

TOLL FRAUD – HOW A CRIMINAL NETWORK MADE A FORTUNE THROUGH THE FRAUDULENT USE OF COUNTERFEIT FUEL AND CREDIT CARDS

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[Press Release](#)



On 6 May, 24 suspects have been arrested in Spain by the Spanish National Police and the Guardia Civil in an international operation involving Spain and France and supported by Europol. The organised crime group was specialised in using counterfeiting fuel and credit/debit cards to avoid paying toll fees and in selling these cards to truck drivers and hauling companies.

Over the course of the three months of action of operation ANDREA, fuel card companies and one card scheme reported approximately 30 000 fraudulent transactions linked to counterfeit cards used to cross toll barriers in Spain and France. Law enforcement agencies then initiated investigations, on the basis of the information obtained, to identify the license plates of the involved vehicles, of which more than 600 were located in Spain only.

The investigation initiated by Spain allowed the identification of the criminal group operating mainly in the Spanish region of Catalonia, although the cards were also used on French highways. As a result of the cooperation between Europol, the Fuel Industry Card Fraud Intelligence Bureau (FICFIB), the Spanish authorities and the French Gendarmerie, 24 people were arrested and 11 fraud cards factories were dismantled.

Europol organised three coordination meetings in Barcelona, Madrid and Paris and supported the Spanish authorities by providing analytical and operational support and by deploying a mobile office on the action day for on-the-spot support. Police officers carried out 21 houses searches in Spain, and seized 15 000 counterfeit blank cards and several card readers and devices, alongside EUR 19 770 in cash and 4 luxury cars. 11 laboratories were dismantled. The estimated damage is estimated at this point at is over EUR 500 000.

Collaboration within Europol and private sector companies

Europol's [European Cybercrime Centre](#) (EC3) hosts on regular basis international meetings with FICFIB (Fuel Industry Card Fraud Investigation Bureau) where representatives of Fuel Industry, Law Enforcement Agencies and Europol have the opportunity to discuss the problems related to payment card fraud at tolls and petrol stations across Europe. This kind of meetings provides insight into activities of organised crime groups and prepares the proper reaction of the industry and police forces to protect EU citizens.

[Watch the video](#)

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