

MASTERMIND SMUGGLER INVOLVED IN 2015 MIGRANT CRISIS ARRESTED IN GREECE

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[Press Release](#)



One of most prolific migrant smugglers along the Western Balkan route was arrested in Athens on 12 June 2018 after very close cooperation between the Hellenic Police (Aliens Division of Attica), the Hungarian National Police (National Bureau of Investigation Illegal Immigration Unit) and Europol. The suspect, a Syrian national, was apprehended in Athens together with an accomplice who is involved in document fraud.

The main suspect, based in Hungary, was involved in the transport of migrants in 2015 and 2016. At that time, he was under investigation in different EU Member States for facilitating several smuggling incidents between Hungary and Germany. The investigation showed that he moved to Greece after the closure of the Western Balkan route to continue his criminal activities. Based on this information, a European Arrest Warrant was issued by Hungary. After an excellent exchange of information via Europol, both the Hellenic and Hungarian authorities met for a final operational meeting with the European Union Task Force (EURTF) in Greece to discuss future steps in the investigation.

Specialists from Europol's [European Migrant Smuggling Centre](#) (EMSC), deployed to the EURTF in Greece, supported the operation on the spot by providing expertise, tailored analytical support and frequent cross-checks against Europol databases.

During a house search on 12 June 2018, 53 documents (passports, ID cards, visa stickers, residence permits, driving licences, social security cards) from all over the world were discovered. All documents are currently under forensic investigation. Several of these documents were reported as lost or stolen. Two cards, a laptop and several phones were seized by the authorities.

Both suspects are currently in custody.

The operation was carried out under the umbrella of the Greek National Operational Plan signed by Europol and the Hellenic Police in June 2016 (<https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/hellenic-police-and-europol-...>). The purpose of this plan is to disrupt organised criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and to reinforce secondary security controls in migration hotspots.



In 2010 the European Union set up a four-year Policy Cycle to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organised crime. In 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the EU Policy Cycle for the 2018 - 2021 period. It aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by organised and serious international crime to the EU. This is achieved by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of EU Member States, institutions and agencies, as well as non-EU countries and organisations, including the private sector where relevant. Facilitation of illegal immigration is one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

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