

# [French and Dutch migrant smuggling ring halted with 23 arrests](#)



The Hague, 22 January 2020

**In a joint action by French and Dutch authorities, coordinated by Eurojust, 23 persons have been arrested on suspicion of large-scale migrant smuggling. They are suspected of facilitating the illegal transport of approximately 10 000 Kurdish migrants to the United Kingdom in refrigerated lorries and small rubber boats, starting from various parking areas in France. In total, 19 suspects were arrested in France and four in the Netherlands, in the vicinity of The Hague. Five premises were searched. Total profits for the criminal network amounted to EUR 70 million.**

Authorities in France began their investigations into the network in August 2018. The network picked migrants up from rest areas between Le Mans and Poitiers. During the investigations, suspects using vehicles with Dutch license plates were regularly spotted, which led to opening up the case to the Netherlands and a request for coordination from Eurojust.

Eurojust financed a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) and set up a coordination centre to support the French and Dutch authorities in rolling out actions on the ground. Two coordination meetings were organised to prepare this week's operation. Eurojust also provided support with the execution of European Arrest Warrants.

During the investigations, a link was discovered to a suspect running an illegal hawala banking system in the Netherlands, which was partly used for the payment of transporting migrants. The fare for a journey to the UK with the smuggling network could run up to EUR 7 000 per person.

The action was successfully carried out by the International Specialised Jurisdiction of Rennes and BMRZ mobile brigade of the French border police, and the Dutch *Koninklijke Marechaussee*, the specialised FINEC unit of the national police and the Dutch immigration services. Europol provided analytical support during the operation.

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**[Press release – Brexit: final committee vote tomorrow on the EU-UK withdrawal agreement](#)**



The European Parliament will initiate its internal procedure to approve the Withdrawal Agreement at its [Constitutional Affairs Committee](#) meeting at 16.00 tomorrow. Following a debate and vote, the Committee will make a recommendation to the EP plenary for the vote on the Agreement's final approval, [scheduled for Wednesday next week](#) in Brussels.

**When:** 16.00 on Thursday 23 January

**Where:** European Parliament in Brussels, Antall building, room 6Q2

*You can watch the committee meeting via [EP Live](#) and [EbS](#).*

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[\*\*Article – New rules to promote water reuse in farming\*\*](#)



Population growth, urbanisation and tourism have all contributed to the water shortages and droughts that are increasingly affecting many areas of Europe, especially the Mediterranean region. Water sources are under stress and the situation is expected to get worse because of climate change. According to an estimate, by 2030 [half of Europe's river basins could be affected by water scarcity](#).

In order to secure Europe's freshwater supplies for the years to come, the members of the environment committee backed on 21 January an [informal agreement](#) reached with the Council on a proposal for the reuse of waste water. The new rules will still need to be approved by the Parliament and the Council in order to become law.

The new rules aim to promote the use of treated wastewater for agricultural irrigation, which accounts for about [half of the water used in the EU every year](#). Increased water reuse in farming could help reduce water scarcity.

In order to ensure safety of the crops, the new rules introduce minimum requirements for water quality, require frequent monitoring and oblige wastewater treatment plants to draw up risk management plans. Member state authorities would issue permits for the treatment plants and check for compliance of rules.

Uniform EU level rules would level the playing field for operators of reclamation plants and farmers and prevent obstacles to the free movement of agricultural products.

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# Risk assessment: Outbreak of acute respiratory syndrome associated with a novel coronavirus, Wuhan, China; first update



A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been isolated and considered the causative agent of the cluster of 448 pneumonia cases in the area of Wuhan, Hubei province in China, as well as of the four travel-associated cases in Thailand, Japan and South Korea.

On 31 December 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China reported a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown aetiology, with a common reported link to Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market (a wholesale fish and live animal market selling different animal species).

On 9 January 2020, China CDC reported that a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) had been detected as the causative agent and the genome sequence was made publicly available. Sequence analysis showed that the newly-identified virus is related to the SARS-CoV clade. Detection systems have been developed and are available for the Member States through WHO and the European Virus Archive global catalogue.

As of 20 January 2020, a total of 295 laboratory-confirmed cases infected with 2019-nCoV have been reported, 291 from Wuhan, China and four travel-

associated from Thailand (2), Japan (1) and South Korea (1). Four deaths have been reported among the cases. Chinese health authorities have confirmed human-to-human transmission and 15 healthcare workers are reported to have been infected in Wuhan. The original source of the outbreak remains unknown and therefore further cases and deaths are expected in Wuhan, and in China. It is possible that further cases will also be detected among travellers from Wuhan to other countries.

There are considerable uncertainties in assessing the risk of this event, due to lack of detailed epidemiological analyses.

On the basis of the information currently available, ECDC considers that:

- the potential impact of 2019-nCoV outbreaks is high;
- further global spread is likely;
- there is currently a moderate likelihood of infection for EU/EEA travellers visiting Wuhan;
- there is a high likelihood of case importation into countries with the greatest volume of people travelling to and from Wuhan (i.e. countries in Asia);
- there is a moderate likelihood of detecting cases imported into EU/EEA countries;
- adherence to appropriate infection prevention and control practices, particularly in healthcare settings in EU/EEA countries with direct links to Wuhan, means that the likelihood of a case reported in the EU resulting in secondary cases within the EU/EEA is low.