

# EPPO: Operational Activities – Reports from October-December 2021



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## News

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After having assumed its investigative and prosecutorial tasks in June 2021, the EPPO regularly informs the public of its operational activities. The activities reported in October/November/December 2021 include the following:

- In cooperation with the Guardia di Finanza in Sicily, the EPPO dismantled two organised criminal groups suspected of having smuggled foreign tobacco products from Tunisia to Italy. The first organisation was responsible for organising the illegal shipments from the North African coast to Italy. The second organisation took care of retailing the goods on the market. The operation, which was carried out on 30 November 2021, led to the arrest of twelve suspects and the seizure of one speedboat, seven vehicles, and €16,000 in cash. The smuggled cigarettes had a market value of €3.5 million and caused damages of more than €6 million to the national and EU budgets.
- On 25 November 2021, the European Delegated Prosecutor in Munich, Germany coordinated an operation against aggravated customs fraud. Searches were carried out in Germany, Austria, and Slovakia against several persons who allegedly falsely declared the provenance of biodiesel and thus damaged the EU budget by more than €1.1 million.
- An operation led by the EPPO and carried out on 23 November 2021, revealed a case of corruption and money laundering in relation to the procurement process in a museum in Czechia, which is financially supported by EU funds. The Czech police seized €16,400 and conducted several house searches.
- On 18 November 2021, the EPPO targeted a beneficiary from the EU Rural Development fund in the province of Bari (Italy). The beneficiary allegedly did not modernise an agriturismo (farmhouse and hotel for touristic purposes), as defined in the grant agreement, but solely intended to make a profit by selling the house during the programming period. The beneficiary allegedly damaged the EU budget by €215,000.
- On 4 November 2021, the EPPO and the Guardia di Finanza in Calabria (Italy) took action against six entrepreneurs who misused EU funds. Under the EU funding scheme to promote tourism in Calabria, the suspects bought pleasure boats. However, they never used the boats for the initial, intended purpose, but moved them to Sicily where they made more profits. Assets worth €900,000 were seized.
- On 4 November 2021, an operation coordinated by the EPPO's central office in Luxembourg dismantled a criminal organisation that operated a VAT carousel fraud scheme from Germany. The

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Published in  
2021, Vol. 16(4) euclid pp 210  
– 211

ISSN: 1862-6947  
<https://euclid.eu>

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scheme involved the repeated circulation of platinum coins through the same companies. Money laundering activities were also carried out in Czechia, Slovakia and Romania. Police and tax police authorities in Germany, Czechia, Slovakia and Romania arrested six suspects and seized assets worth €23 million.

- On 20 October 2021, an operation initiated by the European Delegated Prosecutor in Germany [successfully stroke against Mafia organisations](#) that had established a VAT carousel fraud scheme with luxury cars. The operation involved German, Italian, and Bulgarian authorities. 10 people were arrested and 13 luxury cars seized. It is estimated that the tax loss was around €13 million. The operation is the result of the first case that was registered with the EPPO after the body assumed its tasks on 1 June 2021.
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The project is co-financed by the [Union Anti-Fraud Programme \(UAFP\)](#), managed by the [European Anti-Fraud Office \(OLAF\)](#).



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