

## Preface

Organised crime has been a major threat to European societies for decades, and – unfortunately – it is likely to remain a major threat in the future. While the face of organised crime may keep changing in the context of globalisation, technological transformation and European integration, its basic impact remains the same: it undermines democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which are the values on which Europe is based.

The Council of Europe has taken on this challenge by establishing common standards, by carrying out programmes to strengthen the capacity of member states to fight such crime, by documenting good practice and by preparing annual reports on the current situation.

The 2004 report helps member states to ensure that counter-measures are based on a thorough knowledge of the situation. Economic crime, drugs and the smuggling and trafficking in human beings are the main issues, while money represents the common denominator of organised criminal activities. New treaties on money laundering and trafficking in human beings are under preparation, and their early adoption and implementation by member states is of utmost importance.

The topical chapter on the threat of cybercrime shows that, while information and communication technologies provide states with unprecedented opportunities, states also become vulnerable, and this vulnerability is exploited by criminals, not only in Europe but globally. The report thus makes a strong case for the widest possible geographical implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime and its Protocol on Racism and Xenophobia. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Ulrich Sieber and his colleagues from the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg and the University of Munich who prepared the chapter on the threat of cybercrime.

In view of the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government in May 2005, I believe that this publication is very timely and I am confident that it will provide a useful basis for the Council of Europe's work for the coming years.

Terry Davis  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
Strasbourg, February 2005