

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Tackling counterfeiting and piracy across the EU – the impact of a coordinated approach

Intensive cooperation and coordination between enforcement authorities at EU level has led to the seizure of millions of fake and possibly harmful products and has helped to take down several transnational criminal networks.

At the forefront of this cooperation is the [Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition \(IPC3\)](#), set up within the current structure of Europol, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, and co-funded by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) since July 2016.

As a result of the IPC3's success to date, the EUIPO has doubled the funding available to the unit, to enable it to intensify its work and build on the results it has achieved since its foundation. Its enhanced tasks will include: scanning the internet; data analysis and processing; and increased training of enforcement authorities.

In 2017 alone, the IPC3 has been involved in 36 major intellectual property crime cases. The unit has coordinated large transnational operations from its headquarters in The Hague, and has extensively assisted cross-border investigations by providing operational and technical support. In addition, on-the-spot support has been supplied by deploying IPC3's experts to assist the national law enforcement actions in EU Member States, allowing for real-time information exchange and cross-checks against Europol's databases.

During 2017, over 1 700 secure messages relating to IP crime have passed through the IPC3 hub in Europol, and nearly 1 400 suspects have been investigated.

Some of the major investigations coordinated or supported by the IPC3 this year are:

- [Operation In Our Sites \(IOS\) VIII](#), the biggest hit against online piracy, tackling illicit websites offering counterfeit goods or pirated content. The operation, which finalised in November 2017, resulted in the disruption of over 20 520 domain names illegally selling counterfeit merchandise online to consumers, 15 420 in the UK alone. The goods sold included sportswear, electronics and pharmaceutical products, as well as online piracy on e-commerce platforms and social networks. IOS VIII was carried out in 27 countries, and was jointly coordinated and supported by Europol, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement — Department of Homeland Security Investigations (ICE – HSI) and Interpol.
- [Operation Silver Axe II](#), targeting the emerging menace of illicit pesticides, led to the seizure of 122 tonnes of illegal or counterfeit pesticides across 16 EU Member States in July 2017. The operation targeted infringements of intellectual property rights such as trade marks, patents and copyright, as well as the substandard pesticides.
- [Operation Opson VI](#), a joint Europol-Interpol initiative tackling counterfeit food and drink, resulted in the seizure, from December 2016 until March 2017, of more than 13.4 tonnes of potentially harmful food items and 26.3 million litres of potentially harmful drink products, worth an estimated EUR 230 million. These products ranged from everyday products such as alcohol, mineral water, seasoning cubes, seafood and olive oil, to luxury goods such as caviar.

- [Operation Gazel](#) led to the disruption of an organised crime group trading horsemeat in Europe that was unfit for human consumption. In Spain, 65 people were arrested and charged with crimes including animal abuse, document forgery, perverting the course of justice, crimes against public health, money laundering and being part of a criminal organisation.
- [Operation Kasper](#) resulted in the dismantling of one of Europe's biggest illegal distributors of internet protocol television (IPTV), and their servers shut down. The criminal network owned two internet service providers (ISPs) in Spain and Bulgaria that illicitly offered more than 1000 TV channels to clients across Europe.
- [Operation Pinar](#) led to the disruption of an international criminal organisation involved in intellectual property (IP) crime and money laundering. In total, almost 265 000 products infringing intellectual property rights — including textiles, footwear, watches, sunglasses, leather goods, jewellery and more — were seized in the Spanish areas of La Junquera and El Perthus, with an estimated black market value of EUR 8 million.

The Executive Director of the EUIPO, António Campinos said:

*IPC3 is a success story, both in terms of its activities and in terms of the support it has given to enforcement authorities both inside and outside the EU. With increased funding, the unit will be able to concentrate on a wider range of tasks, with a view to making the internet a safer place for consumers and businesses.*

The Executive Director of Europol, Rob Wainwright, said:

*The rapidly evolving digital world presents big challenges for enforcement officers tackling IP crime that cannot be solved by law enforcement alone. IPC3's operational successes are the perfect example of how building robust partnerships between the stakeholders involved is vital to effectively combat this crime. We welcome EUIPO's decision to reinforce its support to the IPC3 and to strengthen its capacity to fight counterfeiting and piracy.*

The [Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition \(IPC3\)](#) builds on the strategic agreement between Europol and the EUIPO, which was signed in 2013.

## **ABOUT THE EUIPO**

The EUIPO, the European Union Intellectual Property Office, is a decentralised agency of the EU, based in Alicante, Spain. It manages the registration of the European Union trade mark (EUTM) and the registered Community design (RCD), both of which provide intellectual property protection in all 28 EU Member States, as well as carrying out cooperation activities with the national and regional IP offices of the EU.

## **ABOUT [Europol](#)**

Europol is the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation. Headquartered in The Hague, the Netherlands, Europol supports the 28 EU Member States in their fight against terrorism, cybercrime and other serious and organised forms of crime.

## **Press contacts**

**Laura Casado**  
Tel: +34 965138934  
Laura.CASADO@euipo.europa.eu

**Ruth McDonald**  
Tel: +34 965137676  
Ruth.MCDONALD@euipo.europa.eu



Formatted: English (Ireland)

**Claire Castel**

Tel: +34 965199735

Claire.CASTEL@euipo.europa.eu

#EUIPOreports

**Press Europol**

Tel: +31 703025001

press@europol.europa.eu