



EU DRUG MARKETS REPORT

A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Case study 5 Synthetic drugs network broken up

In early 2012, an international organised crime network, responsible for the large-scale production and trafficking of synthetic drugs, was broken up following an extensive investigation by European law-enforcement authorities. The operation resulted in the arrest of the key members of the criminal network, the discovery of three illegal drug production facilities and the seizure of over 100 kg of amphetamine, significant quantities of drug precursors, ammunition, firearms and explosives.

The investigation began when Swedish authorities identified large quantities of amphetamine being trafficked into Sweden. Cooperation was then launched with Europol and other EU Member States when enquiries confirmed that an international criminal network was involved. Based on intelligence and links identified between different countries, Europol initiated 'Operation Fire', working together with several European law-enforcement agencies. The aim of the operation was to dismantle the organised crime network and stop the large-scale production and trafficking of synthetic drugs within the European Union.

Parallel investigations started in Sweden and Germany, while other countries involved supported the operation and conducted their own enquiries. Europol helped coordinate 'Operation Fire' and foster the exchange of criminal intelligence.

During the operational phase of the investigation, 30 kg of amphetamine were seized in Sweden and three suspects arrested as well as two in Germany and one in the Netherlands. In addition, cooperation with Bulgarian authorities led to the arrest of three members of the organised crime network and the dismantling of three illegal synthetic drug production facilities. The Bulgarian authorities seized approximately 75 litres of amphetamine base (enough to produce around 120 kg of pure amphetamine), 15 kg of amphetamine substance and over 1 400 litres of various chemicals used to produce synthetic drugs. Equipment, including two tableting machines, together with five firearms, 150 rounds of ammunition and 6.4 kg of trinitrotoluene (TNT) was also seized.



Photo: Europol.

Following the results of this operation, Europol's Director, Rob Wainwright, commented: 'The successful cooperation between Europol and our European law-enforcement partners has delivered a major blow to this dangerous criminal network of drug producers and traffickers, and will bring justice to those concerned. Europol will continue to proactively support such investigations with our intelligence and technical capabilities and we anticipate further results in this area of serious organised crime.'

'Crime knows no borders, and neither should we. This joint operation goes to show just how immensely important it is for national law enforcement and Europol to effectively exchange information about dangerous criminal activities,' said Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs.



Photo: Europol.

