

New action at EU level against 'Ndrangheta in Italy and Germany



In a new major operation against international drug trafficking and money laundering, Eurojust and Europol have supported the competent Italian and German authorities with the arrest of 31 suspects in both countries, alleged to be part of the 'Ndrangheta mafia, operating in different regions of Italy and abroad. Further to this, in the context of a joint investigation team (JIT) between Italy and Germany, 65 other suspects have been identified and their places were searched during a large-scale action, for which around 800 police officers and tax officials were deployed today in both countries.

Today's actions are a follow up to the Eurojust and Europol coordinated Operation Pollino, during which already 84 suspects were arrested in December 2018 in the two aforementioned countries, as well as Belgium and the Netherlands. In view of today's operation, a European Arrest Warrant has been issued for one of the main and already sentenced Pollino suspects, who was recently taken into custody in Spain and is awaiting surrender to Italy.

During the investigations, Eurojust assisted Italy and Germany in setting up a JIT and to ensure proper coordination of investigations, concerning two particular strands of an organised crime group (OCG), which amongst others is suspected of involvement with international drug trafficking and money laundering activities.

During a period of at least several years, the OCG is suspected of having organised the trade in cocaine between Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain using encrypted EncroChat and Sky ECC communication tools. A string of building and hospitality companies was allegedly used to launder the

proceedings in Italy. The investigations in Germany focus in particular on drug trafficking and potential tax avoidance. For this purpose, financial and economic specialists of the German police joined the JIT.

The operation was carried out on the ground in Italy by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (DIA) under the coordination of the Public Prosecutor of Turin and of the National Antimafia Bureau (DNAA). In Germany, the operation was coordinated by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Konstanz, in cooperation with the Criminal Police of Friedrichshafen and the Economic and Financial Police of Ulm.

Both agencies have assisted the Italian and German authorities during the whole cycle of the investigations. Europol supported the operation by coordinating the international law enforcement activities and providing expertise through its dedicated Analysis Project on Italian Organised Crime (AP ITOC). Eurojust set up a coordination centre and organised two coordination meetings, to prepare for the action day.

In total at least several hundreds of thousands EUR have been seized, as well as weapons, cocaine, two luxury vehicles and jewelry. Furthermore, a full assessment of cash amounts seized is ongoing and bank accounts have been frozen.

This investigation is part of the Italian DIA Project ONNET, an EU-financed initiative to tackle mafia-type organised crime groups active in Europe. The project was launched at Europol's headquarters and targets the mafia-style criminal groups in their entirety, rather than one or more of their specific criminal activities.