

# SPAIN AND SERBIA DISMANTLE SERBIAN MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING NETWORK

22 Jul 2021

[Press Release](#)



Spanish and Serbian authorities have dismantled a large-scale drug trafficking network through a [joint investigation team \(JIT\)](#). In both countries, 43 members of a Serbian organised crime group have been arrested for their involvement in producing and distributing marijuana and hashish.

During a major action day in Serbia and Spain on 28 June 2021 and during interventions against the organised crime group in January, the Spanish Guardia Civil and the Serbian Police carried out 19 searches and seized over 17 000 marijuana plants, over 880 kilos of marijuana buds, and at least 130 kilos of produced marijuana and hashish resins. Approximately EUR 250 000 in cash was also seized.

## EUROPOL'S AND EUROJUST'S SUPPORT OF OPERATION MITIKAS

Europol, as a platform for European policing solutions, was involved in the case since March 2020. Throughout 2020 and early 2021, European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC) of Europol supported Operation MITIKAS through the Drugs Unit by cross-checking information received, providing analytical support, and facilitating the coordination of the information exchange between Spain and Serbia. Two Europol specialists were deployed to Spain and Serbia equipped with a mobile office and a Universal Forensic Extraction Device. Information gathered during the operation was analysed and exchanged in real-time and immediately cross-matched against Europol's databases.

[Eurojust](#), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation initiated the cross-border judicial cooperation in November 2020, leading to the setting up of the first JIT between Spain and Serbia. It was the first time the Spanish authorities had initiated a JIT with a third country.

Operation Mitikas was developed in the framework of the [European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats \(EMPACT\)](#) and the operational action plan on cross-border drug trafficking sourced by large-scale herbal cannabis production in the EU.

## THE CANNABIS MARKET IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The cannabis market remains the largest drug market in the EU, and cannabis trafficking will remain a significant source of income for a wide range of criminal networks. The trade in cannabis but also in other drugs such as cocaine and synthetic drugs is a key threat to the EU due to the levels of violence associated, the multibillion euro profits generated and the substantial harm caused by it.

Herbal cannabis is extensively produced within the EU, with estimates indicating that at least 20 000 cultivation sites are dismantled each year, and is a major source of income for the criminal economy. Although herbal cannabis is produced in each EU Member State, this may not be sufficient to satisfy local demand; therefore, intra-EU trafficking exists as it has been shown in Operation Mitikas.



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. [Drug trafficking](#) is one of the priorities of the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS

[Drug Trafficking](#) · [Cannabis](#)

TARGET GROUPS

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