

TOBACCO PRODUCTS WORTH MORE THAN € 2 MILLION SEIZED IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

13 Jul 2021

[Press Release](#)

The Portuguese and Spanish authorities dismantled the criminal group, arresting 17 suspects



The Portuguese National Guard (Guarda Nacional Republicana) and the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional), supported by Europol and the Spanish customs authorities, dismantled an organised crime group involved in excise fraud and the smuggling of tobacco products.

The action day on 7 July 2021 led to:

- 82 location searches (70 in Portugal and 12 in Spain) targeting private residences, warehouses, garages and vehicles
- 17 arrests (5 in Portugal and 12 in Spain)
- Full production line for roll-your-own-cigarettes dismantled
- 8 000 kg of tobacco worth € 2 000 000 seized
- 454 000 cigarettes worth € 113 500 seized

› Seizures also included 7 weapons, 24 vehicles and € 216 000 (€ 116 000 in cash and €100 000 in a bank account)

ABOUT € 3.2 MILLION IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS SEIZED SINCE THE INVESTIGATION WAS LAUNCHED

The criminal network was involved in the illegal import of large quantities of tobacco leaves and strips from Spain into Portugal. This raw material served the illegal production of both cigarettes and tobacco for roll-your-own-cigarettes distributed on the Portuguese black market. Earlier, in mid-June 2021, Spanish authorities discovered and dismantled cutting and processing facilities. The tobacco processed there was shipped to Portugal, where it was stored in different warehouses before being further distributed. Since the investigation was launched in May 2020, the Portuguese and the Spanish authorities have detained 23 individuals and seized about 1.8 million illicit cigarettes along with 11 tons of tobacco, all of which was worth about € 3.2 million.

Illicit trade in tobacco for roll-your-own-cigarettes continues to be a relevant and widespread criminal trend in Portugal. Certain 'cheap white' cigarette brands have become so popular on the black market that criminal networks have started to counterfeit them rather than smuggle them. This illegal activity generates millions of euros in profit for the involved criminal organisations.

Europol coordinated operational activities, facilitated the information exchange and provided analytical support. Europol provided financial support for the formation of joint Portuguese-Spanish patrols. During the action days, Europol deployed experts to Portugal (Lisbon) and Spain (Seville) to support the investigators in the field with real-time analysis of operational information against Europol's databases. Technical support was also provided by extracting data stored on mobile devices.

Europol recently created the [European Financial and Economic Crime Centre \(EFECC\)](#) to increase synergies between economic and financial investigations and to strengthen its ability to support law enforcement authorities in effectively combating this major criminal threat.



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. [Excise fraud](#) is one of the priorities of the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS

TARGET GROUPS

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