



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Fight against fakes: Increased customs actions boost protection of intellectual property rights

Brussels, 14 July 2011 – In 2010, EU Customs seized more than 103 million products suspected of violating intellectual property rights (IPR) at the EU's external borders. According to the Commission's annual report on EU Customs enforcement of IPR published today, the number of shipments stopped by customs almost doubled compared to last year, rising from 43,500 in 2009 to almost 80,000 in 2010. Today's report also gives statistics on the type, origin and transport method of IPR infringing products stopped at the EU's external borders. For the first time, the report also indicates the value of the goods detained which is estimated at over € 1 billion. The top categories of articles stopped by customs were cigarettes (34%), office supplies (9%) other tobacco products (8%), labels, tags and emblems (8%), clothing (7%) and toys (7%). 14.5% of all detained articles were household products such as shampoos, soaps, medicines or household appliances (hair dryers, shavers, computer parts) which could potentially have health and safety implications for consumers. One of the major trends this year is the growing number of detentions of postal packages.

Algirdas Šemeta, Commissioner for Taxation, Customs, Anti-fraud and Audit said: "We have experienced a spectacular increase of detentions in the postal traffic since last year: the number of cases tripled from 15,000 to over 48,000 and many of the seized goods included medicines and body care products. This upward trend reflects a growing number of online purchases." He added: "I proposed new rules in May to step up the fight against fakes. European consumers – as well as right holders – expect goods to be thoroughly checked and safe. We will continue to step up our efforts within the EU and with our international partners to ensure the maximum level of protection for IPR for both legitimate businesses and consumers".

Regarding the countries of provenance, China continued to be the main source of IPR infringing products, totalling 85% of all IPR infringing articles. Other countries such as Turkey, Thailand, Hong Kong or India accounted for the majority in certain product categories (respectively foodstuffs, beverages other than alcoholic beverages, memory cards and medicines). 90% of all detained products were either destroyed or a court case was initiated to determine the infringement.

Background

As the EU's 2020 Strategy underlines, the protection of IPR is a cornerstone of the EU economy and a key driver for its further growth in areas such as research, innovation and employment. Effective IPR enforcement is also essential as certain counterfeited products (such as foodstuffs, body-care articles and children's items) which are produced in an unregulated environment can pose a serious threat to the health and safety of EU citizens.

EU Customs play a crucial role in stopping products which violate intellectual property rights from entering the European Internal Market. A number of actions are being carried out by the Commission to strengthen Customs' ability to combat such trade. On 24 May 2011, the Commission adopted a proposal for a new regulation on customs enforcement of IPR, as part of a comprehensive package of IPR measures (see [IP/11/ 630](#), [MEMO/11/327](#)).

Good cooperation with international trading partners can also significantly help in preventing and detecting IPR infringing goods from being exported to the EU. In 2009, the EU signed an Action Plan with China which specifically focuses on enhancing cooperation in IPR customs enforcement ([IP/09/193](#)). In 2010, this Action Plan was extended until the end of 2012 ([IP/10/1079](#)). Cooperation with industry is also very important to ensure that goods which violate IPR can be

properly identified. Businesses can request specific customs actions where they suspect that their intellectual property rights are being violated, and the information provided by industry helps customs to better target their controls. The Commission has established a manual for right holders, to help them to lodge such requests, and remains in close contact with the private sector to see where further improvements in controls could be made.

For the full report, see:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs/customs_controls/counterfeit_piracy/statistics/index_en.htm

See also [MEMO/11/506](#)

Stock-shots are available on EbS:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/videoplayer.cfm?ref=I070427&sitelang=en>

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