

Organised crime



Risk assessment (assessed 2024): The trend of organised crime posing a threat to national security remains stable. There is an increased probability of the illegal proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and strategic goods.

CAUSES

Organised crime networks are particularly active in cross-border drug, cyber, economic, and environmental crime, as well as human trafficking, the provision of criminal services, and support for terrorism. There is an increasing shift towards white-collar crime (e.g. fraud). Organised crime networks are flexible, evolving, and adapting, while avoiding being investigated by law enforcement.

- ✓ Two thirds of serious and organised crime offenders in Europe are regularly involved in corrupt activities. More than 80% of criminal networks use legitimate business structures.
- ✓ Around 60% of criminal networks operating in the EU use violence in their criminal activities. Violent crime has become more common in Europe.
- ✓ Around 40% of criminal networks operating in the EU are linked to illicit drug trafficking, which remains a major source of income. Drug trafficking is also one of the main sources of income for organised crime in Estonia.
- ✓ The line between cybercrime and other crime is blurring. Virtual cyberspace is being exploited to commit so-called classic crimes such as fraud, selling drugs, and more.
- ✓ Although organised crime maintains a low profile in Estonia, random and spontaneous violent crimes are still committed. Proceeds are also earned from economic crime, human trafficking, and theft.

THREATS

- ✓ The level of organised crime in Estonia has remained relatively low. A future threat is the possible expansion of international criminal networks into Estonia.

- ✓ The classic organisational cultures of organised crime are being replaced, including in Estonia, by modern criminal associations developing flexible management styles. With this change comes the risk that criminal activity will become more effective and harder to deter, leading to increased financial losses.
- ✓ Organised criminals are increasingly moving into cyberspace. This carries the risk that more and more vulnerable groups in society, with below average digital literacy, will become victims.
- ✓ Due to the war in Ukraine, weapons and ammunition may also fall into the hands of Estonian criminal groups, which could threaten the security of society.
- ✓ The biggest negative impact of organised crime on society comes from drug trafficking, which is the biggest source of income for criminal organisations and continues to pose a threat to public health.
- ✓ Due to our proximity to Russia, which has a high level of organised crime, we also must consider potential impacts from the east. The special services of the Russian Federation use criminals and organised crime to gather cross-border intelligence, undermine the target state, and given the chance, stage a coup.

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Last updated on 20.11.2025