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**Europol's Contribution to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session
(UNGASS 2016) on the World Drug Problem**

1. Introduction

The following summary will aim to provide a valuable contribution to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) by putting forward an accurate representation of Europol's standpoint on the countering the world drug problem and the level of support provided to the law enforcement community.

As a result of Europol's mandate, countering illicit drug production, drug trafficking and money laundering is amongst the organisation's top priorities. Evidence of this is that in the last decade almost 30% of all information exchanged with/via Europol related to drugs. The recurring objective is to contribute to a measurable reduction of the availability of illicit drugs by providing strategic and operational services to law enforcement engaged in disrupting large scale drug trafficking, dismantling of criminal organisations, tracing criminal assets, developing effective intelligence-led law enforcement and increasing intelligence sharing.

Below 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 also from an operational perspective. It provides insight into Europol products and services, the European Union (EU) Policy cycle for serious organised crime, thus providing a comprehensive summary of Europol's drug-related activities.

2. European Drug Situation and EU policies and strategies

Illicit drug production and trafficking remains one of the most innovative and largest criminal markets in Europe. As it grows more complex and interwoven with other forms of crime and even terrorism, it represents a key threat to the internal security of the EU.

Significant increases in land, maritime and air transportation, lower communication costs, misuse of postal and parcel courier services have increased the efficiency of criminal business operations and created efficiency gains for those involved in trafficking activities.

Drug markets have become increasingly diversified. Organized crime networks (OCGs) traffic drugs to the EU markets in multi-tonne shipments as well as small but frequent shipments by sea, air and land. The production is increasingly taking place close to the consumer markets in the EU.

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 OCGs. There is an increasing interaction and cooperation between OCGs. Poly-drug trafficking is becoming more prevalent whilst the diversification of trafficking routes is constantly evolving.

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Poly-drug trafficking OCGs often operate in multiple Member States and use complex distribution networks to deliver their products to millions of consumers in the EU and beyond. They are supplied by OC networks operating on a global scale and specialised in the production and trafficking of specific drugs

OCGs vary greatly in their membership and the scope of their activities. In addition to large and well-established networks operating on a global scale, trafficking and particularly the distribution of drugs is carried out by smaller networks, often on a regional level. Small-scale drug trafficking often relies on couriers and the trafficking of drugs in parcels. In some cases, OCGs trade various drugs amongst each other depending on their access to different types of drugs.

Through globalisation, the drug market appears increasingly dynamic, innovative and quick to respond to challenges. Beyond Europe and North America, markets in Africa, Asia and South America present new challenges. The EU is a production and source region for (herbal) cannabis and synthetic drugs, but also targeted by OCGs as a potential source region for precursors' for heroin and other essential chemicals required for drug or precursor production. Although the heroin problem within the EU seems to be stable or in the long term even slightly declining, stimulants like cocaine and synthetic drugs are of growing importance. Substitutions are fuelling the market with hundreds of new psychoactive substances (NPS) appearing on the market each year. In some countries the NPS are taking market shares from traditional synthetics such as MDMA and amphetamine. The production and distribution of NPS are continuously attractive for OCGs due to low (sometimes non-existing) risks and substantial profits from the NPS trade. The cannabis market has grown in importance and is linked with violence and other criminal activities.

The online trade in drugs and other illicit goods is expanding steadily. OCGs make use of online marketplaces to distribute their products to a widening range of customers, who are drawn to these service offerings by the appearance of anonymity and the ability to order these goods from the comfort of their homes. Online marketplaces also make it possible for individual criminal actors to become distributors of illicit drugs without having to rely on the trafficking infrastructure that was previously required and maintained by OCGs.

3. EU policies and strategies

In the framework of the EU Strategy on Drugs and related action plans, the European Security Strategies 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 providing operational support, coordination and strategic advice to law enforcement agencies and EU policy-makers.

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 agency provided information exchange networks, analysis and training in drug expertise to law enforcement agencies.

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 is being implemented through Action Plans, which do provide a list of specific actions with a timetable, responsible parties, indicators and assessment tools.

Europol is involved in the policy area of drug supply reduction and also has a responsibility for a number of actions referring to the cross cutting themes.

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

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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 EMPACT¹ 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 EU Strategy on Drugs can consequently be seen as a Europol contribution to the UN Plan of Action.

3.1. 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 Justice and Home affairs Ministers, based on the recommendations of the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA)², and the subsequent implementation of strategic plans to tackle the agreed priorities through the EMPACT.

Based on findings within the 2013 SOCTA and 2015 SOCTA, EU Member States have defined priorities for the EU Policy Cycle 2014-2017, two of which specifically related to drug trafficking, namely

- a) Reduce cocaine and heroin trafficking to the EU and disrupt the OCGs facilitating the distribution in the EU.
- b) Reduce the production of synthetic drugs in the EU and disrupt the OCGs involved in synthetic drugs trafficking.

The Multi-Annual Strategic Plans for these priorities provide concrete strategic objectives (see below). Europol plays an integral role in implementing these strategic and operational objectives.

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 *modus operandi*.
- Increase and improve cooperation and intelligence and information exchange amongst Member States' law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities, EU bodies/agencies

¹ European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats

² The SOCTA is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the threat of serious and organised crime in the EU. The recommended priorities inform decision-making at EU-level, in particular decisions priorities for the EU Policy Cycle.

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

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 an 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.

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 *modus 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 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.

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- 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 objectives are translated into operational actions and are being implemented since 2014.

4. Europol's support for drug supply reduction via Focal Points

Analytical and operational 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 currently 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. The focus is 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 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.

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

5. Operational successes

Intelligence sharing between EU Member States and Europol is on the constant rise. In 2015 it increased by close to 20% enabling Europol to support more than 6000 drug related investigations. Based on expertise and intelligence at hand, Europol initiated more than 100 investigations mainly focusing on High Value Targets dealing in poly-drug trafficking and money laundering. The number of supported high level operations in 2015 nearly doubled in comparison with 2013. Below are just a few examples of the operational successes.

- **Operation Archimedes** (2014) - Driven by the EU Member States and coordinated by Europol, this operation was the largest ever international law enforcement operation targeting serious and organised crime in the EU. It involved more than 300 actions at 260 different locations to disrupt the activities of criminal groups engaged in the trafficking and production of drugs, the trafficking of human beings, the facilitation of illegal immigration, organised property crime, the trade in firearms and counterfeit goods. Drug related seizures amounted to nearly 2.7 tonnes together with 96 suspects arrested.

- **Operation Blue Amber** (2015) - Nearly 900 arrests and 7.7 tonnes of drugs seized: these are only a few of the final results from Operation Blue Amber, a series of international actions led by EU Member States and supported by Europol. It is a unique operation that led to law enforcement officers from 28 EU Member States, 31 non-EU countries and other international partners joining forces to disrupt organised crime groups and their criminal infrastructure. In 2015, several simultaneous interventions and action weeks took place across the world. It focused on 'EMPACT' priority crime areas such as drugs trafficking, irregular immigration, organised property crime and counterfeit goods. Coordinated interventions took place at airports, border-crossing points, ports and specific crime hot spots in towns and cities. The final results of Blue Amber include:
 - Nearly 900 arrests made relating to drugs trafficking (257), property crime (281), and facilitation of irregular immigration (60);
 - 263 arrests of fraudsters during the Global Airline Action days, which targeted criminals suspected of fraudulently purchasing plane tickets online using stolen or fake credit card data;
 - 5 tonnes of cocaine, 2.1 tonnes of cannabis, 280 kg of synthetic drugs and 82 kg of heroin seized;
 - 254 vehicles, 190 tonnes of counterfeit pesticides and almost EUR 140 000 euros in cash confiscated;
 - 1400 tonnes of stolen metal seized.

- **Operation DANUBE** (2016) - The Croatian Police in cooperation with its respective counterparts in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands and with the support of Europol have arrested 13 suspects belonging to a Balkan Organised Crime Group responsible for importing large amounts of cocaine from South America to Europe through the Netherlands. The investigation lasted several months and allowed investigators to locate the stash-house where two Croatian citizens residing in the Netherlands hid the substance. From this location, the substance was then sold to buyers in Austria, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Operation DANUBE revealed that in 12 separate instances, the suspects sold approximately 34 kg of cocaine, 7.7 of which have been seized in 6 separate operations in Croatia, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. The above mentioned investigation allowed for the identification and subsequent arrest of a total of 13 suspects: 6 Croatian, 5 Austrian and 2 Serbian nationals. Europol was instrumental in providing the platform for the investigators to meet and exchange operational data. With the help of the analysis performed by analysts at Europol it was possible to provide investigators in the above mentioned countries with enough information to stir their investigative efforts in the right direction.

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- **Operation LIBECCIO INTERNATIONAL (2015)** – on 15 October 2015, an international operation led by Italy and closely supported by France, Spain and Europol, resulted in the discovery and seizure of over 20 tonnes of cannabis resin. The drugs were hidden in the deck of a merchant vessel called Jupiter, flying the flag of the Cook Islands. Ten Syrian citizens were arrested, while six Indian citizens were taken into custody for further investigations. All of them are crew members. The Italian Guardia di Finanza and DCSA, closely supported by the French OCRTIS-DCPJ and CeCLAD-M, Spanish Guardia Civil and Europol, launched this sharp strike against transnational drug trafficking activities in the Mediterranean Sea. On the evening of 26 September 2015, the vessel was located by the air and naval forces of the Italian Guardia di Finanza, assisted by a Spanish Guardia Civil aircraft. The Italian intervention teams of the Guardia di Finanza boarded and secured the vessel, escorting it to the Port of Cagliari (Sardinia). The boarding of the vessel took place in compliance with Article 17 of the U.N. Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs of 1988. After long and extremely complex search activities carried out by the Gruppo Operativo Antidroga, Counter Narcotics Unit of the Guardia di Finanza- Nucleo di P.T. di Cagliari, the enormous illegal load was found skilfully stashed in a large false bottom under the hold of the vessel with its only access hidden by hundreds of tonnes of granite being used as legal cargo. French OCRTIS representatives provided on-the-spot assistance in the initial stages of the searches. Their expertise played a decisive role in the subsequent stages of the investigation, leading to the discovery of the illegal activity behind the shipment. Essential intelligence analysis services were provided through the simultaneous deployment of Europol personnel and specialist tools. This joint operational cooperation framework facilitated the constant monitoring of the drugs shipment along its journey, enabling the most effective planning to ensure such a successful intervention. The above mentioned law enforcement authorities have invested their resources, expertise and strengths into a coordinated and robust multilateral working model against large-scale drug trafficking across the Mediterranean Sea, alongside Europol, CeCLAD-M, MAOC-N , and other EU and Third States affected. Europol provides continuous support to this international law enforcement partnership, triggered by the forerunner unit of the Guardia di Finanza – Nucleo di P.T. di Palermo, by facilitating the exchange of intelligence between the key countries and the subsequent criminal intelligence analysis, hosting and financially supporting operational meetings, and providing on-the-spot support.
- **Operation FANTOMAS (2015)** - Europol has supported Polish law enforcement authorities in seizing Europe’s largest ever haul of the amphetamine precursor, BMK, in Warsaw. The seizure consisted of 346 blue jerry cans, each with a capacity of 20 litres, and totalling almost 7 tonnes. The criminal network involved had imported the BMK from China to Poland, disguised as a consignment of non-ionic surfactants, alkyl polyglycoside (APG). The main suspect – a Polish national charged with a series of crimes including trafficking BMK, money laundering and forgery of documents. Following the seizure, officers from Europol’s clandestine laboratory team completed analysis of the chemicals, which confirmed the earlier results of the Central Forensic Laboratory of the Police. Different samples of the BMK were taken for further profiling. Europol also supported the investigation with intelligence analysis, as well as providing on-the-spot technical assistance to deal with the chemicals.

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

6. Drug related strategic products in the period 2009 – 2016

Europol's strategic products related to drugs trafficking and production inform the policy makers at national and EU level about emerging threats and diversity of drug market. Subsequently it provides guidance for intelligence-led law enforcement activities. Concrete recommendations are proposed where a potential is seen to improve the EU response to the drug situation. Examples of such products are below:

General strategic assessments:

- Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) 2011, including drug related strategic information
- EU Drugs Market Report – A Strategic Analysis (EMCDDA-Europol joint publication), 2012
- Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2013, including drug related strategic information
- The Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (iOCTA) 2014.
- The Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (iOCTA) 2015
- Interim SOCTA 2015: An Update on Serious and Organised Crime in the EU
- Threat Assessment: The online trade of illicit drugs, 2015
- EU Drugs Market Report – (EMCDDA-Europol joint publication), 2016

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 2005³
- 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
- New precursor for Benzyl Methyl Keton (BMK) identified, 2015
- Cannabis Frisian Duck, 2015
- Cocaine couriers report, 2015
- Intelligence Notification. Heroin trafficking via the Southern Caucasus route, 2015
- Intelligence Notifications Heroin 4 – precursors, 2015

³ EU Council decision 2005/387/JHA

Europol Unclassified – Basic Protection Level

- Mephedrone production from 2-Bromo-4'-methylpropiofenone (2,4-BMP), 2015
- Superman-logo tablets linked to deaths in Europe, 2016
- Situation Report Cannabis – update, 2016
- Heroin trafficking to the EU in large quantities, 2016
- Target Group Air Couriers - Final report, 2016
- Heroin trafficking to Europe via the Central Asian Republics, 2016
- Synthetic Drugs (fentanyl) gaining shares in traditional heroin markets, 2016
- Increased sophisticated of Pakistani OCGs trafficking heroin to Europe, 2016
- Regular contributions to the UNODC Global Smart Reports

The previous Europol Strategy laid down the foundation for Europol to become a trusted partner of law enforcement authorities, strengthening criminal information sharing and cooperation as the European criminal information hub and realising its role as a principal provider of operational support and expertise to Member States' investigations.

In line with a new strategy (2016-2020) Europol's core purpose and focus will remain unchanged; Europol will continue to support law enforcement authorities in their fight against serious and organised crime and terrorism, but the strategic emphasis of the organisation will progressively shift from laying the foundation of increased capability to one based on full-scale delivery of operational service and impact.