

Forging documents and trafficking in the forgeries are sometimes pursued as ends in themselves, for profit. But these crimes are often means to other ends, such as terrorism, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in people.

In an age of machine-readable passports, facial-recognition software and iris scanning, it can take a high level of skill to forge documents convincingly. But the rewards make this crime a particular draw for criminals seeking to profit in other crime areas. Stopping the networks involved and seizing their output can thus disrupt a range of other crimes.

Faking it - the word "fake" can mean different things depending on what's being faked:

Counterfeiting refers to the production of:

- › fake items, ranging from high-end consumer goods such as watches, perfumes and leather accessories, to business-to-business products such as machines, chemicals or spare parts, and consumer products such as toys, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and foodstuffs – purported to be from certain manufactures and bearing their logos, and accounting for up to 5 % of imports to the EU;
- › fake currency bills, typically euro notes or US dollar bills in large denominations, and increasingly being produced by digital means rather than by offset, which required considerably greater skill.

Forgery refers to the production of fake documents such as passports and other forms of identification, which are sometimes used as "breeder" documents—administrative documents such as birth certificates, marriage records, and work and residence permits, that can be used to obtain other identification documents fraudulently.

The response of Europol and its partners involves coordination not just across borders but across crime areas that in other ways might seem to be connected either not at all or only remotely. Europol's contribution is key at both the strategic and operational levels: it facilitates the exchange of intelligence, hosts operational meetings and provides tailored analytical support for ongoing investigations.

FORGERY AND TERRORISM

The perpetrators of the murderous attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo and on a Jewish supermarket in Paris in January 2015 committed a number of other lower-level crimes in preparation for their attacks. Among these was the use of a consumer loan obtained with forged documents. The perpetrators of the attacks on the Bataclan theatre in the same city 10 months later also used false documentation. Jihadists regularly travel on forged passports. And documents originally belonging to foreign terrorist fighters can be altered or used by lookalikes.

Europol continues to work at the strategic heart of the response to the elevated terrorist threat to the EU, connecting its information-exchange and analysis capabilities to support counter-terrorism investigations.

FORGERY AND THE SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS

Europol regularly supports operations that both stop the smuggling of migrants and disrupt the creation and use of the forged documents that facilitate the smuggling. These criminal activities, and the operations targeting them, are taking place against the backdrop of the ongoing migrant crisis. Organised crime groups are investing more heavily in the production of fake documents to support a growing criminal market associated with that crisis.

One operation that Europol coordinated targeted a network of organised crime groups in Greece who were involved in the massive production and distribution of falsified or forged documents, including:

- › passports;
- › national ID cards;
- › Schengen visas;
- › driver's licences;
- › asylum seeker's registration cards;
- › residence permits.

The documents were shipped through courier companies to EU Member States and other countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and were then used to allow irregular migrants to enter the EU or legalise their stay there.

FORGERY AND TRAFFICKING IN PEOPLE FOR MODERN SLAVERY

Organised crime groups make frequent use of forged or altered documents to traffic people [for the purpose of sexual exploitation](#). The pattern is familiar: vulnerable women are recruited in their home country, lured by false promises of well-paying jobs in the EU. They are then trafficked to an EU country, sometimes being sexually exploited along the way and then put to work as prostitutes or escorts in hotels, massage parlours and nightspots. Their exploitation is coerced

through such means as:

- › debt bondage
- › the withholding of identity documents
- › sexual and physical abuse
- › the use of drugs.

Europol is working hard with its partners to pursue the criminals who profit from these crimes. It is also adapting tools and strategies to take account of the global nature of these activities, and seeking to enhance cooperation with countries outside the EU, including those from which vulnerable women originate.

NUMBER OF ITEMS FOUND: 51

SEARCH



TYPE

Article/Story, Event, How-To Guide, Landing Page, Multimedia, News/Press Release, Operation, Page, Publication/Document

TARGET GROUP

SEARCH

CLEAR ALL

05
Jul
2011



CHINESE NETWORK OF PEOPLE SMUGGLERS DISMANTLED

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

26
May
2011



ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK DISRUPTED IN FRANCE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

09
Mar
2011



PASSPORT FORGERS ARRESTED IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

◀ FIRST

◀ PREVIOUS

1

2

3

4

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