



Customs Union: Number of counterfeit goods seized by EU authorities continued to rise in 2015

Brussels, 23 September 2016

Customs authorities across the EU seized an estimated five million more counterfeit items in 2015 than the previous year, according to new figures released today by the European Commission.

This means that the number of intercepted goods grew by 15% compared to 2014. More than 40 million products suspected of violating an intellectual property right were detained at the EU's external borders, with a value of nearly €650 million.

Today's report, based on the enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the EU [see [here](#)] also provides figures on the categories of goods detained, on their countries of origin, on the intellectual property rights involved and on the modes of transport used to ship such goods.

Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"I've witnessed first-hand the excellent work of customs officials across the EU in dealing with counterfeit and sometimes dangerous goods. But the criminal activity which swamps our internal market with fake and illegal products shows no sign of abating. The Commission will continue to work with customs authorities, international partners and industry to ensure a high level of protection for intellectual property rights in the EU."*

Cigarettes remain the top category (27%) of articles detained, while everyday products which could be dangerous to the health and safety of consumers such as food and beverages, toiletries, medicines, toys and household electrical goods account jointly for 25.8% of the total. Once again, China was the main originating country for counterfeit goods (41%), followed by Montenegro, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Benin.

Benin was the originating country of a large amount of foodstuff, while Mexico was the top source for counterfeit alcoholic beverages and Morocco for other beverages. Malaysia was in the lead for toiletries, Turkey for clothing, Hong Kong for counterfeit mobile phones and accessories, memory cards, computer equipment, CDs and DVDs and lighters. Montenegro was the biggest originator of counterfeit cigarettes, while India topped the list for medicines. In more than 91% of detentions, goods were either destroyed or a court case was initiated to determine an infringement in cooperation with the right-holder of the brand which is being infringed.

The Commission's report on customs actions to enforce IPR has been issued annually since 2000 and is based on data transmitted by Member States' customs administrations to the Commission. Such data also provides valuable information to support IPR infringements analysis by the OECD.

The Customs Union

The Customs Union is unique in the world. It is a cornerstone of the European Union and essential for the proper functioning of the Single Market. Once cleared by Customs in one Member State, goods can move freely within the Union on the basis that all Member States apply the same revenue and protection rules at external borders.

The 28 customs administrations of the EU must act as though they were one entity, while also facilitating trade and protecting the health and safety of all EU citizens. These are not easy tasks. The EU is one of the largest trading blocks in the world. In 2015, the EU accounted for almost 15% of world trade in goods, worth €3.5 trillion. Managing this volume of international trade requires handling millions of customs declarations per year in a fast and efficient manner.

New customs rules

In June 2013, [new](#) rules on IPR enforcement at customs were adopted (see [MEMO/11/332](#) and [MEMO/13/527](#)). This Regulation has been applicable across the EU since 1 January 2015 and strengthens the rules to protect intellectual property.

For the full report, see:

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