

Caucasian mafia organisation committing burglaries and retail thefts in France and Greece dismantled thanks to first-ever joint investigation team between the two countries

On 17 April 2018, more than 30 suspects, including the 4 leaders of the organised crime group, composed of Georgian and Armenian nationals, were arrested after simultaneous operations of the French and Greek judicial and law enforcement authorities in Caen and Thessaloniki.

Several coordination meetings held at Eurojust led to the first joint investigation team agreement ever signed between France and Greece on September 2017. Eurojust provided substantial logistical and financial support to the joint investigation team, which culminated in the establishment of a coordination centre at Eurojust's premises in The Hague. The common action day was coordinated by Eurojust with the support of Europol, allowing for real-time exchange of information and cross-checks of the evidence gathered against Europol's databases.

The transnational organised crime group (OCG) is believed to be a predominantly Georgian mafia organisation called 'Vory V zakone', suspected of having committed thousands of burglaries and retail thefts in the Normandy region as well as in Greece. It is estimated that the OCG committed on average 13 shoplifting acts in France and 3 house breakings in Greece a day, causing a severe damage of several millions of euros. The OCG, whose sponsors were located in Greece, was hierarchically structured and governed by rigid rules, including the provision of capital to the 'obshak', a fund used as a common financial deposit for criminal activities.

Background

Eurojust is the European Union's hub for judicial cooperation and coordination between Member States, assisting in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving serious organised cross-border crime. The judicial cooperation tools that Eurojust offers to national authorities include coordination meetings, coordination centres and joint investigation teams.

Joint investigation teams are established between the national authorities of two or more Member States to coordinate and enhance ongoing national investigations through sharing of case-related information and evidence. In 2017, Eurojust supported 200 JITs and provided EUR 1.31 million in funding to

JITs.

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