

EXPLOITATION ON THE CONSTRUCTION SITE: 38 ARRESTED IN FRANCE, ROMANIA AND MOLDOVA FOR ABUSING MIGRANT WORKERS

25 Feb 2021

[Press Release](#)

The criminal network smuggled and registered the Moldovan workers in France with fake documents while keeping their real passports as a guarantee





An investigation by the French Border Police as part of the National Police (Police aux Frontières / Police judiciaire), the Romanian Police (Poliția Română) and the Moldovan Police (Inspectoratul General de Poliție), supported by Europol and Eurojust, led officers to dismantle an organised crime group involved in migrant smuggling, human trafficking for labour exploitation, document fraud, social benefit fraud and money laundering.

RESULTS FROM 22 FEBRUARY 2021

- › Simultaneous raids in France, Romania and Moldova
- › 51 locations searched (17 in France, 14 in Romania and 20 in Moldova)
- › 38 arrests (28 in France, 3 in Romania and 7 in Moldova)
- › Seizures include: 19 vehicles including 15 high-end cars, 2 jet ski, weapons, phones, about €100 000 in cash, 11 bank accounts frozen

€14 MILLION IN ILLEGAL PROFIT

The investigation into the criminal network started in 2018 when officers in France intercepted a van transporting ten irregular migrants. They were Moldovan nationals and a number of them had counterfeit Romanian identity cards. The criminal group, organised by a Romanian national living in France, smuggled at least 40 Moldovan nationals to exploit them in the construction business in France.

The criminal network provided the irregular migrants with counterfeit Romanian identity cards and driving licences while keeping their real passports as a guarantee. Most of the smuggled individuals had a low level of education and therefore were more vulnerable to exploitation. They worked 55 hours a week for €60 a day. Large construction and renovation companies were also involved in the criminal scheme. This activity was extremely lucrative, with illegal profits estimated at almost €14 million. The suspects laundered the criminal assets through eight shell companies, most of them based in France.

Europol facilitated the exchange of information and provided analytical support. On the action day, Europol deployed a virtual command post to enable the real-time exchange of information between investigators, Europol and Eurojust. Europol's analysts also cross-checked operational information against Europol's databases to provide leads to investigators in the field.

The investigation was developed as part of EMPACT's Joint Operational Team Doc Fraud. Eurojust set up a Joint Investigation Team between France, Romania and Moldova, signed in May 2020.



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. [Facilitation of illegal immigration](#) is one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS
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