

Eurojust supports action against drug trafficking and money laundering

22 arrests

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Eurojust - Judicial and law enforcement authorities in France, the Netherlands, Spain and Romania have carried out a coordinated action against an organised crime group (OCG) suspected of trafficking cocaine and cannabis and laundering the proceeds of this crime. During a joint action, 22 suspects were arrested. Eurojust assisted the authorities in setting up and funding a joint investigation team (JIT) into the case.

Information obtained by the French authorities from two encrypted communication systems used by the criminals, EncroChat and SkyECC, proved the existence of a major drug trafficking and importation operation, as well as a money laundering network spanning several European countries, notably between France, the Netherlands and Spain. The suspects allegedly used vehicles with fitted hiding places to commit the crimes.

The OCG is believed to have used underground banking to launder the proceeds from the drug trafficking. With this method, large amounts of cash can be moved or converted into cryptocurrencies within a network of underground bankers. A payment can be made anywhere in the world without the money having to physically cross the border.

During a joint action day on 28 March, 22 suspects were detained in France, the Netherlands and Spain. Searches led to the discovery of more than EUR 2 million in cash, dozens of kilograms of cocaine and firearms. Luxury vehicles and watches were also seized.

300 law enforcement officers were deployed across Europe for this operation.

The case was opened by the French authorities in January 2021. A JIT was set up between the French and Dutch authorities with the support of Eurojust in March 2022. Five coordination meetings were hosted by the Agency to facilitate judicial cooperation and provide support for the coordinated investigative efforts. During the action day, Eurojust set up a coordination centre to facilitate rapid cooperation between the judicial authorities.

The following authorities took part in this operation:

France: JIRS (Interregional Specialized Jurisdiction of Marseille) / SRPJ (Judicial Police) Nice

The Netherlands: Public Prosecutors Office Oost-Nederland; National Public Prosecutors Office for Economic and Environmental Offences; Police Oost-Nederland; Fiscal Intelligence and Investigation Service

Romania: Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism; Directorate for Countering Organized Crime – Antidrug Service and Financial Investigations Service; Services for Combating Organized Crime Neamt and Vrancea

Spain: Investigative Courts in Marbella (num 1), Fuengirola (num 1) and Benidorm (num 2), and Central Court num 3 at Audiencia Nacional; and International Cooperation Sections of the Spanish Prosecution Service in Málaga and Alicante and at the Antidrug PPO; Policía Nacional.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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