

Cigarette smuggling from Eastern Europe

Eurojust's coordination supports action against organised crime group in Italy

19 November 2018

✖ On 15 November, coordinated action was taken against an Italian organised crime group (OCG) involved in the smuggling of cigarettes from Eastern European countries into Italy. Eight people were arrested, and assets totalling EUR 15 million were seized during searches in two countries.

In a complicated scheme, the cigarettes were stolen from a factory, with a destination in Libya listed as the recipient. The goods were indicated on the fraudulent paperwork as having travelled through Italy, thus receiving a special tax exemption. Once in Italy, the tobacco was unloaded and a false container with empty boxes continued on to Libya. The cigarettes were resold in Italy on the black market.

The successful action could not have been carried out without the valuable cooperation of the Romanian authorities, and the coordinating role of Eurojust in the execution of two European Arrest Warrants and one European Investigation Order in Romania at the request of the Public Prosecution Office of Naples.

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European Defence Fund: Council adopts its position

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The EU wants to **strengthen the global competitiveness and innovation capacity** of the Union's **defence technological and industrial base**. On 19 November

2018, the Council adopted its position (partial general approach) on the **European Defence Fund** proposed by the European Commission in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027.

On 13 June 2018, the European Commission presented its proposal for a regulation of the European Defence Fund as part of the upcoming MFF with a proposed envelope of €13 billion. The European Defence Fund aims to **foster innovation** and **allow economies of scale in defence research** and in the **industrial development phase** by supporting collaborative projects.

In its partial general approach, the Council broadly agrees with the Commission proposal. In particular, it confirms the overall objectives and structure of the Fund, including the intention to **invest in disruptive technologies**. It mostly seeks to clarify a number of aspects in regards to the **eligibility of entities**, and **ownership of the results**. It also seeks to clarify the award procedures and criteria and the provisions concerning the share of the indirect costs that will be covered by the Fund, the latter being an important element **to make the Fund more attractive for industry players**. The Council further stresses that **special attention will be paid to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and mid-caps** in the Union.

The approach adopted today is labelled as “partial” as the financial and other horizontal aspects of the fund will depend on the overall agreement on the next multiannual financial framework.

Background

Earlier this year, the Council and the European Parliament established the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), under the current MFF and with a total budget of €500 million. The EDIDP also has the objective to foster collaborative defence capability development and reinforce the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the Union’s defence industry.

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[Defence cooperation: Council launches 17 new PESCO projects](#)

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EU countries join forces to face global threats

The Council adopted an updated list of projects to be undertaken under PESCO. There will be **17 new projects** in addition to the initial 17 projects agreed on 11 December 2017 and formally adopted on 6 March 2018.

The projects cover areas such as training, capability development and operational readiness on land, at sea and in the air, as well as cyber-defence.

Background

On 11 December 2017, the Council adopted a decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). PESCO enables EU member states to **work more closely together in the area of security and defence**. This permanent framework for defence cooperation allows willing and able member states to develop jointly defence capabilities, invest in shared projects, and enhance the operational readiness and contribution of their armed forces.

The 25 member states participating in PESCO are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest developments in the Khashoggi case

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