

Up to eight years in prison for leaders of German car theft gang

following intensive coordination between Germany and Lithuania via Eurojust

The Hague, 19 June 2020

✘ The Regional Court of Heilbronn in Germany recently sentenced eleven members of a Lithuanian criminal organisation to imprisonment for up to eight years for stealing luxury cars in Germany. The court rulings followed close and intensive cooperation between the German and Lithuanian judicial and police authorities, coordinated via Eurojust, the EU's Criminal Justice Cooperation Agency, which supported the setting up of a joint investigation team (JIT). Thanks to this collaboration, the authorities were able to map out and take decisive action against the criminal group as a whole. It also enabled them to proceed to a consolidated trial against all eleven defendants, based on solid evidence.

Heilbronn Senior Public Prosecutor Ms Mirjam Weisenburger said: *'Without the joint investigation team, this process and its, what I consider, successful conclusion would not have been possible. We have seen the advantages of this kind of cooperation in investigations on many occasions and that is what really enabled us to move forward in this case.'*

The organised criminal group (OCG), which was coordinated from a base in Lithuania, operated in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The thieves cracked the locks of high-end, luxury keyless cars using radio wave extenders and then transported them in trucks through the Czech Republic and Poland to Lithuania. The leaders in Lithuania communicated in code language with the gang members on the ground in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Given the cross-border dimension of the investigation, a JIT was set up with funding and support provided by Eurojust and analytical support by Europol. This facilitated a quick and direct exchange of information among the authorities involved, who set to work as one team. The constantly changing plans of the OCG were gradually mapped out, including by way of interception means, and step-by-step this led to the identification of additional suspects and criminal facts.

In addition to its financial and operational support to the JIT, Eurojust also assisted the national authorities with the organisation of two coordination meetings, where the team members were able to meet face to face, while interpreters were also on hand to provide help when needed. Eurojust also facilitated the execution of European Investigation Orders and requests for Mutual Legal Assistance.

A carefully prepared action day was held in December 2018, which resulted in the simultaneous arrests of the eleven suspects. To enable a consolidated

trial to be brought against all of them, the two gang leaders and five gang members, who had been arrested in Lithuania, were subsequently transferred to Germany.

The two leaders of the criminal group were convicted to serve prison sentences of seven years and nine months and five years and nine months respectively. The judgements are final. The Court also ordered confiscation of the proceeds of the crimes, the highest single amount being €584,960, while several properties have also been seized in Lithuania.

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[Article – Sassoli calls for action on recovery: ‘Our citizens expect bold action’](#)



Sassoli addressed heads of state and government at the start of a video conference of the European Council on 19 June to discuss the recovery plan and the EU's next long-term budget.

"Time is a luxury we cannot afford," he said. "We need to act urgently and courageously, as EU citizens, businesses and economies need an immediate response. Our citizens expect bold action. Now it is time for us to deliver."

Sassoli called the Commission proposal "ambitious" but added: "In our view it only scratches the surface of what needs to be done."

The President also spoke out against issuing loans as part of the recovery plans. "Parliament is keen to stress that any common debt issued must be repaid fairly, without burdening future generations," he said.

"Let us not forget that providing support solely in the form of loans would have an asymmetric impact on the indebtedness of the individual member states and would be more costly for the Union as a whole. We have an opportunity now to refashion Europe and make it more equal, greener and more forward-looking. To this end, we should seize our chance to introduce a basket of new own resources."

Sassoli called the introduction of new own resources for the EU "an essential prerequisite" for any overall agreement on the EU's long-term budget.

Stressing the importance of an ambitious recovery plan and budget, he said: "Now is not the time to water down our ambitions. We need to show our citizens the value of Europe and our ability to come up with solutions that

matter in their lives.”

The President also addressed the ongoing EU-UK talks on future relations. The previous day Parliament had adopted a report setting out its views. “We will push for an ambitious, overarching and comprehensive agreement in line with the joint commitments undertaken in the political declaration. We believe that this is the best possible outcome for both sides and, despite the limited time available, with goodwill and determination, it is still possible.”

[EUIPO meets with WIPO and EPO](#)

June 19, 2020 [European Trade Mark and Design Network](#)

EUIPO meets with WIPO and EPO



The EUIPO hosted online bilateral meetings with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) on 10 and 12 June 2020.

The meetings aimed at providing both organisations with an outline of the activities in the portfolio of the **European Cooperation Projects (ECP1-8)** under the new [Strategic Plan](#) of the Office, SP2025.

The EUIPO also presented the next steps to be taken during the second half of 2020 and 2021, and invited WIPO and EPO representatives to show their interest in participating in the upcoming ECP working groups.

The EUIPO is committed to do its utmost to continue maintaining direct channels of communications and discussions with WIPO and EPO, not only to exchange views and facilitate the correct understanding of the ECPs, but also

to explore synergies, in particular in terms of tools and initiatives, such as SME activities.

[Press release – COVID-19: Easing rules to encourage banks to lend to companies and households](#)



On Thursday evening, Plenary approved the “quick fix” to the capital requirement regulation (CRR) to temporarily ensure favourable conditions for banks. This will support credit flows to companies and households and absorb losses, mitigating the economic consequences of the COVID-19 lock-down.

With a view to striking a balance between a robust and stable banking system and securing much-needed credit for the EU economy, MEPs agreed on specific temporary changes to the CRR, which will have to be coherently applied in the EU.

The adopted changes include

- Deferred application of the leverage ratio buffer (leverage ratio is a ratio between a bank’s capital and its exposures) by one year to January 2023 to allow banks to increase the amount that they would be able to loan.
- Pensioners or employees with a permanent contract will be able to get a loan under more favourable prudential conditions. The loan will be backed by the borrower’s pension or salary.

- Advanced application of both the SME and infrastructure supporting factor, which allows for a more favourable prudential treatment of certain exposures, ensuring credit flows to SMEs and supporting investments in infrastructure.
- Banks will now be able to treat some software as their own capital, an exemption that will kick in earlier than planned. This could also encourage banks to invest in software and digitalisation.
- Liquidity measures provided by central banks in a crisis context will be effectively channelled by banks to the economy.

In order to support funding options in non-euro member states fighting the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MEPs reintroduced transitional arrangements for exposures to national governments and central banks denominated in a currency of another member state. Finally, taking into account the extraordinary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the extreme levels of volatility in the financial markets, MEPs agreed to introduce a temporary prudential filter to calculate unrealised losses on banks' holdings of public debt.

More details can be found [here](#).

Next steps

The new rules have been adopted with 502 votes to 169 and 17 abstentions.

The plenary session vote on the CRR quick fix was the final vote on the text already agreed with the Council. The changes will enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Journal of the EU.