

# EPPO's Operational Activities Mid July-Mid-October 2022

Thomas Wahl

## News

This news item continues the regular overview of EPPO's operational activities for the period from mid-July to mid-October 2022 (for previous overviews → [eucri](#)m 2/2022, 97-98; [eucri](#)m 1/2022, 17-18; and [eucri](#)m 4/2021, 210-211):

- 18 October 2022: The EPPO in Zagreb, Croatia, launches an investigation into a [fraud case involving money received from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#). An entrepreneur is suspected of having applied for subsidies from the EU fund although he did not meet the eligibility criteria.
- 14 October 2022: After a [broad media echo](#) on the EU's procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, the EPPO confirms in a brief press release that it has an ongoing [investigation into the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines](#) in the EU. The EPPO didn't specify who was being investigated, or which of the EU's vaccine contracts were under scrutiny. However, [media speculate](#) that the investigations could deal with a high-level contract between the EU and the company Pfizer, in which also the involvement of Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* is questioned.
- 12 October 2022: The EPPO in Bologna, Italy, concluded a fraud case in which the suspected farm owner together with two accomplices [unlawfully received EU money for reconstruction after the earthquakes](#) in Emilia-Romagna in 2012. In total, the fraud involves over €700,000. The suspect made false declarations in order to obtain financial support claiming that his farm was active in 2012 which was not true. During the investigations, Italian law enforcement authorities seized €520,000 and a number of assets.
- 10 October 2022: The EPPO in Bucharest, Romania, [indicts a Romanian businessman and a company with fraud and money laundering](#) to the detriment of the EU's financial interests to the tune of over €3 million. According to EPPO's investigations, the Romanian businessman together with an accomplice representing a Spanish company established a fraud scheme in order to obtain EU funds for a project for the creation of a research-development centre in medical recovery and bio reconstruction. The suspects, *inter alia*, submitted false documents and declared overestimated prices for medical products. In addition, a money laundering scheme all over Europe was established for the EU money obtained.
- 7 October 2022: The Lithuanian Financial Crime Investigation Service [arrests five persons and carries out searches in several locations in Lithuania](#) in an EPPO investigation into credit fraud. According to the investigation, the director of two Lithuanian companies received at least €343,000 in EU funds, although his companies have been unable to fulfil the commitments of having own resources for co-financing the supported projects. To this end, the suspects provided false data on loans, forged

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documents of equipment manufacturers and inflated equipment prices, in order to obtain the funds illegally.

- 6 October 2022: The EPPO in Vilnius, Lithuania, [indicts a person for fraud, attempted fraud and document forgery](#), causing significant damage to the EU's financial interests. The person concerned received EU money and applied for further EU funding, in order to carry out agricultural projects. However, after carrying out inspections, the Lithuanian agency managing these funds discovered that the agricultural activities were not being carried out.
  - 5 October 2022: The EPPO in Athens [indicts a Greek police officer for forgery and attempted fraud](#). This is the first indictment in Greece since the EPPO started its operational activities in June 2021. The public official is suspected of having claimed expenses (€12,000) for his activities covered by the EU's Internal Security Fund (ISF) that were never incurred.
  - 27 September 2022: The Guardia di Finanza of Asti, Italy, executes a decree of the [preventive seizure of €200,000](#) against an Italian company. EPPO investigations revealed that managers of the company artificially duplicated costs and issued fictitious invoices in a project for the promotion of typical regional products, which was funded by the EU's Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
  - 26 September 2022: The Riga District Court, Latvia, [sentences four persons for having organised a fraudulent tender procedure](#). EPPO investigations detected that the persons colluded in receiving a construction contract from a public tender, which was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The unlawfully obtained EU funds (€780,000) were fully recovered before the trial. The EPPO stressed that investigations took less than one year and the case is the result of an excellent cooperation with the Competition Council of the Republic of Latvia which initially identified the irregularities in the public procurement procedure.
  - 21 September 2022: An EPPO investigation into the manipulation of a public procurement procedure leads to the [arrest of two suspects in Zagreb](#), Croatia. An employee of the Croatian agency which was responsible for the public procurement allegedly unlawfully favoured a business owner for a graphics project which is funded by the EU.
  - 20 September 2022: An EPPO investigation in the autonomous region of Aosta Valley, Italy, leads to the [house arrest and seizure of €15,000](#) of a suspect who allegedly illegally obtained EU agricultural funds for the maintenance of agricultural grasslands
  - 16 September 2022: An EPPO-led investigation provokes the [seizure of more than €2 million](#) from an Italian company. It is alleged that the company fraudulently obtained EU funds related to the promotion of agricultural products within and outside the EU.
  - 5 August 2022: Upon request by the EPPO, more than €1.1 million of liquid assets and real estate are [preventively seized from two Italian companies](#) and their director. It was investigated that the companies seemingly defrauded healthcare facilities and hospitals in the region of Emilia-Romagna with FFP masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, although the masks had not had the suitable certification.
  - 27 July 2022: In an aggravated fraud case, the Palermo office of the EPPO lets [seize €160,000 in movable assets and real estate in Sicily](#) (Italy). The two suspects allegedly have falsified statements and wrongly declared ownerships / possession of lands, in order to obtain EU agricultural funds.
  - 20 July 2022: In a [joint operation](#) between the EPPO Investigative Section of the Carabinieri Palermo Provincial HQ (Sicily, Italy) and the EPPO, two high-ranking public officials and one private accountant are arrested for unlawful inducement to give or promise money. The suspects allegedly embezzled part of the sums of money allocated to a housing renovation project by the EU's Cohesion Fund.
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