

MAJOR HIT ON INTERNATIONAL ALBANIAN ORGANISED CRIME NETWORK

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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

The Hague, the Netherlands

An organised criminal network of Albanian speaking criminals, suspected of illegally trafficking drugs with links to trafficking in human beings for prostitution, has been dismantled with the support of Eurojust and Europol. 19 persons were arrested yesterday during a joint action day which involved judicial and law enforcement authorities in Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Albania.

Seven arrests were made in Albania, one in France and 11 in Italy. Previously one arrest had been made in the Netherlands and one in Belgium, bringing the total number of arrests to 21.

The investigation began in Italy 2010 led by Mr Andrea Cusani of the District Anti-Mafia Prosecution office of Florence. The suspects involved in drugs trafficking and with links to trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation were located in Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Albania. The targeted organised criminal group is predominantly composed of Albanian nationals, with leading members active in Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Yesterday's operation was coordinated from an Operational Coordination Centre set up at Eurojust, starting at 06:30 [CET]. The action day was run by the Italian National Desk at Eurojust, with assistance from the Eurojust Case Analysis Unit. Throughout the operation, Europol's mobile office was deployed within the coordination centre with two officers, giving real-time support.

The action would not have been a success without the participation of the Arma dei Carabinieri, Comando Provinciale and Procura della Repubblica di Firenze; the Direction Interregionale de la Police Judiciaire de Bordeaux; the Investigative Judge in Brussels, the Public Prosecution Office and the Federal Judicial Police of Brussels; and the Albanian General Prosecution Office and Anti Drugs Special Police Unit.



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