

COVID-19 chiefs of police working group meets to talk pandemic and fighting crime threats



On Friday 12 February, Europol's Executive Director, Catherine De Bolle welcomed Vittorio Rizzi, Deputy Director-General of Police and Director of the Criminal Police in Italy, to Europol's headquarters. Together they chaired the fourth Working Group on COVID-19 Crime Threats and Law Enforcement Responses.

As the pandemic has changed the landscape of crime, law enforcement has had to adapt their approaches to the accelerated shifts in criminal modi operandi and market focus. The COVID-19 chiefs of police working group is an important initiative for law enforcement agencies to work together in monitoring the situation and coordinating the appropriate responses.

European chiefs of police from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and INTERPOL joined the virtual meeting to discuss the latest developments in criminality related to COVID-19 and the priorities of the working group.

Some of the priority areas discussed:

- the risks of criminals taking advantage of vaccination campaigns rolling out across the world to sell fake vaccines. Although still limited, some offers of fake vaccines have appeared on the dark web;
- the online sexual exploitation of minors remains a great concern given the increase in the production and distribution online of child sexual abuse materials during the pandemic;
- fraud schemes are likely to proliferate and intensify due to the economic hardship imposed by the pandemic. As unprecedented financial efforts are made in the EU to boost economic recovery, law enforcement agencies remain strongly committed to preventing and fighting financial and economic crime.

Headquartered in The Hague, the Netherlands, Europol supports the 27 EU Member States in their fight against terrorism, cybercrime and other serious and organised forms of crime. We also work with many non-EU partner states and international organisations. From its various threat assessments to its intelligence-gathering and operational activities, Europol has the tools and resources it needs to do its part in making Europe safer. In 2019, Europol supported 1 874 international operations.

Related publications:

Europol early warning notification: [The illicit sales of false negative covid-19 test certificates](#) (02/02/2021)

Europol early warning notification: [Vaccine-related crime during the covid-19 pandemic](#) (04/12/2020)

Europol report: [How COVID-19-related crime infected Europe during 2020.](#) (12/11/2020)