

International organised crime group involved in fraud, forgery and money laundering dismantled in Spain and Romania

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□The Spanish Central Investigating Court of the *Audiencia Nacional* and the Romanian Directorate for Investigation of Organised Crime, Central Office and Terrorism (DIICOT), as well as the Romanian Police, initiated separate investigations into an organised crime group (OCG), composed mainly of Romanian nationals. The OCG, which targeted a multitude of victims worldwide, including public and private entities, as well as individuals, is suspected of having committed the crimes of fraud, forgery of documents, money laundering and involvement in an OCG. Following simultaneous house searches in both Member States, thirty-three suspects were detained in Spain (fourteen were arrested in Spain on the action day) and five people were arrested in Romania on the basis of Spanish European Arrest Warrants (EAWs).

□Once more, Eurojust's contribution was indispensable to the successful outcome of the operation, providing all the necessary judicial cooperation tools as well as its operational support in a timely and effective manner. On the initiative of the Spanish Desk at Eurojust, a case was opened in February 2018, and, in April 2018, a coordination meeting was held at Eurojust with the national authorities involved to coordinate the investigations in the Member States – as the OCG members were constantly commuting among several countries – exchange case-related information and agree on a way forward. Subsequently, Eurojust, via the concerned National Desks, facilitated the national authorities' investigations through the execution of EAWs and Letters of Request. Two action days took place, in Spain on 23 April, and in Romania on 26 April. Europol deployed mobile offices in both Member States.

The OCG has been active since 2016. Its members opened numerous bank accounts in various Member States using forged identity documents. Through those accounts, and via websites such as Amazon and Airbnb, the perpetrators defrauded an amount estimated at more than EUR 8 million by deceiving them into buying counterfeit products or services, such as fake holiday packages.

Background: