

ONLINE SCAMMERS CAPTURED AFTER CAUSING EUR 18 MILLION OF DAMAGE IN MORE THAN 35 000 CASES

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[Press Release](#)



- Huge operation by the German Prosecutor's Office of Dresden, the Saxon State Office of Criminal Investigation the Lithuanian Police and the Lithuanian Prosecutor's Office
- On the action days 15 people were detained and 31 house searches carried out in nine European countries
- Europol and Eurojust supported the cross-border operation

After six years of preparation and coordination, the international Operation Warenagent has seen the arrest of 15 individuals, thought to be members of a network responsible for online fraud causing EUR 18 million worth of damage. The operation was conducted by the German Prosecutor's Office

of Dresden, the Saxon State Office of Criminal Investigation, the Lithuanian Police and the Lithuanian Prosecutor's Office, with help from Europol and Eurojust at the international level.

During the investigation, the Department of Organised Crime together with the Cybercrime Competence Center Sachsen (SN4C) and the judicial assistance of Lithuania met in The Hague to form a [Joint Investigation Team \(JIT\)](#) with the support of Europol and [Eurojust](#). Overall five coordination meetings took place at Eurojust. The information gathered, alongside frequent information exchange and analysis by Europol, led the investigators to identify and locate the key target in Cyprus.

From the 12 to 15 June 2018, 31 house searches were carried out in Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. On the action days the head of a criminal organisation was detained in Cyprus, alongside four criminals in Latvia and Finland respectively, two in the United Kingdom, and one each in Estonia, Lithuania, Switzerland and Ukraine. Over the course of the investigation itself, four individuals were detained in Germany.

CODE NAMES, ENCRYPTIONS AND CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Since 2012 more than 35 000 cases of online fraud have been detected. In all cases, high-quality goods were ordered from various mail order companies with fraudulently obtained credit card data through a network of merchandise agents. The recipients of these goods, known as package mules, were mostly recruited in Germany. After receiving the illegally obtained goods, the package mules were asked to send the packages to new addresses, primarily in Eastern Europe. These schemes are often disguised as legitimate job opportunities and the mules may receive a commission for their service. They were used as intermediaries and played a crucial role in online payment fraud as criminal networks gain access to the stolen goods or funds without revealing their identity.

All the perpetrators used codenames and encrypted access in the network. Settling payments was carried out with the help of cryptocurrencies, which also played a major role in the investigation. Other criminals were responsible for providing IT infrastructure, recruiting package mules, coordinating criminal activity and laundering money.

Europol supported the investigation from the start by providing information exchange and analysis of the huge amount of information to identify targets and cross-match links to other investigations in participating countries.

CRIME AREAS	Forgery of money and means of payment • Payment Fraud
TARGET GROUPS	General Public • Law Enforcement • Academia • Professor • Students • Researcher • Press/Journalists • Other
COUNTRIES	Germany • Lithuania
ENTITIES	Joint Investigation Teams (JIT's)
ORGANISATIONS	Eurojust

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