
Europol: “organized crime has never posed as high a threat in the EU”. Drugs most profitable business, followed by corruption and online frauds

“Organised crime has never posed as high a threat to the EU and its citizens as it does today. The pandemic and the potential economic and social fallout expected to follow threaten to create ideal conditions for organised crime to spread and take hold in the EU and beyond”. This is according to the EU SOCTA 2021 report (European Union’s Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment) published by Europol today. For the first time in its over 100-pages, the report, published every four years, provides “unprecedented insights into Europe’s criminal underworld based on the analysis of thousands of cases and pieces of intelligence provided to Europol”. 40% of the criminal networks are active in drugs trafficking, which is the largest criminal business in the EU. Also, the trafficking and exploitation of human beings, migrant smuggling, online and offline frauds and property crime pose significant threats to EU citizens. There is then a risk that the exponential increase in data may overwhelm governments who may become “unable to manage” it: “sophisticated and large-scale attacks” may be used to “steal sensitive data”. Even waste management and recycling may become key sectors for criminal organisations, with corruption being an intrinsic part of business: indeed, almost 60% of the criminal networks reported engage in corruption. More than 80% of the criminal networks active in the EU use “legal business structures for their criminal activities”. Also of concern is the use of violence, which is also on the rise, “in terms of frequency and severity”.

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