

Over 1 500 money mules identified in worldwide money laundering sting

4 December 2018

Eurojust–Europol–European Banking Federation (EBF) joint press release

- 168 arrested, 1 504 money mules and 140 money mule organisers identified as a result of the fourth European Money Mule Action 'EMMA 4', a global law enforcement action week tackling the issue of money muling.
- The action took place over the course of three months (September–November 2018).
- 30 States took part in EMMA 4, alongside Europol, Eurojust and the European Banking Federation, supported by more than 300 banks.
- The joint money muling campaign #DontBeAMule kicks off today to alert the public to this crime.

Working together with **Europol**, **Eurojust** and the **European Banking Federation (EBF)**, police forces from over 20 States arrested 168 people (so far) as part of a coordinated money laundering crackdown, the **European Money Mule Action (EMMA)**. This international swoop, the fourth of its kind, was intended to tackle the issue of 'money mules', who help criminals launder millions of euros worth of dirty money.

Held over the course of the past three months (September–November 2018), this year's version of EMMA saw the participation of judicial and law enforcement authorities from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Australia, Moldova, Norway, Switzerland, the UK and the USA.

Across Europe and beyond, 1 504 money mules were identified, leading to the arrest of 168, and the arrest of 140 money mule organisers. 837 criminal investigations were opened; many of them are still ongoing. More than 300 banks, 20 bank associations and other financial institutions helped to report 26 376 fraudulent money mule transactions, preventing a total loss of EUR 36.1 million. The wider community of global and European banks provided support where needed during the three months of action and committed to raising awareness in their countries. Once again, this action highlights the importance of a quick and coordinated response by judicial and law enforcement authorities and the banking sector.

Why do people help criminals launder money?

Money mules are individuals who, often unwittingly, have been recruited by criminal organisations as money laundering agents to hide the origin of ill-gotten money. Tricked by the promise of easy money, mules transfer stolen funds between accounts, often in different States, on behalf of others, and are usually offered a share of the funds that pass through their own accounts.

Newcomers to a State, the unemployed, and people in economic distress often feature among the most susceptible to this crime. This year, cases involving young people selected by money mule recruiters are on the rise, with criminals increasingly targeting financially-distressed students to gain access to their bank accounts.

While mules are being recruited via numerous routes, criminals are more often turning to social media to recruit new accomplices, through the advertisement of fake jobs or get-rich-quick schemes.

Although this may sound like quick and easy money – all it takes is a click to transfer money from an account to another – permitting a criminal group to use your bank account can have severe legal consequences. Mules may face lengthy prison terms and acquire a criminal record that could seriously affect the rest of their lives, such as never being able to secure a mortgage or open another bank account.

#DontBeAMule

To raise awareness of this type of fraud, the [money muling awareness campaign #DontBeAMule](#) kicks off today across Europe. With awareness-raising material, available for download in 25 languages, the campaign will inform the public about how these criminals operate, how they can protect themselves and what to do if they become a victim.

As of next week, international partners from judicial and law enforcement authorities, together with financial institutions, will be supporting the campaign at national level.

Do you think you might be used as a mule? Act now before it is too late: stop transferring money and notify your bank and your national police immediately.

Follow the EMMA prevention campaign here:

- @Eurojust
- @Europol
- @EC3Europol
- @EBFeu
- @Europol (Facebook)
- #DontbeAMule