

**February 2023**

The European Union (EU) faces constant challenges to its internal security. Security threats such as terrorism, organised crime, cybercrime, the drugs trade and violent extremism are increasingly cross-border, interconnected and digital in nature. The coronavirus pandemic and growing geopolitical instability have exacerbated some of these trends and reinforced the need for more cooperation. The European Parliament has helped shape the EU's security policy, always insisting on the need to uphold fundamental rights, equality and the rule of law. This topical digest offers a sample of recent publications by the European Parliamentary Research Service on challenges to the EU's internal security and what the Union is doing to tackle them.

Strengthening the EU's internal security

Revision of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings

Briefing by Marie-Astrid Huemer, EPRS, January 2023

Trafficking in human beings remains a highly lucrative crime, affecting thousands of individuals, primarily women and girls who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Despite progress on implementing measures against them, traffickers remain largely unpunished, as do the users of services from victims of trafficking. This impunity has raised growing concern about the effectiveness of Directive 2011/36/EU. This briefing appraises the practical implementation of the directive in light of the expected European Commission proposal for its revision.

Stepping up the EU's efforts to tackle corruption

Study by Meenakshi Fernandes and Lenka Jancova, EPRS, January 2023

Corruption poses a significant threat in the EU and can erode democracy and the rule of law, especially during times of crisis. The EU can do more to tackle corruption and curb its negative impacts on society. This 'cost of non-Europe' report presents a quantitative analysis of the potential gains from further EU action to tackle corruption, estimating that it could generate up to €58.5 billion a year. Other gains could also be expected in terms of reinforcing democracy and promoting international credibility and long-term growth.

Combating corruption in the European Union

Briefing by Piotr Bakowski, EPRS, December 2022

With all its Member States affected by the problem to some extent, corruption is a major challenge for the EU. The EU has gradually adopted laws addressing a range of corruption-related issues. This legal framework remains patchy though, with the absence of minimum rules defining criminal offences and sanctions in the area of corruption one major issue. The European Parliament has adopted numerous resolutions on corruption, addressing, not least, the impact of COVID-19, systemic challenges to the rule of law, and deficiencies in the EU's fight against corruption.

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Revision of Council Directive 2004/82/EC on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data

Briefing by Marie-Astrid Huemer, EPRS, December 2022

Air carriers are obliged to communicate passenger data (Directive 2004/82/EC on advance passenger information or API) and passenger name records (Directive (EU)2016/681 on passenger name records or PNR). This is to improve EU border control and migration management and, more specifically, to fight terrorism and serious crime. To make EU legislation more coherent and support harmonisation between Member States, the Commission wants to align the API Directive with the PNR Directive. This briefing assesses the practical implementation of the API Directive in light of the expected Commission proposal for its revision.

Combating child sexual abuse online

Briefing by María Del Mar Negreiro Achiaga, EPRS, December 2022

The volume of online child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) and frequency of grooming activities, increasingly targeting younger children, is rising sharply. On 11 May 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for mandatory legislation to combat this escalating problem. The proposal would require interpersonal communication services and others to search proactively for CSAM materials and grooming activities targeting children. It also provides for the establishment of a new EU centre to support implementation and supervision.

Preventing radicalisation in the European Union: How EU policy has evolved

In-depth analysis by Piotr Bakowski, EPRS, November 2022

The EU's counter-radicalisation policy dates back to 2004, when the term 'radicalisation' was used in a public EU document for the first time. Since then, policy-makers have gone a long way from focusing almost exclusively on jihadist terrorism to adopting a much broader view to take account of various forms of 'violent extremism'. The paper describes this evolution and presents the EU's legal, institutional and financial frameworks, recent policy assessments and EU policy developments. It also explores the issues currently at stake, as extremists continue to seek ways to further their cause and the EU continues its efforts to prevent them.

Understanding the EU response to organised crime

Briefing by Katrien Luyten, EPRS, September 2022

Since the early 1990s, the EU has made substantial progress on protecting its citizens. Nevertheless, criminal organisations continue to pose major risks to the EU's internal security. Organised crime is an increasingly dynamic and complex phenomenon, with new criminal markets and modi operandi emerging, benefiting from globalisation and new technologies in particular. Recognising the severity of the problem and the need for coordinated action, the EU has initiated several measures to encourage closer cooperation between Member States. It has also adopted common legal, judicial and investigative frameworks to address organised crime.

Strengthening Europol's mandate

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, EPRS, July 2022

In December 2020, the Commission proposed a regulation to reinforce the mandate of Europol, the EU law enforcement cooperation agency. The proposal's main aim was to make Europol's cooperation with private parties more effective. It also sought to respond to the agency's 'big data challenge', by providing a legal basis for processing large and complex datasets, including personal data of data subjects not related to a crime. Another goal was to reinforce Europol's role in relation to research and innovation for law enforcement. The proposal was signed into law on 8 June 2022 and entered into force 20 days later.

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Revision of Directive 2008/99/EC: Protection of the environment through criminal law

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig with Romy Louisa Boden, EPRS, June 2022

In December 2021, the Commission proposed a revision of Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law. The proposal sought to clarify some of the terms contained in the directive. It includes an updated list of environmental crime offences, harmonised sanction types and levels, measures to strengthen international investigation and prosecution, improvements to the collection of statistical data and measures to improve national enforcement chains. Ultimately, the revision aims to increase the effectiveness of investigation and prosecution of environmental criminal offences across the EU.

Proposal to amend Directive (EU) 2019/1153: Single access point to bank account registries

Briefing by Ann Neville, EPRS, May 2022

The Commission's proposed amendment to Directive (EU) 2019/1153 would allow designated competent authorities responsible for the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences to access and search Member States' centralised bank account registers through a single access point. This would enable them to establish almost immediately whether an individual holds bank accounts in other Member States and identify to which Member States they should make a formal request for additional information.

Revision of Directive 2014/42/EU on the freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime and proposal for a new directive on asset recovery offices

Briefing by Marie-Astrid Huemer, EPRS, May 2022

Confiscation of the instrumentalities and proceeds of crime is a key tool for depriving criminals of ill-gotten gains that they might reinvest in further criminal activities. Directive 2014/42/EU on the freezing and confiscation of the instrumentalities and proceeds of crime was adopted in 2014 to harmonise the rules by introducing minimum standards. In its 2021 work programme, the Commission announced its intention to revise the directive. This briefing assesses the practical implementation of the directive in light of the expected proposal for its revision.

Understanding EU policy on firearms trafficking

Briefing by Ann Neville, EPRS, February 2022

Precise figures about the numbers of illegal firearms in the EU are lacking, but several indicators point to their widespread availability and accessibility. Even people who lack extensive criminal connections can access illicit firearms owing to increased online trafficking and the availability of easy-to-convert weapons. The EU is actively involved in addressing the threat posed by illegal firearms by means of legislative and policy measures, and provides Member States with operational assistance in the fight against firearms trafficking.

eprs@europarl.europa.eu | www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (Internet) |

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