



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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Seizure of 10 million "cheap whites" cigarettes is the fruit of swift international cooperation

On 12 October, Romanian police seized 10 million contraband cigarettes on board a Bulgarian ship on the Danube river. This was as a result of swift international cooperation in an operation involving also Ukrainian authorities and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

The cigarettes were found to be 'cheap whites'¹ of Chinese origin. They had been transported from Montenegro to Belgrade where they were loaded onto a Bulgarian vessel and were in the process of being shipped along the Danube river towards Ukraine, when they were intercepted in the port of Giurgiu.

Intelligence obtained during the operation led to the Ukrainian State Fiscal Service carrying out immediate checks on the shipment which revealed that the alleged Ukrainian recipient of the goods was not in any way aware of their existence. The cigarette brands concerned were also known to be massively sold on the black market in Romania. Swift information exchange followed between the Ukrainian authorities, OLAF and the Romanian authorities, leading to the Romanian authorities making the necessary customs controls and seizing the goods.

Controls raised suspicions that the cigarettes infringed trademarks and that the documents submitted were fakes. Criminal proceedings are ongoing in Romania.

¹ Cigarettes manufactured in a legal way but not officially registered in the EU to be marketed