

PRESS RELEASE  
12<sup>th</sup> of July 2016  
The Hague, the Netherlands

## Launch of the IPC3: Europe's response to Intellectual Property Crime

Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are a widespread and ever-increasing phenomenon worldwide. International trade in counterfeit products represents up to 2.5% of world trade, or as much as EUR 338 billion, based on the latest available data from 2013. This is the equivalent of the GDP of Austria, or the combined GDP of Ireland and the Czech Republic. The impact of counterfeiting is particularly high in the European Union, with counterfeit and pirated products amounting to up to 5% of imports, or as much as EUR 85 billion<sup>1</sup>.

IPR infringements negatively impact the revenues of the affected businesses and produce adverse social and economic effects that result in thousands of job losses. They can also pose a very serious harm to the health and safety of consumers as counterfeit goods are produced without regard to the health and safety standards applicable on the EU market. Recent cases notified to Europol by EU Member States include medical and dental equipment and airbags.

Fighting intellectual property crime is a key priority for law enforcement authorities in safeguarding consumers against dangerous and substandard products and tackling the criminal networks involved in these low risk/high revenue illegal activities.

### **The Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition (IPC3)**

To strengthen the fight against counterfeiting and piracy online and offline, Europol and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) have joined forces to launch the Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition (IPC3).

The IPC3 will provide operational and technical support to law enforcement agencies and other partners in the EU and beyond, by:

- Facilitating and coordinating cross-border investigations;
- Monitoring and reporting online crime trends and emerging modus operandi;
- Enhancing the harmonisation and standardisation of legal instruments and operating procedures to counter intellectual property crime globally;

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<sup>1</sup> Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods: Mapping the Economic Impact, OECD/EUIPO (2016).

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- Reaching out to the public and law enforcement by raising awareness and providing training on this specific field of expertise

While the Internet has become an essential communication and distribution channel for e-commerce, it has also developed as a key enabler for illicit trade allowing the sale of counterfeit goods and the piracy of works on a much wider scale.<sup>2</sup> The online distribution of counterfeit medicines and medical devices has been growing over the past years. As an example, counterfeit dental products are sold online with a price difference of EUR 350-750 less. There are also a growing number of e-commerce marketplaces offering all sorts of counterfeit automotive parts such as shocks, struts, rotors, brake pads or airbags, which carry high risks to the safety of drivers.

The Executive Director of EUIPO, **António Campinos**, said: *“it is essential to deepen the understanding of how the online environment interacts with IP infringements. We noticed IPRs are systematically being misused as a way to disseminate malware, carry out illegal phishing and simple fraud to the detriment of consumers, businesses and the ordinary user of the internet, as illustrated in [a report EUIPO](#) is releasing today which sheds light on the variety of online business models infringing IPR through numerous illicit examples of marketing through Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) websites, online marketplaces and social media*

*We decided to team up with Europol to help combat the IPR-infringing business models in the online environment in the interest of protecting citizens, legitimate businesses and the economy as a whole”.*

**Rob Wainwright**, Director of Europol, said: “Intellectual property crime is not a victimless crime. The criminal networks involved in these offences expand beyond EU borders. They are also linked to other serious forms of criminality such as human trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime. Thanks to the excellent cooperation between EUIPO, law enforcement agencies and private sector representatives across Europe and beyond, they can be effectively investigated and prosecuted. The newly created IPC3 offers the perfect opportunity to further develop more synergies in the fight against IPR-infringements in the EU and reinforces our already existing cooperation.’

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<sup>2</sup>Situation report on counterfeiting in Europe. Europol/EUIPO (April 2015).

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The new IPC3 has been set up within the current organisational structure of Europol. The IPC3 builds on the strategic agreement between Europol and EUIPO signed in 2013, and is already operating with a EUR 500 K annual grant provided by EUIPO.

### **ABOUT THE EUIPO**

The EUIPO 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. Up until 23 March 2016, the EUIPO was known as the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM).

[The European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights](#) was established in 2009 to support the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights and help combat the growing threat of IP infringements in Europe. It was transferred to the EUIPO on June 5 by Regulation (EU) No 386/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

### **ABOUT EUROPOL**

Europol is the European law enforcement agency, whose aim is to support EU Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious organised crime and terrorism. In March 2013, Europol's team 'COPY' was established to investigate intellectual property crime infringements.

Europol supports several international operations targeting counterfeiting and piracy. In June 2016, an international operation supported by Europol targeting the illicit online sale of medicines and medical devices ([Pangea IX](#)), led to the seizure of more than USD 53 million worth of potentially dangerous medicines. In 2015, during an international operation coordinated by Europol ([In Our Sites VI](#)), nearly one thousand websites that were illegally selling counterfeit merchandise online to consumers were seized by law enforcement authorities.

More on: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/fighting-intellectual-property-crime>

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