



"Investigating and countering migrant smuggling, as key element of an effective management of mixed migration flows".

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Some introductory remarks

- We are facing the largest displacement of people since World War II, leading thus to mass migration to Europe.
- In 2017 we had a decrease in the number of illegal crossings at the EU's external borders, dropping to 204.719 from 511.047 in 2016 and from 1.822.117 in 2015.
- The migratory pressure towards Europe still continues.
- Some say that this is not a crisis any more but this is the new normality.
- Uncontrolled migration should not be the main answer to the demographic problem that EU is facing.
- The mass migration influx give ground to new forms of criminality activities.
- Migrant smuggling to and within the EU will remain a key criminal threat.



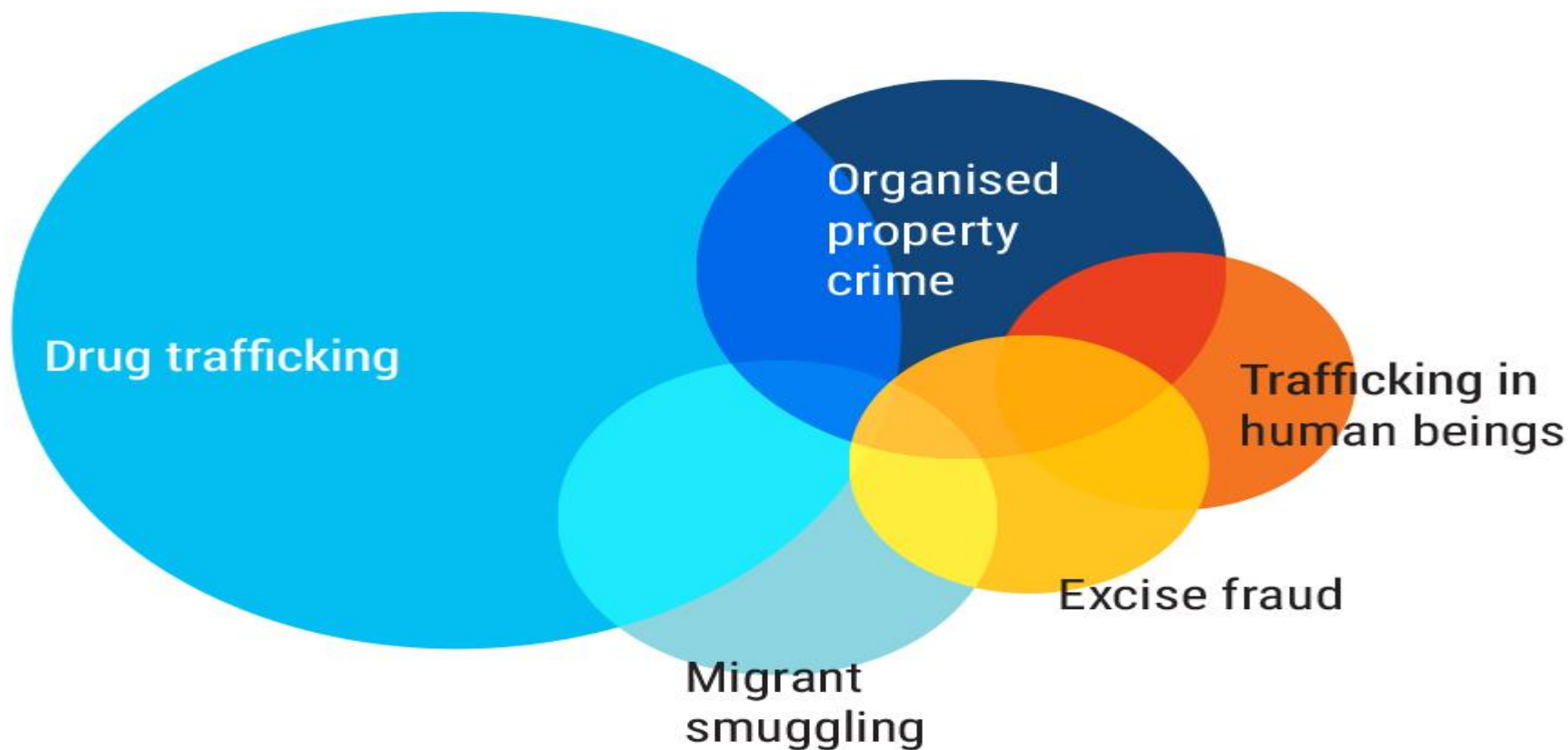
Migrant Smuggling

- Migrant smuggling is one of the most profitable and widespread business for criminal networks, with estimated annual turnover reaching several billion Euros. Smugglers use land, sea and air routes to facilitate illegal migration both into and within the EU and abuse the legal migration system to promote their illegal business practices.
- Migrant smuggling features sustained high levels of demand and relatively low levels of risk. Some Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) previously involved in other criminal activities have added migrant smuggling in their criminal activities.
- It does not require access to significant resources and OCGs can rely on their existing knowledge of routes and infrastructure used to other area of criminalities (e.g. smuggling of goods, drug trafficking).



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45% of the OCGs active in the migrant smuggling are poly-criminal (*SOCTA report 2017*)





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- Actually, the migration crisis of the last years and the arrival of a large number of migrants in the EU have transformed migrant smuggling to a booming criminal business.
- The scale of migrant smuggling activities in the EU is unprecedented and has increased significantly over recent years.
- The demand for smuggling services has grown significantly since 2014.
- The migrant smuggling business is now a large, profitable and sophisticated criminal market, comparable to the European drug markets.
- It has an effect on business operators in sectors such as agriculture, the fishing and shipping industries, the air and land transport sectors, civil society and other organisations working in the field of migration and asylum.



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Positive effects of counter migrant smuggling

- Enhance security: More effective disruption of OCGs targeting the EU. Fewer people enter the EU illegally. Fewer people become illegal by overstaying.
- Stop the exploitation: Migrants represent a large and continuously growing group of potential victims vulnerable to promises of work by OCGs even if this entails exploitation. While the migration crisis has not yet had a widespread impact on trafficking in human beings (THB) for labour exploitation in the EU, some investigations show that traffickers are increasingly targeting illegal migrants and asylum seekers in the EU for exploitation.
- Save lives: It is of the utmost importance preventing them from boarding the boats and thus protecting the lives of those who are seeking to reach Europe at any price.
- Promote legal avenues: EU must enhance its effort to establish more legal and secure migration pathways (blue card, resettlement scheme, relocation etc.).
- Migrants interest: The countering migrant smuggling will also positively affects the safety and security of migrants. Legal migration = no legal implications/consequences.



Challenges - other issues

- = Coordinated approach: Need to tackle migrant smuggling, using all of the legal, operational, and administrative means/leverage available.
- = Human rights: Migrant smuggling constitutes, in most of the cases, violation of human rights of the persons concerned.
- = Criminalisation – prosecution: Need for a firm commitment, at EU and MS level, regarding the successful preventing and countering migrant smuggling. In that respect, the further strengthening cooperation in the frame of EPMACT will play a key role. At present, the overall number of investigations and prosecutions leading to effective convictions of migrant smugglers across the EU is low, compared to the estimated overall scale of the phenomenon.
- = Dealing with the root causes: An EU effort must be undertaken to address the root causes of illegal migration mainly in the countries of origin.



AIM AND OBJECT OF THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

June 3, 2016: The Operational Plan for combating networks of human smuggling was signed between the Director of Europol and the Chief of the Hellenic Police (in the frame of the European Agenda for Migration)

- Achieve a close cooperation between Hellenic Police and Europol in order to dismantle organized criminal networks of illegal immigration with international action.
- Direct exchange of operational information from the regional directorates of Police with Europol.
- Involvement of Turkey as a key partner in the fight against illegal migration networks at both national and European / international level.
- Identification of potential future risks and threats.
- Establish and exchange of best practice in managing migratory flows.



OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

- =Support provided to local Authorities throughout the country.
- =Provide analysis report (strategic and operational) on the spot of the crime, with object the facilitators of illegal immigration in the Mediterranean and the secondary flows of migrants.
- =Collection and evaluation of intelligence in order to improve the detection of criminal networks and assist the identification and arrest of traffickers.
- =Provide a clear and current picture of the situation as regards the areas of choice for illegal immigrants to enter-stay-moving, mode of action, main trends and possible rapid changes in this area.
- =Carry out daily exchanges of information between Europol and all operational bodies and structures involved.
- =Promotion of cooperation between the various Services and the cooperation with other international and EU bodies as also with third countries.



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THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!