

## POWERFUL MEXICAN CRIMINAL SYNDICATES ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP THEIR EUROPEAN DRUGS BUSINESS

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As part of its responsibility to monitor developments in the threat from organised crime in Europe, Europol has gathered intelligence identifying that Mexican criminal groups are attempting to establish themselves as key players in the European drugs market.

Over the last decade, Mexican organised crime groups have developed a central role in the international organised crime landscape. They have become global market coordinators in trafficking cocaine for the European and North American markets, and in the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs for the European, North American and Asian markets.

In addition, groups such as the powerful and violent criminal syndicate, *Los Zetas*, are reportedly involved in trafficking human beings for sexual exploitation from North East Europe to Mexico. Mexican criminal groups are also trafficking firearms from South East Europe to barter with criminals involved in the cocaine trade in Central South America.

An attempt by the *Sinaloa Cartel* to settle in Europe, to develop their wholesale cocaine distribution business, was recently averted by a timely, intelligence-led law enforcement operation. Despite this, Mexican organised crime groups are expected to continue expanding their roles along the supply chain towards Europe to increase their profits.

These criminal groups have an extremely violent operating culture, however only an isolated number of violent incidents in Europe - including a murder attempt - have so far been attributed to the groups.

"We do not want the level of violence and brutality which we see in Mexico mirrored in Europe. Together with our law enforcement partners we will continue our efforts to tackle the criminals who are active within the illegal drug markets and ensure that Mexican organised crime groups cannot gain a foothold in Europe," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

Europol's latest threat notice (*insert link to 'public version'*) on the impact of Mexican organised crime groups in Europe has been disseminated to Europol's cooperation partners in the EU and beyond.



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