



Valsts ieņēmumu dienests

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INFORMATION FOR THE MASS MEDIA

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Last year, State Revenue Service confiscated twice as much illegal alcohol

In 2016, SRS customs activities resulted in the seizure of over 54 thousand litres of illegal alcohol, which is twice as much as in 2015. Preventing the entry of this illegal alcohol onto the market avoided losses of EUR 361,000 to the State budget.

Although the smuggling of alcoholic beverages is not considered a high-level threat, it is to be taken into account that the illegal production and selling of fortified beverages is a serious business of criminal groups, which, just like the smuggling of tobacco, promotes the development of other types of crime, and causes harm to the State budget, legal producers and consumers of alcoholic beverages. Calculations made suggest that the current total of the illegal share of alcoholic beverages in Latvia, most likely, does not exceed 10% of the total consumption of alcoholic beverages in the country.

Kaspars Podiņš, Director of the SRS Customs Police Department: *"Undeniably, as a result of an increase in excise duty rates, prices for legal alcohol grow every year. Respectively, it increases the wish of consumers to purchase cheaper alcohol, which is often of an illegal origin. Harm is caused to both the State budget and mainly the health of inhabitants, since illegal (hence, of illegal origin) alcohol can contain life-threatening substances. Combating the spread of illegal excise goods is one of the priorities of the SRS activity; however, good results can be achieved only by successfully cooperating with other law enforcement authorities of the State. For these purposes, a special Working Group of Law Enforcement Authorities was created, the successful cooperation and coordinated actions of which are visible through an increase in the volumes of illegal alcohol seized over recent years"*.

The data of the State Police, which combats the illegal circulation of excise goods inland, suggest that almost 100,000 litres of alcoholic beverages were withdrawn from circulation last year and 99% of seized alcohol was of unknown origin.

The Provision State Agency destroys a significant amount of illegal alcohol almost every day; moreover, Ieva Rekšņa, Public Relations Specialist of the Provision State Agency, emphasises: *"We can rather confidently state that the flow of smuggling to Latvia, unfortunately, does not decrease. In 2016, 18,397 packages of alcoholic beverages were destroyed within the framework of 21 administrative violation cases and 129 criminal proceedings"*.

In order to effectively fight against the illegal circulation of excise goods, including illegal alcohol, in Latvia in 2016, the Action Plan of Law Enforcement Authorities for 2016–2018 was developed; within the framework of this plan, cooperation of law enforcement authorities and regular assessment of results occurs.

SRS invites: if you see, report! Each sold litre of illegal alcohol promotes crime and increases the total amount of non-paid taxes. By supporting the non-payment of taxes, including the purchasing of smuggled goods, all inhabitants of Latvia lose in the long term, as they do not receive from the State the social guarantees of the desired amount and quality, education, security, medicine, and other services important for each of us, which are mostly

