# Enhancing police cooperation in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; enhancing Europol’s support to preventing and combating such crimes

2023/0438(COD) - 28/11/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to reinforce Europol's role and inter-agency cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: migrant smuggling to and within the EU is reaching new heights, fuelled by increasing demand due to emerging and deepening crises, most notably economic recessions, environmental emergencies caused by climate change, as well as conflicts and demographic pressure in many third countries. It is estimated that more than 90% of the irregular migrants who reach the EU make use of the services of smugglers, mostly organised in criminal groups.

Fighting and preventing migrant smuggling is one of the priorities of the European Union and crucial to addressing irregular migration in a comprehensive way. Criminal networks take advantage of people’s despair and use land, sea, and air routes to facilitate irregular migration, putting people’s lives at risk and seeking in every way to maximise their profits.

In addition, the Commission is proposing a Directive to upgrade its legislative framework, by laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the EU

CONTENT: this proposed Regulation lays down rules to enhance police cooperation and the support of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) in preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, by:

- ***Strengthening the coordination at EU level***: the proposal establishes the European Centre Against Migrant Smuggling as a Union centre of specialised expertise for combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. The Centre will be supported by Member States, Eurojust, Frontex and the Commission. The Centre will monitor trends in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, produce annual reports, strategic analyses, threat assessments and situational updates, as well as investigative and operational actions.

- ***Inter-agency cooperation***: the Centre will be supported by Member States' liaison officers, as well as Eurojust and the Frontex and Eurojust liaison officers, who should be posted to Europol.

- ***Improving information sharing***: Member States' obligations to share information with Europol on migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings will be reinforced. Europol deployment can already take place in third countries. The new Centre will identify cases of migrant smuggling that may require cooperation with non-EU countries, including by exchanging personal data in a case-by-case basis.

- ***Reinforcing resources***: Member States will need to designate specialised services to counter migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, connect these services to secure information exchange network application (SIENA).

- ***Stronger Europol support through staff deployments***: the proposal updates the current legislation with concepts of task forces and Europol deployments for operational support. These are advanced tools for coordination and analytical, operational, technical, and forensic support to Member States, which have already successfully been carried out by Europol. In addition, a reserve pool of national experts will be set up, that can be placed at the immediate disposal of Europol for deployments in Member States.

- ***Enhancing cooperation between Europol and third countries***: the legislative initiative sets out rules to better involve Member States' migration liaison officers deployed in third countries in enhancing the sharing of information by third countries to counter migrant smuggling and supply this information to Europol, directly or through the Europol national unit, using SIENA.