

## [Call for expression of interest – NGO representatives for ECDC’s Advisory Forum](#)



The [Advisory Forum](#) advises ECDC’s Director on the quality of the scientific work undertaken by the Centre and is a mechanism for exchanging information, pooling health knowledge, and furthering public health cooperation.

This call for expression of interest will result in the selection of representatives of non-governmental organisations representing patients, professional bodies, and academia to the Advisory Forum. The successful candidates will be appointed for a three-year mandate starting on 11 July 2021.

The Call, Application Forms, and Declaration of Interests Form can be found here:

[https://ec.europa.eu/health/security/consultations/2021\\_call\\_ecdc\\_advisoryforum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/security/consultations/2021_call_ecdc_advisoryforum_en)

The deadline for the submission of applications is 16 April 2021.

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## [Beware of scam using the name of Europol’s Executive Director](#)



We have been made aware of scams using the name of Europol's Executive Director. Emails or messages on Social Media, written in different languages, use the name of Catherine de Bolle to make it sound serious and legitimate.

Don't be misled – this correspondence is fake. Europol's Executive Director would never directly contact members of the public requesting an immediate action or threatening individuals with opening a criminal investigation.

## **Let us know**

If you receive a suspicious email or correspondence using the name of Europol's Executive Director, please let us know. Send us the details [using this contact form](#), so that we can refer the matter to national authorities for further investigation.

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**[Article – Coming up: Covid-19 variants, data protection, AI](#)**



On Monday the [environment and public health committee](#) discusses the [effectiveness of vaccines against new Covid-19 variants](#) with experts from the European Medicines Agency, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, and the World Health Organization.

The General Data Protection Regulation entered into force two years ago to give Europeans more control over how their online data gets used. On Tuesday, the [civil liberties committee](#) will consider possible improvements and challenges to the legislation. Issues include the use of the rules by data protection authorities against journalists and non-governmental organisations.

Digital issues are on the agenda of the [culture and education committee](#) on Tuesday when committee members vote on an own-initiative report on the use of artificial intelligence in culture, education and the audiovisual sector. The report mainly looks at legal and ethical issues.

On Thursday, the [economic and monetary affairs committee](#) will discuss how to deal with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic with Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank.

A seminar on how to respond to disinformation takes place on Wednesday. Lead MEPs and experts will discuss how disinformation is undermining trust in democracy in the EU and the US. Christopher Krebs, the former director of the US Homeland Security's cybersecurity agency, will give the keynote speech. Watch the event [here](#).

# Spanish Police seize first ever narco-submarine made in Europe



The seizure was made in the framework of Operation FERRO, a high-level law enforcement operation against an organised crime group involved in large-scale drugs trafficking.

Over 300 police officers carried out this operation in Spain, supported by the National Police of Colombia (Policía Nacional de Colombia), the Dutch National Police (Politie), the Portuguese Judicial Police (Policía Judiciária), the U.K. National Crime Agency and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, with international activity coordinated by Europol.

## **Results of Operation FERRO**

- 47 house searches carried out in the Spanish cities of Tarragona (6), Barcelona (11), Gerona (3), Málaga (11), Castellón (4), Valencia (2), Murcia (7), Cádiz (1), Granada (1) and Badajoz (1);
- 52 individuals arrested;
- 2 boats seized: one semi-submersible vessel in Málaga and one speedboat worth over €300 000 in the province of Murcia;
- Over 3 tonnes of cocaine seized, alongside 700 kilos of hashish and over €100 000 in cash.

## **Operation FERRO was carried out in several phases**

**Phase one:** Investigators identified an organised crime group, composed of Spanish, Colombian and Dominican nationals, involved in large-scale trafficking of cocaine, hashish and marijuana. The criminals were operating from Spain, specifically Cataluña. Between April to December 2020, a number of important cocaine seizures linked to this criminal group were made in Colombia. A total of 2 900 kilos of cocaine were seized.

**Phase two:** In November 2020, police officers in Spain arrested the leader of this criminal network in Tarragona, alongside 13 of his accomplices.

**Phase three:** In February of this year, another branch of this organised crime group was targeted. Four individuals were arrested in Tarragona and a shipment of 583 kilos of hashish on its way to France and Italy seized. House searches were also carried out in Málaga, on the occasion of which the half-submersible vessel was found in a warehouse. The boat – the first ever of its kind seized on European soil, was still in construction when it was found. The craft was 9 meters long and could have been able to transport up to 2 tonnes of drugs.

**Phase four:** One of the main targets was arrested in February at the El Prat airport in Barcelona as he was trying to flee to the Netherlands. As a result of this arrest, a warehouse was searched Barcelona which led to the seizure of 300 kilos of cocaine.

**Phase five:** A clandestine drug laboratory was discovered in Barcelona next to an indoor cannabis plantation with over 1 150 plants. A 15-meter long speedboat belonging to this criminal network and loaded with 7 000 litres of gasoline was also seized in the region of Murcia.

**Phase six:** At the end of February, the remaining members of the criminal network were arrested. Some 6 000 litres of drug precursors were also seized, destined for a clandestine laboratory in Murcia.

## **Europol's support**

Europol's EU Drugs Unit coordinated the intense international activity from the onset of this Investigation. Its team of specialists facilitated the exchange of information between the different countries involved and analysed the operational data to identify the main targets.

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**[ESMA to allow decision on reporting of](#)**

## net short position of 0.1% and above to expire

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, has decided not to renew its decision to require holders of net short positions in shares traded on a European Union (EU) regulated market, to notify the relevant national competent authority (NCA) if the position reaches, exceeds or falls below 0.1% of the issued share capital. The measure, which has applied since 16 March 2020, will expire on 19 March 2021.

ESMA's view is that with GDP forecasts showing moderate optimism for recovery, volatility decreasing and the main EU stock indices close to pre-pandemic levels, the current situation in financial markets no longer resembles the emergency situation required by the Short Selling Regulation to maintain the measure.

The overall level of net short positions is decreasing across the EU, reducing the risk that selling pressures could initiate or exacerbate potential negative developments connected with the evolution of the pandemic.

The [last renewed decision](#) expires on 19 March 2021. Therefore, the last reporting where the lower threshold of 0.1% applies will be in relation to Friday, 19 March 2021, and must be reported to NCAs by 15.30 of Monday 22 March 2021.

From 20 March 2021 onwards, positions holders will need to send notifications only if they reach or exceed the 0.2% threshold again, while any outstanding net short position between 0.1% and 0.2% will not have to be reported.

The EFTA Surveillance Authority, in cooperation with ESMA, has also [decided](#) not to renew their current measure applicable to EEA EFTA States' markets, that will therefore also expire on 19 March 2021.

The decision requiring net short position holders to report positions of 0.1% and above was first introduced on 16 March 2020 and was renewed in [June 2020](#), [September 2020](#) and [December 2020](#).

### **Next steps**

ESMA, in coordination with NCAs, will continue to monitor developments in financial markets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is prepared to use its powers to ensure the orderly functioning of markets, financial stability and investor protection.

Further information:

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