



Bundeskriminalamt



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The different Faces of Organised Crime

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The different faces of organised crime

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Abstract

Technological developments, globalisation, economic crisis, well-developed infrastructures and altered general conditions resulting from the EU enlargement are the reasons why Organised Crime (OC) is subject to constant change.

OC causes enormous damage. The impact of these crime forms, which are considered to be particularly antisocial, is experienced throughout the world.

OC is spreading, showing many different faces. It increasingly seeks to achieve its main objective, profit maximisation, by taking advantage of constantly developing technologies.

The membership structure within criminal organisations and their fields of activity change as constantly as criminal-geographic areas, which vary depending on the type of crime.

Increasing internationalisation continues to be a distinctive and significant feature of OC.

The technological possibilities enable OC to act increasingly flexible, innovative and conspiratorial. As a result, the law enforcement authorities are faced with ever greater challenges, in particular encrypted communication, the role of the Internet and the management of big data.

These developments entail an enormous (law enforcement) effort as well as complex and very resource-intensive investigations.

OC has many different faces and manifestations. We are no longer solely dealing with OC in its "traditional" form, which consolidates its position in society's structure. Nowadays, there is an increasing number of criminal groups, for whom, in the light of their intention to maximise profits as well as re-invest and legalise assets obtained, a sense of togetherness of their members or common roots are no longer of importance. These criminal groups are characterised by a higher degree of heterogeneity and increasing hybridisation.

A further trend is the occurrence of criminal groups that show a high OC potential, but are not considered OC groups in the sense of our strict OC definition in Germany. As a local phenomenon, volume crime nowadays can be the result of globally organised criminal networks. Since OC crime intermingles with gang crime the dividing lines between the two phenomena become more and more blurred and, thus, impede a precise assessment of the situation. It is necessary to give up narrow points of view, including strict definitions of fields of crime, when describing the situation in such a way that the threat potential is adequately conveyed.

The changes resulting in particular from technological developments pose a strategic challenge to the law enforcement authorities.

Therefore, an effective fight against serious and organised crime is only possible by an equally flexible adaption of suppression strategies, by setting priorities and acting jointly with partners in the European and international security architecture as well as by co-operating with the business sector, the research sector, society and the political sector. We have to set our own network against criminal networks.