countries, involving over 200 police officers. Further arrests are expected.

The suspected leading figures of the group, based in Bulgaria, were among those caught. They are linked to criminal cells in Kenya, South Africa and the USA. The group's methods included recruiting and training petty criminals to make illegal cash withdrawals.

As a result of international cooperation:

- A major international network of payment card fraudsters was dismantled, suspected of clocking up over EUR 50 million in fraud on EU citizens by 'skimming' their cards and emptying their bank accounts
- Arrests were made in Bulgaria (48), Italy (9), Poland (1), Spain (2) and the USA (2).

Operation Iasi

Main crime area Card skimming

Participating countries Poland Romania Sweden

Europol's contribution

- Coordinating the operation and supporting Romanian investigators on the spot during the final raids in Romania
- Facilitating the exchange of information
- Providing technical expertise and operational analysis
- Organising two operational meetings in The Hague between Polish, Romanian and Swedish investigators and prosecutors.
- Coordinating investigative measures, as several members of the same organised crime group were also arrested in Poland.

Scope of the operation

An organised crime group was active all over the EU, skimming and counterfeiting payment cards and making illegal cash withdrawals. The criminal activities and illegal card transactions led to substantial financial losses for the card holders and issuers in the EU.

The successful operation was led by Romanian law enforcement authorities, and supported by Europol and Polish Police.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Five members of the international criminal structure were arrested in Romania.
- During 14 house searches in several Romanian cities, police seized large amounts of cash (EUR 50 000, USD 50 000 and GBP 15 000), as well as goods fraudulently purchased by the suspects.

When using a cash machine (ATM)

*...Europol recommends some simple steps
to avoid becoming a victim of skimming.*

Stand close to the cash machine.

Be alert and aware of others around you.

If someone is behaving suspiciously, crowding or watching you,
cancel the transaction and use a different machine.

Protect your PIN code. Always **shield the keypad**
with your hand and your body to avoid anyone seeing you enter your PIN.
Do not tell anyone your PIN, even if they say they are
a police officer or bank representative.

If you spot **anything unusual** about the cash machine itself,
do not use it and report it immediately to the bank or police.

3.5 Intellectual property crime

Intellectual property rights (IPR) infringement refers to the violation of two main categories of recognised and protected rights. The first one relates to **industrial property** covering fields such as distinctive signs (trademarks), patents, designs and models (counterfeiting). The second refers to **copyright** of literary and artistic works such as film, musical work and software programmes (piracy). **Counterfeiting** is the offence linked to industrial property violation, while **piracy** is the offence connected to a violation of copyright.

For some years counterfeiting has not been limited to luxury products - it is a global problem affecting all types of goods.

Counterfeiting and piracy can cause serious harm to the economy, consumers and society. It affects legitimate business by reducing sales and income, and consequently affects innovation, investment and the resources devoted to research and development. It encourages unfair competition as counterfeiters are unhampered by laws, regulations, rules, taxes and duties which legitimate companies have to obey. As a consequence, it affects employment and deprives national budgets of taxes and excise revenues.

Perhaps more seriously, counterfeiting can pose a significant health and safety risk to consumers, particularly considering that products such as electronic equipment, beverages, cigarettes, food stuffs, medicines, pesticides, clothing and toys have all been subject to counterfeiting.

Intelligence and evidence gathered by Europol suggests that organised crime groups are effectively involved in piracy and illicitly trading counterfeit goods. The huge amount of money generated by their illegal activities, added to the low level of penalties or effective prosecutions in this area, has provided criminal organisations with the opportunity to make substantial profits, which in turn supports other criminal activities. These include links with illegal immigration, money laundering, smuggling, drug trafficking and corruption.

Figures show that, in 2010, over 103 million counterfeit and pirated articles, involving almost 80 000 cases, were detained by customs at EU borders²⁹. These figures do not take into account 'intra-EU seizures' and investigations made by other law enforcement agencies such as police and customs services. Furthermore, they do not include the detection of counterfeit products manufactured within the EU. The European Observatory on Counterfeiting and Piracy has been created with the aim of improving the quality of information and statistics available on counterfeiting and piracy in the EU internal market.

There have been several seizures of counterfeit pesticides in various Member States and, in 2011, Europol organised an operational meeting with the concerned countries. Europol is planning a training and awareness session in 2012 for the Member States to share knowledge and coordinate joint action against the phenomenon.

Operation Opson

Main crime area Counterfeit food and drink

Participating countries Bulgaria Denmark France Hungary Italy Netherlands
Romania Spain Turkey United Kingdom

Europol's contribution

- Besides assisting with the planning of the operation over six months, Europol provided operational support, deploying teams in the port of Rotterdam to assist Dutch customs, and at Interpol in Lyon.

Scope of the operation

Hundreds of tonnes of fake and substandard food and drink including champagne, cheese, olive oil and tea were seized in this Interpol-Europol coordinated operation across 10 countries, thus disrupting the organised criminal gangs behind this activity.

The week-long operation involved police, customs and national food regulatory bodies in addition to partners from the private sector and saw checks carried out in airports, seaports, shops and flea markets across the 10 participating countries.

²⁹ European Commission – Taxation and customs union. Report on EU customs enforcement of intellectual property rights. Results at the EU border – 2010.

Operation Opson (meaning food in ancient Greek) had three key aims:

- Raise awareness of the dangers posed by counterfeit and substandard foods
- Establish partnerships with the private sector to provide a cohesive response to this type of crime
- Protect consumers by seizing and destroying substandard foods and identifying the criminals behind these networks.

Investigations are continuing and the final results from Operation Opson will be released upon their conclusion. The Democratic Republic of Congo participated as an observer, with a view to conducting a pilot operation in Africa next year.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Law enforcement authorities recovered
 - more than 13 000 bottles of substandard olive oil
 - 30 tonnes of fake tomato sauce
 - around 77 tonnes of counterfeit cheese
 - more than 12 000 bottles of substandard wine worth EUR 300 000
 - 5 tonnes of substandard fish and seafood
 - nearly 30 000 counterfeit candy bars.
- The sale of fake or substandard caviar via the Internet is also under investigation.

International Intellectual Property Law Enforcement Conference, Madrid

In September, Europol co-hosted this three-day event, together with Interpol and the Spanish Cuerpo Nacional de Policía. The conference brought together over 450 specialist IP crime investigators, prosecutors and experts from 52 countries representing both the public and private sectors.

Operational workshops and round table sessions enabled participants to share best practices and discuss operational methodologies. Europol presented its operational capabilities.

This conference provided the perfect opportunity to highlight all the dangers posed by counterfeit and pirated goods as well as to promote Europol's analytical and operational support to investigators.

Operation Leatherface

Main crime area Counterfeit & substandard power tools

Participating countries Spain

Europol's contribution

- Europol notified Spanish law enforcement authorities of intelligence suggesting criminal activity in their jurisdiction

Scope of the operation

Intelligence identified organised criminals in Spain who were active in money laundering, tax evasion and crimes against industrial property.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Spanish Guardia Civil arrested 64 persons. 62 of those arrested were Italians linked to the Camorra
- Premises were searched in Malaga, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Sevilla, and large quantities of substandard and 'fake' branded merchandise was seized including generators, chain saws and other power tools.

Card sharing

In 2011 Europol organised a training session and operational meeting on 'cardsharing', the phenomenon of manufacturing and distributing pirated Pay TV smart cards. This activity generates little interest or awareness despite huge profits for criminal networks and Europol's intelligence reveals that most of it is controlled by EU nationals.

3.6 Cigarette smuggling

Europol supports law enforcement agencies in preventing and combating the activities of organised crime groups (OCGs) illegally manufacturing and trafficking cigarettes and tobacco products.

Tobacco smuggling is not a victimless crime. The lost government revenue is vital money that could have been spent on essential public services, such as schools, hospitals, roads and law enforcement.

- It is estimated that the illicit tobacco trade costs the EU about EUR 10 billion annually in lost revenue
- A 40 foot (12m) container can hold up to 10 million cigarettes. If this amount is smuggled, for example, into Ireland then the revenue loss is about EUR 3 million. If smuggled into the UK, it's about GBP 1.25 million in lost revenue
- According to British American Tobacco (BAT), smugglers sell 52 billion cigarettes a year in the EU, which is equivalent to 6000 x 40 foot containers. The average EU selling price of the illicit product is EUR 2.50 per packet.

To increase profits, illegal tobacco is produced with cheap materials, and with little regard for health and quality controls. These cigarettes are sold to smokers instead of genuine products, which meet certain standards. Counterfeits generally contain much higher levels of tar and nicotine than genuine brands, and produce more harmful carbon monoxide. They could incorporate a seriously unhealthy mix of cancer-causing chemicals including arsenic, cadmium, benzene and formaldehyde – far greater than genuine cigarettes. Seized counterfeit cigarettes have even been found to contain mites, insect eggs, fungi and faeces.

Counterfeit and smuggled tobacco products are sold on open markets and customers are often unaware that they are buying illegal products. The money they pay goes directly to criminal groups, funding other areas of serious organised crime and terrorism.

- The United Nations Security Council investigative body - the Group of Experts - have reported how millions of dollars in illicit tobacco revenues are reaching Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist organisations. Their report went on to state that these funds are also financing Congolese rebels, who recruit child soldiers and conduct mass rapes and murders.

- In January 2011, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police estimated that of the 105 OCGs they were investigating for tobacco smuggling, 69% were also involved in drug and weapons trafficking.
- Many countries consider themselves merely transit countries in the illicit tobacco trade. However they are also suffering from this type of crime because OCGs need warehouses, transport, and financial support, moving the illegal goods from source to market and to launder the proceeds. Along these routes, black markets operate in logistics support to facilitate the trade, law enforcement can be corrupted and legitimate businesses suffer.

Operation Tsar

Main crime area International cigarette smuggling networks

Participating countries Czech Republic France Germany Hungary Italy Slovakia

Europol's contribution

- The operation was supported and coordinated by Europol and Eurojust, which included a carefully planned day of action with more than 150 law enforcement officers deployed
- A coordination centre was swiftly set up by Eurojust with a mobile office operated by a Europol analyst, providing vital analytical support from an early stage
- The coordinated multi-agency approach at EU level allowed real-time exchange of information and evidence, cooperation between customs, police and judicial authorities in the countries involved, and immediate cross-match analysis of the data collected

Scope of the operation

Europol and Eurojust supported several Member States to break up a large network of counterfeit cigarette smugglers operating from Ukraine to the United Kingdom.

In a case initiated by France, the investigation revealed the existence of a structured criminal organisation established in a region of Ukraine that borders several EU Member States. This network operated through front companies in several of the countries involved, using compliant carriers.

As a result of international cooperation:

- 5 European Arrest Warrants were issued, with 5 arrested. The suspects are awaiting trial
- 13 simultaneous house and company searches, resulting in the seizure of a large body of documentary evidence, computers, cell phones and various IT devices

3.7 Euro counterfeiting

Europol has the mandate to prevent and combat the forgery of money, in particular the euro, and has been designated as the European Union's Central Office for combating euro counterfeiting. This legal status qualifies Europol to act as a worldwide contact point for combating counterfeiting of the euro.

Europol cooperates closely with European Union Member States, the European Central Bank, European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), Interpol and other partners.

To fulfil this Central Office function, Europol offers a wide range of products and services to its partners:

- Europol actively supports law enforcement authorities by gathering, analysing, disseminating and facilitating the exchange of criminal intelligence, as well as providing other expertise and knowledge to assist investigations
- Europol is involved in all major euro counterfeiting investigations in the EU, including Joint Investigation Teams
- Financial support and on-the-spot assistance is also given when requested
- Europol provides forensic support to law enforcement agencies to determine the origin of materials and devices used for the manufacturing of counterfeits
- We also provide technical support and training on tactical and technical issues related to protecting the euro from counterfeiting.

Operation Gazeta

Main crime area Mass production of counterfeit euros

Participating countries Poland

Europol's contribution

- Assisted the operation by facilitating international cooperation
- Established the distribution network for the counterfeits outside of Poland
- Before the raid provided technical advice on counterfeit printing techniques and equipment which could be used by counterfeiters
- Europol took part in the examination of the illegal print shop and provided technical support on the spot

Scope of the operation

One of the biggest counterfeit euro print shops in Europe was dismantled in a Polish Police operation supported by Europol.

Polish Police were first investigating fraudulent activities connected with the use of counterfeit documents, when they discovered a place making fake identification cards. It turned out that counterfeit money was being produced in the same place.

When law enforcement raided premises near Warsaw, they discovered a complete printing plant, producing fake banknotes as well as forged documents.

The success of this operation has prevented the potential production and distribution of huge amounts of high quality euro counterfeits, capable of defeating commercial authentication sensors.

As a result of international cooperation:

- A record number of counterfeit banknotes in 50 and 500 euro denominations were seized, with a total nominal value of over one million euros
- A man was arrested for the production of counterfeit banknotes and fake documents
- 7500 A4 uncut sheets of 50 euro banknotes were confiscated with security features such as holograms
- A wide range of polygraphic equipment and material for further counterfeit production was seized, including an offset machine
- Police took away large quantities of counterfeit documents and related production materials including identity cards, passports, vehicle registration documents from different European countries, legal deeds and stamps of different state offices.

Operation Chipmunk

Main crime area Production of forged euro notes and coins

Participating countries Belgium France

Europol's contribution

- Experts were present at the operational coordination centre to provide technical expertise and operational analysis support
- Europol's technical examination of the seized banknotes identified them as being linked to an investigation conducted by Italian law enforcement and other international partners

Scope of the operation

In an investigation initiated by Belgian authorities³⁰ and supported by Europol, two illegal euro mint-shops were dismantled and an organised criminal group active in the distribution of forged euro banknotes and coins was disrupted.

The suspects of Italian and Belgian origin, were arrested after they had established two industrial-size illegal mint-shops in Belgium, in which they produced counterfeit euro coins. French Police were also involved in this operation, following the earlier arrest of a suspect in France through whom links to the Belgian investigation were established.

³⁰ Belgian Federal Police of the Mons Criminal Investigation Department (CID), supported by the local Police in La Louviere, the Belgian Royal Monnaie and the Belgian National Central Office (OCRFM).

As a result of international cooperation:

- The investigation revealed the delivery of counterfeit euro banknotes with a total face value of about EUR 60 000
- In addition to the illegal mints and finished coins, devices and material used to produce counterfeit one euro and 50 cent coins, such as dies and blanks, were also seized.
- Several firearms were also discovered during the operation.

Joint Investigation Team (JIT) Limón

Main crime area Euro counterfeiting & card skimming

Participating countries Participating countries Bulgaria and Spain supported by the United States

Europol's contribution

- During the investigation phase, Europol prepared several intelligence reports and facilitated the exchange of intelligence, which also resulted in the discovery of new criminal links
- Europol experts provided technical support by examining the premises of a print shop located in the centre of Sofia using special equipment to find traces with euro images
- Europol also provided financial support to the investigation.

Scope of the operation

A Joint Investigation Team was established between Bulgaria, Spain, Eurojust and Europol to tackle euro counterfeiting. The US Secret Service also supported the JIT.

As a result of this successful JIT, three counterfeit euro print shops have been dismantled and the organised criminal groups involved in the production and distribution of counterfeit money have been put out of business.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Six arrests and an illegal print shop producing 100, 200 and 500 euro banknotes was dismantled in Plovdiv, Bulgaria
- Counterfeit banknotes with a face value of more than half a million euros, an offset machine, a hot foil stamping machine, dies, inks, computers and films seized
- Later, another two print shops in Sofia and its suburbs were dismantled. These were producing counterfeit euros and US dollars
- Other counterfeit products such as passports, tax labels and plastic cards - some with credit card logos - were also seized.

3.8 VAT fraud

The European Commission estimates that VAT fraud costs Member States around EUR 60 billion annually. Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) Fraud is a form of organised, sophisticated tax fraud carried out by criminals attacking the Value Added Tax (VAT) regimes of EU Member States. The basic model of transnational intra-community VAT fraud involves at least two Member States.

MTIC fraud is carried out by organised criminals who put in place a structure of linked companies and individuals to exploit the differences in national VAT systems while disguising the real links between participants. Those involved in VAT fraud schemes who are initially responsible for the tax damage - the so-called missing traders - only operate for a short time, sometimes only weeks, before disappearing. The schemes may be based on real, or now increasingly virtual, 'carousel fraud' transactions, where the same 'goods' are sold and resold several times.

However, tangible goods-based MTIC fraud – often involving such commodities as mobile phones, computer chips or precious metals - is no longer the sole concern. A clear mutation into service-based fraud has been experienced, as fraudsters have shown interest in intangible items and extended their criminal activities into the environmental and energy markets.

A priority for Europol during 2011 has been to coordinate and disseminate intelligence to support Member States' criminal investigations into VAT fraud in the trading of carbon emission allowances, or European Unit Allowances (EUAs).

Europol estimates that the loss to carbon credit fraud between June 2008 and December 2009 was approximately EUR 5 billion. Since then major law enforcement operations were undertaken by Germany (April 2010) and Italy (December 2010), involving the arrests of several individuals and numerous premises searched. A target group was set up at Europol to coordinate around 30 criminal investigations in EU Member States. The first trial of suspects accused of carbon credit fraud was held in France in January 2012, and will soon be followed by similar trials in Germany and the United Kingdom.

The Europol analysis project on MTIC fraud is the only EU-level database for storing related criminal information and this has become the principal source of reference for law enforcement operations. The knowledge and data stored within Europol enables the development of a solid picture of this area of crime and identifies the most prominent criminal targets. Europol has become a centre of excellence for fighting cross-border MTIC fraud and related offences.

During 2011 Europol supported Member States' investigations into:

- Criminal activity in the EU's Emissions Trading System (carbon credit fraud).
- Thefts of tradable EUAs (EU Emission Allowances).
- Several successful phishing attacks from accounts held within National Registries.

This has included the following key activities:

- Deployment of the mobile office to support the gathering and analysis of intelligence in Dubai.
- Joint Europol-Eurojust VAT Fraud Strategic meeting, attended by around 80 experts from law enforcement, the judiciary and policy makers from across the EU.
- Strategic, operational and intelligence coordination meetings with relevant partners including Eurojust, the UK's HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Dubai Police Authority.
- 8 arrests and 20 premises searches in the UK in connection with Operation Vista, coordinated with 33 premises searches in Germany and some in the Czech Republic, with a request for full support to analyse seized material.

Payment platforms and facilities to support criminal financial flows have also been identified and analysed, which will result in a 2012 conference at Europol on this issue to discuss findings and coordinate the EU law enforcement response.

Europol supports the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) managed by the European Commission. Seminars facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices between law enforcement officers and prosecutors from EU and neighbouring countries. Cooperation with non-EU countries is essential in fighting VAT fraud as the criminal profits are often laundered outside the European Union.

Operation Jacquo New

Main crime area VAT fraud

Participating countries Belgium France Spain United Kingdom

Europol's contribution

- Several Member States requested Europol's operational and analytical support for ongoing criminal investigations related to VAT fraud in the platinum trade
- Europol's analytical findings showed clear links between the countries above
- Europol participated in the Joint Investigation Team
- France requested the deployment of the Europol mobile office to check and analyse the data obtained "in situ" during the development of the operation
- Europol carried numerous analytical checks on documents seized during the searches. Hits with existing related investigations, as well as two new links to one of the main suspects of carbon credit fraud, were established. Further analysis is continuing.

Scope of the operation

A meeting held at Eurojust led to the creation of a JIT between Belgium and France with the participation of Europol.

French and Belgian investigators identified key players suspected to be involved in VAT fraud and targeted a Belgian company trading in precious metals, with clients located in the United Kingdom, France and Spain.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Coordinated searches were carried out by French and Belgian law enforcement officers, linking seven people directly to the main suspects in the French investigation.

3.9 Money laundering and asset tracing

Indications are that 70% of all crimes are acquisitive³¹, leading to immense criminal revenue. Thus, the majority of cases investigated by law enforcement have one common denominator - a financial motive for committing the crime. Following the money trail provides leads to the perpetrators, it may disrupt their associates and enables potential confiscation of the proceeds of crime. This approach attacks the economic base of criminal enterprise and prevents illegal proceeds being reinvested in further criminal activities.

Europol supports Member States in preventing and combating criminal money-laundering activities through a dedicated operational analysis project, which is currently supported by 25 EU Member States plus Eurojust and Iceland. The project assists Member States through the analysis of operational data pertaining to Suspicious Transactions Reports filtered by competent law enforcement authorities, Currency Transactions Reports and ongoing money laundering investigations.

The work exploits the intrinsic value of financial intelligence, like suspicious transaction reports, integrating such information with intelligence coming in from ongoing money laundering cases and cross-border cash detections. In addition, Europol provides horizontal support to other ongoing Europol projects by assisting specialists to analyse financial flows.

Activities in 2011

Unusual cross-border movements of bulk cash (USD)

Europol received intelligence contributions about unusual movements of large sums of US dollars occurring across the Ukraine-Romania-Bulgaria-Turkey route. About 200 million US dollars in cash had been declared over a two-year period (March 2008 - June 2010). Bulgarian authorities proposed a strategic meeting be held along with Romanian, Turkish and Ukrainian authorities. This was done in 2011 - channels of communication were clarified and Ukraine agreed to consider launching an investigation.

Operation Spectre II: multinational cash courier operation

In November 2011 Europol deployed its mobile office to support a multi-agency cash seizure and detection operation at UK ports and borders. Europol dealt with 271 requests during the operation resulting in 19 seizures and 4 true matches. GBP 418 136 in cash was seized over the course of the operation, and a further GBP 1 412 722 in cash was detected alongside silver, jewellery and khat³².

³¹ UK Cabinet Office, 2000.

³² Khat is a plant whose leaves are chewed for an amphetamine-like stimulant effect, derived from its active ingredients of cathine and cathinone. It is a banned substance in most EU countries.

International organised crime group laundering money from cocaine trafficking

Supporting JIT Playa, Europol provided horizontal support through the provision of dedicated financial analysis and several operational analysis reports. The JIT resulted in the arrest of 10 suspects from a major international drug trafficking organisation, following a lengthy international investigation. Their profits had been invested in acquiring personal property - luxury cars, real estate, discotheques and leisure boats - in Spain and other countries. To hide their identities, the criminal gang had established several companies. Europol also provided expertise and investigative support to facilitate the recovery of the criminal assets.

Major 'Ponzi'-type collective investment fraud

Europol supported a major, multi-jurisdictional investigation looking into allegations that the main suspects had defrauded investors, both private and corporate. The investors had given large sums of money on the understanding that it would be invested, with a guaranteed, substantial return. Instead, the main suspects used a network of bank accounts to siphon-off the investors' money to their private accounts.

Money laundering activities conducted at an international level confirm the wide use of traditional methods such as cash movements by money couriers along with sophisticated techniques aimed at setting up off-shore financial investments, transacted under an anonymous corporate veil. Current money laundering cases have also registered the involvement of professionals, mainly from outside the traditional financial sectors, who have been used to integrate illegal proceeds into commercial activities. Real estate investments, commercial activities and luxury goods still remain some of the most apparent investments for organised crime groups.

The Europol Criminal Assets Bureau (ECAB) assists Member States' financial investigators to trace worldwide the proceeds of crime, when assets have been concealed outside their jurisdictional boundaries. The ECAB exists primarily to trace the criminal proceeds in investigations supported by Europol.

In addition other important aspects of ECAB'S work include the establishment of Asset Recovery Offices in the Member States, enhancing their cooperation at European level and hosting the Secretariat of the CARIN network.

Camden Assets Recovery Inter-Agency Network (CARIN)

Europol hosts the permanent secretariat for CARIN, which is an informal network of judicial and law enforcement asset recovery experts. CARIN currently has 49 registered member jurisdictions, including all 27 EU Member States and nine international organisations.

One law enforcement and one judicial contact are nominated from each jurisdiction, to assist cross-border cooperation in tracing, freezing, seizing and confiscating criminal assets. These contacts assist with general questions about asset recovery in their own jurisdictions, and also provide operational support via available legal channels.

3.10 Mobile organised crime groups

Mobile organised crime groups (MOCGs) operate with a high degree of flexibility and mobility in multiple jurisdictions and criminal sectors. Primarily involved in property crime or fraud, these criminals focus on activities such as:

- (Armed) robberies.
- House, business and distraction burglaries.
- Organised shoplifting and pick-pocketing.
- Cargo and metal theft.
- Cash-in-transit (CIT) and cash machine (ATM) physical attacks.
- Theft of heavy machinery from construction sites.
- Theft of luxury cars and trucks.

MOCGs entered the scene when, at the end of the 1990s/early 2000s, it was found that Eastern and Central European gangs were increasingly responsible for systematic burglaries of houses and shops, ram raids and certain forms of car theft. Based on their *modi operandi* it was already clear back then that the gangs were well-organised, operated systematically and that they were mainly interested in cash and goods that they could sell on the stolen goods and second-hand markets³³.

These criminal organisations provide victims of THB³⁴ and other stolen or illicit goods, including drugs, for the EU markets, after which they repatriate the profits to their places of origin, inside or outside the EU. In some cases they also take care of the final distribution of the commodities. Most mobile organised crime groups have their leaders, and at least a substantial part of their assets, inside the EU.

³³ Tackling of Itinerant Criminal Groups: new challenges, published by Belgian law enforcement authorities in 2010.

³⁴ Trafficking in human beings.

Amongst the most dominant MOCG are the Lithuanian-, Georgian- and Russian-speaking mobile organised crime groups.

Lithuanian organised crime groups are active in many Member States, including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK. These groups have been already identified by the OCTA 2011 as a priority for Europol to tackle Europe-wide. The North East criminal hub³⁵ remains a focus for transiting illicit commodities to and from the former Soviet Union and a base for violent poly-criminal groups with international reach. Lithuanian groups are engaged in a wide range of property crime as well as vehicle theft (including a new trend - the theft of trucks), robberies, burglaries, pick pocketing and fraud. They are also engaged in drugs trafficking from Latin America via West Africa and the South West and North West hubs. Lithuanian OCGs cooperate with Albanian-speaking criminal groups to traffick heroin from Central Asia to Western Europe.

Lithuanian groups also play an important role in trafficking synthetic drugs to the Russian Federation, Scandinavia and the Baltic States. They have recently become an essential link in the supply chain to the North West hub, sourcing benzyl methyl ketone (BMK) from the Russian Federation for amphetamine production. As in the case of Albanian-speaking organised crime, the comparative wealth of Lithuanian criminal groups increases their recruitment, retention, infiltration and investment capacities.

Georgian- and Russian-speaking OCGs are highly organised and run by subgroups of hierarchical structures. Georgian organised crime groups operate in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain and also in the Russian Federation and the United States. In at least one case, the Russian language has facilitated the activity of a group whose members hail from several different states of the former Soviet Union.

Russian/Georgian criminal groups are, among others, involved in property crime, illegal immigration, identity document counterfeiting, money laundering, extortion and drugs trafficking. Georgian groups are also involved in importing cocaine from South America to the Russian Federation and the Caucasus.

³⁵ See Annex 1 for further details.

Intelligence indicates that mobile groups of CIS³⁶, Chechen and Georgian origin are controlled by a *vor v zakone* or Thief in law³⁷. Mobile group members have to contribute to the common fund (obshak) by paying protection money and handing over part of the criminal proceeds to the concerned *vor v zakone* - these vory can be seen as the regulators of the Russian-speaking organised crime scene.

Top *vor v zakone* are so wealthy that they can play a significant role in strategic economical sectors. For example, current investigations show links to major Eurasian energy companies. These links are exploited for a mixture of legal and illegal activities, but also for creating a smokescreen of credibility and trustworthiness for the persons and activities involved. Their possible access to legal economic EU circles should be monitored and fought.

In this framework, Europol has supported EU and non-EU Member States with:

- Strategic and operational analytical and technical support given to several investigations carried out by EU Member States;
- Coordination and operational meetings;
- Engagement in the Operational Action Plan (OAP) on Mobile Organised Crime (MOCG) to reduce the general capabilities of these groups to engage in criminal activities (COSI/EMPACT).

Operation Vigilant

Main crime area Motor vehicle crime

Participating countries Belgium, France and the Netherlands

³⁶ Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

³⁷ *Vor v zakone* or Thief in law (a more clear translation may be a 'Thief who operates *within* the law' or 'A criminal who obeys The Thieves' Code) is a criminal who is respected, has authority and a high ranking status within the criminal underworld. Thieves in law, or *vory*, are the elite of the Russian world of organised crime - they do not belong to any individual group but are the regulators between the different organisations (e.g. Solntsevskaya, Ismailovskaya, Tambovskaya). Each organisation has a representative under the vory who deals with them and the decisions of vory are binding to all organised crime groups.

Europol's contribution

- Europol deployed its mobile office and provided expertise on the spot to the Dutch law enforcement agencies³⁸ involved in the action
- In addition Europol provided possibilities to perform direct checks of the gathered information with the Europol Liaison Officers.

Scope of the operation

Europol provided operational support to a Rotterdam Police action day in the Netherlands. Stationary Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras scanned 351 vehicles – more than 100 vehicles were pulled over by police for further inspection.

As a result of international cooperation:

- 5 arrests
- 41 fines given – EUR 33 000 collected
- 23 vehicles seized
- 24 suspicious documents inspected.

Operation Oakleaf

Main crime area Property crime and fraud .

Participating countries Initially, 12 countries: Belgium Czech Republic Denmark Finland France Germany Ireland Italy Netherlands Norway Sweden United Kingdom.

These countries joined later: Austria Portugal Spain Switzerland USA. Interpol is also supporting the case.

Europol's contribution

- Europol hosted a cooperation meeting in The Hague for participating countries to plan the coordinated approach necessary for tackling this type of mobile organised crime group.
- Several cases were supported with ad hoc, timely analysis which assisted investigators during live surveillance operations. The quick feedback also helped prosecutors to keep suspects in custody. In December 2011, an analyst was present in Paris, supporting the French authorities to input data into the Schengen Information System

³⁸ Community Charge Service Rotterdam, Dutch Customs, National Road and Traffic Inspection (RDW) and various teams from the Rotterdam-Rijnmond police.

- Since the end of 2010, Europol has been the principle repository for intelligence and analysis on the group. The analysis has so far helped identify six primary targets and their associates.
- Several intelligence gaps have been identified, over 900 SIENA messages processed, over 11 000 entities have been created so far and there is a constant flow of contributions for processing and follow up
- The operation is also supported by Europol's SCAN team and an ad hoc threat notice was sent to law enforcement authorities in July 2011. This described the criminals' modus operandi, providing the general public and law enforcement with indicators for their travel-related crimes, and warning potential targets with rhino horn on display or in storage
- The need for the support of the Europol Criminal Assets Bureau (ECAB) has been identified, to target the finances of these criminals.

Scope of the operation

Operation Oakleaf started in November 2010, on the initiative of Ireland, to target the activities of a mobile organised crime group of Irish origin. This group has mainly been involved in tarmac fraud, the distribution of counterfeit products (e.g. power tools and generators), organised robbery, money laundering and drugs trafficking in many EU countries. Recently, these criminals have also started to specialise in the theft and illegal trade of rhino horn, hence the activities of its members now being reported in North and South America, South Africa, China and Australia.

As part of their criminal enterprise this highly organised group are establishing companies all over Europe in an attempt to legitimise and cover their illegal activities. The OCG members have laundered their illegal and undeclared income into properties, new luxury cars and other assets in Ireland. So far EUR 9 million worth of tax demands has been served on nine members of the OCG, with more in the pipeline.

After EU and non-EU law enforcement authorities agreed that a coordinated approach was vital to tackle this group, a meeting was organised at Europol in 2011. The meeting highlighted how dozens of 'minor' cases that have occurred all over the EU are ascribable to the this group and a common way forward is being followed to disrupt their activities.

As a result of international cooperation:

- Dozens of arrests took place all over the EU, also thanks to the awareness arisen by the analytical reports issued by Europol.

Operation Baia Mare

Main crime area Motor vehicle crime

Participating countries Austria France Germany Hungary Romania

Europol's contribution

- Operational meeting with Eurojust and the concerned Member States was organised at Europol
- Several contributions of intelligence were submitted to Europol and the related analysis resulted in the identification of the main suspects and modus operandi.

Scope of the operation

Supported and coordinated by Eurojust, police, gendarmerie officers and prosecutors in five countries ran an operation against several sophisticated criminal networks involved in cargo theft on EU motorways. In particular, the operation aimed to disrupt organised crime groups that attacked trucks in parking lots while the drivers slept.

France initiated the case and estimated that more than 70 thefts had taken place on French soil, from 2010 until March 2011, causing a loss of approximately EUR 3 million. Having begun at a local level, very soon the case expanded to national³⁹ and then European level.

The investigators uncovered the modus operandi of the criminal network. Several teams were operating in France, stealing high-value goods. Austria was occasionally a transit country. Germany was used for logistics and a meeting place to exchange trucks. The principal organiser, and also the storage place for the stolen goods, were identified in Hungary. Romania was the country of origin for most of the members of this criminal organisation.

As a result of international cooperation:

- In total, 22 suspected criminals were arrested
- 13 European Arrest Warrants were issued
- Approximately 20 house searches were conducted in the participating countries, resulting in the recovery of a large quantity of evidence and stolen goods.

³⁹ At a French national level, this case is being investigated by the French National Gendarmerie (SR Limoges and OCLDI) under the lead of the JIRS of Bordeaux.

Operation Caucase

Main crime area Robberies

Participants France

Europol's contribution

- Analysis and support with Mobile Office in the spot during the action days
- Multiple links to other groups active in France, and to groups and *vor v zakone*³⁷ active in other EU Member States, were detected.

Scope of the operation

In 2011, a large-scale organised crime network made up of Georgian and Armenian nationals was dismantled near Toulouse in the South of France⁴⁰.

The network members are suspected of committing over 1000 offences in the Toulouse region - mainly residential and commercial burglaries and thefts. Property stolen, such as computers, electronics and luxury clothing, was being shipped abroad in containers and trucks, while the stolen jewellery was - on a regular basis and by the kilogram - sent for sale in Antwerp, Belgium. The criminal group was hierarchically structured on several levels (burglars, drivers and team leaders) under the coordination of at least one thief in law.³⁷

As a result of international cooperation:

- 23 suspects have been arrested so far
- Kilograms of gold and jewellery have been recovered
- The latest container of stolen goods was stopped before leaving port
- Two individuals of Georgian origin, bearing tattoos specific to thieves in law, were found in the searched residences.

⁴⁰ Dismantled by the French Central Office for Combating Itinerant Delinquency of the National Gendarmerie (OCLDI) and the Gendarmerie of Midi-Pyrénées, with the support of the Intervention Groups of the National Gendarmerie (GIGN).

JIT Balcar

Main crime area Vehicle crime

Participating countries Estonia Latvia Lithuania

Europol's contribution

- This Joint Investigation Team is being supported by Europol and Eurojust
- Europol has already organised and funded several operational meetings
- Europol has also deployed its mobile office and is producing periodical analytical products.

Scope of the operation

This investigation concerns Lithuanian OCGs suspected of being involved in the theft of luxury vehicles in Germany and the Baltic States. In 2009 there was a wave of thefts of new vehicles in Estonia. The investigation showed links leading to Latvia and Lithuania. Later that year, the first 'brigade' was arrested in Estonia. Europol joined the JIT in 2010 and soon another 'brigade' was arrested in Estonia. The JIT duration has been extended and the investigation continues to target one of the most active organised crime groups in Lithuania.

As a result of the international cooperation

- So far three organised crime groups have been dismantled
- From those, one Lithuanian OCG and one Latvian OCG have already been sentenced
- One Lithuanian OCG was partially arrested, additional evidence is being gathered and new arrests will follow in due course.

3.11 Outlaw motorcycle gangs

Most members of motorcycle clubs around the world are part of normal society; however, a small percentage do not abide by the law and do not accept the rules of society. They call themselves 'outlaws' or 'one-percenters'. Often organised into outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs), they wear a specific patch on their jackets showing a 1% sign inside a diamond shape.

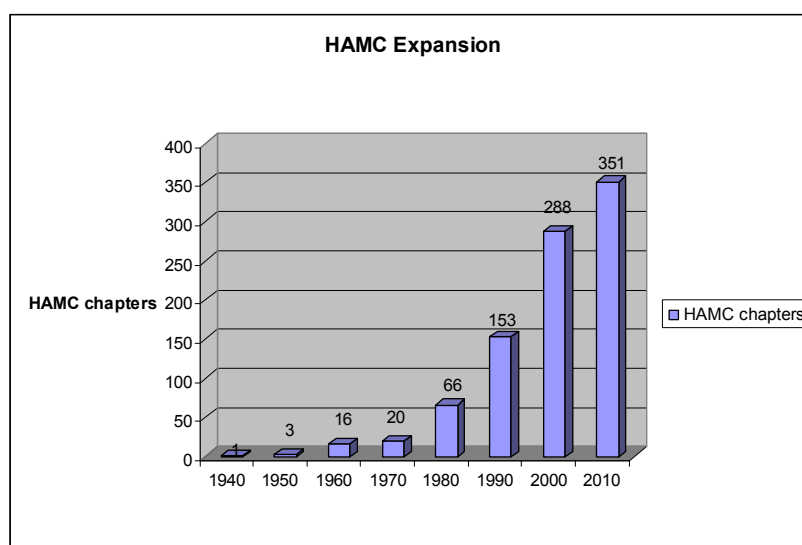
To counter this threat, Europol's specialist project 'Monitor' helps prevent and combat the criminal activities of OMCGs such as the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC), Bandidos, Outlaws and their support motorcycle clubs. The project follows a multi-disciplinary and horizontal approach, focusing on the organised crime groups rather than just on the crime phenomena inherent to OMCGs, by:

- Identifying the structures and the members of these OMCGs
- Revealing the meaning of new phenomena within this subculture and detecting new trends through strategic analysis
- Initiating, promoting and coordinating new operational activities with operational analysis
- Supporting partners in policing major biker events, such as the 2011 HAMC World Run in Laconia, USA, and other operational activities through the use of Europol's mobile office
- Organising OMCG training courses throughout Europe
- High-level support to law enforcement management, judicial and government authorities
- Supporting the Europol Platform for Gangs Experts which is a unique environment for sharing strategic information, best practices, expertise and knowledge amongst law enforcement officers who are active in combating outlaw motorcycle gangs, street and other similar gangs.

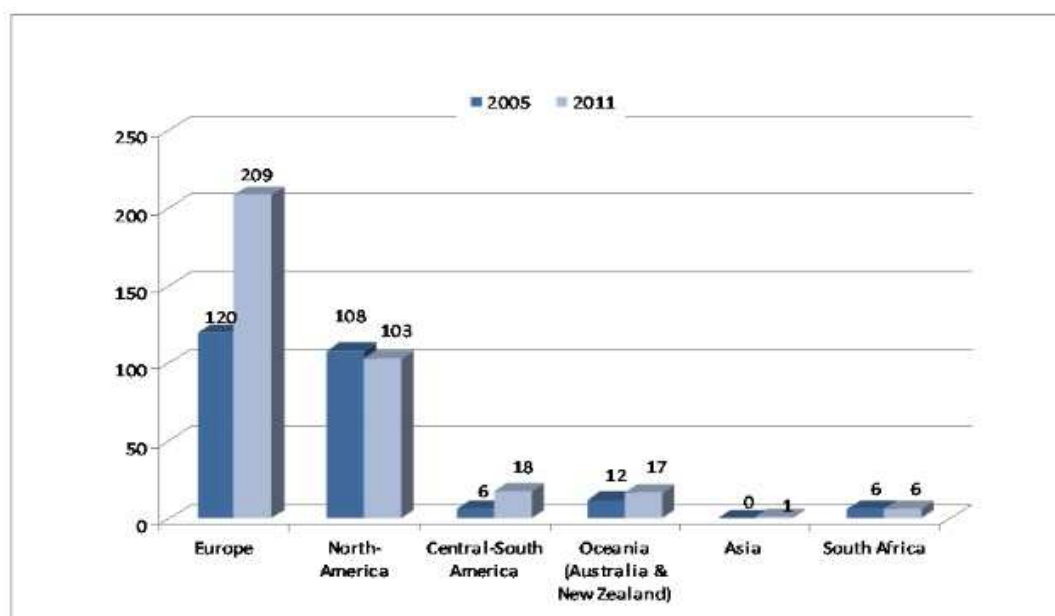
The extremely violent brawls between rival clubs and second generation street gangs have shown to be a security risk to the general public and thus important for law enforcement authorities to monitor. Outlaw motorcycle gangs are considered a national threat and a national policing priority in the majority of the 15 countries that participate in this project. To assist our partners more effectively, strategic and operational priorities have been identified including investigating the expansion of OMCGs into new areas of Europe and their recruitment from the right-wing hooligan scene.

Growth of Hells Angels (HAMC)

HAMC expansion worldwide (1940-2011)



HAMC expansion by region (2005-2011)



3.12 Terrorism

More than 10 years after the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York, terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to the European Union. Extremist and terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and others, are active in the EU and impact the lives of its citizens. The fight against extremism and terrorism therefore remains a priority for the EU and Europol.

Europol assists Member States to conduct successful investigations in this area by providing the following products and services:

- Analysis and analytical products such as reports, threat assessments and missing links for ongoing international investigations.
- Information exchange and access to Europol's databases, exchange systems and other expert platforms.
- Expertise through Europol's mobile office which enables on-the-spot assistance.
- Producing the annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), which presents basic facts and figures regarding terrorist attacks and arrests in the EU, including new trends.

3.12.1 Modus Operandi Monitor

The Modus Operandi Monitor provides an overarching activity model that continuously assesses terrorist events and investigations, by focusing on specific elements of the terrorists' modus operandi. Additional value is given by the fact that the outcome is linked to other Europol intelligence products and aims to provide real-time expertise and intelligence to the relevant Member States' agencies.

3.12.2 First Response Network

The First Response Network provides support to any Member State faced with a major terrorist event by connecting its national experts with an international platform of counter terrorism experts and intelligence analysts including Europol. Through this platform Europol delivers its unique capabilities to European law enforcement partners including:

- an international database of terrorist suspects and extremists
- the ability to track terrorist financing
- an operational platform to coordinate major international lines of enquiry.

In such cases, this team will use Europol's operational centre to ensure efficient information exchange with all involved parties. In addition to offering support in a crisis situation, the First Response Network also aims to provide high-level terrorism experts with strategic advice, tailored to the evolving modus operandi of an attack. A recent example being in the immediate aftermath of the horrific car bomb and shootings in Norway when, in July 2011, Europol hosted the EU First Response Network⁴¹, supporting the investigation.

Following First Response Team workshops at Europol, a report was submitted to the JHA Council of Ministers detailing three main recommendations for future activities. These recommendations were endorsed by a high-level expert meeting in October 2011 and will be instrumental in creating a virtual Task Force on Violent Extremism:

- A virtual Task Force on Violent Extremism should be created, comprising relevant experts from EU Member States, tasked with researching and reporting on the implementation of an EU-wide strategy based upon a successful project already underway in the United Kingdom (Project Guillemot).
- The Europol Check the Web concept should be replicated to provide an EU portal for the exchange of best practice, analysis and assessments in relation to the use of the Internet by individuals and groups associated with extreme right wing (XRW) activity.
- Europol should prepare a full EU-wide assessment on the threat posed by individuals and/or groups associated with violent extremism and/or extreme right wing activity.

3.12.3 European Explosive Ordnance Disposal Network (EEODN)

Set up for experts to exchange knowledge about the disposal of explosive materials, the network contributes towards identifying best practices and organises training in partnership with EU Member States and third parties. It also keeps explosive ordnance disposal units up to date with the latest relevant developments. It is open to all police, government and military units that deal with explosives. Two conferences and two training courses on Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) were carried out in 2011, one in Hungary and another in Poland. These activities were co-funded by the European Commission.

In order to implement one of the actions of the EU CBRN Action Plan, the EEODN Protocol was amended to better involve the CBRN⁴² community. Therefore, the EEODN should now serve the same initial purpose but now for both the EOD and the CBRN communities. This was discussed and approved during the second EEODN Conference in Poland.

⁴¹ Which was, in this instance, made up of representatives from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

⁴² Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials (CBRN).

3.12.4 EU Bomb Data System (EBDS)

The EU Bomb Data System (EBDS) provides a platform for sharing timely and relevant information and intelligence on incidents involving explosives, incendiary and explosive devices (IEDs, IIDs)⁴³, as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials (CBRN). The EU Bomb Data System also comprises incident databases for explosives and CBRN, as well as libraries and expert forums. Operational since October 2010, this European Commission co-funded project was completed by November 2011. Almost all EU Member States are already connected to this system, which has seen a steep increase in the number of new users, activity and contributions in 2011.

IKEA stores incidents

In September 2011, Europol appealed for information on behalf of Belgian and Dutch authorities following blasts at European IKEA stores. The perpetrator had placed improvised explosive devices inside IKEA stores before making a quick exit. The devices then detonated, causing injuries and property damage.

Europol supported cases with the same modus operandi from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany and the Netherlands, and the public were asked to help identify the main suspect from surveillance camera footage and witness descriptions.

Two operational meetings were held at Europol with an increasing number of participating Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland). Europol played a central role in this case which also offered opportunities to engage in further counter terrorism cooperation with the involved Member States.

The EU Bomb Data System (EBDS) was used for the secure and timely exchange of information on this case, which ultimately resulted in the identification and arrest of the perpetrators. By the time the last incident took place, in the Czech Republic, all available information on the different devices used was available through the EBDS.

⁴³ Improvised explosive device (IED). Improvised incendiary device (IID).

Norway attacks

Apart from the support given through the First Response Network to Norwegian authorities in the aftermath of July 2011 attacks, Europol also provided EU Member States with the latest information and initial assessment on both the bomb incident and on the content of the manifesto released by the perpetrator prior to his attacks.

Once produced – within hours of the bombing and shooting - this information was immediately made available to the EBDS users, demonstrating the potential and value of such a system. Ultimately, these events led to the Norwegian authorities requesting and obtaining a connection to the EBDS.

In the weeks following the attacks, Europol was present during the reconstruction of the devices used and visited the different crime scenes.

3.12.5 Maritime piracy

Since maritime piracy became a major issue, costs for the shipping industry have been spiralling due to higher insurance rates, security costs and the increased operational costs incurred on longer alternative routes.

Europol, in close cooperation with Interpol and supported by 10 EU Member States and Eurojust, exchanges intelligence on maritime piracy. Europol's involvement focuses on the identification of key perpetrators, logistical assets and financial flows linked to the criminal activity. Intelligence suggests piracy could have connections with other organised crime such as the smuggling of human beings, weapons and drugs.

A unanimously-endorsed United Nations Security Council Resolution⁴⁴ calls on all of its 192 member countries to work in cooperation with Europol and Interpol to fight the criminal networks involved in maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia. This Resolution was an important step forward as international law enforcement authorities provide the critical link between arrests, made through military interventions, and the investigation and prosecution of maritime pirates and their associated criminal networks.

⁴⁴ United Nations Resolution 1950 (2010).

Europol is supporting Operation Atalanta (EU-NAVFOR)⁴⁵ to develop a system to keep track of all relevant information on all maritime piracy cases. Europol maintains contact with Interpol, the NCIS⁴⁶ and involved Member States in this regard.

In 2011, Europol hosted two Member States' terrorism Joint Investigation Teams.

3.12.6 Check the Web

Europol's 'Check the Web' portal enables competent authorities of EU Member States to voluntarily share information on Islamist terrorist activities on the Internet via the secure Europol network and the Europol National Units. Its aim is to create synergies between the Member States in the analysis of online Islamist terrorist activities. In 2011, Check the Web:

- Provided operational support to six EU Member States.
- Facilitated ongoing work into Inspire - an English-language online magazine reported to be published by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
- Saw Australia and Switzerland join the project and associated analysis work files.

In total, there are now 44 points of contact from 24 different countries connected to Check the Web, with 10 EU Member States actively contributing. Since March 2011, there has been a 21% increase in data being contributed to Check the Web, 75% of which comes from EU Member States.

Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGT)

In 2011 Europol and the Dutch KLPD co-hosted the Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGT). For the first time in the PWGT's existence, Europol was requested to render a situation overview based on the contributions of the participating services, initial feedback received is positive.

UK Greater Manchester Police Operation Munda

Europol received thanks and an award from the Greater Manchester Police in 2011.

⁴⁵ European Union Naval Force: www.eunavfor.eu

⁴⁶ Naval Criminal Investigative Service of the United States.

Praise was given for Europol's assistance in bringing a case to court which resulted in four life sentences for Jihadist recruiter, Munir Farooqi. The 54-year-old former Taliban fighter recruited candidates to fight against British troops in Afghanistan from his bookstall in a Manchester shopping street. Undercover work by Greater Manchester Police secured around 600 hours of recorded conversation where the Taliban recruiter mentioned attacking British troops, releasing prisoners, and the names of training camps. It was, however, difficult to assess the authenticity of such details, so the UK police turned to Europol for assistance.

Europol's approach involved checking the information received using the analytical tools available in order to compare operational details including in Europol's Terrorism Event Database. The analysis carried out enabled confirmation of some important facts including that, certain events had taken place at the specific places and dates as mentioned by Munir Farooqi. A summary of Europol's findings was used to help the court assess the results of the Greater Manchester Police undercover work.

Violent animal rights extremists

A major conference was organised by Europol and Eurojust, bringing together 58 experts from law enforcement and prosecution authorities, plus representatives from 35 private sector organisations, to discuss the issues behind this trend.

The increase in violence by extremists remains a concern for all of the conference participants, an example is the increased use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Improvised Incendiary Devices (IIDs). The conference drew up recommendations after clearly identifying the need for a wider exchange of information to provide the Member States' authorities with a clear picture of ongoing criminal activities.

Future developments

- Virtual Task Force on Violent Extremism
- Portal on Violent Extremism
- Creation of the following online platforms for experts are in progress:
 - ◆ First Response Network
 - ◆ CBRNE, for threats associated with chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear materials and enhanced (improvised) explosives
- Supporting major sporting events like the London 2012 Olympics, and 2012 UEFA EURO in Poland and Ukraine.

- Improving cooperation with SitCen by producing a future oriented restricted assessment. As mentioned in the conclusions on enhancing the links between internal and external aspects of counter terrorism⁴⁷ *"SITCEN and Europol to work together, in a complementary manner, to comprehensively analyse the terrorist threat to the EU, bearing in mind the work already being undertaken by these bodies in this area and that such an overview is an important step to counter terrorism and ensure effective policymaking."*

3.12.7 Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP)

Following the EU–US Agreement on the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP), which came into force on 1 August 2010, several tasks were given to Europol. To carry out these new responsibilities Europol created a dedicated TFTP unit within Europol's operational department.

Europol's specialists carry out three distinct roles:

1. The verification of US requests to a Designated Provider(s) of financial messages (Article 4 of the TFTP agreement)
2. The recipient of information spontaneously provided by the US Treasury (Article 9 of the TFTP agreement)
3. As Requester of TFTP searches, Europol ensures close cooperation with Member States and ensures an integrated response between Europol, Member States and Eurojust (Article 10 TFTP agreement).

Europol has created a single point of contact (SPOC) for EU Member States and Eurojust to channel requests for TFTP searches via Europol.

The intelligence leads received by Europol will, in strict observance of dissemination requirements, be cross matched against Europol databases. Then, with the agreement of the data owner, the information will be forwarded to the US Treasury where the TFTP checks will be carried out. The objective of this collaboration between the US and the EU is to identify, track and pursue terrorists and terrorist finances. In this context:

- Europol handled numerous Article 10 requests for US TFTP searches in 2011. These requests originated from multiple Member States and were also generated by Europol itself.
- Member States authorities received TFTP information providing valuable lead intelligence to support ongoing terrorist investigations.

⁴⁷ 11075/11, Brussels, 6 June 2011 (adopted by JHA Council on 9 June 2011).

- In July 2011, Europol initiated several Article 10 TFTP requests, in support of Norway, together with several affected EU Member States. These requests were generated in response to the Norway Oslo bombing and subsequent shooting spree. These Article 10 requests provided immediate assistance to Norwegian authorities, together with provision of information to affected EU Member States.
- Europol's TFTP unit engaged fully in the First Response Network team, providing constant information flow.
- Information provided by the US TFTP provided 'real time' fast-tracked operational support to numerous EU and non-EU countries.
- Europol has also passed on to EU Member States information spontaneously provided by the United States. This information and replies to Article 10 requests for US TFTP searches have proven significant in support of Member States' operational enquiries, and generated new operational lines of enquiry for EU and non-EU countries.

4. Europol's reach

4.1 EU Member States law enforcement agencies

Europol has a live 24/7 connection with the Europol National Units based in the 27 EU Member States. This permanent exchange of communications and criminal data is possible thanks to the Liaison Bureaux located at Europol headquarters. It is a crucial and effective way of maintaining contact and support to around 2 million EU law enforcement officers and, most importantly, to all investigators whose operations could benefit from Europol's support.

Europol organises regular awareness-raising events for EU law enforcement officers to enhance their knowledge of Europol services that could help their cross-border cases. In 2011, seven of these seminars were attended by over 750 law enforcement personnel. These Europol 'roadshows' have strengthened cooperation and improved the quality and quantity of criminal intelligence exchanged.

Regional support officers

In 2011, a new regional support concept was launched, with the appointment of three regional support officers (RSOs), who will strengthen dialogue with Member States' competent authorities and maintain an overview of organised crime in their geographical areas of responsibility, namely: Western Europe, North-East Europe, and South-East Europe.

The first constructive results, such as the identification of new emerging threats in the regions, the provision of daily assistance to key partners, and the steady integration of third parties into the Europol environment, are evidence of the valuable roles the regional support officers are playing.

4.2 Europol's external cooperation

Europol cooperation is vital between EU and non-EU law enforcement authorities, and other partner EU agencies and institutions. Europol currently cooperates with 18 non-EU countries⁴⁸, 9 EU bodies and agencies⁴⁹, and 3 other international organisations⁵⁰, including Interpol, which features in many aspects of Europol's operational work.

⁴⁸ Albania, Australia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Serbia, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America.

⁴⁹ Eurojust, European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), European Central Bank, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Commission, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN), European Police College (CEPOL) and Frontex.

⁵⁰ Interpol, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Customs Organization (WCO).

The exchange of information with these partners takes place on the basis of cooperation agreements. Two types of agreements determine the nature of cooperation. Strategic agreements make it possible for the two parties involved to exchange all information with the exception of personal data, while operational agreements also allow the exchange of personal data. In 2011 two new operational agreements were signed - with Monaco and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

As in previous years, Europol continued its close cooperation with other EU agencies and organisations active in the areas of Freedom, Security and Justice. In 2011 Europol cooperated on a number of initiatives on a bilateral basis.

European Police College (CEPOL)

- E-learning opportunities were discussed and developed in close cooperation. Europol is the subject of the first CEPOL e-learning course and has made significant contributions to its format and content. Other e-learning courses on cybercrime and Schengen are in development.
- Ongoing cooperation on a project for the standardisation of knowledge management.
- Europol and CEPOL have worked together on the development of a future course on the new EU Policy Cycle for serious and organised international crime.
- Europol has coordinated a number of external training activities developed using Europol and CEPOL's different e-Net applications, such as the Police Knowledge Bases and the Learning Management System-LMS.
- In the framework of the European exchange programme, Europol and CEPOL have jointly developed a study week at Europol for law enforcement staff from Member States. Due to the great demand, three courses were held in 2011 and two more study weeks are planned for 2012.

Eurojust

- Europol participated in two-thirds of all 2011 coordination meetings held at Eurojust. A significant number of these meetings dealt with the establishment of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs).
- Europol has regular contact with the JIT secretariat hosted by Eurojust and continues to co-organise annual meetings of JIT national experts.
- Fruitful cooperation takes place in the field of JIT-related training.
- Europol currently supports 17 JITs with Eurojust via signed arrangements.
- A joint Task Force is in place to monitor and improve cooperation between both agencies.
- A staff exchange programme was set up, which will be further developed in 2012 (exchanges will take place every month).

Frontex

Europol supported a number of operations coordinated by Frontex. Frontex' new legal framework entered into force on 12 December 2011 and provides the agency with limited rights to process personal data. Hence, it is expected that the number of joint operations will further increase in the future. An expert group has been established to elaborate on the business processes and procedures for the future exchange of personal data.

European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

The establishment of a secure line and an operational working arrangement between OLAF and Europol is under discussion. Europol supported and contributed to operations initiated by the Office and the International Conference on the Protection of the Euro jointly organised by Europol, OLAF and the European Central Bank (ECB) in November 2011.

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)

EMCDDA is active with Europol in a number of different areas, not least in respect of the Polish Presidency of the EU Council's Pact on Synthetic Drugs. Europol and EMCDDA collaborated on joint publications,⁵¹ the third of which, on amphetamine, will be published in 2012.

Interpol

Interpol and Europol extended the close collaboration against transnational organised crime with the establishment of a secure communication line between the organisations, as well as endorsing a collaborative operational action plan in key security areas. Under a signed Memorandum of Understanding, the communication line has linked up the secure networks of both agencies. It will facilitate and simplify the exchange of operational and strategic crime information, including using their respective liaison officers based at Interpol in Lyon and at Europol in The Hague to enhance the flow of intelligence between the agencies.

⁵¹ Available to download from the Europol website.

4.3 European Police Chiefs Convention

Europol held the first European Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC) at our new headquarters in The Hague from 30 June - 1 July 2011.

The event drew together almost 300 Chiefs of Police, senior law enforcement officers and academic experts to debate the combating and prevention of serious organised crime and terrorism affecting Europe.

Convention delegates participated in high-level discussions and working groups to look at the way in which organised crime is changing, becoming more flexible and dynamic. Common areas of concern were then identified, joint conclusions and guidelines for future policies were agreed upon and then presented to EU Home Affairs Ministers.

On the closing day of the Convention, Europol's Director, Rob Wainwright, addressed an audience including Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, and Ronald Noble, Secretary General of Interpol. He spoke of the urgent need to improve the strategic understanding of the challenges posed by organised crime and terrorism, and to develop innovative and more effective responses to it. A comprehensive report was subsequently published on the Convention's findings and conclusions⁵².

The second European Police Chiefs convention will be held in May 2012.

⁵² Available to download from the Europol website.

5. Moving forward

5.1 Strategy and goals

Europol's strategy and goals, as presented in the 2010 Europol Review, continue to be the frame of reference for our daily business, ensuring the best support for EU law enforcement cooperation.

Following this ambitious strategy, Europol will address the most important challenges ahead, but will also exploit all opportunities to make further progress and deliver tangible benefits. The strategy guides Europol on a planned path to implementing its main goals, delivering a unique set of operational services for the EU in three main areas:

To function as the principal EU support centre for law enforcement operations

More will be done to maximise the operational value of information held by Europol and to streamline the delivery of analysis and other operational services. Europol is taking a leading role in establishing more effective cooperation between agencies and law enforcement partners, including Eurojust and Interpol.

To become the criminal information hub of the European Union

Cooperation between Member States, in identifying common information gaps and investigation priorities is essential and will be strengthened. Europol's unique capabilities provide the opportunity to grow as a central information hub in the EU, to address these issues, and build an information platform capable of facilitating a more effective operational response to key security threats. Further development of Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) will bring Europol closer to the law enforcement 'front line'.

To develop further as an EU centre for law enforcement expertise

Europol pioneers new techniques based on innovation and best practice as well as facilitating knowledge sharing and quality training in specialist areas, such as euro counterfeiting, terrorism and the dismantling of drug laboratories.

We will address any gaps in knowledge and expertise by developing and promoting best practice. Assisting Member States through support, advice and research in the areas of training, technical support, crime prevention, technical and forensic methods and analysis, and investigative procedures.

5.2 Looking ahead

Europol has gained an improved position on the EU stage in the last couple of years, partly thanks to the Lisbon Treaty, its new legal status (the Europol Council Decision (ECD)), and the agency's own strategy and improved capabilities. These developments make Europol a unique cooperation partner for EU law enforcement agencies and also an important contributor to the EU decision-making process.

In 2011, Europol's Management Board agreed to a single evaluation of the Europol Council Decision implementation and Europol's activities. This is being carried out to comply with Article 37(11) of the ECD⁵³ and to support the production of the European Commission's impact assessment before drawing up their proposal for the future draft Europol Regulation. The Management Board has appointed a Steering Committee, which consists of the Management Board Chairperson and the Management Board members from Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Spain and the European Commission. The Director of Europol is also involved in the work of the Committee as an observer.

Following a procurement procedure the evaluator, RAND Europe, was selected by the Management Board and a contract was signed in August 2011. Interviews are being conducted with Europol officials and relevant stakeholders. RAND Europe submitted a first interim report in November 2011 and will submit their final report in June 2012. The Management Board will discuss the evaluation results and then submit recommendations to the European Commission.

As a leading EU law enforcement agency, Europol is always looking ahead for opportunities to streamline the fight against organised crime and terrorism. Such new opportunities have been identified and include a need to:

- Enable more effective investigations on cybercrime, supported by centralised EU expertise and resources
- Explore better cooperation with the private sector to make greater use of expertise on issues like cybercrime, money laundering and intellectual property crime.

⁵³ Europol Council Decision, Article 37(11): Within four years of the date of application of this Decision and every four years thereafter, the Management Board shall commission an independent external evaluation of the implementation of this Decision and of the activities carried out by Europol. The Management Board shall issue specific terms of reference to that effect. The report of the evaluation shall be forwarded to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

Towards the end of 2011 a meeting between Europol and the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) resulted in the creation of a joint project on countering violent extremism. In cooperation with EU Member States, Europol and the DHS will share information on case studies, focusing on suspicious behaviors and other indicators, and develop best practices to counter terrorist radicalisation.

Regardless of new policy possibilities, Europol's primary purpose remains to support the EU law enforcement community, to disrupt and dismantle serious organised crime and terrorist groups. The law enforcement community as a whole needs to continue innovating tools, tactics and policies to keep pace with global developments and stay ahead of the criminals.

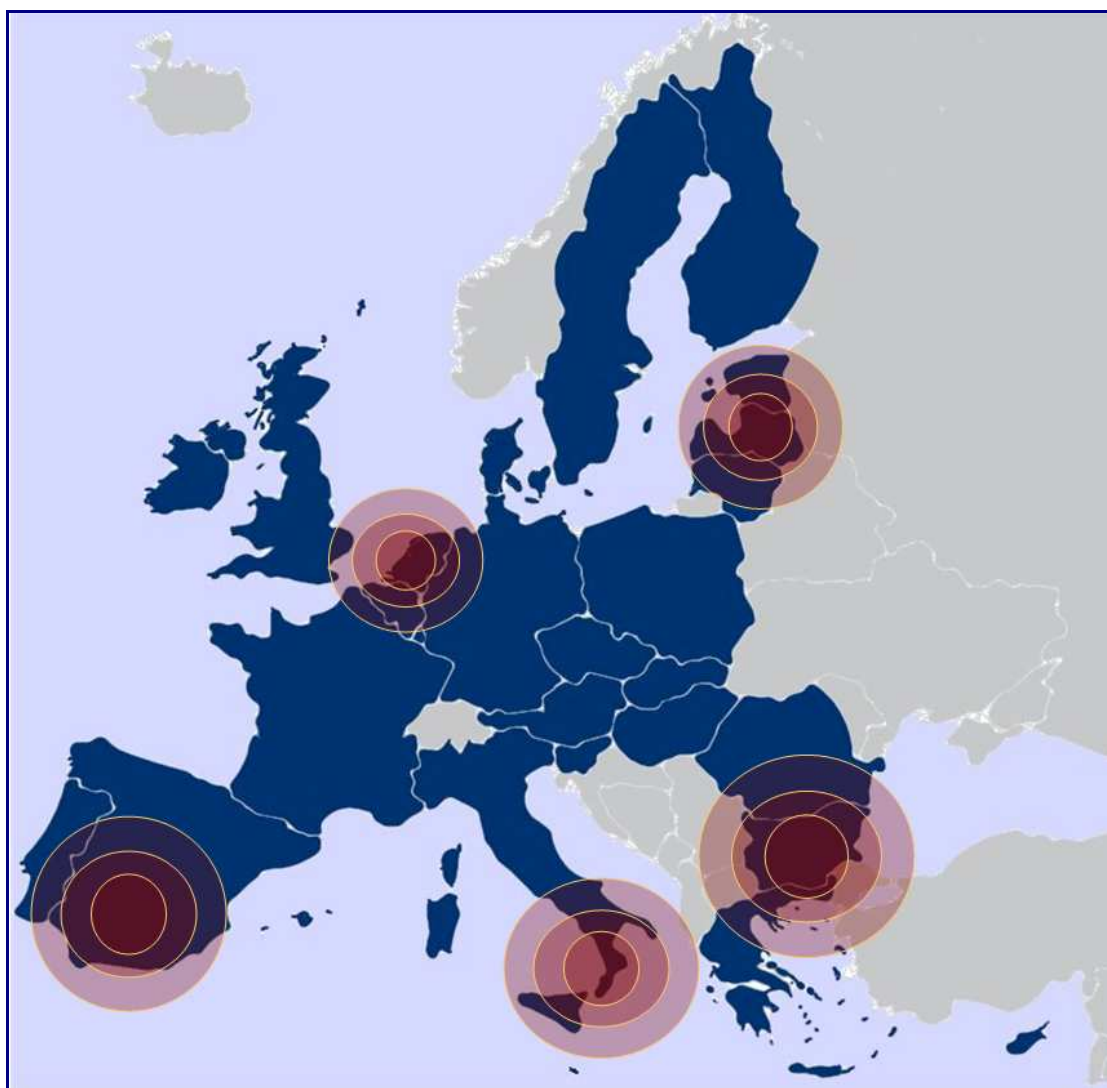
In view of the ever-increasing sophistication of criminal activity, local or even national efforts to tackle international organised crime and terrorism alone can only enjoy limited success. However, together with EU Member States and partner organisations, Europol can play an increasingly prominent role in safeguarding EU internal security.

A stronger Europol means more successful investigations and better protection for EU citizens against the threats of serious international crime and terrorism.

EU Criminal Hubs⁵⁴

Criminal hubs are concentrations of criminal logistics which receive illicit flows from numerous sources, and whose influence extends throughout the EU. Such concentrations facilitate not only the trafficking of illicit commodities but also the forging of new criminal markets, providing new opportunities for criminal groups. The following hubs have been identified, based on their proximity to major destination markets, commercial and transport infrastructure, prevalence of criminal groups and opportunities for criminal migration:

- **North West** – centre of gravity: The Netherlands and Belgium
- **North East** – centre of gravity: Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and the Kaliningrad exclave (Russian Federation)
- **South East** – centre of gravity: Bulgaria, Romania and Greece
- **Southern** – centre of gravity: Southern Italy
- **South West** – centre of gravity: Spain and Portugal



⁵⁴ Please note, centres of gravity as identified by the radii on the map are approximate and do not designate cities or regions of prolific criminal activity.