

# Illegal Tobacco Trade Operations in 2021

Thomas Wahl



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## News

On 23 February 2022, OLAF informed of the [results of its operations against tobacco smuggling in 2021](#) (for the results in 2020 → [euclid 1/2021, 14](#)). In 2021, world-wide operations involving OLAF were able to seize over 430 million illicit cigarettes in total. The majority (253 million) was seized outside the EU borders preventing the illicit cigarettes from flooding the EU market. OLAF also helped take down illegal production sites across the EU, which amounted to the seizure of 91 million cigarettes. 372 tonnes of raw tobacco were confiscated. Contraband or counterfeit waterpipe tobacco remains a trend that has increasingly affected OLAF's activities. OLAF was able to identify suspicious consignments for over 60 tonnes of waterpipe tobacco.

OLAF Director-General *Ville Itälä* said: "These seizures have saved EU Member States roughly 90 million euro in lost revenue, and we have helped target the criminal gangs that are behind this illegal business. Smugglers deploy various tricks and schemes (for example declaring at customs almost 10 million illicit cigarettes as suitcases) and they have adapted their business model to the pandemic, and to tougher controls at the EU's borders."

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