

## Europol: 500 arrested in Operation "Blue Amber"

More than 500 suspects arrested in 61 countries, 390 vehicles confiscated, 1300 tonnes of copper seized, 2.8 tonnes of cocaine seized: these are the results of Operation Blue Amber (video), one of the biggest operations against organized crime ever carried out in Europe.

Operation Blue Amber was a series of international actions, which were supported by Europol (fully operational since July 1, 1999), and took place in 260 locations across the world between May 4 and June 24, 2015.

Police from the 28 EU countries and 33 international partners joined forces to take out organized crime groups and their infrastructure. In particular, the operation focused on: - combating trafficking in drugs, firearms, human beings, and stolen vehicles; facilitated illegal immigration, production of counterfeit goods, cybercrime; - seizing and confiscating organized crime proceeds and assets.

Europol liaison officers were deployed in various locations where the operation took place and provided analysis tools and direct access to Europol's centralized databases, thus giving a major contribution in terms of information.

The actions against drugs trafficking revealed that drugs couriers transporting cocaine leave from South America to Europe, while heroin is sent from Afghanistan/Pakistan to the West, on a daily basis. Various concealment methods were also discovered: from hiding the drugs in impregnated clothing or shoe insoles, to diluting it into medical products.

As for trafficking in human beings, thanks to the close cooperation with Western Balkans countries, several facilitators were arrested and a "safe house" for migrants was also discovered in Hungary.

To achieve these results Europol operational coordination centre, along with Europol's specialists, police liaison officers (coordinated for Italy by the Criminal Police Central Directorate) and law enforcement partners as SELEC (Southeast European Law Enforcement Center), TISPOL (European traffic police network) and PCC-SEE (Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat) processed and analysed incoming intelligence from the EU Member States so as to support the operational activity.

This intelligence work facilitated the operations carried out in several cities. Other interventions took place in airports, border-crossing points, ports and various crime hotspots.

Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol, expressed great satisfaction with the results of the operation: "Once again we have seen that successful international cooperation can have a major impact on organized crime. The outcome in this operation, with over 500 arrests made, is a reminder to criminals that they should not feel safe anywhere. Europol will continue to support national law enforcement agencies with its unique intelligence and technical capabilities."

Italian version

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