

€7.9 million of illegal products seized in a hit against medicine traffickers

165 arrests and 12 organised crime groups dismantled in Europe-wide operation

Between July and October 2019, Europol supported a pan-European operation targeting the illicit online and offline trafficking of misused and counterfeit medicines. The operation, led by the French National Gendarmerie (Central Office against Environmental and Public Health Crime - OCLAESP) and the Finnish Customs (Tulli), involved law enforcement authorities from 11* EU Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States. The operation was also supported by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), Eurojust and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

The operation in numbers:

- 12 organised criminal groups disrupted;
- 165 suspects arrested in Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom;
- Nearly €1.5 million of assets recovered;
- Around €7.9 million seized;
- Nearly 36 million units of medicines seized (among which pseudoephedrine, anti-cancer drugs, antihistamines, anxiolytics, erectile dysfunction medicines, hormone and metabolic regulators, narcotics, painkillers, antioestrogens, antivirals, hypnotics, and doping substances).

Worrying trends of medicine trafficking continue

- Growing trafficking in the EU of oncologic medicines stolen from hospitals
- Asia remains the main source region for both medicines and doping products
- Medicines are diverted from the legal supply chain by wholesalers and resold to criminal groups
- Medicines are illegally obtained with forged or stolen medical prescriptions, with or without the help of doctors and pharmacists, and then resold to criminal groups or individuals directly
- Doping products are mainly sold online
- Counterfeited medicines and doping substances are illegally made and packed in underground laboratories often in the EU

Over three years, Mismed allowed for:

- the seizure of 123 million units of illegal medicines and doping substances worth €0.5 billion;

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- 600 arrests;
- 49 organised crime groups dismantled.

*Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain.