



### Enforcement and Compliance - Responsibilities > Tobacco and Cigarette Smuggling

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Tobacco and cigarette smuggling remains a global problem, which continues to increase in spite of Governments' enforcement strategies. Cigarettes are of high value, highly taxed, readily portable and ideal commodities to be traded illegally. Cigarette smuggling appears to have been developed by organized crime groups as a global criminal business and generates huge profits for those involved. The number of seizure reports is increasing and smuggling routes are continuing to diversify.

- [WCO Customs and Tobacco Reports 2008 - 2009 - 2010](#)
- [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products \(INB-IT/4\)](#)
- [Tobacco Poster](#)

There are a several large-scale smuggling cases, which resulted in seizure of more than 10 million pieces of cigarettes. The disposal of such large quantities of tobacco requires involvement of organized distribution channels. In addition, there has been a growing concern within the international law enforcement community that the transnational crime organizations involved in this illegal smuggling may be linked with international terrorism organizations, which are seeking means of funding their activities.

Trafficking in counterfeit cigarette is another aspect of problem and a relatively new major criminal trend is emerging. Seizures of raw tobacco or leaf tobacco, as well as forged tobacco stamps, have increased, which tends to suggest the expansion of illegal production of cigarettes. More and more illicit manufactures of cigarettes were discovered, particularly in Europe.

Counterfeit cigarettes are sometimes declared to Customs as genuine ones at the point of entry. In this way, counterfeit cigarettes are introduced into the licit market and, even though duties and taxes are paid, a substantial profit is still made by the criminals who no longer incur the additional costs associated with concealing the cigarettes.

Given that many countries are the targets of cigarette smuggling, enhanced multi-agency cooperation at the national level is urgently needed. The WCO has been working with other regional and international organizations in an attempt to identify the best possible enforcement strategies to counter this problem, including joint Customs enforcement projects.

More and more Customs administrations have been involved in these international/regional projects, which have turned out to be very successful, significantly increasing the cooperation between the participating Customs administrations, which exchanged relevant information and shared their experience and expertise for combating cigarette smuggling.

Not to be missed!

#### Calendar of Events



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