

# 166 ARRESTED IN INTERNATIONAL CRACKDOWN AGAINST CRIME IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

30 Sep 2020

[Press Release](#)



A total of 34 countries teamed up last week to combat organised and serious international crime originating from Southeast Europe as part of [joint action days \(JAD\)](#). The four-day operation supported by Europol was aimed at tackling the facilitation of illegal immigration and the trafficking of firearms and drugs, which are key priorities of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).

The operation brought together:

- **EU Member States:** Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.
- **Non-EU Member States:** Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine, United States.
- **EU Agencies:** Europol, Eurojust, Frontex
- **International and institutional partners:** INTERPOL, UNODC, PCC-SEE, CCWP, PA/2019 countering serious and organised crime in the Western Balkans, SEESAC.

8838 law enforcement officers were involved in the operation and included police officers, land, sea and air border guards and customs agents.

## BIG HIT AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

During the span of the action week, more than 390 000 individuals and 44 000 vehicles were checked at cross border locations and in suspected hotspots for criminal trafficking.

These controls and investigations have led to the following arrests in several European countries:

- Firearms trafficking or illegal possession of firearms: 17
- Migrant smuggling or illegal immigration: 73
- Drug trafficking: 37
- Firearms and drug trafficking: 7
- Document fraud: 12
- International arrest warrant: 1
- Other crimes not related to the JAD: 19

In addition, investigators seized 51 weapons of different types and 47 kilograms of a variety of drugs.

## OPERATIONAL SET UP

The EMPACT Firearms – led by Spanish Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) coordinated the operation with the support of Europol. The framework for the JAD consisted of databases crosschecking to help advance investigations, operational analysis, the exchange of information and real time communication and checks. During the course of the operation, Europol set up a virtual coordination centre to enable daily briefings and support the exchange of intelligence among the participants.

Throughout the action days, law enforcement intensified surveillance and controls at selected border-crossing points. The high-risk areas were identified following an upstream work of information gathering and analysis between national law enforcement authorities, Europol and the institutional partners. Several countries also carried out inland criminal investigations and activities in relation to the trafficking of weapons and explosives.

Commenting on this operation, the **Lieutenant of Guardia Civil, Pedro García Vazquez** said:

“

As action leader for this international JAD implemented in the framework of the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT operation, Spain and of course my agency Guardia Civil is tremendously pleased with the results achieved. Law enforcement agencies are prepared to fight organised crime internationally by conducting high impact operations, despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, and citizens can be confident that we continue to pursue and innovate in criminal investigations. This operation shows the results we achieve when national law enforcement authorities across Europe, EU agencies such as Europol and Frontex, and international agencies such as INTERPOL and the United Nations work together.

”

The **Head of Europol's Serious Organised Crime Centre, Jari Liukku**, added:

“

“Criminals from the South East Europe region are increasingly expanding their network of influence. Europol is committed to working closely with this region and supporting an international coordinated and mutually supportive approach for tackling serious and organised crime. This operation is an outstanding success and exemplifies this strong law enforcement cooperation.”

”

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



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. [Drug trafficking](#), [illicit firearms trafficking](#) and [facilitation of illegal immigration](#) are one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS

TARGET GROUPS

SUPPORT &

SERVICES

[Facilitation of Illegal Immigration](#) · [Drug Trafficking](#) · [Illicit firearms trafficking](#)

[General Public](#) · [Law Enforcement](#) · [Academia](#) · [Professor](#) · [Students](#) · [Researcher](#) · [Press/Journalists](#) · [Other](#)

[Operational coordination](#) · [Operational support](#) · [Information exchange](#) · [Analysis](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/166-arrested-in-international-crackdown-against-crime-in-southeast-europe>