

# EPPO's Operational Activities: April - June 2024



**euclid**

European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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**News**

This news item provides an overview of the EPPO's main operational activities from 1 April to 31 June 2024. It continues the periodic reports of previous issues → [euclid 1/2024, 20-21](#) and is in reverse chronological order.

- 28 June 2024: An investigation by the EPPO in Brussels (Belgium) into a customs fraud case involving [biodiesel imports](#) of US origin into the EU, while fraudulently declaring their origin as Morocco, leads to the arrest of two suspected ringleaders. The biofuel was being transited via non-EU countries to avoid the application of anti-dumping duties that apply to the importation of biodiesel produced in the USA. As the EU applies a preferential tariff to goods originating from Morocco, the biodiesel was ostensibly being imported from there at a preferential import duty rate of 0%. The estimated damage amounts to €3.1 million.
- 26 June 2024: The EPPO in Paris (France) investigates complex customs fraud involving the [importation of eyeglasses](#) from China into several EU countries. The eyeglasses were being sold online at a lower market price on a massive scale within the EU. The fraud allegedly consisted of illicitly undervaluing the price of the glasses to avoid paying import taxes. Consequently, the scheme led to savings in customs duties and taxes and allowed the glasses to be sold at a lower market price, which is unfair to market competitors.
- 24 June 2024: As part of an ongoing investigation reported to the EPPO by OLAF, the European Investment Bank (EIB) accepts the request of the EPPO to [lift the immunity](#) of two of its former employees and the inviolability of its premises, buildings, and archives in Luxembourg. The individuals are suspected of corruption and abuse of influence as well as the misappropriation of EU funds.
- 18 June 2024: The investigation code-named "[Stop the Carousel](#)" by the EPPO in Bologna (Italy) leads to the arrest of three suspected ringleaders of a criminal organisation created to obtain funds – mostly through letterbox companies – from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The investigation uncovered at least 15 instances of aggravated fraud to obtain public funds, involving requests for public funding amounting to €15 million.
- 10 June 2024: The EPPO in Hamburg (Germany) informs the public that its [investigation "Goliath"](#) led to the arrest of a suspected ringleader of an €85 million VAT fraud in Nairobi (Kenya) end of May 2024. The arrest took place after police surveillance over six months enabling to find out the location of the suspect. The Danish citizen is the second ringleader arrested after an action targeting an international criminal ring; the action already took place in November 2023 (→[euclid issue 4/2023, pp 322 – 324](#)). The criminal organisation was active in international trade with consumer electronics (mainly AirPods) and suspected of evading tax by means of a VAT carousel fraud. Investigation Goliath has been supported by Europol, German tax agencies, and several national police forces

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Published in  
2024, Vol. 19(2) [euclid](#) pp 102  
– 104

ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://euclid.eu>

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stretching across Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland.

- 7 June 2024: An investigation by the EPPO in Bucharest (Romania) concerning procurement fraud involving [EU funds for the modernisation of water infrastructure](#) and the improvement of energy efficiency leads to searches in Romania and Spain. To compensate the damage to the EU budget, the EPPO also ordered the seizure of assets worth up to €10 million.
- 6 June 2024: The EPPO in Bologna (Italy) requests the freezing of over €6.8 million against four individuals and one company suspected of VAT fraud relating to the [illegal importation of fabric from China](#). The investigation, under which searches were already conducted in [April](#), targets eight individuals and seven companies suspected of evading VAT on the import of over 13,600 tonnes of textiles, worth around €63 million, from China into the EU. This scheme caused an estimated VAT loss of over €13 million, leading to the freezing of assets worth €7.3 million in April and €6.8 million in June 2024.
- 3 June 2024: An investigation by the EPPO in Rome (Italy) concerning VAT fraud involving [the trade of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages](#) leads to the arrest of seven individuals for participation in a criminal organisation, VAT fraud, and self-money laundering. The individuals are suspected of having used Italian and Bulgarian companies, the latter acting as missing traders, to evade VAT payment. By means of forged documents, the beverages appeared to pass through Bulgaria but were in fact distributed directly in Italy, resulting in VAT losses amounting to €18 million.
- 24 May 2024: Investigation “[Kingdom](#)” by the EPPO in Brussels (Belgium) leads to seven arrests in the Netherlands. The arrested persons allegedly controlled a Dutch company functioning as a missing trader, defrauding the Belgian Treasury of €13 million in VAT refunds. While several luxury goods could be seized in the Netherlands, a substantial part of the illicit gains had already been transferred to the United Arab Emirates.
- 24 May 2024: At the request of the EPPO in Palermo (Italy), the judge for preliminary investigations of [the Court of Palermo issues a freezing order for over €15 million](#), real estate, and company shares together with restrictive measures against seven individuals and five companies suspected of defrauding the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), self-money laundering, and tax evasion. According to the investigation, the suspects falsified documents to obtain EU funds in order to build a fuel distribution system, a farm with stables, and a vineyard with an enclosed cellar, and they issued and used invoices for non-existent operations.
- 14 May 2024: The EPPO in Bucharest (Romania) carries out searches to investigate [an €8 million fraud involving EU funds for the purchase of medical equipment](#) (protective masks, disinfectants, and other medical supplies for hospitals, schools, and other municipal state facilities) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The supply of the medical equipment was funded by the programme Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU). The criminal network is suspected of having manipulated the public procurement procedure to benefit predetermined suppliers.
- 7 May 2024: Italian and Latvian authorities arrest 14 individuals, seize 470 tonnes of [lubricating oil](#), and execute a freezing order of €15.4 million against suspects in Operation “Greasy Hands”. The operation, led by the EPPO in Turin (Italy), targets an international criminal network alleged to have imported vehicle lubricants to the Italian market while systematically evading VAT and the payment of excise duties. The criminal group is further suspected of counterfeiting motor oil brands and laundering the illicit profits gained.
- 15 April 2024: The EPPO in Rome (Italy) requests that the Italian Financial Police (Guardia di Finanza) in Bari carry out searches in an investigation into an [€8.8 million fraud in the training sector](#). The suspects received public funds under the Youth Guarantee Programme to conduct training activities, which presumably did not take place.
- 4 April 2024: 22 individuals are arrested in Italy, Austria, Romania, and Slovakia. They are suspected of defrauding tax credits from the Italian authorities and funding from the Italian National Recovery and

Resilience Plan (NRRP). The NRRP is part of the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) for Italy. The RRF is the main pillar of the NextGenerationEU recovery plan (→[eucrim 9 March 2024 // preprint Issue 1/2024](#)). The investigation code-named "Resilient Crime" pursues a criminal association suspected of orchestrating a fraud scheme to obtain non-refundable funds from the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). A network of accountants, service providers, and public notaries allegedly supported the suspects in creating false corporate balance sheets showing active and profitable companies that are, in fact, non-active and fictitious. The total potential damage to both the Italian and EU budgets is estimated €600 million. The international large-scale investigation is led by the EPPO in Venice (Italy).

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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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