

MIGRANT SMUGGLING ORGANISED CRIME GROUP DISMANTLED IN GREECE

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[Press Release](#)

An organised crime group involved in smuggling migrants from Greece to other European Union countries has been dismantled in Athens, Greece. The operation was jointly carried out by Attika Aliens Division, Europol and the UK's National Crime Agency, following several months of investigations.

In this large operation in Athens at the end of May, a total of 12 individuals were arrested, of which seven were members of the organised crime group. Four arrestees were migrants that were about to be smuggled. In addition, one Afghan national was arrested for carrying a false identity card. Seven members of the organised crime group were already arrested earlier. The members of the network received up to EUR 16 000 per person that was illegally transported, with the money transferred via the Hawala informal money transfer system.

Regarding the modus operandi, the organised crime group consisted of two sub-teams. Both sub-teams were involved in smuggling migrants mainly from Greece, either by land using the "Balkan route", or by air. In particular, for facilitation through the Balkan route, the migrants crossed the border from Greece to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. From there, other members of the group picked up the migrants and organised further transport to the destination countries.

Based on the investigation, for each leg of the journey, the network received between EUR 1000 and EUR 2000 per person, with main destinations being Austria, Germany and, in some cases, the Netherlands. In addition, one of the teams illegally transported migrants by air, mainly via Athens International Airport but also the national airports of Heraklion and Mytilene. Migrants were provided either with false documents or other people's genuine passports. The prices the migrants were charged depended on their desired countries of destination. For EU countries, the price varied from EUR 4000 up to EUR 6000, except for the UK where the price varied from EUR 8000 up to EUR 10 000. A facilitated trip to Canada was EUR 16 000 per person.

According to the investigation, the network was involved in 26 facilitation cases - 11 of them using air transport, 14 by land and one by sea.

Searches took place in houses and shops in central Athens, where the following were confiscated

(among others):

- 17 passports
- 8 identity cards
- 2 Afghan travel documents
- 2 asylum request documents
- 3 boarding passes
- EUR 3400 in cash
- Certificate for residence permit request
- 24 mobile phones
- German visas
- 3 laptop computers.

CRIME AREAS

[Facilitation of Illegal Immigration](#)

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