

23 ARRESTS AND AROUND 10 000 CULTURAL ITEMS SEIZED IN AN OPERATION TARGETING ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAFFICKING

18 Nov 2019

[Press Release](#)



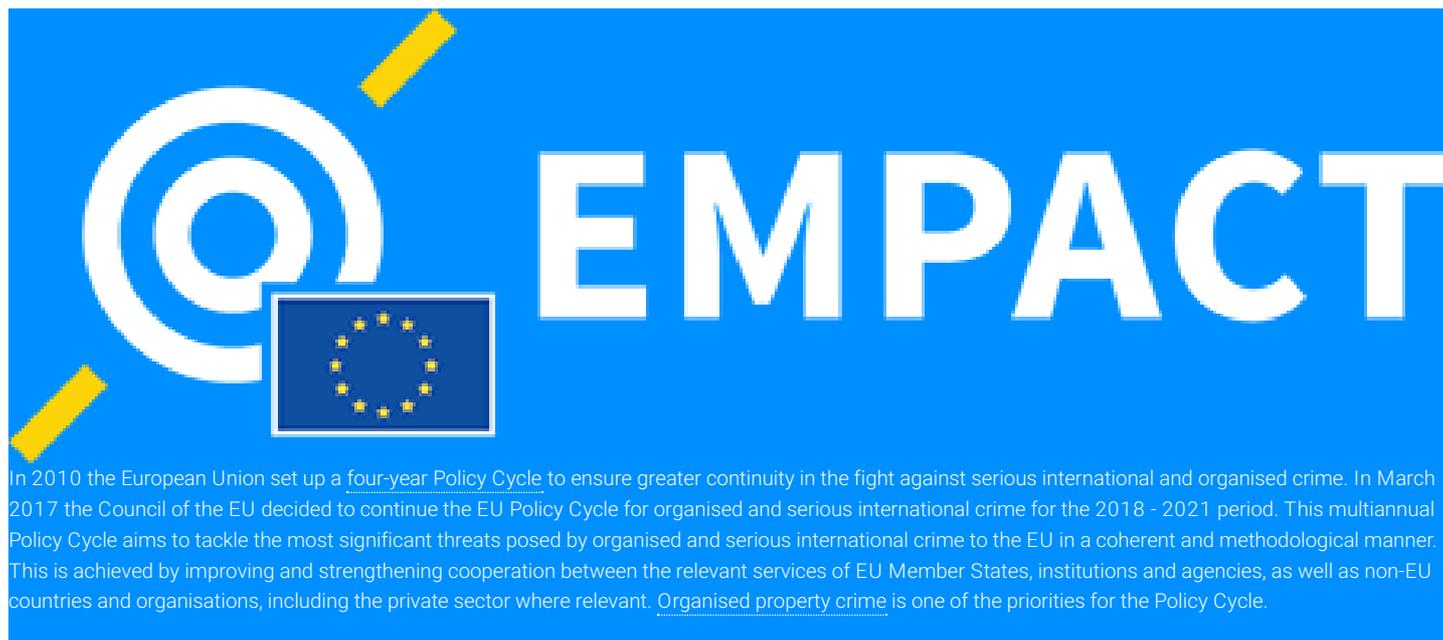
On 18 November 2019, an international police operation involving over 350 police officers, supported by Europol (within the framework of EMPACT) and [Eurojust](#), dismantled an international organised crime group involved in large-scale [trafficking of looted archaeological items](#) resulting in the arrest of 23 individuals, 80 house searches, and the seizure of around 10 000 cultural items.

Operation Achei, was led by the Italian Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Carabinieri) supported by Europol and Eurojust, the French OCBC (Office central de lutte contre le trafic de biens culturels), the German Bavarian LKA (Bayerisches Landeskriminalamt), the Serbian Criminal Investigations Directorate and the British Metropolitan Police Service – London. The investigation began in 2017 to fight the looting of archaeological sites in Calabria, southern Italy where the cultural heritage includes important traces from the Greek and Roman period.

SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO ITALIAN HERITAGE

The investigations revealed that the illegal excavations were managed by a well-structured [organised crime group](#) able to carry out all phases of the trafficking. The different rings of the network, led by two Calabrians living in the province of Crotona, included looters, fences, intermediaries and mules operating from different Italian regions. The key facilitators were also acting from Dijon, Munich, London and Vršac coordinating the supply chain. The damage caused to the Italian cultural heritage by this criminal group is very significant as it the criminals were looting archaeological sites for many years.

Europol Analysis Project FURTUM supported the investigation by coordinating the information exchange, holding several operational meetings, preparing the action day and providing on-the-spot analytical support in Italy to cross-check operational information against Europol's databases. Eurojust supported the execution of the European Investigation Orders and arranged a coordination centre to follow the action in real-time.



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 March 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime for the 2018 - 2021 period. This multiannual Policy Cycle aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by organised and serious international crime to the EU in a coherent and methodological manner. 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. [Organised property crime](#) is one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS

[Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Goods, Including Antiquities and Works of Art](#)

TARGET GROUPS

[General Public](#) · [Law Enforcement](#) · [Press/Journalists](#) · [Other](#)

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