

EU to speed up introduction of aerodynamic lorry cabs – Council agrees its stance

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Prostitution: Romanian criminal network dismantled

30 January 2019

✖ On 16 January, Swiss and Romanian investigators carried out simultaneous searches and hearings of 23 persons in an operation to dismantle an organised criminal group (OCG) suspected of committing trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and controlling of prostitution.

The operation is part of a joint investigation team concluded in August 2017 between the Prosecution Office of the Canton of Vaud and the Directorate for Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) Pitesti Territorial Office, with the operational and financial support of Eurojust. This JIT was the first JIT was signed with a Swiss cantonal prosecutor's office.

Investigations, conducted both in Vaud and Pitesti, indicate that as of 2016, the members of the OCG recruited young female victims in precarious financial and social situations using the 'loverboy' method. The victims were transported to and intensively exploited in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 2016,

one such victim, purchased by three suspects from another suspect, was stabbed to death. Her body was found abandoned in a forest on the French/Swiss border.

The investigation began in early 2016 by the Lausanne municipal police, and the case was opened by the Swiss Liaison Prosecutor at Eurojust in May 2017. The investigation led to the identification of nine suspects and fifteen victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in Switzerland and Romania. As a result of the investigations carried out, the criminal activity is estimated at more than EUR 2 million.

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Major hit against fraud and money laundering

[ES](#)

30 January 2019

✖ Yesterday, a joint action led by Germany (the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) Cologne and Police Cologne) and Italy (PPO Bolzano, with the support of *Guardia di Finanza Brunico*) resulted in the dismantling of an organised crime group (OCG) involved in large-scale financial fraud and money laundering across Europe. Cooperation in Spain was provided by PPOs in Pontevedra, Ourense and Majorca, with the support of *Guardia Civil*, and by PPO Madrid with the support of *Policía Nacional*, under the general coordination of the GPO Unit for International Cooperation, as well as by the competent investigative courts in the mentioned cities, when necessary.

Various European Investigation Orders (EIOs), freezing orders and European Arrest Warrants (EAWs) were issued and executed prior to (including extensive financial investigations) and during the action day. Based on EAWs issued by PPO Cologne, two suspects were arrested in Spain; another two suspects were arrested in Germany.

Eurojust contributed substantially to the overall success of the action day by setting up a joint investigation team (JIT) between Germany and Italy, providing financial support to the JIT, and facilitating communication with the Spanish national authorities through two coordination meetings and a coordination centre. The coordination centre allowed the national authorities to immediately identify arising needs for cooperation. Eurojust provided legal assistance, including support in drafting, issuing and executing new measures, to complete the operation and prevent the suspects from keeping their ill-gotten gains.

✖ During the simultaneous operations, numerous private residences and business premises were searched in Germany (Ratingen, Düsseldorf, Mönchengladbach, Munich and Münster), Spain (Pontevedra, Ourense, Madrid and Majorca) and Switzerland. The majority of the measures were executed in Spain, in which the proceeds of several bank accounts were seized, as well as other assets, such as luxury cars and jewelry. Several bank accounts were frozen in Switzerland and Portugal. At the same time, bank accounts were seized and bank safes were searched in Germany. During the searches in all States involved, the authorities managed to secure large quantities of evidence, e.g. paper and digital documents.

The investigations into 14 OCG members were initiated four years ago. The OCG members are suspected of being involved in a scam of fraudulent investments. They had been collecting money from victims to allegedly make profitable investments on their behalf; however, they used the money for their own profit. More than 60 investors in various States have been victimised by the OCG; the total damage amounts to approximately € 12 million. Some of the OCG members are suspected of having also caused financial damages to investors in Italy, using the same *modus operandi*. A separate investigation was therefore launched in Italy in the interest of the Italian victims.

One of the persons arrested in Germany was released for health reasons. The other three remain in custody in Germany and Spain; the two arrested in Spain are awaiting a decision on their surrender.

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[Trans-European transport network – Coreper approves mandate for talks on Brexit-related adaptation](#)

Today, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) approved a mandate which will enable the presidency to start negotiations with the European Parliament on a proposal to **ensure new maritime connections between Ireland and the other EU countries** on the North Sea-Mediterranean core network corridor of the **Trans-European transport network (TEN-T)** in the event that the United Kingdom leaves the EU under a 'no deal' scenario. The reformulation of the corridor will ensure continuity for ongoing and future infrastructure investments and provide legal clarity and certainty for infrastructure planning.

The proposal adapts the 2013 **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** regulation, which provides funding for key projects in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors. After 2020, the CEF regulation will be replaced by CEF 2.0, on which negotiations have just begun between the Council and the

European Parliament.

The **Council mandate** amends the Commission proposal in particular regarding the selection of ports to ensure the EU27 link to Ireland in the North Sea-Mediterranean core network corridor. The mandate also specifically mentions investments for security and border checks purposes among investments that would be eligible for support in the remaining programming cycle of the CEF.

The draft amending regulation will enter into force 20 days after publication. It will become applicable the day after the 2013 CEF regulation ceases to apply to the UK.

Negotiations with the European Parliament on the final text are set to start this evening.

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[Cybercrime: xDedic illegal online marketplace dismantled](#)

23 November 2018

✖ On 24 January, members of the National Police and the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, with assistance from members of the Federal Computer Crime Unit (FCCU) of Belgium, Europol, and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of Tampa, Florida, conducted house searches in nine places in Ukraine. Several IT systems were confiscated and three Ukrainian suspects were questioned.

The house searches were related to two criminal investigations into the xDedic Marketplace, on which access to tens of thousands of compromised servers of unknowing victims (companies and private individuals) was offered for sale. The hacking was accomplished via the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP). Buyers and sellers traded such RDP servers on this platform for amounts ranging from USD 6 to more than USD 10 000 each.

In the first investigation, the investigating judge in Mechelen, at the request of the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office and the General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine, conducted a criminal investigation. At the beginning of 2018, a JIT agreement was signed between Belgium, Ukraine, Eurojust and Europol, which was renewed early this year.

The JIT was funded by Eurojust. The investigation focused on a number of vendors on the xDedic Marketplace, who sold a large number of Belgian hacked computer systems, and the organised criminal group (OCG) that organised and operated the illegal online marketplace.

The US investigation into the OCG behind the xDedic marketplace was led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

On 24 January, the xDedic Marketplace was made inaccessible on the orders of a US court, and the criminal IT infrastructure was confiscated. Customers who attempt to access the xDedic domain will be referred to a US government page explaining that the marketplace was taken offline. For this confiscation and inaccessibility, assistance was provided by police forces in Germany.

The Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office started the investigation into the xDedic Marketplace in June 2016. Using special investigative techniques, the criminal infrastructure behind xDedic was made visible and digital copies of the most important criminal servers were obtained.

A thorough analysis of the content of the servers, supported by Europol and the Ukrainian National Cyber Police, led to the identification of website administrators in Ukraine. Throughout this investigation, Belgian and Ukrainian law enforcement closely coordinated their investigative efforts.

As soon as the Belgian and American criminal investigators discovered that they had shared common targets and goals, they worked together closely. In the course of 2018, Eurojust held two two-day coordination meetings, with Belgium, the USA, Ukraine and Europol, to plan the actions, provide support for the issuing and execution of the European Investigation Orders, and deal with any judicial obstacles.

Through their coordinated efforts, Belgian, Ukrainian and American judicial, prosecutorial and police authorities struck a devastating blow against the online marketplace for the illegal trade of hacked computer systems. An important signal was also sent to the perpetrators of other online criminal activities, including on the darkweb, that they are not immune from criminal investigation and prosecution. The approach to the xDedic marketplace demonstrates the importance of intensive international cooperation in the fight against organised crime on the dark web.

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