

Use of prepaid cards to commit terrorist and criminal offenses

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Introduction to the use of SIM cards.

SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) is a module for identifying each subscriber, available as a microprocessor card with built-in memory. The SIM card identifies an individual telephone user.

✓ **The challenge of anonymity in telecommunications**

- Criminals take advantage of the lack of identification to avoid detection

✓ **Global threats**

- In the age of globalisation and digitisation, the anonymous use of telecommunications services has become a tool used for terrorism and crime
- EU roaming regulations allow SIM cards registered in the EU to be used throughout the European Union without additional charges.
- **Lack of harmonised regulations on SIM card registration**



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Obligation to register SIM cards in individual countries

	country	registration required	no registration required	comments
1	AUSTRIA	REGISTRATION		
2	BELGIUM			no data
3	BULGARIA	REGISTRATION		
4	CYPRUS	REGISTRATION		
5	CZECH REPUBLIC		NO REGISTRATION	
6	GERMANY	REGISTRATION		
7	DENMARK		NO REGISTRATION	
8	ESTONIA			no data
9	SPAIN	REGISTRATION		
10	FRANCE			no data
11	GREECE			no data
12	CROATIA		NO REGISTRATION	
13	HUNGARY	REGISTRATION		
14	IRLEAND			no data
15	ITALY	REGISTRATION		
16	LITHUANIA		NO REGISTRATION	
17	LUXEMBOURG			no data
18	LATVIA		NO REGISTRATION	
19	MALTA	REGISTRATION		
20	NETHERLANDS		NO REGISTRATION	
21	POLAND	REGISTRATION		
22	PORTUGAL			no data
23	ROMANIA		NO REGISTRATION	
24	SWEDEN	REGISTRATION		
25	SLOVENIA		NO REGISTRATION	
26	SLOVAK REPUBLIC	REGISTRATION		
27	FINLAND			no data
28	ALBANIA	REGISTRATION		
29	SWITZERLAND	REGISTRATION		
30	GEORGIA		NO REGISTRATION	
31	ICELAND		NO REGISTRATION	
32	MOLDOVA		NO REGISTRATION	
33	MONTENEGRO	REGISTRATION		
34	NORTH MACEDONIA	REGISTRATION		
35	NORWAY	REGISTRATION		
36	UKRAINE		NO REGISTRATION	
37	UK		NO REGISTRATION	



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The Polish context:

- ✓ **No obligation to register SIM cards until 2016** - Perpetrators of telecommunications crimes took advantage of the lack of identification to avoid accountability. In practice, this made it difficult for law enforcement to locate and identify those responsible for the crimes.
- ✓ **This has resulted in the widespread use of anonymous SIM cards** in criminal activities such as false bomb alarms, crimes against the elderly and terrorist activities
- ✓ **The obligation to register SIM cards** was introduced in Poland by the Act of 10 June 2016 on Anti-Terrorist Activities. From that moment on, every user purchasing a prepaid SIM card had to register it with their personal data. Telecom operators were obliged to store this data and make it available to law enforcement authorities upon request.
- ✓ **Transition period** - those who already had an active SIM card before the law came into force were given time until February 2017 to get it registered.



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Use of SIM cards to commit crimes

✓ False bomb alarms

- Before 2016, the number of false bomb alarms was alarmingly high. Between 2010 and 2015, an average of around 3,000 to 4,000 false alarms were reported each year.
- An increase in the number of such reports was noted in the years under review, particularly among young people, who saw these activities as a joke (e.g. cancellation of school activities) or a form of sabotage
- Prior to the introduction of mandatory SIM card registration, the detection rate of offenders was around **30 - 40%**
- Since 2016, the number of false bomb alarms reports has fallen significantly to around 200 per year, and the detection rate has increased to **60 - 70%**.
- Reduced investigation time: Using data from registered SIM cards, law enforcement agencies were able to more quickly identify the location of the connection or the owner of the device.
- A reduction in the number of false alarms reports has allowed better allocation of resources to services such as the police, fire brigade and ambulance services.

Use of SIM cards to commit crimes

✓ Crimes against the elderly (CATE)

- Organised crime groups are using prepaid SIM cards to commit fraud against the elderly. The perpetrators call the victim on an unregistered card, often pretending to be family members or law enforcement officials, and persuade the victim to hand over money and valuables.
- The cross-border nature of the activities of the criminal groups
- SIM cards purchased in countries where registration is not required are used. Criminals use many SIM cards, often bought *en masse*.



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Use of SIM cards to commit crimes





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Use of SIM cards to commit crimes

✓ Activities of Mobile Organised Crime Groups (MOCG)

- Unregistered SIM cards are also used by organised crime groups to commit property crimes. These include car theft, burglary, ATM theft and robbery.
- Members of criminal groups use such cards to communicate with each other while planning and carrying out crimes. After the crime has been committed, they dispose of the phones and SIM cards.



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Use of SIM cards to commit crimes

✓ Cybercrime

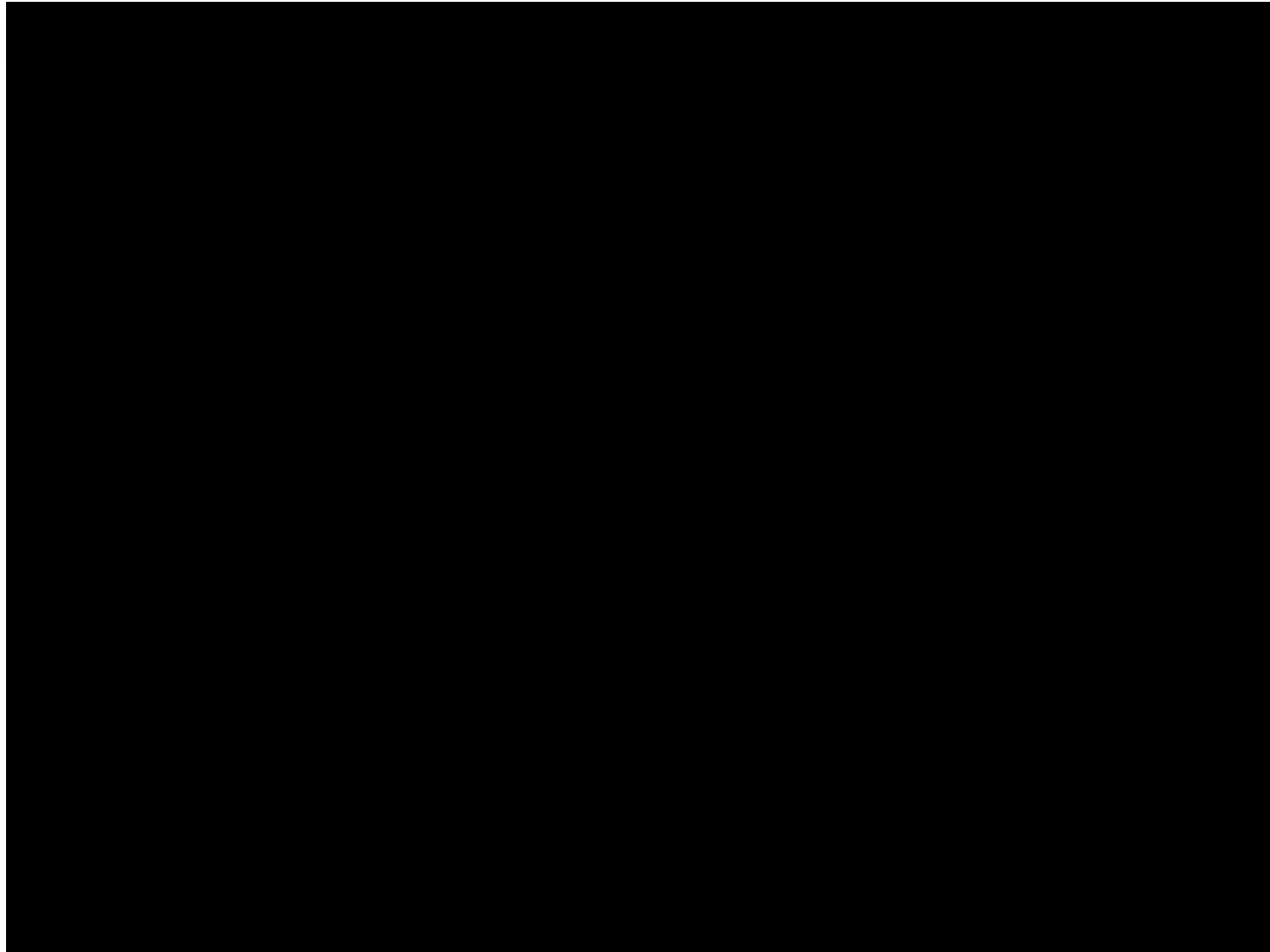
- Cybercriminals often use unregistered SIM cards in conjunction with fake social media accounts and other online services. Without being able to identify the phone number associated with the SIM card, fraudsters can carry out activities such as phishing, identity theft and other forms of cyber attack.
- Criminals use unregistered SIM cards in SIM-box devices to make themselves anonymous and then commit crimes (e.g. setting up fake investment platforms).





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International police cooperation





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International police cooperation



✓ Benefits of cross-border police cooperation

- Exchange of intelligence and evidence.
- Joint investigation teams
- Analytical and technological support
- Financing of cross-border police operations
- Expert training and exchange of experience





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Summary

- ✓ Improvement of international public safety
- ✓ Facilitate cross-border cooperation
- ✓ Reduce the black market for SIM cards
- ✓ Prevention of terrorism and cybercrime
- ✓ Improvement of law enforcement effectiveness
- ✓ Prevention of the migration of criminals



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