

Project Medusa Targets Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault



Cornelia Riehle

News

On 22–24 June 2026, law enforcement authorities from seven countries, led by Germany and the United Kingdom and supported by Europol, **conducted an operational week** targeting drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) in intimate-partner settings, particularly in the context of online communities. Investigators worked jointly to identify perpetrators and victims, detect misogynist online communities, and develop new investigative leads.

The operation was part of **Project Medusa**, which was launched in April 2026 to strengthen the cross-border investigation of DFSA and disrupt online networks facilitating such offences. The investigations revealed that perpetrators use encrypted messaging services, forums, and closed chat groups to exchange information and material, normalise abusive behaviour, facilitate the illegal trade in prescription medicines and narcotics, and coordinate offences. Europol stressed that the detected crimes are not isolated incidents but a pattern of organised, mutually reinforcing behaviour.

The offences predominantly target women and may be committed over extended periods. In some cases, perpetrators exploit positions of trust or professional authority. The investigations concerned not only rape and sexual assault, but also dangerous bodily harm and attempted murder, given the risks associated with the deliberate sedation of victims.

Since the launch of Project Medusa, 113 investigations have been initiated, resulting in 57 arrests and the safeguarding of 158 victims. The June operation identified 156 victims and perpetrators, and it generated 274 new investigative leads. In addition, four new misogynist online communities were identified.

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