

[Eurojust helps unravel massive trans-European pay-TV fraud](#)

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□The Hague, 18 September 2019

A multi-country action day coordinated by Eurojust in The Hague led to the dismantling of an international criminal network committing massive fraud with pay-TV, which shows organised crime expanding its illegal activities to large-scale violations of audiovisual copyright. The actions taken in this unique case in the European Union are the result of complex investigations conducted by prosecutors from Naples and Rome, with the support of judicial and police authorities from Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, France, and the Netherlands, as well as Eurojust. The damage caused by the criminal gang amounts to approximately €6.5 million, jeopardising the existence of many legal providers of pay-TV on the market. More than 200 servers were taken offline in Germany, France and the Netherlands, and over 150 *PayPal* accounts of the criminals were blocked. Eurojust, the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit, set up its 100th coordination centre, since the first in 2011, to support on the spot the national authorities in swiftly disrupting the illicit activities. Today's simultaneous operation led to the disruption of the signal for illegal pay-TV viewers in Europe, who benefitted from a subscription fee far below market value.

A press conference on the case was held at Eurojust today at 12:00. A link to the recording of the press conference is available [here](#) .

OUTCOME OF THE CROSS-BORDER INVESTIGATIONS

- A complex and very technical investigation into the organised crime group (OCG) was conducted by the Public Prosecutor Office (PPO) of Naples, supported by the *Nucleo Speciale Tutela Privacy e Frodi Tecnologiche della Guardia di Finanza di Roma*.
- Due to the transborder dimension of the criminal activities, a case was opened at Eurojust to advance the Italian investigation. A link was also discovered with another investigation conducted by the PPO of Rome, which was supported by the *Polizia di Stato – Servizio Polizia Postale e delle Comunicazioni – Sezione Financial Cybercrime*.
- Eurojust ensured quick information exchange with the other Member States involved, as well as the proper and fast execution of judicial orders, including several European Investigation Orders and freezing orders. During the action day, evidence, including servers, digital equipment, payment instruments, record sheets and other infrastructure (*Load Balance*) were seized. A total number of 22 suspects of different nationalities were identified.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CRIMINAL NETWORK

In 2015, the OCG started illegally re-broadcasting and selling pay-per-view products and services, similar to the ones offered by *Sky Italia*, *Mediaset Premium*, *Netflix*, *Dazon*, and *Infinity* in various Member States and third countries. The well-skilled criminals used the most sophisticated and efficient software for the fraud. Several retransmission stations were set up with special servers to disable the encryption of the original programmes and generate the illegal IPTV signal in violation of intellectual property law. The gang members offered to a wide audience of unknowing clients actual pay-tv programmes, cinematographic works and on-demand content at a very low price. The illegally obtained assets were subsequently transferred to foreign bank accounts.

The members of the OCG are suspected of having committed large-scale fraud, cybercrime and money laundering.



Photos: © Polizia di Stato (IT)

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The following national authorities, among others, were involved in the investigations and the joint action day coordinated by EUROJUST:

Italy

- PPO of Naples
- PPO of Rome
- State Police – *Servizio Polizia Postale e delle Comunicazioni – Sezione Financial Cybercrime*
- *Nucleo Speciale Tutela Privacy e Frodi Tecnologiche della Guardia di Finanza di Roma*

Greece

- Extradition and mutual legal assistance (MLA) Office of the Appeals PPO of Athens
- MLA Office of the Court of First Instance of Athens
- First Instance PPO of Athens
- Court of First Instance of Thessaloniki
- First Instance PPO of Thessaloniki
- Hellenic Police – Cybercrime Division
- Hellenic Police – Northern Greece Cybercrime Subdivision

Bulgaria

- PPO of the Republic of Bulgaria
- Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria

France

- *Direction Régionale de la Police Judiciaire de Lille*
- *Parquet du Tribunal de Grande Instance de Lille*

Germany

- General Prosecutor's Office of Frankfurt am Main – *Zentralstelle zur Bekämpfung der Internetkriminalität*
- PPO of Wuppertal
- Hessian State Police

The Netherlands

- International Cooperation Unit (IRC) of the PPO of The Hague and the National Police, The Hague

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