

Smuggling network connected to four deaths at sea dismantled in Spain

The suspects are linked to the smuggling of an important amount of people through the Strait of Gibraltar

On 29 March 2021 Europol supported the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional) in dismantling an organised crime group involved in migrant smuggling from Morocco to Spain through the Strait of Gibraltar. More than 150 police officers were deployed in Spain to arrests the suspects, considered dangerous because of their history of violent crimes and suspected possession of weapons.

Results from the action day in Spain

- Simultaneous actions in Algeciras, Ceuta, La Linea de la Concepción and Madrid
- 6 house searches
- 20 suspects arrested
- Suspects charged with migrant smuggling and 4 murders related to the deaths of people who drowned during a sea crossing
- Seizures including 3 boats (one rubber boat in Ceuta, one fiberglass boat in La Linea and a yacht in Algeciras), jerry cans and big tanks of fuel totalling some 7 000 litres, 5 weapons and mobile devices

Four deaths connected to this network

The criminal network was composed of Spanish and Moroccan nationals. The suspects smuggled Moroccan nationals through the Strait of Gibraltar on different vessels, some of them stolen. The boats were fuelled at sea to avoid suspicions from the authorities.

The migrants, mainly young individuals and often minors were paying about €2 500 per person for the smuggling services. The suspects transported the migrants in life-threatening conditions without any safety measures in case of emergency at sea. Evidence suggests links between the network and a deadly shipwreck, which took four lives in February.

Europol facilitated the exchange of information, provided operational coordination and analytical support. On the action day, Europol deployed an analyst to Spain to support with technical expertise and to enable the real-time exchange of information and cross check operational information against Europol's databases in order to provide leads to investigators in the field.

[Watch the video](#)



In 2010 the European Union set up a [four-year Policy Cycle](#) to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organised crime. In 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the EU Policy Cycle for the 2018 – 2021 period. It aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by organised and serious international crime to the EU. This is achieved by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of EU Member States, institutions and agencies, as well as non-EU countries and organisations, including the private sector where relevant. [Facilitation of illegal immigration](#) is one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.