

COCAINE CARAVANS IMMOBILISED: 12 ARRESTS IN BIG BUST AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKERS IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

23 Jan 2020

[Press Release](#)

€2 million in assets “owned” by frontmen seized



A large-scale [drug trafficking](#) organisation linked to Colombian and Peruvian cartels was dismantled in Spain and Colombia in an international law enforcement operation. Europol supported the two-year-long investigation, led by the Spanish Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) in close collaboration with the National Police of Colombia and the US DEA.

In total 11 Spanish nationals were arrested in Tenerife (Spain) and a Colombian national – in Cali (Colombia) – is currently awaiting extradition to Spain. €2 million in assets have been seized so far. The investigation was triggered by information on large cash movements in Tenerife, money laundering-related intelligence shared via international cooperation.

CARAVANS WITH COCAINE WERE TRAVELLING TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Spanish branch of the network was distributing the cocaine delivered in bulk from South America. The suspects concealed the drugs in caravans travelling between the Canary Islands. A seizure of 60kg of cocaine hidden in a mobile home was made during one of these transfers. To cover up their criminal activities, the suspects used legal businesses. The criminal networks owned vehicle dealerships, auto repair shops and managed long-term caravan parks. These legal businesses provided the criminals with cover to transport the vehicles and [launder money](#). The intermediary, a Colombian living in Cali oversaw the trafficking from South America to Spain.

COCAINE'S NEW ROUTE

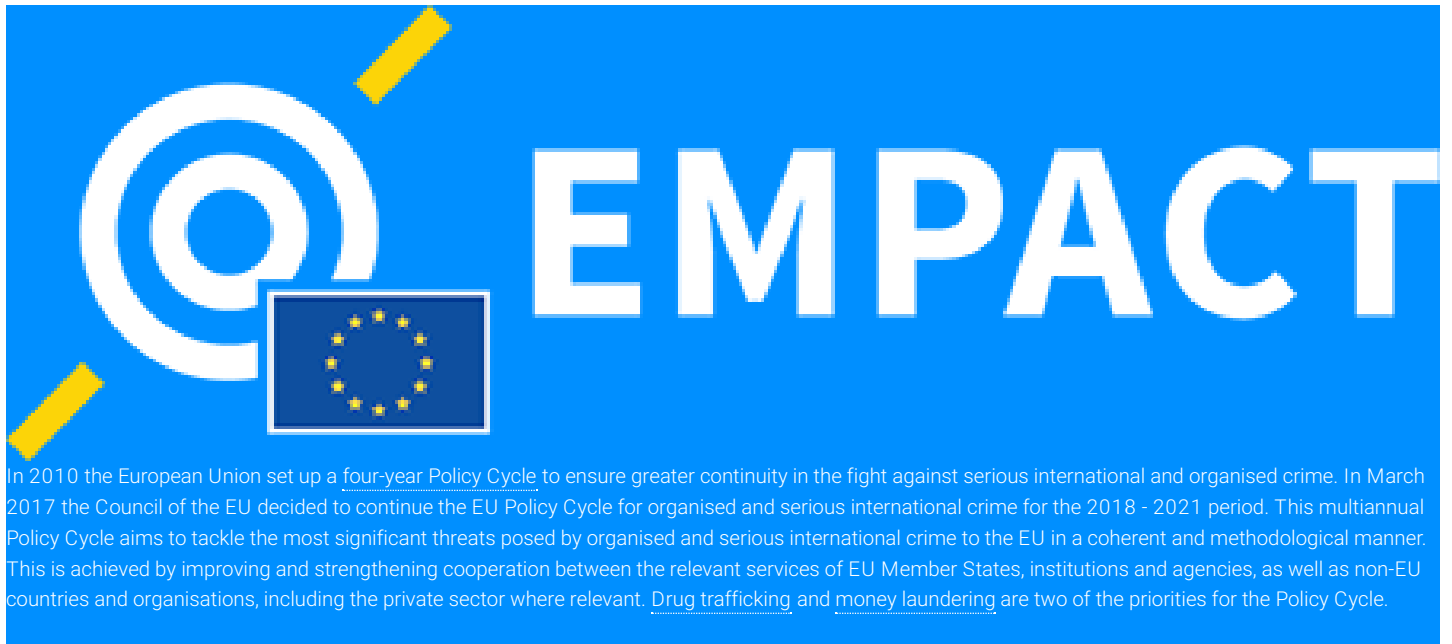
One part of the investigation focused on a Ghanaian citizen. This allowed the investigators to gather evidence on the “African route” of [cocaine](#). This emerging transit route is used by South American [drug cartels](#) to send large shipments to Europe. The drugs travel through the west coast of Africa, where they are stored before going to Spanish coasts. Africa has a growing role as a trafficking and transit area, a new trend identified in the [2019 EU Drug Markets Report by Europol](#) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction ([EMCDDA](#)) [↗](#).

TRACING MONEY MOVEMENTS TO CATCH DRUG TRAFFICKERS

Europol supported the investigation from its very beginning by assisting the coordination of the operational activities between the countries involved and by facilitating the information exchange and operational analysis. Europol also provided technical and analytical support and facilitated the exchange of judicial evidence collected during the house searched carried out in Colombia.

On the action day, Europol deployed two experts on the field to cross-check operational information in real-time and provide technical support on the spot.

[Watch video](#) 



The banner features a blue background. On the left, there is a white target icon with a central bullseye and two yellow diagonal bars. Below the target is a small European Union flag. To the right of the target, the word "EMPACT" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

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. [Drug trafficking](#) and [money laundering](#) are two of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

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