

PRESS RELEASE

Large European operation against persons behind child sexual abuse images in the internet

2xx suspects identified and xxx arrested

The Hague, the Netherlands

With the involvement of law enforcement agencies from xx European countries a major crackdown against child sexual abuse in the internet has been carried out with the support and coordination by Europol.

So far 'Operation Icarus' has allowed the identification of XXX suspects and the arrest of XXX suspects spread over the XX participating countries*. The operation was targeted towards those with a preference for videos with the most severe child sexual abuse material. The videos contained material including babies and toddlers being sexually abused and raped by child molesters. A lot of the material seized during the house searches will still need to undergo forensic examination in order to assess how deeply involved the suspects are in the abuse of children. However, at this moment the discovery of previously unknown networks of child sex offenders operating on different internet channels have been identified.

'It is with great pleasure that I see the number of arrests, but it is also with deep concern that I note how widespread this kind of crime is. Europol will continue to help our cooperation partners dismantle child sexual abuse networks and bring the criminals who directly or indirectly sexually abuse children to court,' says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

Investigations are ongoing and more arrests are expected. Special focus will be on identifying producers, molesters and victims. Among the arrested suspects for downloading illegal material there has already been identified a person who was grooming a young child, but who now has been arrested before he managed to set up a meeting face to face with the child.

Operation ICARUS is the first operation concluded under the auspices of the new action plan of the COSPOL Internet Related Child Abuse Material Project (CIRCAMP)** currently led by Belgium and funded by the EU Commission.

"The victims who are pictured in child sexual abuse images are victims of two crimes. First when the actual abuse is filmed. And, thereafter, every time the images are posted, circulated or viewed. The Commission will continue to support the fight against this crime against our most vulnerable citizens, children, by using the instruments at our disposal such as policy coordination, funding and legislation", says Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs.

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Europol Public Information

Operation ICARUS was initiated during a CIRCAMP meeting in the beginning of 2011. It was agreed that the National High Tech Crime Unit of the Danish Police (DK NITEC) should be the lead country and carry out the investigations because of its expertise within the area of exchange of illegal material through file sharing systems, known as peer-to-peer. After the collection of the intelligence performed by the Danish National Police, an operational meeting was organised at Europol in September 2011 in order to disseminate the intelligence packages to the involved EU Member States and countries with a Europol operational agreement.

The packages and additional information were disseminated by Europol through its secure system in order to guarantee the integrity of data and to ensure a fast reaction in the concerned countries. Europol's cooperation network will also facilitate the further investigations by involving partners like Eurojust and Interpol when needed.

"Law enforcement agencies have to work together to combat the growing threat of cybercrimes against children, and we have to use the most advanced technology available. The complexity is huge and challenging i.e. one of the Danish suspects had 29 terabytes of data which we confiscated. This is an incredible amount of data for our investigators to handle. To put it in perspective this amount of data can hold about 9000 hours of high quality video," says Jens Henrik Hoejbjerg, Danish National Commissioner of Police.

* The participating countries are:

** The members of CIRCAMP are: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Europol and Interpol.

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