



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group Vienna, 10 May 2021**

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#### **EU statement: Addressing Transnational Organized Crime through Improved Multilateral Co-operation**

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The European Union warmly welcomes today's speakers to this meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group. It also thanks the Polish Chair of the Group for this pertinent meeting on Addressing Transnational Organized Crime through Improved Multilateral Co-operation.

Organised crime is a serious threat to our security . It undermines the Rule of Law and compromises the integrity of democratic institutions. We reiterate our commitment to step up action to tackle transnational organised crime and address its root causes, through building strong societies and effective institutions, based on the rule of law, as well as through a gender-sensitive and human-rights based approach.

The agency that assists the EU Member States in their fight against transnational crime and terrorism, Europol, was born in 2000 and it is now at the heart of the European security architecture. The EU is convinced that by depriving criminals of their illicit gains and ensuring that "crime doesn't pay" we can disrupt their criminal activities. This is why in 2020 Europol's European Financial and Economic Crime Centre was established.

Talking about Europol's tools, we have to mention the "European Union Serious Organised Crime Threat Assessment" (EU SOCTA). The SOCTA is Europol's flagship report delivering an insight into and assessment of organised crime in

the EU. In this year's issue, the analysis indicates that criminal structures are becoming more fluid and flexible, the use of violence appears to be increasing, while corruption and abuse of legal business structures are key features of organised crime activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how agile organised criminal groups are to adapt to new situations.

In order to step up efforts against organised crime, the Commission adopted on 14 April the EU Strategy to tackle organised crime for the period 2021-2025. It aims at boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation, disrupting organised crime structures and tackling high priority crimes, eliminating the profits generated and making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age. The Strategy also sets out actions to step up cooperation with international partners, in particular with the neighbourhood countries. For the EU, the Mediterranean constitutes a priority region for cooperation in the fight against organised crime, including against firearms trafficking, drugs trafficking and trafficking in human beings.

As part of the EU efforts to tackle organised and serious international crime, the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) identified the fight against the facilitation of irregular immigration as one of the priorities for the period 2018-2021 and the EU has taken decisive actions to target criminal networks which exploit vulnerable migrants. We work closely with migrants' countries of origin and transit to tackle smuggling and trafficking networks, including through law enforcement cooperation.

In the Mediterranean context, the EU is financing the "Euromed Police" project, which contributes to enhancing institutional capacity to protect EU neighbours' citizens against transnational serious and organised crime. The project focuses on building the operational capacities of the South Partner Countries to fight serious and organised crime and to strengthen strategic cooperation between law enforcement authorities and governments.

We welcome the decision taken by the Swedish Chairpersonship, the Security Committee Chair, as well as the Polish Chair for Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, to keep focus on transnational organised crime in 2021. The EU

strongly supported the adoption of the Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Transnational Organized Crime and we believe that our efforts should now focus on ensuring its effective implementation, including together with our Partners for Co-operation.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.