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# 48 ARRESTS AND 6 ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS DISMANTLED IN MEDICINE-TRAFFICKING OPERATION

21 Jan 2020

[Press Release](#)

Misused medicines and doping substances worth €2.6 million seized





Europol supported a pan-European operation targeting the illicit online and offline trafficking of misused and counterfeit medicines. The operation was led by Finnish Customs (Tulli) and the Central office against environmental and public health crime of the French National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale, Office central de lutte contre les atteintes à l'environnement et à la santé publique) and involved law enforcement authorities from 11\* EU Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The operation took place between 15 and 18 October 2019, the results of which can only be released now for operational reasons.

The joint Europe-wide actions, coordinated in real-time from the coordination centre set-up at Europol, led to:

- the disruption of six organised crime groups;
- 112 house searches;
- the arrests of 48 suspects in Cyprus, Finland, France, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom;
- the seizure of around 34.5 million units of medicines and doping products, and other substances such as antihistamines, anxiolytics, erectile dysfunction medicines, hormone and metabolic regulators, narcotics, painkillers, antioestrogens, antivirals, and hypnotics.

The seizures are estimated to be worth around €2.6 million.

## TREAT A COLD OR GO COLD TURKEY: MEDICINE MISUSED TO STIMULATE ADDICTIONS

Criminals misuse pseudoephedrine – an active substance of medicine generally used to treat colds to make methamphetamine – a very addictive synthetic drug.

Drug addicts use psychotropics, which are mostly made from hypnotic medicines, to replace opioid drugs like heroin. Pseudoephedrine and psychotropic medicines were among the biggest seizures made on the action days. Stolen with fake medical prescriptions or acquired with the collaboration of complacent doctors and pharmacists, most of these medicines were diverted from the legitimate supply chain. Several thousands of the seized medicines were falsified.

The misuse and [falsification of medicines](#) is a serious and growing problem that needs to be tackled at European level. Organised crime groups are increasingly turning to this highly profitable crime area marked by relatively low risks of detection and criminal charges.

\* The following EU Member States participated to the Joint Action Days: Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom

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