TRANSCRIME
Joint Research Centre on Innovation and Crime

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

Two opposite trends in Europe? Major internationalization of O.C. and minor effectiveness of asset recovery and confiscation measures

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Europol Methodology and dataset

This mapping exercise on the most threatening criminal networks active in and affecting the EU was conducted in four steps. First, Member States and third countries identified the most threatening criminal networks for the EU's internal security at national level. Second, the characteristics of these groups were described. Third and most importantly, the key characteristics that heighten the threat level of criminal networks were assessed. Finally, based on these deepened insights, we highlight key areas to target in strategic, tactical, operational and proactive approaches.

EU Member States and third countries identified a total of 821 most threatening criminal networks active in the European Union, and affecting the region's internal security. The total memberschip of the identified networks **exceeds 25 000 individuals**.

These criminal networks were selected based on criteria around the threat they pose.[5] This overview of 821 most threatening criminal networks is a unique feat for the European Union as it brings together details on their functioning and operations in a uniform way by all contributing countries.

These networks and the suspects they are composed of are **active in a range of crime areas, such as drug trafficking, frauds, property crime, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (THB), among others**. Drug trafficking clearly stands out as a key activity – **half (50 %) of the most threatening criminal networks are involved in drug trafficking, either standalone or as part of a portfolio of activities. One third (36 %) have a unique focus on drug trafficking**.

Trends around the most threatening criminal networks were identified through the analysis of the full dataset of 821 networks.

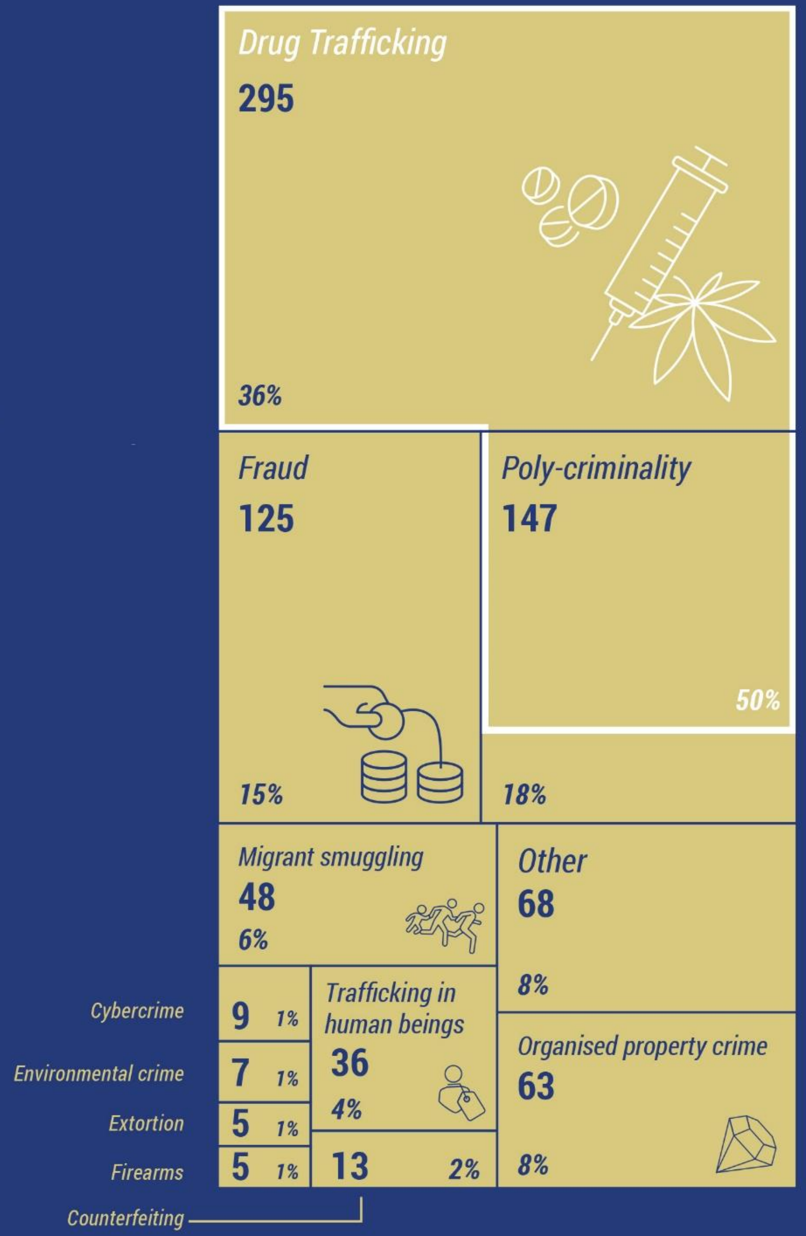
5. The classification of criminal networks as most threatening and the criteria used for this assessment were left to the discretion of the national authorities. The same applies for the number of networks provided.

821

most threatening criminal networks active in/affecting the EU identified

+25 000

Total membership of the identified most threatening criminal networks exceeds 25 000 individuals



Internationalisation of O.C. in Europe and beyond (Europol Data)

“The 821 most threatening criminal networks affect all 27 EU Member States. The majority have a reach that extends beyond the EU, particularly to countries in the EU neighbourhood, but also more distant locations. This global reach is also reflected in ***criminal networks’ composition, with 112 nationalities represented among the members of the 821 most threatening criminal networks. 68 % of networks are composed of members from multiple nationalities,*** *while 32 % have members from only one country. Multinational criminal networks are often composed of nationalities of neighbouring countries or of nationalities with large diaspora”.*

From: Europol DECODING THE EU’S MOST THREATENING CRIMINAL NETWORKS,2024

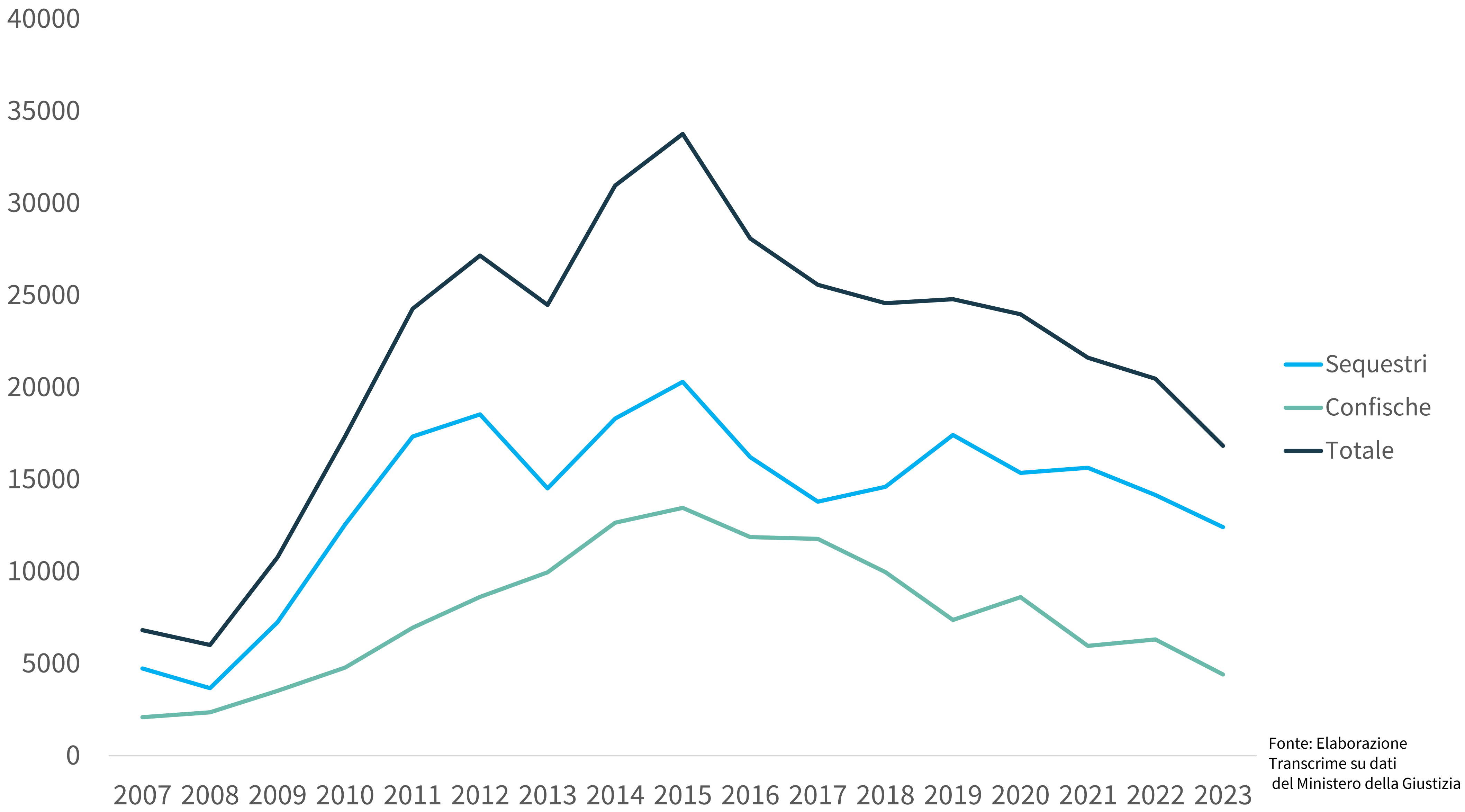
Is there a nexus between more internationalisation of O.C. and number of confiscation measures inside a single country?

I think there is at least for Italy but we need to check for other EU MS. My hypothesis is that we are in front of a new phenomenon: criminal organisations invest outside their jurisdiction reducing the law enforcement risk (conviction and confiscation) and less inside the jurisdiction where they traditionally operate.

Considering the numbers of requests for asset recovery and confiscation abroad that Matteo Anastasio will show in the next presentation, thanks to data provided by EU Commission, the Italian Ministry of Justice and Col. Ribaudo from the Italian Aro, we **can state that risk for criminal organizations operating in Europe is minimal if compared with the risk in the country where the criminal organizations traditionally operate.**

The two trends of internationalization of crime and confiscation of its assets in the country of origin of O.C. go, at least for Italy, in opposite direction. Let us look to Italian data.

Changes in the number of freezing and confiscation measures in Italy (2007-2023)



Fonte: Elaborazione Transcrime su dati del Ministero della Giustizia

What about the other EU MS?

Thanks