

Joint operation against 'ndrangheta in Italy and Germany

9 January 2018


Today, during an international joint action day in Italy and Germany, 160 people were arrested. More are expected to be apprehended. They are suspected of participation in a mafia-type ('ndrangheta) organised criminal group, attempted murder, extortion, money laundering, firearms-related offences and other crimes. Today's operation is the culmination of lengthy and complex investigations, initiated and conducted in Italy by the Reparto Operativo Speciale (ROS) under the leadership of the Procura della Repubblica – Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia (DDA) of Catanzaro.

In Germany, the operation involved several Prosecutor General's Offices and Prosecution Offices in four German Federal States (Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia), as well as numerous German police authorities, with the full and direct support of Eurojust.

The investigation revealed that a local cell of the 'ndrangheta (a so-called 'locale') based in Cirò (Crotone, Italy), owned and used several businesses in Italy, including companies producing wine, oil, bread and dairy products, as front companies to launder illicit profits obtained through a wide range of criminal activities. Telephone interceptions, together with other covert investigation measures, further revealed that a branch of the locale of Cirò was very active in Germany, where its members also intimidated owners of restaurants, pizza and ice cream parlours, forcing them to buy products from the companies controlled by the criminal group.

Eurojust ensured a comprehensive coordination at EU level and provided full operational legal assistance to all national authorities involved. Today, 160 arrests and over 250 simultaneous searches and seizures took place all over Italy and Germany. Eurojust set up a coordination centre at its premises in The Hague with the participation of representatives of the Prosecution Office and ROS of Catanzaro. Via the coordination centre, Eurojust coordinated the simultaneous execution of 10 European Arrest Warrants and 13 European Investigation Orders in four Federal States in Germany and facilitated the real-time exchange of information among all judicial and law enforcement officials involved in the joint operations.

Today's joint operations were prepared during a coordination meeting that took place in December 2017 at Eurojust, during which representatives of the relevant judicial and law enforcement authorities of Germany and Italy discussed the best way forward in relation to mutual legal assistance and exchanged operational information resulting from the complex national investigations. They also agreed on a common operational strategy to dismantle the mafia criminal group, including deciding to organise today's joint operation to arrest the group's alleged members.

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