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Delegations will find in the Annex a final press release by Europol on operation "Blue Amber".



16 December 2015

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Operation Blue Amber against organised crime results in nearly 900 arrests in 2015**

### **The Hague, the Netherlands**

Nearly 900 arrests and 7.7 tonnes of drugs seized: these are only a few of the final results from Operation Blue Amber, a series of international actions in 2015 led by EU Member States and supported by Europol. Operation Blue Amber is a unique operation that led to law enforcement officers from 28 EU Member States, 31 non-EU countries and other international partners joining forces to disrupt organised crime groups and their criminal infrastructure. In 2015, several simultaneous interventions and action weeks took place across the world.

Operation Blue Amber is a series of global actions to target organised crime. The operation, which follows the successful one-week Operation Archimedes in 2014, focused on 'EMPACT'<sup>1</sup> priority crime areas such as drugs trafficking, irregular immigration, organised property crime and counterfeit goods. Coordinated interventions took place throughout 2015 at airports, border-crossing points, ports and specific crime hot spots in towns and cities.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) is part of the intelligence-led policing approach to tackle organised crime. It identifies priorities and establishes an international team-work approach to bring down criminal groups that threaten EU security.

The final results of Blue Amber include:

- Nearly 900 arrests made relating to drugs trafficking (257), property crime (281), and facilitation of irregular immigration (60);
- 263 arrests of fraudsters during the Global Airline Action days, which targeted criminals suspected of fraudulently purchasing plane tickets online using stolen or fake credit card data;
- 5 tonnes of cocaine, 2.1 tonnes of cannabis, 280 kg of synthetic drugs and 82 kg of heroin seized;
- 254 vehicles, more than 190 tonnes of counterfeit pesticides and almost EUR 140 000 euros in cash confiscated;
- 1400 tonnes of stolen metal seized.

The Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU organised Operation Luxcar, focusing on vehicle theft. "More than 250 stolen vehicles were seized in a two-day international coordinated action, several new investigations were initiated with the support of many police officers in the EU and the support of Europol's experts," says Steve Schmitz, the coordinator of Luxcar for the Luxembourg Police. "Property crime, and more specifically vehicle crime, continues to pose a threat to all EU citizens."

Operation Blue Amber also included two drugs action weeks. Synthetic drugs trafficking and the use of small postal parcels to traffic the drugs is a key issue for many European countries. "During the Blue Amber drugs action weeks, the focus was specifically on this modus operandi of trafficking. In total, nearly 300 kg of synthetics were seized in and outside the European Union," says Johan Nooijens, Chief Inspector, National Police Agency Netherlands, and co-driver for 'Empact Synthetic Drugs'. "The joint action days (JADs)<sup>2</sup> on drugs were successful for us. The international information exchange and coordination is the key to success against these types of international organised crimes. Under the upcoming Dutch Presidency, joint action days on drugs will be organised and strongly supported again."

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<sup>2</sup> Joint action days (JADs) are cross-border law enforcement operations focusing on horizontal key crime hot spots and criminal infrastructures across the EU. JADs are a Member States-led initiative, supported by Europol, and take place within the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime.

Liaison officers from the EU Member States and colleagues from other international partners coordinated the exchange of information and intelligence between national law enforcement authorities from a 24/7 operational coordination centre at Europol's headquarters in The Hague. Europol specialists and analysts provided support from its headquarters and also on the spot in EU Member States.

Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol, is determined to continue to support such investigations in the future: "Criminals do not take borders into account and they need to know that they are no longer safe anywhere. It is our duty as law enforcement agencies to continue this international cooperation to tackle organised crime. Europol is committed to supporting national law enforcement agencies with its unique intelligence and technical capabilities."

The whole operation was overseen by the EU's **Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI)** of the Council of the EU. Its Chairperson Ms Andrée Colas commented: "The EMPACT joint action days (JADs) are a good example to demonstrate how enhanced coordination of law enforcement operations leads to concrete operational results. As chair of COSI, the committee providing strategic guidance to the planning of the JADs, I am very pleased with the outcome of Blue Amber and encourage all EU Policy Cycle partners to develop the JAD concept further."



RESULTS 2015

ARRESTS

SEIZURES

