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Europol's Contribution to the UNODC high level review of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem

1. Introduction

The following summary will aim to provide a valuable contribution to the UNODC's high level-report on the *'Implementation by Member States of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem'* by putting forward an accurate representation of Europol's standpoint on the subject matter, and the level of support provided in relation to the issues identified.

As a result of Europol's mandate, remaining a global player countering drug production, drug trafficking and money laundering is amongst the organisation's top priorities. Evidence of this is that almost 25% of all messages exchanged via Europol relate to drugs.

What follows is an overview of Europol's efforts to support international cooperation to counter the world drug problem, not only from a strategic point of view, but from an operational perspective. It provides insight into Europol products and the European Union (EU) Policy cycle for serious organised crime, thus providing a comprehensive summary of Europol's drug-related activities.

Previous cooperation between Europol and the UNODC has been good. An example of this can be seen in the **UNODC Paris Pact Initiative**. We are sure the UNODC is well aware of the extent of said collaboration and therefore further details are not provided in this report.

2. European Drug Situation and EU policies and strategies

Patterns of drug use are constantly changing as new drugs appear contributing to the complexity of the drugs market. Equally, the criminality that the drug market generates can only be understood in the wider context of the activities of organised crime groups (OCGs). There is an increasing interaction and cooperation between OCGs. Poly-drug trafficking is becoming more prevalent whilst the diversification of trafficking routes is on the increase. Through globalisation, the drug market appears increasingly dynamic, innovative and quick to respond to challenges. Beyond Europe and North America, new markets in Africa, Asia and South America present new challenges. The EU is a production and source region for cannabis and synthetic drugs, but also a source for precursors for heroin and other essential chemicals required for drug or precursor production. Although the heroin problem within the EU seems to be declining in the long term, stimulants like cocaine and synthetic drugs are of growing importance. Substitutions are fuelling the market: in particular new psychoactive substances are unregulated, difficult to control, but economically attractive for users and OCGs. The cannabis market has grown in importance and is linked with violence and other criminal activities. This calls for an equally dynamic, innovative and agile response in continuing to tackle the drugs

problem in a comprehensive and balanced way. The drug policy chosen by the EU fully complements the Political Declaration of the UN to counter the world drug problem.

In the framework of the EU Strategy on Drugs and related action plans, the European (external) Security Strategy, the Stockholm (internal security) Programme, the EU Internal Security Strategy and the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime, the EU has developed a wide range of operational actions on all fronts in the fight against drugs. Europol plays a key role in operational coordination and in providing strategic advice to law enforcement agencies and EU policy-makers.

2.1. EU Drug Strategy 2005-2012

With the adoption of the previous EU Strategy on Drugs (2005-2012) Europol's role was to strengthen law enforcement cooperation and to exchange best practice, knowledge and expertise in this area. Throughout the lifetime of the Strategy, Europol fulfilled a crucial role in coordinating the collection and dissemination of intelligence and in the provision of operational support. The organisation provided exchange networks, analysis and training in drug expertise to law enforcement agencies.

2.2. EU Drug Strategy 2013-2020

The current EU Drugs Strategy (2013-2020) is structured around two policy areas: drug demand reduction and drug supply reduction, and three cross cutting themes, coordination, international cooperation and research / information / evaluation. The strategy will be implemented through two Action Plans, which will provide a list of specific actions with a timetable, responsible parties, indicators and assessment tools. The first of these Action Plans (2013-2016) was adopted recently. It provides for more than 50 actions to comply with the objectives of the EU Strategy. Europol is involved in the policy area of drug supply reduction and has been made a responsible party for 9 of 13 actions. Additionally, Europol has a responsibility for other actions referring to the cross cutting themes of coordination, international cooperation and information/research/monitoring and evaluation. Europol is expected to help to maintain a continued focus on the implementation of the Strategy and the accompanying Action Plans and to contribute to the mid-term assessment of the Strategy by 2016.

The strategy includes approaches in drug supply reduction, addressing new challenges which have been identified in recent years. This is especially so in respect of the dynamics of the drug markets, including the use of new communication technologies as a facilitator for the distribution of illicit drugs and the need to prevent diversion of precursors, pre-precursors and other essential chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs from the legal trade to the illicit market. The objectives are therefore to contribute to a disruption of the drugs market and a measurable reduction of the availability of illicit drugs; to encourage coordination through active discourse and analysis of developments and challenges in the field of illicit drugs at EU and international level; and to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation between EU and non-EU countries, International Organisations and other actors.

A measurable reduction of the availability of illicit drugs should be achieved through the disruption of illicit drug trafficking, the dismantling of OCGs involved in drug trafficking, efficient use of the criminal justice system, effective intelligence-led law enforcement and increased intelligence sharing. At EU level, emphasis will be placed on large-scale, cross-border and organised drug-related crime. All related priorities have links to current operational and strategic activities within Europol, including its core operational projects ('Focal Points'), Europol support to EMPACT as the

operational implementation of the EU policy cycle (see below), support provided to other regional initiatives and activities in the areas of money laundering and asset recovery.

The orientation of the EU Strategies on Drugs (2005-2012 and 2013-2020) were and are closely linked with the UN goals and targets as set out in the Political Declaration and its Action Plan. Therefore, the Europol contribution to the EU Action Plan of the new EU Strategy on Drugs can consequently be seen as a Europol contribution to the UN Plan of Action.

2.3. EU Policy Cycle, EMPACT and Focal Points

The EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime was established in 2010 and is now in its second iteration. The Policy Cycle foresees the agreement of priorities by EU Ministers, based on the recommendations of the new EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA), and the subsequent implementation of strategic plans to tackle the agreed priorities through the "European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats" (EMPACT).

2.3.1.2012-2013 EMPACT priority areas related to drugs

In 2011, the Council of the EU adopted eight crime priorities, four of which related to illicit drugs. Each priority led to agreement on a series of strategic goals, which were later transferred into Operational Action Plans (OAPs) managed by project groups (EU Member States supported by Europol) serving for the years 2012 and 2013.

- 1. EMPACT West Africa** – Weaken the capacity of OCGs active or based in West Africa to traffic cocaine and heroin to and within the EU.
- 2. EMPACT Western Balkans** – Mitigate the role of the Western Balkans as a key transit and storage zone for illicit commodities destined for the EU and logistical centre for OCGs, including Albanian-speaking OCGs.
- 3. EMPACT Synthetic drugs** – Reduce the proportion and distribution in the EU of synthetic drugs, including new psychoactive substances.
- 4. EMPACT Container Smuggling** – Disrupt the trafficking to the EU, particularly in container form, of illicit commodities, including cocaine, heroin, cannabis, counterfeit goods and cigarettes.

The first set of Operational Action Plans (OAPs) have already provided concrete drugs-related action points in 2012 and 2013. Europol had an integral involvement in implementing these actions. This included strategic and operational coordination and coordination of investigations as well as operational support on the spot.

2.3.2.2014-2017 EMPACT priority areas related to drugs

Based on the 2013 SOCTA, EU Member States have defined new priorities for the EU Policy Cycle 2014-2017, two of which specifically related to drug trafficking. Although not formally adopted yet, as shown below, the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the new priorities provide concrete strategic objectives. Europol has an important and integral involvement in these strategic objectives, including strategic and operational coordination.

1. EMPACT priority cocaine/heroin: Reduce cocaine and heroin trafficking to the EU and disrupt the OCGs facilitating the distribution in the EU.

- Improve the strategic and operational picture of the cocaine and heroin markets, in particular trafficking to and within the EU, including through regular evidence based reviews. Specific attention should be given to OCGs, production methods, trafficking methodologies and traditional and developing modi operandi.
- Increase and improve cooperation and intelligence and information exchange amongst Member States' law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities, EU bodies/agencies and other relevant stakeholders with regard to transnational cases, particularly in support of operational activities.
- Develop and improve the cooperation with Third Countries, including source and transit countries, taking into consideration the continuous diversification of routes and on-going efforts in West-Africa and the Western Balkans, particularly through the enhanced involvement of EU Member States' and agencies' liaison officers and magistrates.
- Target prominent OCGs and high value targets, through coordinated investigation and prosecution, acting as key brokers in the trafficking of heroin, cocaine, precursors and cutting agents through the main entry points and routes to and within the EU.
- Undermine and disrupt the criminal infrastructure by targeting those who are involved in corruption, abuse legitimate business structures and communication technologies, invest in poly-crime activity and engage in money laundering, through coordinated investigations and prosecutions, particularly in support of asset recovery.
- Improve controls using a multi-disciplinary approach at key EU entry points, in particular ports and airports, and to develop specific operations in partnership with law enforcement agencies, port authorities, private security companies and commercial transport organisations, in order to minimize vulnerabilities.
- Raise awareness and build prevention capabilities, notably by sharing best practices amongst all stakeholders with a view to identifying and implementing those measures that deliver the greatest impact in terms of prevention, deterrence, detection, investigation and prosecution.
- Support the rationalisation of existing mechanisms towards the development of a system to coordinate donor activities of the EU, Member States and where possible other relevant stakeholders with a view to optimising operational outcomes.

2. EMPACT priority synthetic drugs: Reduce the production of synthetic drugs in the EU and disrupt the OCGs involved in synthetic drugs trafficking.

- Improve the strategic and operational picture on synthetic drugs including through evidence-based indicators by giving specific attention to illicit market trends, trafficking methodology and OCGs modi operandi.
- Further develop intelligence and information gathering using a multi-disciplinary approach and to improve intelligence sharing mainly with a view to initiate investigations and prosecutions by focusing especially on emerging threats and large-scale production of synthetic drugs.
- Reduce the diversion/trafficking of (pre)precursors and other essential chemicals by focusing on controls in particular at the EU entry points, by addressing their diversion within the EU, by targeting and prosecuting the main

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OCGs involved, and by tackling in a timely manner emerging threats including through means of legislation.

- Improve law enforcement knowledge on and the response to the supply of NPS including the involvement of OCGs by wider sharing of information through existing channels, in particular the Early Warning System, by tackling in a more effective manner emerging threats including through means of legislation.
- Improve law enforcement and judicial cooperation among EU Member States by conducting joint and parallel investigations and prosecutions particularly on prominent OCGs, HVTs and facilitators.
- Develop law enforcement and judicial cooperation with relevant third countries and partners on threats emerging from the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs.
- Improve cooperation with the private sector including the financial sector, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, internet service providers and transport/courier/delivery companies, in order to disrupt the chain of synthetic drugs production and trafficking.
- Focus on asset recovery and money laundering activities by triggering financial investigations and prosecutions in parallel with the criminal investigation on synthetic drugs. Such investigations should include the participation of all relevant services including the tax authorities.
- Further develop multi-disciplinary training and awareness activities at national, EU and international level as well as curricula at EU level i.a. on dismantling of clandestine laboratories. Training will also cover judicial authorities.

These strategic priorities will be translated into operational action and with implementation starting 2014. However, to reach its full potential, it needs serious commitment of different competent European Union national authorities and EU agencies to align their work programmes to the priorities.

3. Drug related operational support for supply reduction via Focal Points at Europol

Operational analytical support provided to Member States and operational partners are dealt with in the framework of Europol's Analysis Work Files (AWFs). Within these, "Focal Points" are the operational projects bringing together groups of investigators and analysts from Europol, concerned Member States and Third Parties. Europol current runs Focal Points (FPs) on cannabis, cocaine, heroin and synthetic drugs/precursors (Cannabis, Cola, Heroin and Synergy). However, drug related support may also be provided within other Focal Points such as Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (Monitor), Ethnic Albanian Organised Crime (Copper), Eastern European Organised Crime (EEOC), Sustrans (Suspicious Transactions – Money laundering related).

With regard to drugs, Europol focuses on supply reduction, particularly on sources, processing, production, routes, regions and involved OCGs. A more systematic use of the EU Member States liaison officers in Third Countries for intelligence exchange is envisaged as well as a use of regional security platforms to counter emerging threats, wherever appropriate and useful. There will be a focus on high value targets and most prominent OCGs. Asset recovery in Member States supported by Europol's Criminal Asset Bureau is a key element to tackle OCGs.

The objectives of the FPs are to gather and exploit available information (within Member states as well as outside), discover links between cases, identify criminal targets & target OCGs. FPs are also involved in initiating, supporting and

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coordinating the intelligence aspects of investigations, facilitating and enhancing information exchange, knowledge and experience in the specific subject area including the related precursors and equipment as well as wholesale, trafficking, cultivation/ production, etc.

The customised products provided by the Focal Points, increasingly in support of EMPACT, include:

- Operational analysis;
- Technical and forensic expertise;
- On-the-spot support (mobile office; Universal Forensic Extraction Device (UFED); dismantling of laboratories/cultivation sites including technical and comparison reports on chemicals and equipment seized in illegal synthetic drug production/storage locations and waste dump sites; participation in Joint Investigation teams (JITs) and in Joint Customs and/or Joint Police Operations (JCO, JPO, JCPO);
- Testimony in court;
- Financial support for operational meetings;
- A faster first line of response to contributions (e.g. cross match reporting);
- Technical and forensic support for specific criminal investigations, for example the Europol Illicit Laboratory Comparison System (EILCS), the Europol Synthetic Drug System (ESDS), the Europol Cocaine Logo System (ECLS), the Europol Logo System on Cannabis (ELSC) and concealment methods;
- Technical and forensic analysis of IT;
- Financial intelligence profiles on natural or legal persons;
- Overview of OCG financial activities (money flows, company ownership, assets held);
- Threat notices, intelligence and situation reporting.

4. Drug related strategic products in the period 2009 – 2013

The purpose of providing strategic products related to drugs trafficking and production is to inform policies at national and EU level and to provide a basis for intelligence-led law enforcement. Concrete recommendations are proposed where a potential is seen to improve the EU response to the drug situation.

4.1. General strategic assessments:

- Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) 2011, including drug related strategic information.
- Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2013, including drug related strategic information. The SOCTA is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the threat of serious and organised crime in the EU. The SOCTA adopts a commodity-oriented approach and as such the crime areas are largely defined by the commodities and services offered by OCGs. The recommended priorities inform decision-making at EU-level, in particular decisions priorities for the EU Policy Cycle.
- EU Drugs Market Report – A Strategic Analysis (EMCDDA-Europol joint publication in January 2012).

4.2. Specific drug-related strategic products:

- New Psychoactive Substances (within the Early Warning System and on annual basis) together with the EMCDDA and in close cooperation with the European Commission in line with the Council Decision of 2005¹
- Europol Drugs Newsletter Alert on 4-Fluoramphetamine 2009-001
- Europol Drugs Newsletter Alert on BMK Bisulphite adduct 2009-002
- Europol Drugs Newsletter Alert on Safrole 2009-003
- Methamphetamine - A European Union perspective in the global context (EMCDDA – Europol joint publication) 2009
- Report on concealment methods, 2009
- Cocaine conversion laboratories in the European Union, 2009
- Europol Cocaine Logo Catalogues, 2010
- Safrole and Sassafras Oil – An emerging trend in MDMA production, 2010
- Synthetic Drug Equipment Catalogue 2010
- Alert Report SYNALERT on PMK Glycidate 2010-001
- Alert Report SYNALERT on PMA and PMMA 2010-002
- Cocaine - A European Union perspective in the global context 2010 (EMCDDA-Europol joint publication)
- Amphetamine – A European Union perspective in a global context 2011 (EMCDDA – Europol joint publication)
- Alert Report SYNALERT on APAAN 2011-001
- Cocaine trafficking within the banana trade, 2011
- Chemicals involved in the cocaine extraction and conversion process, 2011
- Submersibles – The imminent threat to Europe?, 2011
- Alert Report SYNALERT on 'legal high' product known as "Annihilation" 2012-002
- Cocaine concealed within liquids, 2012
- Cocaine trafficking to Europe by sea, 2012
- Regular contributions to the UNODC Global Smart Reports

¹ EU Council decision 2005/387/JHA