

Action taken against bitcoin fraud in France and Belgium



30 January 2020

Authorities in France and Belgium, with the support of Eurojust and Europol, have taken action against a criminal network which committed large-scale international fraud with the sale of bitcoins and other crypto-currencies. Approximately 85 victims in France and Belgium were defrauded of EUR 6 million by an Organised Criminal Group (OCG) operating from Israel. In total, 10 suspects were arrested. The investigations unveiled further plans to commit fraud, which were not realised.

✘ The criminal group approached victims by phone, offering them huge profits on investments in bitcoins of up to 35 percent. To gain their trust, victims initially made small gains on these investments, thereby encouraging them to further invest. Victims were then defrauded on subsequent payments. These were transferred to fake companies, which had been set up for this purpose by the OCG. The profits were then quickly transferred via bank accounts in other EU Member States to bank accounts in various Asian countries and Turkey.

European Investigation Orders (EIOs) were issued to the authorities of Bulgaria, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Spain, the Czech Republic and Portugal to help with the investigations. Four persons had been arrested in France in January 2019, and in cooperation with the authorities in Luxembourg, EUR 1 million were seized.

Eurojust assisted the French and Belgian authorities by setting up and financing a **Joint Investigation Team (JIT)** and organizing a **coordination meeting**. Europol participated in an international rogatory mission of French and Belgian magistrates to Israel. In close collaboration with the Israeli police, seven searches took place and five persons were interrogated.

The investigations were led by the specialized interregional jurisdiction (JIRS) of Nancy and the Belgian Federal Parquet, in close collaboration with the judicial police in Israel, the national police of France and federal police of Belgium.

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EIB Group Press Conference on Annual Results – EU bank closes 2019 with stronger results in climate finance and a record number of deals



- Share of climate financing rises to 31% of EIB's total, underlining the Bank's commitment to play a key role in the European Green Deal and the fight against global warming.
- EIB Group financing increases by 13% to more than EUR 72 billion.
- Highest number of financing operations: 1 095, up 28% from 2018.
- EIB financing outside the EU brings 10-year total to almost EUR 70 billion, of which almost EUR 22 billion to Africa.
- EIB President Werner Hoyer: "The EU bank is more relevant than ever for climate action and Europe's competitiveness."

In a challenging year, the European Investment Bank Group (EIB) exceeded its own targets, signing a record number of 1 095 operations and increasing financing volumes to EUR 72.22 billion. This was in spite of uncertainty and delays linked to Brexit and to the need for the remaining EU Member States to come to an agreement, last spring, over the replacement of the UK's share of EIB capital.

"The EU bank has performed well in the markets, proving that there is strong

demand for its products. It has also won support from the Member States in addressing and resolving the Brexit challenge”, EIB President Werner Hoyer said at the EIB Group’s annual press conference on 30 January in Brussels.

The financing provided by the EIB Group in 2019 supports total investment of around EUR 280 billion in Europe and worldwide, an increase of EUR 50 billion compared to 2018.

“We are able to reach out and work with a larger number of smaller projects contributing to prosperity in Europe and beyond. This more targeted approach allows us to maximise our impact in terms of total investment supported. This is sharper, smarter investment,” said Hoyer.

Ramping up climate action

A record 31% share of EIB financing went into climate action projects, transforming Europe’s energy markets, but also mitigating the effects of climate change and helping people in greatly affected areas to adapt. “Now, as Europe puts a strong emphasis on climate action, the EIB has decided to strengthen its role as the European Union’s climate bank. We are ramping up our climate action. The EU bank plays an integral part in the European Green Deal announced by the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen,” Hoyer said.

[Press release – Brexit deal approved by the European Parliament](#)



In a debate with the Croatian State Secretary for European Affairs [Nikolina Brnjac](#) on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, [Commission President Ursula von der Leyen](#), and the EU's Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier, Parliament took stock of the withdrawal process so far and the challenges ahead.

Commenting on the historic importance of the vote, most speakers on behalf of the political groups highlighted that the UK's withdrawal will not be the end of the road for the EU-UK relationship and that the ties that bind the peoples of Europe are strong and will remain in place. They also mentioned that there are lessons to be learnt from Brexit that should shape the future of the EU and thanked the UK and its MEPs for their contribution throughout the UK's membership. Many speakers warned that the negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and the UK are going to be difficult, especially taking into account the timeframe provided in the Withdrawal Agreement.

You can catch up with the debate by clicking on the links below:

Opening statement by [Guy VERHOFSTADT](#) (RE, BE), EP Brexit Steering Group coordinator

Opening statements by [Nikolina BRNJAC on behalf of the Croatian Presidency](#) and by [Ursula VON DER LEYEN, Commission President](#)

First round of [political group speakers](#)

[MEPs debate](#) (1st part)

[MEPs debate](#) (2nd part)

[MEPs debate](#) (3rd part)

Closing statements by [Michel BARNIER, Head of the Task Force for Relations with the UK and Nikolina BRNJAC](#)

Closing statement by [David SASSOLI](#), EP President

Parliament will have its say on future relationship with UK

Parliament's UK coordination group, led by [Foreign Affairs Committee Chair David McAllister \(EPP, DE\)](#), will liaise with the EU [Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom](#) and coordinate with the Foreign Affairs Committee and [International Trade Committee](#) and all other competent committees. The EP will follow closely the work of the EU negotiator Michel Barnier and continue to influence the negotiations through resolutions. The final agreement will need the approval of the Parliament as a whole.

Quote

After the historic vote, President Sassoli said that: ““It deeply saddens me to think that we have come to this point. Fifty years of integration cannot easily be dissolved. We will all have to work hard to build a new relationship, always focusing on the interests and protection of citizens' rights. It will not be simple. There will be difficult situations that will test our future relationship. We knew this from the start of Brexit. I am sure, however, that we will be able to overcome any differences and always find common ground”.

Next steps

To enter into force, the Withdrawal Agreement will now be put to a final vote by qualified majority in the Council.

The transition period starting on 1 February is set to expire at the end of December 2020. Any agreement on the future EU-UK relationship will have to be fully concluded before that point if it is to come into force on 1 January 2021.

The transition period can be extended once for one to two years, but the decision to do so must be taken by the EU-UK Joint Committee before 1 July.

Parliament will have to approve any future relationship agreement. If such an agreement refers to competences that the EU shares with member states, then national parliaments will also need to ratify it.

Background

The vote in Parliament's plenary session took place after the completion of the ratification process in the UK and the [positive recommendation by the Constitutional Affairs Committee](#). [Part Two of the Withdrawal Agreement](#) protects EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in other EU countries, as well

as their families. According to its provisions, all social security rights under EU law will be maintained and citizens' rights will be guaranteed throughout their lifetime, and relevant administrative procedures have to be transparent, smooth and streamlined. The implementation and application of these terms will be overseen by an independent authority, which will have powers equivalent to those of the European Commission.

[Press release – Parliament to debate the Coronavirus outbreak](#)



Following statements by the Council and the Commission, MEPs will discuss the consequences and actions to take with regard to the outbreak of the [Novel Coronavirus](#) epidemic in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China.

Watch the live debate via [EP Live](#), and [EbS+](#).

Debate: Wednesday, 29 January

Procedure: Debate on topical issues