

# MIGRANT SMUGGLING NETWORKS

Joint Europol-INTERPOL Report

Executive Summary

May 2016

 **EUROPOL**



**INTERPOL**

## Foreword

### EUROPOL

I am pleased to present this report, which relied on the combined resources of Europol and INTERPOL to provide European and global law enforcement authorities with a comprehensive situational picture of the role of organised crime networks in the migration crisis.

Europe is confronted with an unprecedented migration crisis in terms of the number of migrants arriving in Europe as well as the level of involvement of complex and ruthless migrant smuggling networks. Intelligence held at Europol indicates that more than 90% of all migrants reaching the European Union use the facilitation services of a migrant smuggling network at some point throughout their journey. This is a clear indication that organised crime networks are profiting from mass migration. Europol has been at the forefront of supporting Member States in fighting the criminal networks that exploit desperate migrants seeking to escape armed conflict, persecution and deprivation.

Migrant smuggling networks have proven flexible and resilient, adapting to law enforcement action by quickly changing the routes used to smuggle migrants to the EU. These routes are constantly diversifying and changing. More than ever before, law enforcement authorities have to rely on situational awareness and an intelligence picture updated in real-time that can only be provided through effective intelligence-sharing.

Migrant smuggling networks accrue immense criminal profits. In 2015 alone, these organised crime networks generated an estimated USD 5-6 billion from their illegal activities. These earnings strengthen criminal networks and have a significant negative long-term impact on Europe's economy.

Irregular migration is a global phenomenon impacting on Europe as a key destination region. To understand the impact of migrant smuggling networks on Europe today, Europol and INTERPOL utilised their unique capabilities to identify the *modi operandi*, routes and structures of the criminal groups involved.

Europol has been able to contribute to this report with intelligence from EU Member States and other partners shared via the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC). Inaugurated in February 2016, the EMSC represents the collective response of the EU Member States' law enforcement authorities in countering the organised criminal groups orchestrating the illegal entry of migrants into the

European Union on a massive scale.

Europol will continue to work with Member States, INTERPOL and other partners to dismantle migrant smuggling networks. This report will aid these stakeholders in enhancing our response to this unprecedented crisis.

*Rob Wainwright*

Europol Director



## INTERPOL

Driven from their homelands by instability, insecurity and poverty, the number of migrants flowing into the European Union over recent years has reached unparalleled levels. These tragic circumstances have generated both a serious humanitarian crisis and given rise to numerous opportunities for transnational criminal networks. As vulnerable persons set out on perilous journeys from across the globe – Africa, the Middle East and Asia – criminals are ready and waiting to exploit their need for assistance and their dreams for a better life.

From illegal crossings at land or sea borders, to the fabrication and provision of fraudulent travel and identity documents, the challenges for the law enforcement community in countering the facilitation of illegal migration are numerous.

In order to effectively dismantle the criminal networks behind the smuggling of desperate men, women and children, it is important to develop an accurate and in-depth understanding of the wide range of illicit services they offer, along with their operating methods. In this regard, the joint Europol and INTERPOL analytical report on Migrant Smuggling Networks is an unprecedented effort to examine and provide insight on the activities, organisational structures, operating capabilities, estimated profits and geographical hotspots of migrant smugglers and their criminal networks.

While Europe may be the destination for these migrants, the crisis cannot be resolved by police and policy-makers in the European Union alone. Europol and INTERPOL continue to demonstrate their dedication to working together to assist our member countries to fight these crimes, and it is my belief that this comprehensive joint analysis will serve as the basis for targeted and meaningful joint actions in Europe and around the world.

*Jürgen Stock*

INTERPOL Secretary General



## Key Findings

- **More than 90% of the migrants coming to the EU are facilitated**, mostly by members of a criminal network. These numbers are expected to increase in the future in response to control measures taken by countries along the migratory routes.
- Although key migratory routes were identified as main corridors for migrant smuggling, they are fluid and influenced by external factors like border controls and weather conditions. **A further diversification of routes is expected** as smugglers adapt their services to increased controls and find new ways into the EU. **New hotspots may emerge** in response to these changes.
- **Facilitators are organised in loosely connected networks**, stretched along the migratory routes. More than 250 hotspots for migrant smuggling are identified in and outside the EU.
- Migrant smuggling is a **multi-national business**, with suspects originating from more than 100 countries both inside and outside of the EU.
- The basic structure of networks includes leaders who loosely coordinate activities along a given route, organisers who manage activities locally through personal contacts, and opportunistic low level facilitators.
- Migrant smuggling is a **highly profitable business**, entailing low overall costs to run smuggling operations and persisting high demand for services. An estimate of the yearly turnover of migrant smuggling results in an average USD 5 to 6 billion turnover in 2015. The main means of payment remains cash.
- Intelligence collected in recent months suggests that **polycriminality linked to migrant smuggling is increasing**: suspects in migrant smuggling cases have previously been recorded in relation to other types of serious crime.
- **Migrants** who travel to the EU are **potentially vulnerable to be targeted for labour or sexual exploitation** as they need to repay their debt to smugglers. It is expected that these types of exploitation will increase in the coming years.
- Terrorists may use migrant smugglers' resources to achieve their goals. There is an increased risk that foreign terrorist fighters may use the migratory flows to (re)enter the EU.



## Introduction

The exceptional scale of migrant smuggling to and within the EU has triggered an increased number of actions taken at the international level.

In 2015, Europol and INTERPOL reported a stark increase in the number of investigations that were initiated on migrant smuggling, and they have been confronted with a significant increase in the number of requests for operational support throughout the migration crisis. In order to formulate an adequate response to this unprecedented crisis, European and international law enforcement agencies require a much better picture of the activities of migrant smuggling networks operating across Europe and the world.

The first Europol-INTERPOL Operational Forum on Migrant Smuggling was held in October 2015. One of the outcomes of the conference was that there is a need for an improved intelligence picture on migrant smuggling to Europe. It was agreed that a joint report should be the basis for operational and strategic actions on migrant smuggling to the EU.

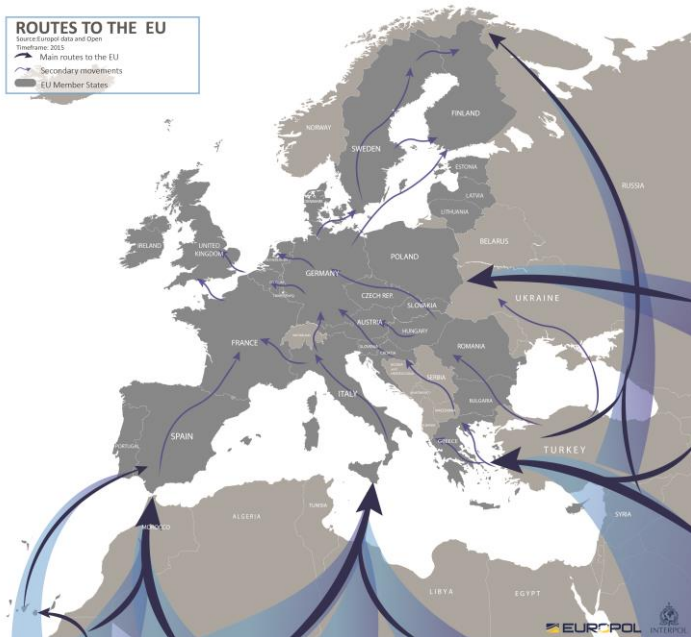
The objective of this report is to add new elements to the already widespread existing knowledge on migrant smuggling. In this regard, attention is given mainly to the analysis of criminal networks with the aim of:

- Determining the networks' structures and strategies;
- Analysing their financial assets and money flows related to their activities;
- Identifying the hotspots where networks are active;
- Providing recommendations on key operational areas to target as well as a roadmap to enhance European and international law enforcement (LE) cooperation; and,
- Providing an overview of future risks and threats.

The key findings and intelligence gaps identified in this report were the basis of a number of working group discussions at the second Europol-INTERPOL Operational Forum in February 2016. The results of these exchanges are reflected in this report as recommendations for future operational and strategic actions.



## Migrant Smuggling Routes and Hotspots



Europe has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of irregular migrants arriving in the European Union since 2014. The scale of these migratory flows reached previously unseen heights in 2015 and this trend is expected to continue in 2016. Currently, Europol estimates that more than 90%<sup>1</sup> of the migrants travelling to the EU used facilitation services. In most cases, these services were offered and provided by criminal groups. A large number of criminal networks as well as individual criminal entrepreneurs now generate substantial profits from migrant smuggling or crimes related to the “facilitation” of migrant smuggling.

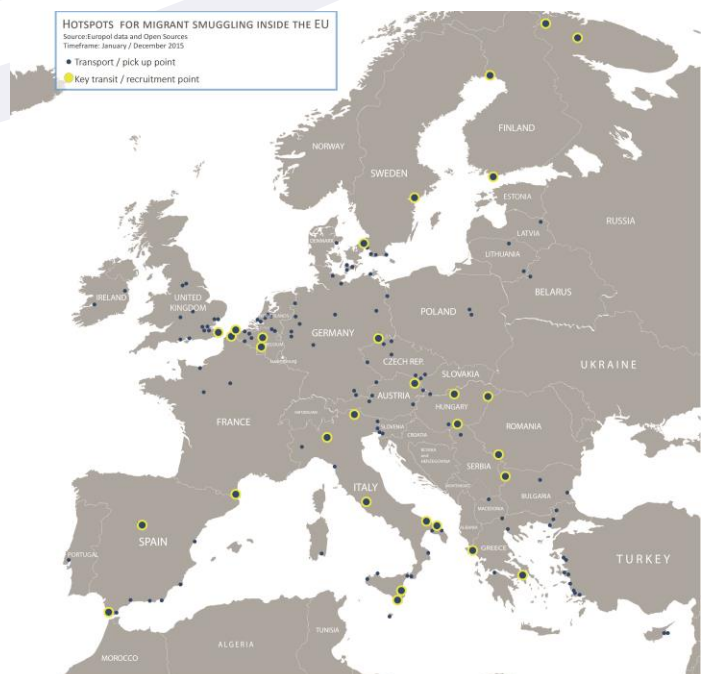
Many of the routes used by migrants to enter the EU, whether by sea, land, or air, are not new. Migrants have used the **Western Mediterranean route** via Spain and Portugal for more than ten years. In 2015, a total of 7,164 illegal border crossings mainly by Guinean, Algerian and Moroccan nationals along this route were reported to Frontex. Migrants departing from Libya and travelling to the EU by sea often use the **Central Mediterranean route** arriving in Italy. This route is predominantly used by migrants originating from African countries. Although there was a decrease of 12% from 2014 to 2015,

<sup>1</sup> Estimate based on 1,500 debriefings of migrants collected by Frontex and EU Member States in 2015. It is expected that the percentage will be even higher in 2016.

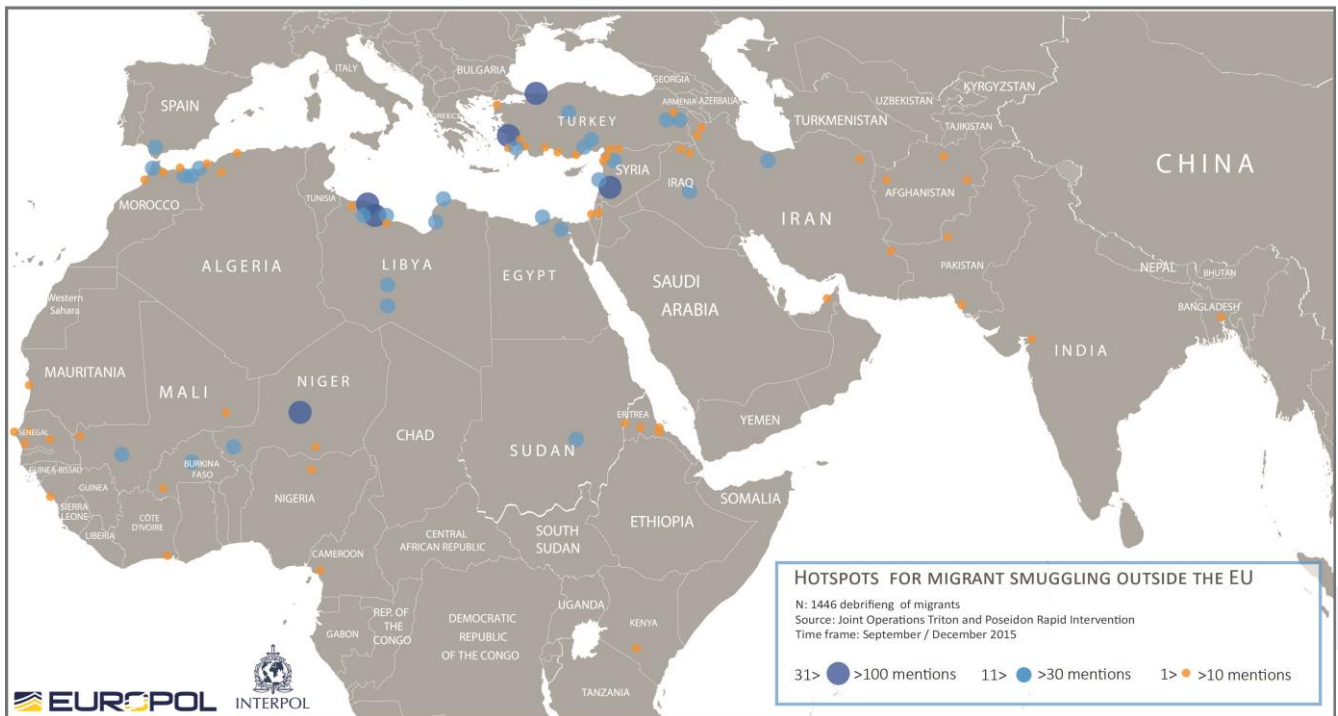
in 2015 a total of 153,946 illegal entries were detected along this route<sup>2</sup>.

From Turkey, migrants travel along the **South-Eastern route** to enter the EU via Greece or Bulgaria by sea, land and/or air. Due largely to the worsening situation in Syria, the number of migrants travelling on this route increased massively (1,612%) in 2015 compared to the previous year. In total, 885,386 entries were recorded along this route in 2015. Migrants entering the EU via the South-Eastern route typically travel onwards along **the Balkan route** to reach countries of destination in Northern Europe.

Migrants travelling on **the Eastern route** enter the EU along the EU’s external border with Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. In 2015, 1,920 entries were recorded along this route with most migrants of Afghan, Vietnamese, or Syrian nationality. Finally, migrants travel along **the Nordic route** across Russia to enter the Schengen zone via Norway or Finland. More than 2,000 migrants attempted to enter the Schengen area using this route in 2015.



<sup>2</sup> In 2016 **arrivals in Italy** (from Turkey, Greece, Libya and Egypt) have increased significantly and it is expected that arrivals will continue to be high in the upcoming months due to better weather conditions. The Central Mediterranean route (so far mainly used by African nationals) may be increasingly used by migrants originating from the Middle East who wish to avoid Turkey as a departure point.



Favourably located along the routes, **smuggling hotspots** attract both migrants and smuggling networks. In and outside the EU, the analysis of geographical data resulted in the identification of around 250 key criminal hotspots, including 170 in the EU and 80 outside the EU.

Hubs offering transport infrastructure such as international train stations, airports and service stations for long distance coaches are key locations for migrant smuggling activities both in and beyond the EU. Smuggling hotspots may also emerge in areas with weak law enforcement controls or no rule of law as migrant smugglers rely on inadequate border controls and the corruption of border guards, police patrols or navy officers to facilitate their activities. The presence of diaspora communities can also determine the location of hotspots. Although major migrant smuggling hotspots are likely to remain the same in the near future, new ones may emerge in response to fluctuations in migratory flows, changes in policy or law enforcement countermeasures.

### Criminal Networks and Infrastructure

When examining the structure of migrant smuggling networks, the information available would strongly suggest that migrant smugglers and facilitators are organised in loose networks, stretched along the migratory routes. Information further reveals that the main organisers are mostly non-EU nationals with the same origin as the migrants. However, the networks they control would appear to be composed of both EU and non-EU nationals. Another finding is that facilitators who originate outside the EU and are active inside the EU have often acquired the nationality of the country in which they work, or have residence permits in those countries. Outside of the EU, facilitators typically support the movements of migrants with the same ethnic background.

The basic structure of migrant smuggling networks includes leaders who coordinate activities along a given route, organisers who manage activities locally through personal contacts, and opportunistic low-level facilitators who mostly assist organisers and may assist in recruitment activities. Members of migrant smuggling networks typically work autonomously with a number of lower-level contacts who are part of their personal network. Low-level contacts are used as drivers, crew members,

scouts, or recruiting agents. The complexity of the network is ultimately determined by the length and degree of risks involved in the route.

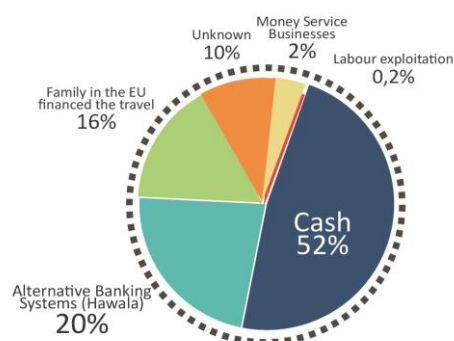
Cooperation among groups is usually based on need, particularly when one network has control over part of a migration route. Cooperation can also be more than occasional and make up an integral part of a network's regular business. Although no fighting between migrant smuggling networks was reported, the high demand for facilitation services surely results in some degree of competition among groups. Instead of violent competition, it is understood that a phenomenon of "oligopolisation" of the smuggling market is taking place, meaning that, in places where the criminal activities are largely concentrated, larger criminal networks will gradually attempt take over smaller opportunistic networks.

With regard to the criminal networks' "business model," migrants may be targeted for recruitment or, conversely, facilitators might be actively sought out by migrants who are in search of smuggling services. Unsurprisingly, recruiters tend to be of the same nationality as migrants. Aside from asylum centres, the recruitment of migrants might take place in a number of locations which are likely to be frequented by migrants. Social media is also an important tool widely used by migrants and recruiters alike to diffuse information about routes, services, and prices.

Corruption is another key facilitating factor in migrant smuggling. Categories of civil servants who may be susceptible to corruption include law enforcement and customs officers who are bribed to let vehicles go through border checks, and naval or military officers who receive payments for every migrant or ship they release. Given how lucrative estimates show migrant smuggling to be, it is not difficult to understand why perpetrators of this crime would be willing to part with some of the profits in order to stay in business. A rough estimate of the yearly turnover of migrant smuggling can be produced based on the number of migrants who entered the EU in 2015: approximately 1 million people entered the EU, most of whom were facilitated, and who paid an average of USD 3,200 – 6,500 (EUR 3,000-6,000). This would result in an average turnover of USD 5 to 6 billion in 2015.

## MEANS OF PAYMENT

Source: Europol data 2015



There is no single pattern regarding when the money is paid by the migrant and a smuggling fee can be paid beforehand, at each leg of the journey or upon arrival at the destination. Various payment methods are also used, the most common of which are cash and Hawala. Overall, it appears that money is sent mainly from destination countries, meaning that migrants tend to pay when they arrive at their preferred destination. Hawala is most widely used by criminal networks based in Turkey, Iraq or other parts of the Middle East and Asia. In some cases, migrants may have to spend several weeks or months in transit hubs in order to reimburse the facilitator for their travel or save money for the next leg of the journey.

Although migrant smuggling is a profitable business, smugglers need to ensure that they manage their assets in a way that allows them to enjoy the profits of criminal activities. Depending on the level of sophistication of the networks, several money laundering methods are used to place, layer and integrate the money into the legitimate economy. Available information shows that smugglers are increasingly using cash as the primary means of laundering their proceeds. Couriers are generally used to carry large amounts of money across borders, either overland (e.g. concealed in vehicle parts) or by air. In some cases, smugglers or their relatives own legal enterprises such as car dealerships, grocery stores, restaurants, or transport companies which can be used to launder criminal proceeds and provide a façade of legitimacy for their income. The criminal proceeds may be invested in real estate, high value goods, and legal businesses in both the countries of origin and the country of destination. Generally, smugglers adapt the methods with which they bring proceeds back to



their country of origin depending on the various regulations in place in their country.

Legal business structures are also used in many ways to facilitate irregular migration. However, it is not always clear to what extent they are complicit in smuggling activities or whether they are being abused. Vulnerable sectors or industries include catering, hotels, transport companies, shops, barbershops, internet cafés and travel agencies. These businesses may be used along the routes to either support the facilitation activities of the networks (for instance by providing logistical support) but also to launder the proceeds of smuggling activities.

### **Modi Operandi for Travel**

Facilitation services are solicited mainly by undocumented migrants or those who do not fit entry requirements, which leads to increased demand for fraudulent documents. In Western and Northern Europe, migrants make extensive use of public transports such as buses or trains, in which case they either don't use facilitation at all or they only obtain fraudulent documents to go through possible security checks aboard trains. Numerous testimonies of migrants describe how they travelled un-facilitated between Italy and France and made multiple attempts to cross the Channel to the UK on their own before seeking facilitation services.

Overland travel is by far the most used *modus operandi*, either to travel to popular departure points or for secondary movements. Sometimes parts of a journey can be done on foot, but this is usually limited to short walks to cross green borders between countries. In most cases, land transfers are carried out by car, bus, lorry or train, with some variations depending on the routes. In many cases, vehicles used by smugglers are registered with licence plates that are different than the country of residency of the owner, allowing for the links between owner and vehicle to be blurred in case of interception by law enforcement. Rented cars also tend to originate from a country which is different to where the criminal activity will take place.

Facilitation by sea is used on the South-Eastern migration route (via Greece), the Central Mediterranean entry route (via Italy), the South-Western entry route (via Spain) and the crossing of the Red Sea (via Yemen) or the Gulf of Aden.

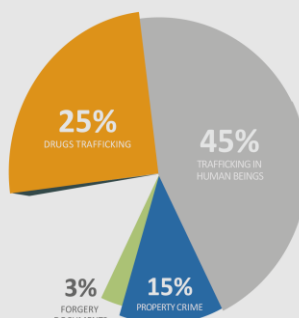
The most widely used means of transport in 2015 on short distances was the rubber dinghy, which usually measures 8-12 meters long and can carry an average of 30-40 migrants. In most cases, smugglers do not accompany migrants during the crossing from Turkey to Greece. Instead, they are simply instructed on how to manoeuvre the boats. Large vessels such as fishing boats or cargo ships may also be used on the Central Mediterranean route in combination with rubber dinghies.

Facilitation by air is currently less frequent than other *modi operandi* but is likely to become more attractive in the future due to increased controls on land and sea routes. Air travel may sometimes be the only transport means used by migrants but in most cases it is part of a larger facilitation package which includes transport by land or sea. Facilitation by air habitually includes the provision of fraudulent documents. **Documents can simply be rented out to migrants for use on a portion of the trip then taken back by the accompanying facilitator** once in the EU. Migrants may change documents several times during their trip, and the same documents may be used several times to facilitate different migrants. To increase the likelihood of success, facilitators might also consider using complex or unusual routes or the booking of return tickets.

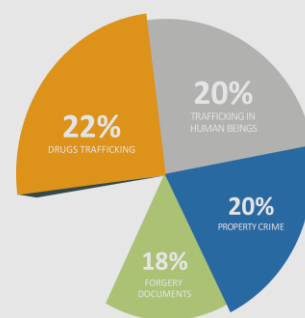
### **Polycriminality**

Some of the suspects involved in migrant smuggling are also involved in other types of crime such as drug trafficking, document forgery, property crime and trafficking in human beings. In 2015, over 220 smugglers were identified by Europol as being involved in more than one crime area. Out of these, 22% were linked to drug trafficking, 20% to trafficking in human beings, 20% to property crime and 18% to forgery of documents.

MIGRANT SMUGGLING SUSPECTS' LINKS TO OTHER CRIME AREAS  
Source: Europol data 2014



MIGRANT SMUGGLING SUSPECTS' LINKS TO OTHER CRIME AREAS  
Source: Europol data 2015



Intelligence collected in recent months suggests that polycriminality linked to migrant smuggling is increasing.

**Three types of links have been identified between migrant smuggling and other crimes:** the first link involves the criminal actors, who may shift towards migrant smuggling or add this activity to their criminal portfolio. The second link refers to the criminal infrastructure, as identical criminal infrastructures or routes can be used both for migrant smuggling and for the smuggling of drugs or other illicit goods. Thirdly, several other criminal activities are operated in support of or in relation to migrant smuggling, for example document fraud and labour exploitation.

From a geographical perspective, the smuggling routes used for facilitating migration are often very similar to the ones used for the trafficking of other commodities such as drugs, weapons or other goods. As a result, groups involved in the transport of one commodity may also use the same route and logistical means to transport migrants illegally across borders. The existence of common routes among commodities provides a natural incentive for groups to get involved in the trafficking of several commodities at the same time. Due to the peak in demand for migrant smuggling and other related facilitation services in 2015, some groups who were previously involved in the trafficking of other commodities seized the opportunity to increase their profits by also smuggling migrants. This would probably not represent additional risks for the smugglers because they are already familiar with the route and have countermeasures in place to avoid law enforcement attention.

Criminal activities can also be carried out in support of, or in relation to, migrant smuggling. The most obvious of these is the abuse of travel and identity documents. Between 2014 and 2015 the percentage of suspects linked to forgery of documents increased from 3% to 18%. A large variety of documents may be abused for the purpose of facilitating irregular migration. These include mainly travel documents (e.g. passports, visas), identity documents (e.g. ID cards) but also supporting documents (e.g. driving licences, refugee cards), “breeder” documents<sup>3</sup> (e.g. birth certificates, marriage records, work and

residence permits) and fixtures (e.g. stamps, stickers). Documents of certain nationalities may be more attractive than others because they allow their holders to access certain services or benefits that would not otherwise be available. Overall, the increased controls and restrictions on travel and entry in some EU countries will likely fuel the growing demand for fraudulent documents and result in an increase in prices.

The abuse of legal channels is another integral part of irregular migration but may not systematically be linked to smuggling. Migrants can obtain tourist visas on their own without the support of a facilitator, for instance. However, once in the EU, they will likely get in touch with a facilitator in order to obtain documents that will allow them to regularise their status from irregular over stayer to legal resident. Schengen visas (tourist, work or study) to EU countries are the most commonly abused legal channel as they enable irregular migrants to enter the EU and subsequently abscond and stay in the Schengen area illegally after their visa expires. The asylum system can also be misused by those irregular migrants who do not fall under the conditions of recognised refugee status, in order to obtain a number of financial and material advantages linked to a temporary residence document. Marriages of convenience are similarly an important *modus operandi* used to gain unlawful entry to the EU, and especially to legalise the stay of those remaining unlawfully.

Finally, irregular migrants are themselves vulnerable to exploitation by criminals and criminal networks both prior to and after their arrival in the EU. They may be exposed to labour exploitation, sexual exploitation or be forced to serve as drug mules or participate in the recruitment and smuggling of other migrants. An increase of cases can be expected in which women and minors, but also male adults, who may not be able to cover the financial costs of travel to the EU will be increasingly targeted by traffickers.

### **Migrant Smuggling, Terrorism and Violent Radicalisation**

With the continued migratory pressure on the EU combined with the recent terrorist attacks in the EU, there is a growing concern that illegal immigration routes and networks may be used by radicalised foreign fighters wishing to return to

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<sup>3</sup> Breeder documents are administrative documents that can be used as a basis to obtain other identification documents fraudulently (Oxford Dictionary).

the EU, or by terrorist organisations as a source of funding for their activities.

The links identified by Europol between terrorism and migrant smuggling primarily involve the opportunistic use of migrant smuggling networks and their logistics to support terrorism related activities. Even though Europol has not received concrete data to suggest that terrorist groups consistently rely on, or cooperate with organised crime groups for their illicit activities, it cannot be disregarded that terrorists may use migrant smugglers' resources to achieve their goals.

Some incidents have been identified involving terrorists who have made use of migratory flows to enter the EU. In the investigations into the 13 November Paris attacks, it was found that two of the attackers had entered the EU through Greece as part of the large influx of refugees from Syria.

### **Future Trends and Risks**

- Overall, an increase in the number of migrants trying to reach the EU is expected. In Libya alone, around 800, 000 migrants are waiting to travel to the EU.
- It is expected that, in 2016, more than 90% of the migrants moving towards the EU will be facilitated by smugglers. Within Europe an increase and change of facilitation services is likely due to the recent closure of the national borders of several European countries.
- There will likely be an 'oligopolisation' of the criminal market for facilitation where the criminal activities are largely concentrated and larger criminal networks will gradually take over smaller opportunistic networks. This phenomenon is already visible outside the EU (e.g. in Turkey, Egypt and Libya) and may extend further.
- Polycriminality linked to migrant smuggling will further increase:

It is expected that document counterfeiting will further increase as a supporting crime;

Cases of human exploitation, especially labour exploitation, may increase especially in the countries of destination of migrants;

The links between migrant smuggling and other types of crimes will remain stable (e.g. trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking, smuggling of goods);

- Forced criminality may increase in the EU, as migrants may be coerced into criminal activities by their facilitators. Unaccompanied minors may be further victimised, as they may be sexually exploited, forced to commit criminal activities, or else be involved by smugglers in the recruitment of other potential clients.
- Overall, it is anticipated that the abuse of legal systems for the purpose of status regularisation will increase. Irregular migrants who have already entered the EU may seek to obtain counterfeit breeder documents (such as fake birth certificate or false work permits) in order to acquire residency in the destination country.
- The demand for identity and travel documents of unlawful origin will increase, possibly with more demand for high-quality counterfeits. The market may also see the expansion of temporary lease or rental of documents which are used by migrants for one trip and sent back to the facilitators for re-use.
- Major facilitation hotspots will likely remain the same in the foreseeable future. However, new ones may emerge on a provisional basis according to fluctuating flows, policy changes, or law enforcement actions.



## Recommendations

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Europol and INTERPOL Operational Forum on Countering Migrant Smuggling Networks, the participants endorsed the following conclusions:

1. The Operational Forum on Countering Migrant Smuggling Networks organised jointly by INTERPOL and Europol in Lyon on 15 and 16 October 2015 and in The Hague on 22 and 23 February 2016 has significantly contributed to the establishment of contacts, reinforcement of trust and enhancement of operational cooperation between the countries of origin, transit and destination affected by the current migration flows towards Europe, and the alignment of INTERPOL and Europol's activities in their endeavour to ensure, within their respective memberships, optimal investigative support to law enforcement authorities fighting against migrant smuggling networks.
2. As agreed at the 1<sup>st</sup> Operational Forum in Lyon in October 2015, Europol and INTERPOL elaborated a joint report on migrant smuggling networks affecting Europe. The report provides an overall intelligence picture by analysing the criminal infrastructure of smuggling networks, highlighting the main *modi operandi* used by facilitators, identifying hotspots for criminal services, analysing the financial flows and assets of supporting networks, assessing future threats and risks and proposing a list of recommendations for future operational actions. The intelligence gaps identified and operational key areas to target were discussed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Operational Forum in February 2016 with a view to complete and finalise the report. The final report will be distributed to the law enforcement authorities of the member countries to support their strategic analysis and guide coordinated operational actions. An unclassified summary of the report will be made public.
3. Taking into account the findings of the joint Europol-INTERPOL report on migrant smuggling, in particular in the areas of illicit money flows and money laundering, the use of social media by smuggling networks, the link between migrant smuggling and other crime areas such as trafficking in human beings and child exploitation, tackling fraudulently obtained travel and identity documents and patterns of travel facilitations, the participants in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Operational Forum in February 2016 considered the possibilities for concrete operational actions.
4. The proposals for operational actions identified in the workshops of the Operational Forum will be refined and implemented by the law enforcement authorities of the countries concerned with support from INTERPOL and Europol. Operational actions taking into account links to other crime areas are planned to be launched within the framework of the EMPACT Joint Action Days 2016 under the EU Policy Cycle for serious and organised international crime.
5. The launch by Europol of the *European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC)* in the framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Operational Forum on 22 February 2016, following the European Agenda on Migration and the invitation by the Council of the EU from November 2015 "to strengthen Europol's capacity to support EU Member States in better preventing and fighting against migrant smuggling" is an important step towards strengthening the fight against migrant smuggling networks. The EMSC will provide enhanced operational and strategic support to EU Member States, including through the deployment of Europol Mobile Investigation Support Teams (EMIST) and Europol Mobile Analytical Support Teams (EMAST) on the spot, and in close

cooperation with INTERPOL and relevant EU partners, to other affected partner countries.

6. The INTERPOL *Specialist Operational Network (ISON) against Migrant Smuggling* has been created. It is currently comprised of 86 experts from 71 source, transit, and destination countries, and in close cooperation with Europol, with the objective of increasing the real-time exchange of law enforcement information worldwide in order to more effectively investigate migrant smugglers and dismantle the criminal organisations to which they may belong. Member countries are encouraged to join and make use of the network.
7. The organisation of INTERPOL INFRA (*International Fugitives Round-up and Arrest*) Operations, named 'HYDRA,' to assist member countries in locating and apprehending wanted criminals involved in people smuggling, to promote the global exchange of information concerning their whereabouts, to enhance networking between fugitive investigators and specialised units, and to promote the use of INTERPOL Notices and diffusions. Cooperation with Europol will be carried out where appropriate.

8. Law enforcement authorities in member countries are encouraged to further improve the cross-border exchange of information on criminal networks related to migrant smuggling, and to make optimal use of the tools and capabilities provided by INTERPOL and Europol.



## Methodology

This report relies on information available at or collected by Europol and INTERPOL as well as relevant open sources.

The findings in this report emerge from the thorough analysis of a broad range of sources and provide the most detailed assessment ever produced on migrant smuggling. This report is unique in its blending of intelligence from EU and non-EU sources:

- Over 11,500 contributions on migrant smuggling provided to Europol in 2014 and 2015;
  - Intelligence on nearly 40,000 suspects, 10,000 of which were contributed in 2015;
  - Over 1,500 international investigations supported by Europol;
  - 1,500 debriefings of migrants collected by Frontex and EU Member States;
  - Over 140,000 communications from 2015;
  - Operational and strategic reports from Europol and INTERPOL;
  - Questionnaires provided by INTERPOL's National Central Bureaus;
  - Geographical information (addresses and GPS data);
  - Intelligence on more than 100 suspicious vessels;
  - Social media analysis from Europol's Internet Referral Unit;
  - Europol's daily monitoring report on migrant smuggling (EPMT);
  - Reports from partner agencies (Frontex, EASO, UN agencies);
  - Open Source Intelligence (OSINT).
- A combination of several analytical tools was used to explore this data set:
- A criminal profile analysis was made on 10,000 suspects to define their origin, their roles within migrant smuggling networks, and their links among each other (communication);
  - A detailed comparative analysis was performed on a sample of 522 networks in order to determine their composition and structure as well as the profile and relation of the members;
  - Social network analysis was carried out on the largest networks to identify how widely they spread, how they are connected to each other, how the links between the cells are established, and who are the main organisers;
  - Qualitative research on 490 investigations supported by Europol was done to provide context for the findings of the aforementioned exercises and to provide case examples;
  - Geographical analysis was used to map key locations linked to migrant smuggling and to identify criminal hotspots.



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