

## EU Policy Cycle - EMPACT

### EMPACT 2022+ Fighting crime together

EMPACT stands for the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats. It introduces an integrated approach to EU internal security, involving measures that range from external border controls, police, customs and judicial cooperation to information management, innovation, training, prevention and the external dimension of internal security, as well as public-private partnerships where appropriate.



The initial, reduced, EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime/EMPACT was implemented between 2012 and 2013. This was followed by two fully-fledged EU Policy Cycles between 2014-2017 and 2018-2021. Through these different stages, EMPACT has evolved into an EU flagship instrument for multidisciplinary and multiagency operational cooperation to fight organised crime at an EU level. It calls for robust action to target the most pressing criminal threats facing the European Union.

EMPACT has a clear methodology for setting, implementing and evaluating priorities in the fight against organised and serious international crime. It aims to tackle the most important threats posed to the European Union in a coherent, methodological way by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of the Member States, EU institutions and EU agencies, as well as third-party countries and organisations, including the private sector where relevant.

In 2021, the Council of the European Union decided on the following:

- Permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime: EMPACT 2022+ (8 March 2021) – this also introduced the change of name to ‘EMPACT’, while the four-year periodicity of its steps remained unchanged.
- The EU’s priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022-2025 (26 May 2021).

Priorities 2022-2025

Priority	Aim(s)
High-risk criminal networks	To identify and disrupt high-risk criminal networks active in the EU, such as mafia-type, ethnic and family-based organisations and other structured networks, and individuals with critical roles in these networks, with a special emphasis on those criminal networks undermining the rule of law by using corruption, those who commit acts of violence, including intimidation, and use firearms to further their criminal goals, and those who launder their criminal proceeds through a parallel underground financial system.
Cyber-attacks	To target the criminal offenders orchestrating cyber-attacks, particularly those offering specialised criminal services online.
Trafficking in human beings	To disrupt criminal networks engaged in trafficking in human beings for all forms of exploitation, including labour and sexual exploitation, and with a special focus on those who exploit minors for forced criminality; those who use or threaten with violence against victims and their families, or mislead victims by simulating to officialise the exploitation; those who recruit and advertise victims online, and are serviced by brokers providing digital services.
Child sexual exploitation	To combat child abuse online and offline, including the production and dissemination of child abuse material as well as online child sexual exploitation.
Migrant smuggling	To fight against criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling, in particular those providing facilitation services to irregular migrants along the main migratory routes crossing the external border of the EU and those involved in facilitation of secondary movements and legalisation of residence status within the EU, particularly focussing on those whose methods endanger people's lives.
Drugs trafficking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="488 1413 1391 1637">1. The production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin - To identify and target criminal networks involved in the wholesale trafficking of cannabis, cocaine and heroin to the EU; To tackle the criminal networks involved in the cultivation, production, transformation and distribution of cannabis, cocaine and heroin in the EU.</li> <li data-bbox="488 1659 1391 1839">2. The production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs and New psychoactive substances (NPS) -To identify and target the criminal networks involved in the production and global supply of synthetic drugs and NPS in the EU.</li> </ol>
Fraud, economic and financial crimes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="488 1850 1391 2040">1. Online fraud schemes - To target individual criminals and criminal networks orchestrating large-scale fraud schemes online as well as fraud and counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment aimed at defrauding private individuals (incl. vulnerable persons such as the elderly), businesses and public sector organisations, particularly</li> </ol>

Priority	Aim(s)
	<p>those generating multi-million-euro revenues each year and using online platforms to amplify the reach of their scams to target a large number of victims.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="491 412 1394 517">2. Excise fraud - To target criminal networks and individual criminals engaging in the large-scale excise fraud with particular focus on the production and/or trafficking of illicit tobacco products in the EU.</li> <li data-bbox="491 546 1394 651">3. MTIC (VAT) Fraud - To disrupt the capacity of criminal networks and individual criminal entrepreneurs involved in Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud.</li> <li data-bbox="491 680 1394 898">4. Intellectual property (IP) crime, Counterfeiting of goods and currencies - To combat and disrupt criminal networks and criminal individual entrepreneurs involved in IP crime and in the production, sale or distribution (physical and online) of counterfeit goods or currencies, with a specific focus on goods harmful to consumers' health and safety, to the environment and to the EU economy.</li> <li data-bbox="491 927 1394 1384">5. Criminal Finances, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery - To combat and disrupt criminal networks and criminal individuals who are involved in criminal finances and money laundering, and facilitate asset recovery in view of effectively confiscating the criminal profits, especially by supporting the automatic launch of financial investigations and developing a culture of asset recovery through training and financial intelligence sharing, by targeting money laundering syndicates offering money laundering services (incl. money mules and trade based money laundering) and those criminal networks making extensive use of emerging new payment methods to launder criminal proceeds or launder their criminal proceeds through a legal or parallel underground financial system.</li> </ol>
Organised Property Crime	To disrupt criminal networks involved in organised burglaries and theft, organised robberies, motor vehicle crime and illegal trade in cultural goods, with a special focus on those that are highly mobile and operating across the EU.
Environmental Crime	To disrupt criminal networks involved in all forms of environmental crime, with a specific focus on waste and wildlife trafficking, as well as on criminal networks and individual criminal entrepreneurs with a capability to infiltrate legal business structures at high level or to set up own companies in order to facilitate their crimes.
Firearms trafficking	To target criminal networks and individual criminals involved in the illicit trafficking, distribution and use of firearms.

## EMPACT steps

EMPACT is a permanent and key EU instrument for structured multidisciplinary cooperation to fight organised and serious international crime driven by the Member States and supported by EU institutions, bodies and agencies in line with their respective mandates. EMPACT follows a four-year cycle and consists of four steps, namely:

### **Step 1: European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA)**

#### **The role of EU SOCTA**

Provide a complete and thorough picture of criminal threats impacting the European Union – to ensure major criminal threats are tackled with an intelligence-led approach.

The first policy development step is based on the European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA). The EU SOCTA, prepared by Europol, identifies a set of key threats based on in-depth analysis of the major crime threats facing the European Union. On the basis of these, the Council of the European Union defines the priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime. The SOCTA plays a key role in EMPACT.

In preparing the EU SOCTA 2021, Europol analysed trends and patterns in current crime data, but it also scanned the environment for other factors that can be expected to influence the commission of organised crime over the four years, and the ability of law enforcement to stop this. This exercise provides the basis for assessing future threats to EU internal security.

The analysis underpinning the development of priorities also supports the planning of operational actions.

### **Step 2: EU's crime priorities and MASP**

The next step involves policy setting and decision-making through the identification of a limited number of priorities by the Council. Further, a General Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (G-MASP) with Common Horizontal Strategic Goals (CHSGs) is developed to achieve a multidisciplinary, integrated and integral (covering preventive as well as repressive measures) approach to effectively address the prioritised threats.

### **Step 3: Operational Action Plans (OAPs)**

The third step involves the development, implementation and monitoring of annual operational action plans (OAPs). The 15 OAPs contain operational actions to combat crime in the 10 areas corresponding to the European Union's crime priorities for EMPACT 2022-2025. The OAPs address the prioritised threats and need to be aligned with the CHSGs as determined in the G-MASP. Additional targeted strategic goals may be added to the OAPs, tailored to the specific priority needs.

Each OAP contains a set of operational actions contributing to the objectives of CHSGs. The EMPACT-relevant actors and partners work in a coordinated fashion to implement the operational actions of each OAP.

During the implementation of the operational actions in the OAPs, information exchange related to criminal investigations comes to Europol via its Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), for analysis. The intelligence derived from these investigations is processed by the Europol Analysis Projects in line with the handling codes. This feeds into the intelligence cycle and may trigger the review of priorities and strategic goals following the mid-term review of new, evolving and emerging threats.

The Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) adopts the annual OAPs and coordinates and monitors their implementation. COSI also monitors and endeavours to ensure that adequate funding is provided to effectively support the actions agreed upon within EMPACT.

**Step 4: Independent evaluation**

At the end of each EMPACT cycle, an independent evaluation will be conducted to assess the implementation of EMPACT and its outcomes, followed by an informed policy decision, and will serve as guidance for the next EMPACT cycle.



The operational and governance framework of EMPACT is further developed in the [EMPACT Terms of Reference](#), as approved by COSI (Council document, public, 9921/21, 17 June 2021).

**EMPACT results**

Successes partly or wholly attributable to the EMPACT cycle have already been seen in each of the priority crime areas, and there is every reason to expect that this trend will continue.

EMPACT 2023 results

[EMPACT Video](#)

[EMPACT Fact sheets](#) (PDF)

