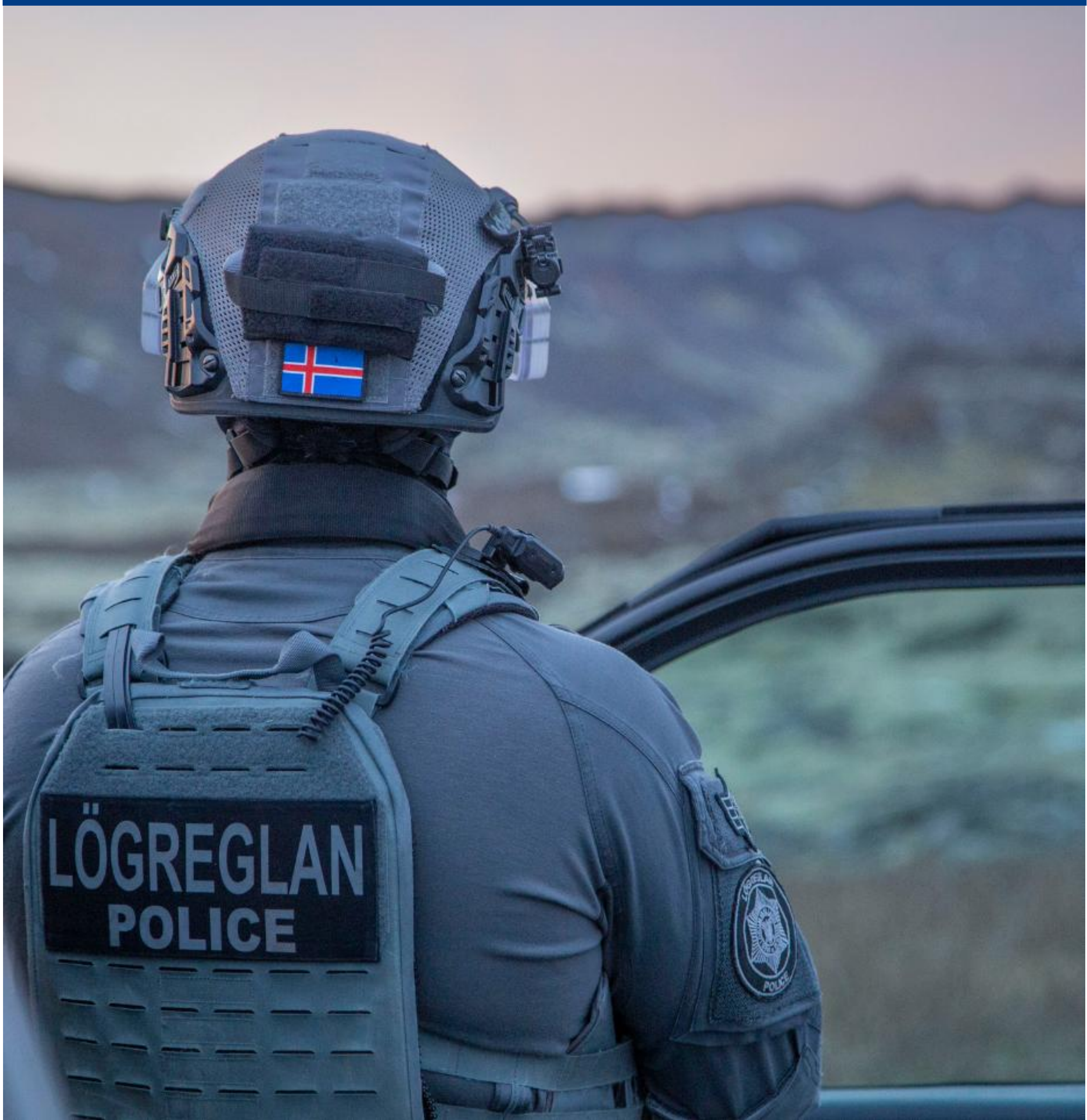
January 2026

# Safer Iceland

## Policy and Actions against Organised Crime

**Government Offices**
Ministry of Justice



**Safer Iceland – Policy and Actions against Organised Crime**



Ministry of Justice· Skúlagata 4 ·

101 Reykjavík

Tel. 545 9000 · dmr@dmr.is

January 2026

**www.stjornarradid.is**

# Contents

# Preface by the Minister

The national government's platform clearly states its intention to increase public safety and to tackle organised crime.

The Icelandic government is taking targeted steps to gain the upper hand in the fight against organised crime.

This policy is the first of its kind in Iceland. The policy and actions provide a comprehensive view of what needs to be done and lay the basis for a concerted effort.

Much work is needed, on many fronts. And collaboration, both domestically and internationally, is the key to success.

We need to strengthen analytics. We need to reinforce criminal justice. We need to work across police departments to an increasing extent. We need to consider modernising legal procedure. We need technology and innovation. We need to increase the flow of information and strengthen international co-operation. We need active crime prevention and authorisation to intervene.

Developments in Nordic countries unfortunately reveal how criminal organisations prey on young people and induce them to commit crimes for payment. This must be prevented in Iceland. Furthermore, special remedies are needed for young offenders, including realistic exit routes for them and rehabilitation. We also need to place major emphasis on crime prevention locally, strengthening co-operation and communication with municipalities, schools and other parties.

Finally, I would like to mention international co-operation. Organised crime respects no borders, making it necessary to strengthen collaboration between law enforcement authorities across borders. Through the Schengen Agreement, Iceland has extensive co-operation with foreign and international law enforcement agencies. Our co-operation and participation in Europol and Interpol is also invaluable.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this work. However, these are only the first steps. the fight is far from over.

*Þorbjörg S. Gunnlaugsdóttir, Minister of Justice*

# Introduction

Organised crime has established itself as one of the main threats to public security and the fundamental pillars of European societies. It is also increasingly linked to other threats, such as terrorism and actions by foreign hostile states.[1] Organised criminal groups finance their activities through a variety of illegal activities, including money laundering to put illicit funds into circulation. This creates a hidden financial system that weakens the economy of countries and undermines trust in government and public services.

This policy discusses the priorities and actions the government considers necessary to combat organised crime in Iceland. The policy is intended to set out a clear vision for the future and ensure that the authorities have the tools necessary to combat organised crime. It seeks to create a framework for the police and other authorities in their work to curb and investigate organised crime in this country.

The policy is based on the assumption that the authorities' priorities and actions take into account the behavioural patterns of criminal groups, the threats they pose, and the crimes they commit and can be considered the focus of their activities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring co-ordinated policy development and prioritising actions in order to enable authorities to act as a unified whole to combat organised crime.

The policy was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in consultation with police departments represented on the Police Steering Group on Organised Crime and Iceland's liaison officers at EUROPOL and EUROJUST. Drafting of the policy was based on police analytical data on the state of organised crime in Iceland and the experience of neighbouring countries. The intention is to have this policy support the government's current policies and action plans in related areas, i.e. in measures against money laundering and the financing of terrorism and of weapons of mass destruction,[2] the policy and national plan on border issues[3] and the government's action plan against human trafficking.[4] It also lays out key actions intended to implement the contents of the policy, which will be complemented by a special action plan under the responsibility of the ministry.

[1] See, for instance: EUROPOL SOCTA report, 2025.

[2] For more details, see: Actions against Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism and of Weapons of Mass Destruction. September 2025.

[3] For more details, see: Government Policy on Border Issues. November 2024. National Plan for Integrated Border Management 2024-2028. September 2024.

[4] For more details, see: Government Priorities for Actions against Human Trafficking and other Forms of Exploitation. March 2019.

# 1. Government Policy

## 1.1 General points

Organised crime is a complex phenomenon which is manifest in a wide variety of forms, making it difficult for societies to eradicate it. Its main characteristics, however, are that more than one offence is committed over a specific period of time, in a regular manner, by more than one person, with the aim of profiting in one way or another. Organised crime is thus distinguished from traditional crimes, which are generally committed on impulse or for short-term gain. Different and more specific measures need to be taken to prevent and investigate offences related to organised crime.

The international community has made some progress in its efforts to combat organised crime, including developing common standards. The most notable of these is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the organisation in New York on 15 November 2000, often referred to as the Palermo Convention. It defines the concept of organised criminal groups specifically[5], among other things, prescribing the investigative resources that states must have at their disposal to counter such groups. Iceland ratified the agreement in 2009 following amendments to national law. Among other things, a special provision was added in Art. 175 a. of the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940, on the criminal liability of conspiring with another person to commit an offence liable to at least 4 years' imprisonment, when the commission of the offence is part of the activities of a criminal organisation. Iceland has also been a member of the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) since 1991. Its main objective is to combat money laundering and pressure states to ensure that they have strong and effective defences in their efforts in this area, as money laundering is one of the main by-products of organised crime.

International law enforcement agencies such as Interpol and Europol are playing an increasingly important role in the fight against organised crime. Their work is based, among other things, on co-ordinating actions between countries, sharing information and conducting specialised analyses that support authorities in member states in dealing with the ever-changing manifestations of this type of criminal activity.

To strengthen resilience and co-ordinate actions, numerous countries, including other Nordic countries, have established specialised offices or units operating at a national level and tasked with combating organised criminality and related crimes.

[5] In the Convention, the term covers an organised group of three or more individuals who operate over a period of time with the intention of committing serious offences in order to obtain financial or other material gain. Law enforcement agencies also rely on Europol's SOCTA approach, which focuses on the threat and capabilities of criminal groups, regardless of their formal structure, and also considers loosely connected networks, their adaptability and the abuse of public systems.

In Iceland, however, the police are organised in such a way that responsibility for the investigation of crimes related to organised crime is determined by where the crime is committed. This means that it is necessary for police actions to be co-ordinated. To this end, a steering group was established in 2020, consisting of representatives from the offices of the National Commissioner of Police, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the Suðurnes Police Commissioner and the District Prosecutor. with the role of ensuring national police co-ordination to combat organised crime and improve information sharing between police districts. The steering group has been operating since that time and provides support to police commissioners in matters related to organised crime. It also works to strengthen co-operation between police commissioners, co-ordinate procedures, increase education for police commissioners and maintain an overview of the issue. In 2023, the steering group's activities were further strengthened by increasing the number of offices it represents, as well as including Iceland's liaison officers at Europol and Eurojust.[6] The Director of Public Prosecutions, who is in charge of criminal investigations in this country, was also tasked with setting procedural rules for police co-operation to combat organised crime, including the activities of the steering group. According to current rules, a representative of the District Prosecutor's office chairs the group. In 2024, the activities and role of the steering group were enshrined in law through amendments to the Police Act.

## 1.2 Organised crime in Iceland

The scope of organised crime in Iceland has increased significantly in recent years and decades. This can be clearly seen, among other things, in the fact that criminal groups, both foreign and domestic, have put down roots here and are committing various serious crimes in an organised manner. The activities of these groups have steadily increased, and conflicts and tensions can be identified between individual groups, which have resulted in further crimes, including in the form of serious violence and weapons violations.

Regular reports from the National Security Unit (NSU) of the National Commissioner of Police, which assess the danger posed by organised crime, confirm this trend. The conclusion of the NSU's 2021 report stated that the risk posed by organised crime in Iceland was considered very high. Increased access by criminal groups to foreign drug markets, their use of digital technology, and diverse patterns of criminality, including in the form of human trafficking and people smuggling, are among the main factors that led to the report's conclusions. This development naturally means that it is more difficult for the authorities to deal with the problem, and investigations into organised crime are placing increasing pressure on the police, requiring more time and manpower.

[6]The following offices now also have representatives in the steering group: the offices of the Commissioners of Police in South Iceland and in Northeast Iceland, and Iceland's liaison officers at Europol and Eurojust are expected to have seats in the group.

### 1.2.1 Report of the National Security Unit of the National Commissioner of Police of 14 November 2025

The newly published NSU report of November last year provides a detailed account of where and how organised crime causes the greatest harm to society, including by taking into account developments in other countries. It also identifies which categories of crimes should be the focus of attention when considering measures against organised crime in Iceland. The overall conclusion of the report is that organised crime in Iceland has become internationally connected, multifaceted and broadly comparable to that found elsewhere in the Nordic countries.

From the content and findings of the report it is evident that organised crime in Iceland has taken on a more complex and dangerous form in recent years. The number of active criminal groups has doubled in the last decade, from around ten in 2015 to some twenty by 2025. This development reflects the increased international networking of criminal groups and greater specialisation. Icelandic groups appear to have direct connections to other countries in Europe, South America and Asia. At the same time, the professionalism and adaptability of these groups have increased and their activities have become more focused and visible. The harm caused by these groups is evident in many areas of society and affects security, the economy and societal well-being.

**The impact of organised crime in Iceland**

The impact on *societal safety* is manifested, among other things, in the increased frequency and severity of violence. Violence for payment, where youths and individuals in a vulnerable situation are recruited to commit acts of violence for payment, has emerged as a new and serious manifestation of this development. This has undermined the public's sense of security and reinforced the perception that organised crime has become part of Icelandic reality. In addition, the groups are using technological advances, encrypted communication programs and international networks to organise their offences more efficiently than before.

The *economic impact* of organised crime mainly consists of extensive money laundering, which disrupts normal markets and increases the risk of corruption. Criminal groups utilise legally established companies, real estate transactions, virtual assets and complex financial structures to hide the origin of illicit proceeds and maintain their profits. These activities weaken the competitive position of law-abiding businesses, reduce government tax revenues and create the risk of criminal gang funds being mixed into legitimate business activities. This not only involves financial losses, but also undermines trust in public administration and the business community.

Human trafficking, people smuggling and prostitution, where foreign nationals in vulnerable situations are exploited for profit, are also prominent manifestations of organised crime. Iceland has now become a destination for human-trafficking-related activities. Victims are often lured to the country with promises of work or a better life, but end up in debt bondage, oppression and restrictions on their freedom. In addition to causing great personal harm, these offences also result in increased strain on social services and the criminal justice system.

**Structure and nature of criminal groups**

The structure of criminal groups in Iceland varies. The most common are loosely connected groups of individuals who co-operate on specific projects, often with a clear division of labour but without a formal hierarchy. There are also hierarchical organisations with their own rules and symbols, similar to the motorcycle groups Hells Angels, Bandidos, and Outlaws. They all operate in Iceland with direct links to Nordic and European sister organisations. Poorly organised gangs also exist, that are prominent in public and are primarily associated with the sale and distribution of illicit drugs and acts of violence. A common characteristic of all these groups is their flexibility, adaptability and international connections that allow them to operate across borders.

**Main types of crimes**

Data shows that the aforementioned groups are primarily involved in drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, people smuggling, cybercrime and organised theft. By far the most common and profitable activity of criminal groups in Iceland is drug trafficking, which involves both import and production, particularly of cannabis products and cocaine. New psychoactive substances, so-called NPS substances, have also appeared in recent years, creating a previously unknown danger. Despite increased success in the seizure and confiscation of illicit drugs, the overall size of the market has not decreased, indicating that supply and demand remain stable.

Money laundering always accompanies drug trafficking and is a key prerequisite for criminal groups to maintain their operations and hide the origin of illegal profits. Human trafficking and exploitation are also prominent, as criminal groups systematically exploit weaknesses in the legal or social system, including the application process for international protection. Cybercrime is also a growing threat, as new technology and artificial intelligence (AI) enable groups to engage in sophisticated fraud, cyberattacks and extortion.

## 1.3 Main emphases

In consideration of the conclusions of the NSU regarding the damage and extent of organised crime, together with proposals and suggestions made during the policy formulation, the government will prioritise the following key areas to prevent, investigate, prosecute and eradicate all forms of organised crime. The emphases reflect both international developments and the challenges facing the Icelandic government. Firstly, emphasis will be placed on ensuring *real results and increasing efficiency,* to enable the criminal justice system to respond to the growing scope and complexity of cases. Secondly, *active and evidence-based crime prevention* will be emphasised, based on a co-ordinated effort by the police, other authorities and society as a whole. Thirdly, *increased and targeted international co-operation* will play a key role in responding to the reality that fighting organised crime requires co-ordinated cross-border actions. The following section explains these emphases in more detail.

### 1.3.1 Real results and increased efficiency

Experience of recent years has shown that extensive investigations and prosecutions for offences related to organised crime place a great strain on the criminal justice system as a whole. Cases generally take a long time to investigate, involve multiple defendants, and more often than not require the assistance of foreign authorities. To reduce this burden and the risk of it compromising individual cases, it is necessary to increase efficient and economic use of resources at all stages of the proceedings and to promote real success in these cases.

**Reinforcing criminal justice**

Criminal law must be required to reflect the threats facing society, in that the more harm or danger a criminal act causes, the more severe the punishment it carries. Accordingly, it is not only considered justified, but absolutely necessary, that offences committed as part of organised criminal activity generally will warrant more severe punishment. There are clear indications that current criminal law does not fully meet this requirement. To respond to this it is necessary to examine specifically whether the definition in Art. 175 a of the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940, of a criminal organisation is too narrow in substance and therefore does not adequately cover the criminal groups that are active in Iceland. It is also necessary to consider the punishment framework of the provision, which currently provides for a maximum of four years in prison. Furthermore, an assessment needs to be made as to whether a special authorisation should be enacted to increase sentences in cases where it is proven that an offence was committed as part of the activities of organised criminal groups. With reference to developments that have taken place elsewhere in the Nordic countries, and indications that these are gaining ground in this country, authorisation for increased sentencing should also be considered in cases where the offence involves the exploitation of children or young people, for example, when children undertake to commit an offence in exchange for payment.[7]

Similarly, there is a need to assess whether existing powers to seize and confiscate the unlawful proceeds of organised crime are adequate. In this regard, it is worth examining whether there is reason to grant the police and, where applicable, customs authorities authorisation to confiscate valuables in cases where individuals cannot demonstrate that they were acquired legally, without the person in question being convicted of any offence.[8] Legal provisions of this type

[7]What is referred to as "crime as a service" in English.

[8]What is referred to as "unexplained wealth" in English.

are in force widely Europe and were recently adopted in Sweden, where this has already delivered notable results.

**Prioritisation and co-ordination of actions at the national level**

As a general rule, crimes are investigated by the police in the district where the crime was committed. Organised crime, however, is diverse in nature and encompasses different types of offences. A number of offences committed by the same group may therefore be under investigation by more than one office at the same time, with the associated burden and risk of duplication of effort. To counteract this and ensure a co-ordinated approach, the Police Steering Group on Organised Crime needs to be able to implement the policy it sets for itself and to have full authority to prioritise emphases and actions against organised crime at the national level. The steering group is therefore expected to make strategic decisions aimed at long-term success, even if this may reduce measurable benefits in the short term. By combining their efforts in this manner, the police will be able to address the challenges they face in the fight against organised crime and work towards the future as a unified force.

**Modernisation of procedural law**

A fundamental prerequisite for government action against organised crime to achieve its intended objectives and to produce the desired results is that the rules governing the conduct of criminal investigations facilitate this or at least do not obstruct this unnecessarily. Various principles of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Act No. 88/2008, are conceived primarily for the investigation of traditional crimes involving individual localised actions. However, they are less adequate in dealing with the current landscape of criminal activity in Iceland, where some dozen organised crime groups are engaging in numerous crimes of various types, employing every means available to conceal their illegal gains. It is clear that various aspects of the regulatory framework need to be reviewed to adapt it to changing circumstances and bring it into better alignment with what applies in the other Nordic countries. Among the issues in need of special attention are the maximum length of remand detention, deadlines for providing evidence to the defence attorney, the implementation of coercive measures before obtaining a court order, and the defendant's choice of defence attorney.

**Technology and innovation**

Technological advances and various technological innovations have in many ways revolutionised organised crime, together with the methods needed by the police to investigate it. The use of encrypted communications, widespread online fraud, and the exploitation of children and vulnerable individuals, including through social media, have brought immense challenges for the police and force the authorities to constantly race to keep up with technological developments. It is important to ensure that police have adequate authorisation to monitor social media, search seized phones, conduct real-time data mining and rapidly obtain electronic data from foreign technology companies and other service providers.

At the same time, the police need to be able to conduct digital investigations and actively participate in technological innovation and development in collaboration with foreign states and international organisations. The possibility of the police adopting any technological innovations that give them a real advantage over the activities of criminal groups needs to be examined, for example, through the use of facial recognition and cryptocurrency tracing. Police information systems must also support advances in this field, including by enabling the interoperability of individual systems. To facilitate communication with foreign internet and communications companies, police practices also need to be co-ordinated, by establishing a single national portal that handles such communications and information requests.[9]

**Increased information flow**

However, success will not only be achieved through legislative changes and increased co-ordination within the police, the police must also be able to co-operate effectively with other authorities through the necessary exchange of information. In recent years, the legal environment here has undergone various changes. Clear authorisations are now incorporated in the Police Act, No. 90/1996, and the Act on the Processing of Personal Data for Law Enforcement Purposes, No. 75/2019, for the mutual exchange of information, including personal data. It is important to continue this facilitation and prevent unintended obstacles from standing in the way of increased co-operation and information sharing between authorities that have a role to play in this area. The possibilities of data-linking information systems of different authorities must be examined, for example, between the National Registry or the Register of Companies, on the one hand, and the police system, on the other. In this regard, it is also appropriate to consider whether specific obligations should be enacted for state and local authorities to provide information for the work of the police and other authorities in eradicating organised crime. A model for such a law can be found, for example, in Swedish legislation that came into effect earlier this year.[10] Effective co-operation and data exchange are also key when it comes to ensuring the integrity of public services, including by preventing any form of benefit fraud or abuse of the social system and preventing organised crime groups from having unlawful influence on public decision-making.

### 1.3.2 Active crime prevention

The term crime prevention generally refers to the role of the police in curbing crime and preventing any activities that disrupt the security of citizens and the state. Law enforcement today increasingly involves proactive work in the form of

[9] Such a national portal is referred to as a single point of contact (SPOC).

[10] The Act entered into force in April 2025 and is entitled Act (2025:170) *on the Obligation to Provide Information to Law Enforcement Authorities (Lag om skyldighet att lämna uppgifter till de brottsbekämpande myndigheterna).*

intelligence gathering and analysis. Changing patterns of crime and the spread of international organised crime require law enforcement authorities to be able to respond and take action before individual crimes are committed. Crime prevention also includes extensive prevention work, and it is of paramount importance that authorities other than the police play a key role, including in preventing children and young people from becoming recruited for crimes.

**Intelligence-led policing and authorisations for action**

Amendments to the Police Act in 2024 comprise an important step towards strengthening crime prevention and bringing police powers into line with what is general practice elsewhere in the Nordic countries. A clearer legal basis was provided to authorise intelligence-led policing[11]. This means that police work should, among other things, be based on the use of risk assessment and risk management instead of solely responding to reported crimes. Emphasis is placed on systematic and active intelligence gathering and analytics as the basis for police planning and decisions on priorities and initiatives. A strong information base and good analytical work are important prerequisites for effective crime prevention. It is important to further strengthen this work through increased registration in databases and an increased number of analytical products, including passenger manifests, which are useful to the police in mapping the activities of organised crime groups. The aforementioned legislative amendments also granted the police specific authorisation to conduct specific surveillance of individuals associated with organised crime groups without the person in question being suspected of a crime. The decision to apply such surveillance is, however, subject to fairly narrow conditions and there is reason to consider, in light of experience, whether the conditions can be considered too burdensome or restrictive to make such surveillances of real use to the police in their work in this area.

Clearer legal authorisation for the use of surveillance cameras is also necessary, for instance, for their use with AI. The aim of this is to ensure that police have the technical capacity to combat serious crimes, including by monitoring the movements of key players in criminal groups and other indications of organised criminal activities. At the same time, it is also important to ensure that use of such technology accords with the principles of proportionality and personal privacy, where transparency, oversight and a clearly defined role for video systems are provided for by law. The experience of neighbouring countries shows that co-ordinated video surveillance has proven effective in the fight against organised crime, making it important to ensure comparable authorisations in this country.

[11]What is referred to as "intelligence-led policing" in English.

### Borders and foreign criminal groups

In accordance with the government's policy on border issues, it is necessary to strengthen law enforcement controls at internal borders, along with controls targeting foreigners illegally resident in Iceland. This increases the deterrent effect on foreign criminal groups and also reduces the likelihood that the same parties will repeatedly head for Iceland. Organised criminal groups from other EEA states have been shown to operate in Iceland, including groups carrying out organised theft. It can prove very difficult to control the activities of such groups and catch them, as their members often remain in Iceland for only a short time. One of the most effective ways to reduce the activities of such groups is to immediately deport their members when the police encounter them. This requires, firstly, adequate authorisation under the Act on Foreign Nationals, No. 80/2016, to do so and, secondly, that the police prioritise actions at the national level, in consultation with the Directorate of Immigration.

### Increased co-operation between authorities

The key to comprehensive and effective prevention of organised crime lies no less in inter-institutional co-operation, with the participation of as many public agencies as necessary. A special co-operation platform between the police, the Directorate of Internal Revenue and the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health is already in place, aiming to eradicate all forms of organised crime in the labour market. In addition, an agreement was signed last year providing for co-operation between twelve public institutions under the direction of the National Commissioner of Police, aimed at strengthening the society's resistance to organised crime directed against the public sector.[12] Added to this is the steering group on prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing. It is important to strengthen this type of collaboration between state and local government actors and ensure its success; however, the prerequisites for this are that the relevant actors have sufficient authority to disseminate information and take action quickly.

### Security and integrity

Authorities must also be vigilant with regard to organised crime groups expanding into and taking over certain legitimate activities. To avoid this, the current regulatory framework must prevent such activities from being exploited for the benefit of criminal groups. For example, suspected offenders must be barred from working for security companies or as doormen at restaurants and entertainment venues. A closely related issue is the importance of strengthening background checks for jobs that are considered sensitive in this regard. It is also imperative to protect the integrity of public services and prevent individuals associated with

[12] The following agencies are involved in this collaboration: Auðkenni (Digital IDs), the Financial Management Agency, the Housing and Construction Authority, Icelandic Health Insurance, Icelandic Revenue and Customs, Digital Iceland, the Social Security Administration, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health, the Directorate of Labour, the Directorate of Immigration, Registers Iceland, the District Prosecutor and the National Commissioner of Police.

criminal groups from gaining a foothold within the administration. This requires targeted background checks, clear eligibility requirements and active monitoring.

**Remedies for young offenders**

Organised criminal groups increasingly use young people and individuals in vulnerable positions to commit crimes on their behalf. To counter this trend, greater use must be made of remedies under the General Penal Code regarding special conditions for deferred prosecution and suspended sentences, cf. Art. 56 and Art. 57 of the Act. The general conditions of suspended sentences are often insufficient to address the underlying factors that lead young people to crime, such as substance abuse problems or poor social status. Stipulating specific conditions pursuant to the third paragraph of Article 57 of the Act, such as an obligation to undergo treatment, a ban on substance use, pursuing active studies or work, and supervision by a professional, may provide practical restraint that promotes improvement and reduces the likelihood of young offenders participating in the activities of organised criminal groups. Such conditions will also be more effective with regular follow-up by the Prison and Probation Administration, cf. Articles 83-84 of the Act on the Execution of Sentences, No. 15/2016. Increased application of special conditions complies with the goals of the criminal justice system to protect society, promote social integration and reduce recidivism. These measures are more effective for young people and more socially beneficial than unconditional imprisonment and can make a difference in terms of severing their ties to organised crime before they reach a point of no return.

**Exit routes**

The feasibility of establishing special remedies that provide individuals associated with organised criminal groups with a viable exit route also needs to be examined.[13] Such an examination would assess how the police, the Prison and Probation Administration, social services, municipalities and other relevant parties can support persons wishing to sever their ties with criminal groups with access to resources including social and financial support, housing, counselling, treatment, education or employment. It is important to look at the experience of other Nordic countries, especially Sweden, where work has been done to develop co-ordinated and individualised pathways for individuals wishing to leave organised criminal groups. There the emphasis is on multidisciplinary collaboration, clear procedures, and the use of risk assessment as a basis for support and protection. Experience suggests that well-designed exit routes can reduce recidivism and also impact the activities of criminal groups by disrupting their networks. An examination of possibilities for similar remedies in Iceland can assess whether and how they

[13] What are referred to as "exit programs" in English.

support the government's goals of combating organised crime and offer a realistic option for individuals who choose to start a new life without crime.

**The local environment**

Finally, it is important to emphasise the obvious, which is that crime prevention is most effective when it is carried out at local level. Police in each district must actively collaborate and communicate with local authorities, schools, leisure centres, primary health care, hospitals, victim support centres and other public and private entities to promote crime prevention through active prevention efforts. The police must be guaranteed sufficient scope and manpower to carry out proactive work of this kind, as it is a prerequisite for future success in crime prevention.

### 1.3.3 Increased international co-operation

A review of judgments handed down in major criminal cases in recent years, together with the reports of the National Commissioner of Police's NSU, shows clearly that organised crime extends beyond the borders of Iceland, and that criminal groups operating here almost without exception have international connections. Their activities will therefore not be curbed unless Icelandic authorities can co-operate effectively with other states and international organisations. International co-operation between Icelandic law enforcement authorities is mainly carried out through formal legal requests to other states for assistance in criminal investigations, the exchange of information in connection with Schengen co-operation and membership in the international organisations Interpol, Europol and Eurojust. The police also have mutual co-operation with sister agencies elsewhere in the Nordic countries.

**International legal assistance**

Based on the Act on the Arrest and Surrender of Persons to and from Iceland in connection with Criminal Acts on the basis of an Arrest Warrant, No. 51/2016, Icelandic authorities participate in European co-operation that greatly facilitates the extradition of criminals between states. In other respects, extradition and international legal assistance are governed by the Act on Extradition and Other Assistance in Criminal Matters, No. 13/1984. The Act was recently amended to increase efficiency, among other things, by transferring most of the responsibility for individual cases from the Ministry of Justice to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

**Schengen co-operation**

Through their participation in Schengen co-operation, Icelandic authorities engage in extensive collaboration with other member states in the field of law enforcement, particularly through the use of the Schengen Information System (SIS). SIS is a harmonised electronic information system, recording certain information about individuals and goods, used by law enforcement authorities in all Schengen states. Individuals arriving at the external borders of the Schengen area are checked in the system during personal border checks; the system is used to share and record information during internal border checks. The National Commissioner of Police also operates a harmonised information portal that receives and replies to requests from European law enforcement authorities for any kind of information that concerns law enforcement in one way or another. It is important to expand further co-operation of Icelandic authorities in this regard and ensure that the police can participate fully in projects and co-operation among law enforcement authorities in the Schengen area. In addition, there is reason to consider participating in law enforcement projects under the auspices of the European Union that concern the interests of all Schengen states, such as organisations for port security,[14] which aim to stop the import of illegal drugs and other imports of organised criminal groups through the ports of member states.

**Interpol and Europol**

Since 1971, Iceland has been a member of the intergovernmental International Criminal Police Organisation, Interpol, through the International and Border Department of the National Commissioner of Police, the national representative of Interpol. In 2001, Iceland became a member of Europol and the International and Border Department is its national representation as well, working in close collaboration with the Icelandic liaison officer located at the agency's headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. A liaison prosecutor is also posted at the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, Eurojust, whose main role is to support the investigation and prosecution of cases involving transnational criminal activity. The liaison officers perform extremely important work for the police and prosecution authorities in Iceland, serving as intermediators with foreign law enforcement authorities and organising and preparing joint actions of Icelandic and foreign authorities. Given the increased impact and seriousness of international organised crime requiring increased international co-operation, there is reason to increase the number of Icelandic liaison officers at Europol. Similarly, it is important to move towards increasing Iceland’s involvement in Europol as a Schengen state. At the moment the country's status within the organisation is the same as that of any third country. Such a change would make it possible to send police officers or other experts abroad to participate directly in the institutions’ activities.

[14]The organisation referred to is called the "European Ports Alliance".

# 2. Key actions

With reference to the previously explained emphases of the government in combating organised crime, the following key actions are proposed following the publication of this policy. The actions link together the government's goals and vision for the issue and, furthermore, will be elaborated in a specific action plan.

## 2.1 Real results and increased efficiency

- Review provisions of the General Penal Code regarding criminal organisations and authorisations for increased sentences.
- Consider providing statutory authorisation for the confiscation of unexplained wealth without a conviction for a specific crime.
- Strengthen the mandate, work and decision-making of the Police Steering Group on Organised Crime.
- Review provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure regarding remand detention, the delivery of evidence etc.
- Promote innovation and the adoption of technological advances by the police.
- Increase consultation and information exchange between the police and other state and local authorities.
- Ensure public sector integrity, for instance, by preventing unlawful influence on decision-making.

## 2.2 Crime prevention and social action

- Review provisions of the Police Act on measures to combat organised crime and on the sharing of information between the police and other authorities.
- Issue a regulation on crime prevention actions based on Art. 15 a of the Police Act, No. 90/1996.
- Adopt statutory authorisations on the use and operation of video surveillance for law enforcement.
- Strengthen information-led policing, including by increasing registrations in IT databases and derived analytical products.
- Increase the gathering and analysis of passenger information.

- Ensure adequate authorisations for customs authorities to respond to organised crime, for instance, taking into account Nordic practices.
- Increase surveillance at the country's ports.
- Ensure adequate protection of children and other individuals in vulnerable situations.
- Systematically apply specific conditions of the General Penal Code for decisions on deferred prosecution and prosecutors' proposals on arrangements for suspended sentencing, especially for young offenders.
- Examine the feasibility of establishing remedies providing an exit route for offenders.
- Increase monitoring of companies providing security services.
- Implement the government's anti-money laundering policy and action plan.
- Co-ordinate and prioritise the authorities' actions to more effectively deny entry and deport criminal groups from other EEA or EFTA states.

## 2.3 International co-operation

- Increase the number of liaison officers at Europol and Eurojust.
- Expand the scope of Iceland's participation in Europol's work as a Schengen state.
- Strengthen police co-operation within the Schengen area.
- Expand the scope of Iceland's participation in Interpol's work.
- Strengthen Nordic co-operation and consider appointing a special liaison officer for this purpose.
- Strengthen collaboration with Frontex, especially in implementing deportations.
- Consider participating in projects under EU auspices, e.g. as a member of the European Ports Alliance.