

HARD BLOW AGAINST RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MAFIA

19 Jun 2013

[Press Release](#)

Early on 18 June 2013, Europol supported the arrest of 18 suspects, 13 of them 'thieves in law' (*vor v zakone*), from the Georgian *Kutaisi* clan. This is one of the most significant blows against clans controlled by this high-ranking, elite of the world of Russian-speaking organised crime.

The operation was developed in Italy where the Central Operational Service of the Italian National Police and the Squadra mobile of Bari led the case and arrested 7 people. Other arrests took place simultaneously in the Czech Republic (2), France (1), Hungary (1), Lithuania (5) and Portugal (2). As well as the arrests, weapons, drugs and EUR 100 000 were seized. Belgian, German and Polish law enforcement authorities also provided substantial operational support. This outcome is the result of 18 months of EU-wide intelligence exchange and evidence gathering activities in several European Union countries.

This is the first time in Europe that such a high number (13) of thieves in law have been arrested simultaneously. The arrest of the *Kutaisi* leader in Hungary is specifically a significant blow to Russian-speaking organised criminals. As well as the leader, the rest of the clan's hierarchy were arrested. The operation is ongoing and further arrests are expected.

This EU-wide investigation was supported from the outset by Europol specialists who facilitated the exchange of criminal intelligence with other Member States, delivered analytical reports and supported the operation on the spot with a mobile office. Eurojust participated in several operational meetings held during the investigation and Interpol was also present yesterday in the operational centre.

In offering his congratulations to all the services involved in this operation Michel Quillé, Deputy Director (Operations) at Europol said: "In such operations the essential role in bringing separate, sensitive investigations together in a secure environment is exactly what Europol is designed to do. In this way a clear picture of the situation in the EU can be built up, intelligence exchange between Member States can be stimulated and Member States can be alerted to the need for them to launch their own investigations or support ongoing enquiries. This case is an excellent example of such cooperation working to protect EU citizens across several Member States."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Vor v zakone or thieves in law are Eurasian criminals who act as leaders, controllers and regulators

of Russian-speaking organised crime. For several years the power balance in this criminal landscape has been in turmoil because of an ongoing conflict between the two main Georgian clans - the *Tbilissi* and *Kutaisi* clans. The main reasons for the conflict have been the struggle for important crime investment areas and the ultimate aim of full control over all Eurasian organised crime groups.

The assassination of a *Tbilissi* clan leader, in January 2013 in Moscow, created a new power vacuum leading to several, violent attempts by key players to strengthen their criminal positions. This has resulted in an increased presence of thieves in law in the EU. EU countries have become a shelter for them to avoid investigation and prosecution in their home jurisdictions. Ease of movement and excellent communications in the EU are an attractive environment for them to deploy and monitor their organised crime groups, re-invest criminal proceeds and hide from possible retaliation from opposing clans in the ongoing power struggle.

CRIME AREAS [Organised property crime](#)

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

GENERAL TERMS [Operation](#)

SUPPORT & [Information exchange](#) • [Mobile office](#)
SERVICES

Source URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/hard-blow-against-russian-speaking-mafia>