Late 2019 – Spanish authorities launch an investigation into a VAT evasion and money laundering scheme, involving large-scale forgery of documents, that will ultimately cost the country EUR 26 million in missed revenues.

To avoid paying VAT within the internal market, the scammers have set up a series of shell companies in Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Belgium and the Netherlands to fraudulently claim that goods are being traded internationally, when in fact they are never sent abroad and are therefore subject to VAT.

22 April 2021 – A joint operation involving law enforcement and judicial authorities from Spain, Slovakia, Belgium and the Netherlands is organised through a coordination centre at Eurojust, with Europol providing analysis and cross-checking support. 22 suspects are arrested, 13 properties and 16 vehicles are seized and dozens of bank accounts are frozen.

22 April 2021 – A coordination meeting is held at Eurojust to facilitate exchanges of information among all parties concerned and prepare for the swift establishment of a coordination centre on 28 April. Several European Investigation Orders and freezing orders are issued over the following days.

13 April 2021 – The Spanish Desk at Eurojust opens a case towards Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia, as well as Europol in the framework of its Analysis Project Sustrans which supports anti-money laundering investigations.

28 April 2021 – A joint operation involving law enforcement and judicial authorities from Spain, Slovakia, Belgium and the Netherlands is organised through a coordination centre at Eurojust, with Europol providing analysis and cross-checking support. 22 suspects are arrested, 13 properties and 16 vehicles are seized and dozens of bank accounts are frozen.