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## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

# **New threat assessment confirms links between counterfeiting and organised crime in the EU**

Most criminal activity involving counterfeiting is carried out by increasingly professionalised organised crime networks, which can reap large profits while running relatively few risks.

That is according to the first EU-wide intellectual property crime threat assessment from Europol and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO).

The report also underlines that, although the majority of counterfeits in the EU market are produced outside Europe, in particular in parts of Asia, domestic manufacturing within Europe is an increasing trend.

The threat assessment, carried out using EU-wide data and strategic intelligence analysis, also stresses that, as well as the traditional categories of counterfeited clothes, footwear and luxury products, there is a growing trade in fake products which have the potential to damage human health. An example of this would be the trade in counterfeit medicines for the treatment of serious illnesses, which appears to be increasing.

In addition, fake goods are increasingly shipped via small parcels and express couriers, which are more difficult for enforcement authorities to detect.

Online, illegal digital content continues to be distributed through BitTorrent portals and peer-to-peer networks, but also, increasingly, via cyberlockers, the threat assessment finds. The owners of these platforms generate profit through digital advertisements, which often include mainstream adverts from major brands. In many cases, these websites are also used to target consumers using phishing techniques or the dissemination of malware.

The Executive Director of the EUIPO, Christian Archambeau, said:

This threat assessment paints a stark picture of the scope and range of counterfeiting and piracy in the EU, and the damage it can cause to legitimate business and to consumers. Through our collaboration with Europol, we aim to support the efforts of law enforcement authorities in their fight against IP Crime, particularly in the online environment.

Europol's Executive Director, Catherine De Bolle, said:

This report clearly shows that counterfeiting and piracy are not victimless crimes. Organised crime groups who **produce and sell** these goods have no respect for the quality of products which very often pose health and safety risks. Europol is dedicated to continuing its efforts, together with EU Member States and partners, to stop the criminal networks behind this dangerous **and illegal trade**. The health and safety of European consumers is of the utmost importance to us!

The threat assessment will be released at the [IP Enforcement Forum](#) (co-organised by the OECD, the European Commission and the EUIPO) which aims to facilitate a coherent strategy to support effective IPR enforcement at EU and international level.

This high-level forum will also study ways to reinforce cooperation in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy at all levels, including bridging governance gaps.

The EUIPO will also release the new [IP Enforcement Portal](#) (a single EU platform for the enforcement of intellectual property rights) at the event, to support the IP enforcement community. This new powerful tool aims to facilitate the communication between rights holders and enforcement authorities, providing a central access point for most of the searchable databases for IP-related material, including TMview and DesignView. The portal combines the Enforcement Database (EDB), the Anti-Counterfeiting Intelligence Support Tool (ACIST) and the Anti-Counterfeiting Rapid Intelligence System (ACRIS) in a single platform.

#### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

This threat assessment has been drawn up in partnership between Europol and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and is intended to update policymakers, law enforcement authorities, businesses and the public in general about the latest trends and the current impact of intellectual property crime within the EU. The report focuses on the counterfeiting activities and piracy affecting the EU and provides an assessment of the threat posed by this counterfeiting and piracy in several product sectors, as well as cross-cutting factors which influence or impact the criminal area such as trade routes and technological development. It builds on two previously developed joint situation reports, published in 2015 and 2017, and forecasts future trends.

The report was drafted by a team of analysts and specialists from Europol and the EUIPO. It draws on contributions received by Europol from Member States, EU Agencies and third parties, for the purpose of strategic intelligence analysis. In addition, it uses the operational data covering IP crime available at Europol, in particular the IPC3 (Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition). This includes data on large operations coordinated or supported by Europol. It also relies on the statistical data collected by the Directorate-

General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) on seizures of counterfeit items by EU customs authorities in 2017. Furthermore, it takes the strategic and thematic reports produced or received by Europol or the EUIPO since the 2017 situation report into account. Finally, where appropriate (and verified), open source information has been used to complement the primary data.

Watch [the live streaming](#) of the IP Enforcement Forum.

#### **ABOUT THE EUIPO:**

The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) is a decentralised agency of the EU, headquartered in Alicante, Spain. It manages the registration of the European Union trade mark (EUTM) and the registered Community design (RCD), as well as carrying out cooperation activities with the national and regional intellectual property (IP) offices of the EU. The EUIPO carries out research and activities to combat IP rights infringement through the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights.

##### **Press contact**

**Ruth McDonald**

Tel: +34 965137676

[Ruth.MCDONALD@euipo.europa.eu](mailto:Ruth.MCDONALD@euipo.europa.eu)

#### **ABOUT EUROPOL:**

As the EU's agency for law enforcement cooperation, Europol has a mission to support its Member States in preventing and combating all forms of serious international and organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism. Europol's vision is to ensure an effective EU response to the threats of serious international and organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism in the EU, by acting as the principal information hub, delivering agile operational support and providing European policing solutions in conjunction with our network of partners.

##### **Press contact**

Press office: [press@europol.europa.eu](mailto:press@europol.europa.eu)

+31703025001