

Illicit Tobacco Trade in 2022



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

Thomas Wahl

News

On 4 April 2023, OLAF presented the [results of its operations against tobacco smuggling in 2022](#). For the results in 2021 → [euclid 1/2022, 14](#); for the results in 2020 → [euclid 1/2021, 14](#).

International operations involving OLAF throughout 2022 led to the seizure of 531 million contraband cigarettes, more than 205 tonnes of raw tobacco, and 65 tonnes of water-pipe tobacco. Investigations indicated that there is an increasing trend towards illicit factories combining raw materials in the European Union. Nearly 60% of the cigarettes seized (over 316 million cigarettes) had been illegally produced in the EU. In addition, around 200 million cigarettes could be prevented from entering the EU at its external borders. 2022 also saw an increase in the smuggling of water-pipe tobacco, another emerging trend.

Smuggling networks usually take advantage of the differences and gaps between the various national systems. OLAF's role is, above all, to gather intelligence, to put the relevant information together and into concrete operations, and to promptly provide the competent national authorities with this information, so that they can take action.

AUTHOR

Thomas Wahl

Senior Researcher
Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Crime, Security and
Law

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