

# Long-Term Operation Dismantles Illegal Cigarette Trade Scheme



**Thomas Wahl**

## News

On 21 December 2020, [OLAF reported](#) that the final phase of a long-term trans-European operation against illegal cigarette smuggling and production ended by raids in Romania, Hungary and Italy. The operation dubbed “Khar-on” started three years ago and targeted the carriers of the precursors for illegal cigarette production and their movements across the EU. During the entire operation coordinated by OLAF, over 200 persons were arrested or reported to judicial authorities; the loss of approximately €80 million in duties and taxes in five EU countries was prevented, nine illicit factories were dismantled and 95 million illegal cigarettes and 300 tonnes of tobacco were seized.

The action that took place in Romania on 17 December 2020 was carried out by more than 160 officers and targeted 50 individuals suspected of being part of a criminal organisation involved in cigarette smuggling and fiscal fraud. In parallel, searches were conducted in Hungary and Italy. In the course of the operation, ten EU Member States (including UK) were involved. OLAF supported the operation not only by coordinating cross-border investigations, but also by providing intelligence and analysing shipment movements.

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