

Strike against international steroid gang - POLADA and WADA comment

Joint operation of the Central Investigation Bureau of Police (CBŚP), Slovak and Czech Police, Europol and Eurojust (JIT) is the first ever case of this type on an international scale in which POLADA participated both as lead expert and as an expert witness. This is the largest operation ever held on steroids in Poland. A representative of WADA's Intelligence and Investigations Department was also in attendance.

Underground laboratories, illegal production of dietary supplements, possession of illegal substances prohibited in sport and withdrawn from the pharmaceutical market, product counterfeiting this is just a small part of the picture that the law enforcement authorities and anti-doping experts found at the scene.

Polish Anti-Doping Agency Director, Michał Rynkowski, said: "Once again we have evidence that organised crime today is not only about drugs, it is also about the market for steroids, counterfeit supplements and other illegal and often life-threatening substances. The scale of this particular case should be a further warning to society as a whole and to athletes in particular"

The Polish Anti-Doping Agency cooperates with Polish law enforcement such as: Police, Military Police, Border Guard, Tax authorities or National Prosecutor's Office since few years. POLADA is once again acting as an expert in this type of case, but this is the first time in an international case of this scale. POLADA has become the leading anti-doping agency in the world, participating in police operations. Over the past month, the Polish Anti-Doping Agency has helped the law enforcement authorities several times to varying degrees. POLADA also focuses on the development of anti-doping investigations, because it has specific reasons for doing so.

Head of the Intelligence and Investigations Team of POLADA, Agnieszka Ostrowska, explained: "Athletes who have violated anti-doping regulations and are questioned very often indicate the source from which they obtained the products used, including medicines. These are most often websites, advertisements in social media. They have no idea that they buy something that is produced in scandalous conditions, without any purity, without any control, and that these are products from organized criminal groups." and she added: "As many as 90 per cent of doping violations are also linked to criminal violations. Only 10 per cent of athletes possess the substances they use from legal sources."

The importance of these issues from an anti-doping point of view is evidenced by the fact that the World Anti-Doping Agency took an interest in the case and joined the operation. A WADA representative was present during the operation in Poland.

World Anti-Doping Agency President, Witold Bańka, said: “The World Anti-Doping Agency is delighted to have contributed to this sophisticated, multi-party operation through our Intelligence and Investigations Department. Since its formation in 2016, this team has played a pivotal role in the protection of clean sport, leading several successful investigations, across a range of countries and sports. This latest operation is the result of excellent collaboration between several organizations, including WADA, the Polish Anti-Doping Agency and law enforcement in a number of European nations. Increasingly, these kinds of collaborations with various law enforcement agencies, including Europol, INTERPOL and customs authorities, are bearing fruit and delivering results for the athletes of the world. I congratulate the Polish police force and all those involved, and I pledge the ongoing support of WADA to help restrict the global production, sale and supply of performance-enhancing drugs.”

Joining forces with so many organisations underlines the importance of this issue and the importance that the world's major anti-doping sports organisations place on protecting the lives and health of athletes.