

BIG HIT AGAINST COSA NOSTRA IN SICILY

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32 with links to Italian mafia arrested in Sicily



In the early hours of Monday 4 March, the Italian Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (Anti-mafia Investigation Department) and the Italian Carabinieri arrested 32 individuals, allegedly members of the Italian crime syndicate, Cosa Nostra.

Law enforcement organised raids in several Italian cities, such as Agrigento, Catania, Palermo, Parma and Trapani. The arrests were the result of a long and complex investigation carried out by the Italian authorities with the support of Europol and the Belgian Federal Police. The investigation, labelled Operation Kerkent, started in 2015 and targeted the Cosa Nostra of Agrigento, in Sicily, that was known to be active not only in Sicily but also in the region of Calabria and in northern Italy. The mafia-structured organised crime group and its members were involved in international drug trafficking (cannabis, cocaine and synthetic drugs), weapons and explosives offences, as well as one case of kidnapping. Among the 32 arrested, was the leader of the Cosa Nostra family and a well-known leader of Ultras Bravi Ragazzi, an organised supporter group of the Italian football club Juventus F.C.

The successful hit is the result of a fruitful exchange of information between Europol, Belgium and Italy. The success is a concrete example of cooperation in tackling the dangerous Italian criminal group Cosa Nostra, which spreads its illicit business outside Italy into many European Union Member States. Europol supported the case with the Top OCG Team, dealing with the most dangerous organised crime groups and its dedicated Analysis Project on Italian Organised Crime

(AP ITOC). Europol provided analytical and operational support, such as organising dedicated operational meetings at its headquarters in The Hague.

The investigation was also supported by the Italian @ON network (Operational Network), in which Europol and Belgium play key roles. The aim of the @ON network is to strengthen international police cooperation on mafia-style criminal groups, making it possible for EU Member States to request, in coordination with Europol, the deployment of specialised investigators.

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