

# Major Albanian-Italian drug trafficking network dismantled

## International coordination led by Eurojust



The Hague, 30 June 2020

**With fundamental and constant support from Eurojust, judicial authorities and police in Italy and Albania have arrested 37 members of an organised criminal group (OCG) responsible for international trafficking of large quantities of drugs. 3.5 tonnes of marijuana, cocaine and hashish have been seized, with an estimated street value of more than €40 million. A variety of goods and assets in Albania were also seized, with a value of over €4 million.**

The operation was carried out in Italy by the Anti-Mafia Investigative Direction of Bari, with the cooperation of Carabinieri, Polizia di Stato, Guardia di Finanza, under the direction of the Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office of Bari (DDA of Bari). In Albania, the Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Prosecutor's Office of Tirana (SPAK) and the Albanian Police concluded the operation.

The Italian Antimafia and Counterterrorism Directorate (DNA) and Eurojust, ensured proper coordination of investigations, at national level and international level respectively.

The suspects, of Italian and Albanian origin, were part of a powerful criminal organisation trafficking drugs from Albania to Italy and had been very active on the drug market for a long period. They had been smuggling large quantities of drugs using leisure boats, subsequently transporting them overland mainly to the Bari, Puglia and Basilicata regions.

Today's final action day, coordinated by Eurojust, resulted in the simultaneous arrest of 37 suspects in Italy and Albania, while other measures are being executed in France. The investigation allowed the seizure of 3.5 tonnes of drugs (marijuana, cocaine and hashish), the equivalent of about 7 million individual doses worth €40 million. Various assets were seized as well in Albania, including a coffee production and trading factory, a drinks and alcohol distribution company, a food business, a restaurant, 15 apartments, a building plot, as well as 7 large cars and a boat equipped with powerful outboard motors.

This outstanding investigative result with simultaneous execution of this cross-border operation was made possible thanks to the Joint Investigation Team between the Albanian and Italian authorities, whose agreement represents a model for the cooperation between Albanian and EU judicial authorities.

The JIT was established in 2017 and benefited from financial and analytical support from Eurojust. This facilitated a quick and direct exchange of information among the authorities involved, who set to work as one team. It enabled in-depth investigations into the criminal activity, mapping out its operations and network, both in Albania and in Italy.

In addition to its financial and operational support to the JIT, Eurojust also assisted the national authorities with the organisation of four coordination meetings, where team members exchanged crucial information about the case and were efficiently supported by Eurojust in establishing a common investigative strategy where seizure of the criminal assets was one of the key elements of the strategy.

Eurojust also facilitated the preparation and execution of a European Arrest Warrant in one EU member state (France) and of a European Investigation Order.

Today's action is the culmination of long-lasting criminal proceedings in Albania and in Italy where several suspects – one part of the criminal group – had already been convicted in the Court of First Instance in Italy in 2019.

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## [Press release – Deal on digitalisation of access to justice will benefit citizens](#)



The two pieces of legislation under negotiation between the two EU

legislators, respectively on taking evidence and on service of documents, aim to make judicial cross-border cooperation between national courts more efficient through digitalisation in civil and commercial matters.

## Quotes

[Emil Radev \(EPP, BG\)](#) rapporteur for [Cooperation between the courts: taking of evidence in civil or commercial matters](#) said: “The provisions we have adopted will have a real impact on the everyday lives of our European citizens. Requests to take evidence will be transmitted between the courts of member states directly, rapidly and reliably, while encouraging the use of videoconferencing. This will save European citizens both time and money.”

[Franco Roberti \(S&D, IT\)](#) rapporteur for [Service of judicial and extrajudicial documents in civil or commercial matters](#) said: “This agreement is a step forward in the European judicial area in civil matters, based on the principles of mutual trust and mutual recognition of judgments. It removes administrative obstacles and offers legal certainty to citizens and businesses that documents have the same legal effects in any EU court. This was not an easy task, given the plurality of legal systems and traditions that coexist within the EU.”

Main elements of the agreement:

- **Courts will be able to exchange documents electronically:** changes in both regulations establish a decentralised IT system that will allow for faster, more secure and effective exchange of documents between member states;
- The **decentralised IT system** will be composed of national, interoperable IT systems, without involving any EU institutions;
- **Data protection:** information will be kept strictly confidential and personal data and privacy will be protected when documents are transmitted and evidence is being taken; personal data which is deemed irrelevant for a specific case will be deleted immediately;
- **Increased use of distance communication:** modern communication technologies, such as videoconferencing, that can lower costs and help evidence to be taken more quickly, will be used appropriately and with the consent of the person to be heard.

Greater legal certainty, combined with simple and digitalised procedures, will encourage individuals and businesses to engage in cross-border transactions, thereby boosting trade within the EU, and hence the functioning of the internal market.

## Next steps

Parliament and Council now need to endorse the final version of the agreement before it is published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The two regulations will enter into force 20 days following their publication.

### **Background information**

The two proposals constitute a package to modernise judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters and [replace](#) the earlier international, more cumbersome system of the Hague Conventions between the member states.

The existing regulation on the service of documents puts in place a fast-track and standardised transmission procedure for the service of documents between courts and other parties in different EU countries. The regulation on taking evidence provides a framework for cross-border judicial assistance between EU countries by facilitating the collection of evidence across borders.

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## **[EU met air pollution limits for four key pollutants, including ammonia, in 2018](#)**

The news for 2018 is more positive than previous years, according to the yearly EEA briefing '[National Emission reduction Commitments Directive reporting status 2020](#)'. The EU as a whole (28 Member States, including then member the United Kingdom) met the 2010 emission ceilings of the four main air pollutants; nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>).

While total EU emissions of ammonia emissions plateaued, five Member States (Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Spain) exceeded their 2010 national emission ceilings for ammonia and one (Czechia) also exceeded its ceiling for NMVOCs. Ammonia emissions lead to increased acid depositions and excessive levels of nutrients in soil, rivers or lakes, damaging aquatic ecosystems as well as forests, crops and other vegetation. NMVOCs are emitted into the atmosphere from a large number of sources, including combustion activities, solvent use and industrial production. These compounds contribute to ground level ozone, with certain NMVOCs posing risks to human health.

Since 2016, all Member States have been in compliance with their national emission ceilings for nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide.

The EEA briefing also assesses the reduction against 2018 emission levels required for Member States to meet their individual reduction commitments set under the EU's National Emissions reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive for 2020 and 2030.

The majority of Member States must make additional efforts to reduce emission levels to meet their 2020 reduction commitments and in particular, ammonia emissions which remain a problem. The slowdown in economic activity across Europe in 2020 associated with the COVID-19 lockdowns is expected to lower emissions of several pollutants and may result in more countries meeting their 2020 commitments. However, without additional efforts, such COVID-19 related reductions might be reversed as the economy starts to recover.

All EU Member States will need to reduce their NO<sub>x</sub> emissions on 2018 levels to achieve the 2030 reduction commitments. Moreover, half of the Member States will need to reduce fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) emissions by more than 30 % to meet future commitments. Moreover, ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) will still remain a challenge with 25 Member States required to further lower their emissions.

Efforts required by Member States to reduce their emission levels was confirmed by [the NEC Implementation report recently published by the European Commission](#) where the risk of not compliance for many Member States (based on their National Air Pollution Control Programmes and their projections) was assessed.

## **Background**

The [briefing](#) presents progress made by the EU and its Member States in meeting emissions ceilings applicable since 2010 and set out in the NEC Directive (2016/2284/EU). The EU legislation sets emission reduction commitments for four key air pollutants from 2010 onward, including NO<sub>x</sub>, NMVOCs, SO<sub>2</sub>, and NH<sub>3</sub>, and for PM<sub>2.5</sub> from 2020 onwards. The analysis is based on the latest air pollutant emission inventory data for the period 2010-2018, as reported by EU Member States in February. The briefing also provides an assessment regarding the percentage reductions on 2018 emission levels needed for the Member States and the United Kingdom to reach their emission reduction commitments for 2020 and 2030.

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**[EIB to release new report on energy efficiency investment in the EU and US – Thursday, 2 July 2020](#)**



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Investments in energy efficiency improvements are vital to ensure Europe's future as a sustainable yet prosperous economy. The benefits are enormous – these investments contribute to abating greenhouse gas emissions, improving the competitiveness of European businesses, and enhancing Europe's energy security. This is why European leaders are placing energy efficiency at the heart of their strategy to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Yet amid the COVID-19 crisis, we risk losing sight of the benefits of energy efficiency investments by European firms, just at a time when we really need to accelerate our efforts.

In this context, a new EIB report, ***Going Green – Who is investing in energy efficiency, and why it matters***, will be published at 14:00 Brussels time on Thursday, 2 July 2020.

The report sheds light on **firms' investments in energy efficiency measures and the role of various factors in their decisions, based on the EIB Investment Survey (EIBIS)**. The insights are compared across countries (EU 27 and USA), sectors and firm size classes to identify areas for potential improvement and target setting. The EIBIS has been conducted annually since 2016 and includes interviews with some 12 000 firms from all EU countries, size classes and main sectors, providing qualitative and quantitative information about their investment activities, their financing needs and the difficulties they face.

[The full report will be available on the EIB's website](#)

The Director of the EIB Economics Department Debora Revoltella and the lead author of the report Fotios Kalantzis will present it in a **webinar on Thursday, 2 July at 13:30**. You can register for the webinar by sending your name and the name of your organisation to the EIB press team: [press@eib.org](mailto:press@eib.org)

The report, with results on EU level and for single EU countries, will be **available under embargo on Tuesday, 30 June**. Requests should be sent by email to [press@eib.org](mailto:press@eib.org). In asking to receive the report under embargo, journalists

undertake to respect the publication time of 14:00 Brussels time on Thursday, 2 July 2020.

For further information and interview requests, journalists are invited to contact EIB communications officer Jan Gerrit Wnendt (+352 691 284 340), [j.wnendt@eib.org](mailto:j.wnendt@eib.org).

### **About the EIB Economics Department**

The EIB Economics Department provides economic research and studies, as well as unique analysis of investment activities in the EU and beyond, and supports the Bank in its operations and in defining its positioning, strategy and policy. Chief Economist Debora Revoltella heads the Department and its team of 40 economists.

### **About the [EIB Investment Survey \(EIBIS\)](#)**

The EIB Group Survey on Investment and Investment Finance is a unique annual survey of some 13 500 firms. It comprises firms in all EU Member States, as well as a sample of US firms that serves as a benchmark. It collects data on firm characteristics and performance, past investment activities and future plans, sources of finance, financing issues and other challenges that businesses face. Using a stratified sampling methodology, the EIBIS is representative across all EU Member States and the US, as well as across firm size classes (micro to large) and four main sectors. It is designed to build a panel of observations to support time series analysis – observations that can also be linked to firm balance sheet and profit and loss data. The EIBIS was developed and is managed by the Economics Department of the EIB, with Ipsos MORI providing development and implementation support.

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