

## **No fake rum in Spain for Christmas: nearly 150 000 bottles seized with OLAF's help**

**One of the biggest seizures in the EU involving fake spirits took place just two days before Christmas. A well-coordinated action in the Netherlands between OLAF and the Dutch customs authorities led to the seizure of more than 147,000 bottles of counterfeit rum, an equivalent of 10 containers. The final destination of the seized bottles of counterfeit rum was Spain.**

Starting in July 2019, OLAF received information that counterfeit rum was being smuggled from the Netherlands and into Spain. Following several inspections, OLAF carried out in close cooperation with the Spanish and the Dutch authorities as well as the analysis of thousands of documents, OLAF investigators figured out the modus operandi of the rum smugglers, and identified a warehouse of possible concern in the Netherlands.

As a result, OLAF and the Dutch authorities jointly inspected the warehouse on 23 December 2019. The operation, carried out in cooperation with the brand holder of the rum, showed that 96% of the bottles contained counterfeit rum, which amounts to an estimated value of 2 million EUR.

*"This is another example of a successful cooperation between OLAF and national customs authorities – working together to protect the health of EU citizens and support the interests EU companies,"* OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said.

A related OLAF investigation concerning the infringement of intellectual property rights is still ongoing.

### **Background**

The trade of counterfeit products results in vast illicit profits and huge losses of tax revenues for the EU and its Member States. The smuggling of counterfeit products harms the European economy, damages legitimate business and stifles innovation, putting many jobs at risk in Europe. Counterfeiting also poses serious risks to the environment and to health and safety, in particular in case of counterfeit foodstuff.

OLAF is competent to conduct investigations related to the smuggling of counterfeit goods, thereby protecting the EU and its Member States from customs and tax revenue losses. OLAF particularly focuses on the smuggling of potentially dangerous products.



#### **OLAF mission, mandate and competences:**

OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop fraud with EU funds.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud and corruption involving EU funds, so as to ensure that all EU taxpayers' money reaches projects that can create jobs and growth in Europe;
- contributing to strengthening citizens' trust in the EU Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU Institutions;
- developing a sound EU anti-fraud policy.

In its independent investigative function, OLAF can investigate matters relating to fraud, corruption and other offences affecting the EU financial interests concerning:

- all EU expenditure: the main spending categories are Structural Funds, agricultural policy and rural development funds, direct expenditure and external aid;
- some areas of EU revenue, mainly customs duties;
- suspicions of serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU institutions.

#### **For further details:**

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