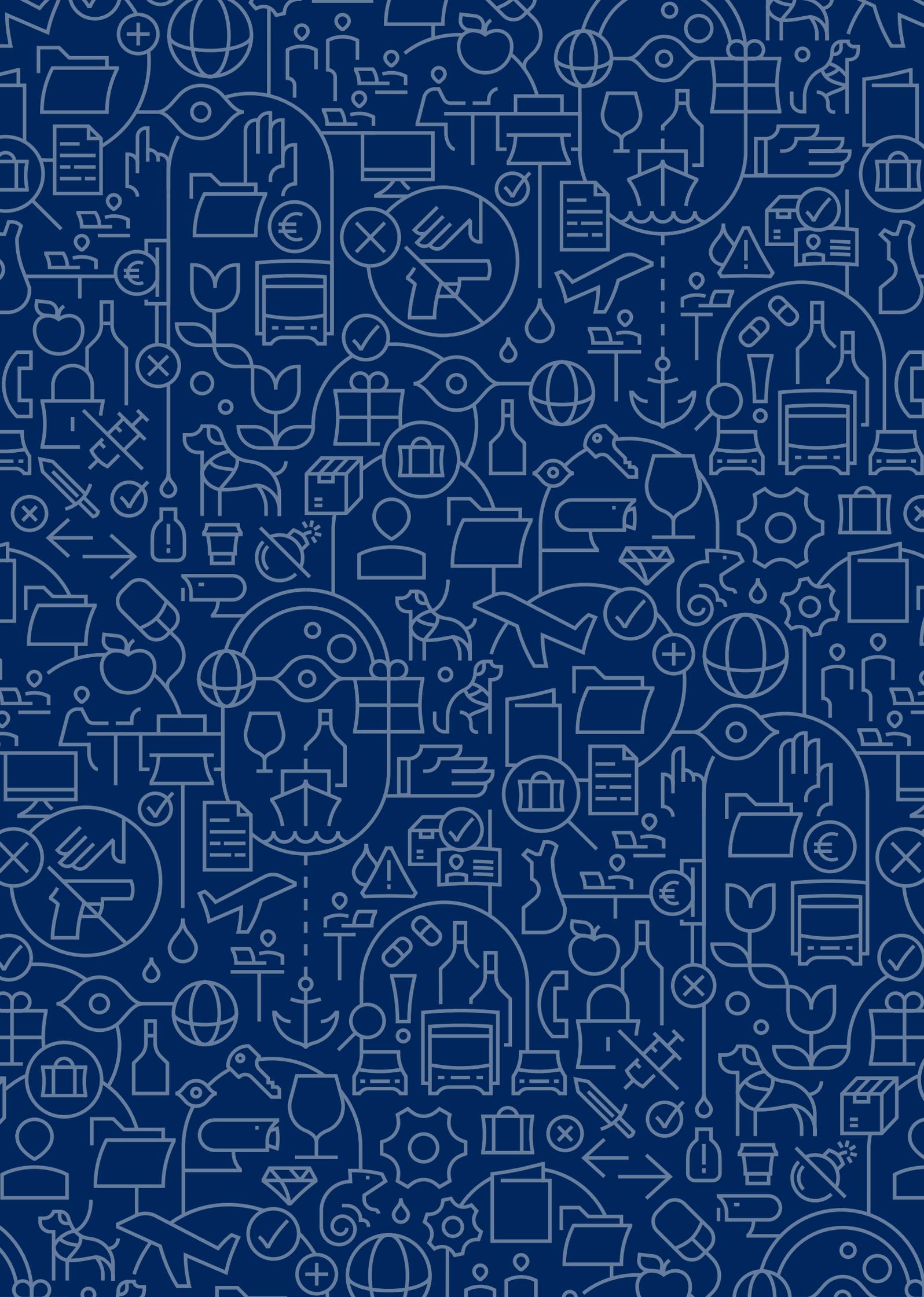


Finnish Customs Enforcement 2025



CUSTOMS



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Enforcement by Finnish Customs is perfectly suited to an ever-changing operating environment

Editorial



The year 2025 kept the enforcement personnel busy. The incident involving the vessel *Fitburg* on New Year's Eve reminded us once again that we must remain vigilant every day of the year to keep Finland safe. After all, we are the authority responsible for ensuring overall security. For us, it is not only about enforcement and crime prevention, but also about ensuring the safety and security of products, protecting everyday life and the environment, as well as fiscal security.

We have always been where the action is and where cooperation and support are needed. With regard to the law enforcement cooperation in the EU, I am proud to say that Finnish Customs has had a liaison officer at Europol for 30 years. A total of nine customs liaison officers have served in The Hague. The actual anniversary is on 1 April 2026.

The situation on the eastern border has remained unchanged. The border-crossing points have been closed, except for occasional freight train traffic. Finnish Customs personnel have been superbly flexible and understand the background of the change. A survey was conducted among the personnel in Finland's southeastern corner at the end of the year; they were asked where they would most like to see themselves working in the future. At the time of writing, the directors of strategy and transformation of the future organisation of Finnish Customs are reviewing a large number of applications for various positions. At the same time, assignments of personnel from the eastern border to southern Finland, the airports in Lapland and the internal border of the EU have continued. In fact, we at the management of Finnish Customs hold our skilled enforcement personnel in high regard.

Port security became a key government project through government resolutions (Government Resolution on a strategy and action plan to combat organised crime (2025–2030) and the Government Report on Internal Security 2025). Leadership of the project was assigned to Finnish Customs, and the call has been answered. The horizontal steering group established last year on the basis of the PPP principle (public-private partnership) has already met twice. We have organised port visits to Finnish ports and participated in EU cooperation. In terms of communication, we have been active in various channels and discussion forums.

The year 2025 will be remembered in the field of narcotics especially for the increase in the smuggling of alpha-PVP and the spread of its use. The users of the

narcotic behaved disruptively, which frightened citizens, sparking widespread public debate in which Finnish Customs also actively participated. In the fight against narcotics, we participated in the planning and implementation of targeted enforcement operations. The number of drug seizures has remained high. Together with our partners in the PCB cooperation between police, Finnish Customs and the Border Guard, we have continued our crime prevention and enforcement activities with good results.

The explosive growth of e-commerce has continued. According to the latest statistics, a total of 40.5 million consignments were cleared through Customs into Finland in 2025. In addition, EUR 14 million worth of goods destined for other EU countries were cleared through Finnish Customs. In total, this amounts to an incredible 54.5 million consignments. This represents a 69 % increase compared to 2024. Therefore, the purchasing behaviour of consumers has not changed, even though goods imported from outside the EU often have safety issues.

At the same time, the average value of a single consignment has continued to decrease, dropping down to EUR 5.61 last year. This was particularly influenced by cheap imports from China. In terms of enforcement, the challenges have certainly not diminished. An effort has been made to respond to these challenges through joint operations with the EU Anti-Fraud Office OLAF, and by utilising new enforcement technology in customs controls. However, the situation is only expected to change decisively later, through future changes to EU legislation.

The impact of Finnish Customs' crime prevention activities was once again significant. The total impact amounted to EUR 82 million. The value of the recovered proceeds of crime was 54 million. This shows that investing in the recovery of the proceeds of crime and the concept of following the money have yielded results.

The past year was marked by the implementation of Finnish Customs' strategy and the intense preparations for the new organisation. This placed demands on time management in the preparation of matters, personnel management and decision-making. Nevertheless, in my opinion we were very successful in this together. The new regulations concerning customs administration came into force on 30 December 2025. Changes in legislation enable the launch of Finnish Customs' new organisation on 1 April 2026.

In the new organisation, departments and procedures will change. However, the duties of Finnish Customs, the professional approach and expertise of its personnel, as well as its social importance and impact remain unchanged.

This is the last annual publication of the current Enforcement Department. I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for these two years as the Director of the Department. Let us be proud of our work and the widespread recognition we enjoy both internationally and in Finland.

Helsinki, 22 January 2026

Samy Gardemeister

Director of the Enforcement Department

Crime situation

The changes in the Finnish security and operating environment have placed new demands on the operations of Finnish Customs. The scope of our tasks is broad, and our operations have an impact on society as a whole. We work for 11 ministries. Finnish Customs is the only authority present at every Finnish border crossing point and the only one that monitors all cross-border traffic flows.

As a security authority, Finnish Customs has a major responsibility for the security of society and its citizens. We monitor foreign trade and fight cross-border crime. The increase in drug use and smuggling, the diversification of customs offences, and the unpredictable customs policy initiated by the United States have affected both the everyday lives of Finns and the operations of Finnish Customs. Our goal is to ensure a safe, reliable and fair operating environment for citizens and businesses.

Finnish Customs strengthens port security

Because over 95 % of Finland's foreign trade is transported by sea, the security of ports and maritime transport is crucially important for the national security of supply, the economy and the functioning of society as a whole. Port security is threatened by organised crime, and by state actors and individuals and organisations acting on their behalf. Illegal operators exploit the structures of legitimate maritime transport and infiltrate logistics and forwarding companies. The smuggling of prohibited substances and restricted products, as well as threats, violence and corruption strongly associated with organised crime put Finland's internal security at risk.

In the strategy and action plan to combat organised crime for 2025–2030, Finnish Customs has been designated as the authority responsible for improving port security. This role requires strong preparedness and capability from Finnish Customs. Finnish Customs has appointed a working group consisting of representatives from security authorities and ministries, as well as operators at ports. The objective of the working group is to secure ports and critical infrastructure and to weaken the operating conditions of organised crime.

The functionality of ports is ensured through legislative reforms and by enhancing customer cooperation and international activities by the authorities, among other measures. Finnish Customs actively participates in the European Ports Alliance. The importance of ports has also been taken into account in the joint PCB strategy of the Police, Customs and the Border Guard, in which the focus of Finnish Customs is on “criminal activity and influence through ports”.

Finnish Customs has targeted operations successfully

In 2025, Finnish Customs was aware of 5 078 criminal cases, around 450 fewer than in the previous year. With the closure of the eastern border, regulation offences and cases of tax fraud have decreased. The number of tax fraud cases investigated by Customs has also decreased due to the Supreme Court ruling of June 2024 stating that cases of snuff smuggling will no longer be investigated as tax fraud. The number of narcotics offences also decreased.

At the same time, Customs seized significantly more narcotics and cigarettes than in previous years. Twice as many weapons were also seized. Criminals have started to operate more efficiently and the size of individual shipments of smuggled goods has increased, which poses challenges for the prevention and investigation of crimes.

In 2025, the impact of Finnish Customs' crime prevention activities was significant, totalling EUR 82 million. The majority of this, EUR 54 million, consisted of recovering the proceeds of criminal activity. The amount also included items not seized during investigations, valued at EUR 16 million, and taxes evaded through criminal activity, amounting to EUR 12 million. This good result reflects the successful targeting of Finnish Customs' operations.

Seizures of gas weapons on the rise

Violence linked to organised crime is on the rise. In 2025, Customs recorded a total of 207 firearms offences, which is significantly more than in previous years. Approximately twice as many weapons were seized compared to previous years, totalling 689. Of the weapons, 11 were firearms and 678 were gas weapons. Most of the gas weapons were seized from postal shipments and passengers entering Finland from Estonia. Most of the seized gas weapons were gas sprays, amounting to over 600 weapons.

Weapons legislation varies in different EU countries, which provides organised crime opportunities for acquiring weapons. Illegal firearms, firearm parts and ammunition are traded on dark web platforms and in encrypted messaging apps. Unauthorised military weapons and explosives coming from war zones as well as 3D-printed weapons ending up in illegal cross-border trade in information networks pose a new threat. 3D-printed weapons are becoming more common in criminal circles, and they have also been found in criminal cases investigated by Customs.



Drug networks operate systematically and covertly

The foothold of the global drug market and its complex logistics networks in Finland is growing increasingly stronger. Finland is affected by networked multinational drug crime, which uses highly advanced and professional methods. Finland has become an attractive market for substances such as cocaine, because the number of users is growing and the profits are higher than elsewhere in Europe.

Foreign nationals have taken on a stronger role in drug crime. In 2025, the share of foreigners suspected of aggravated narcotics offences investigated by Customs rose to 62 %. Finnish operators have well-established links with criminal networks selling drugs, particularly in the Baltic states, Spain and the Netherlands. The number of suspects from Nigeria and the United Kingdom has also increased. Albanian criminals are known to organise the smuggling of cocaine in particular into Finland. The rise of operations by Swedish organised crime in Finland has increased the threat of violence.

Smuggling organisations operate in a systematic and covert manner, with a clear division of labour between management, import and distribution. In addition, separate individuals collect payments and send the proceeds of crime abroad. The people operating on different levels do not usually have direct contact with each other. Sales transactions are chained, and software that can encrypt or delete data on phones is used for communications. Drug trafficking has increasingly migrated from dark web marketplaces to encrypted instant messaging apps and regional sales groups. Younger and younger people are becoming involved in the activities.

Criminal acts are committed or concealed by exploiting legal business activities, such as the transport units or company information of reputable companies. Professional help is used in smuggling. For instance, a part of the chain of operations can be outsourced to a freight forwarder or an accountant who handles customs procedures or money laundering.

Over 2 500 kg of narcotics seized

The number of narcotics offences that Customs was made aware of decreased compared to the previous year. In 2025, Customs uncovered 1 751 narcotics offences, 392 of which were aggravated. The threshold for aggravated offences was exceeded in seizures of marijuana, cocaine and amphetamine in particular. As in previous years, a large number of basic narcotics offences were uncovered. Most of them are uncovered in postal traffic.

In 2025, Customs seized a total of 2 574 kg of narcotics, which was over 500 kg more than in the previous year. Previously in the 2020s, approximately 1 000 kg of narcotics were seized per year. A record amount of cocaine was seized in addition to large quantities of marijuana as in the previous year. The large total amount of narcotics is partly explained by the fact that nearly 800 kg more khat was seized than in the previous year, totalling 1 140 kg. Khat is seized from air passengers arriving from Israel, the United Kingdom and South Africa, among other places, as well as from express courier shipments.

However, the vast majority of drugs enter Finland in internal EU traffic by mail and express courier, commercial traffic and passenger traffic from the Baltic countries and Western Europe. The substances are imported via the major ports in southern Finland and Helsinki Airport



in particular. A significant amount of narcotics also comes from Sweden, especially across the northern land border or by ship. The main source of cannabis is Spain, while synthetic drugs mainly arrive from the Netherlands and cocaine from Western Europe. Benzodiazepines come from the Balkans.

Finland is also a transit country for drug smuggling. In the autumn of 2025, Customs uncovered an attempt to smuggle approximately four kilograms of cocaine. An attempt was made to send packages containing narcotics to Australia by using the information of a Finnish company that was not involved in the crime. The case came to light when Customs inspected parcels to be sent abroad on the premises of an express carrier in Vantaa. The cocaine seized was very pure, and the street value of the drug shipment after processing for sale would have been nearly EUR 750 000.

Record amount of cocaine seized

Cocaine use and the quantities seized have increased in Finland in recent years. In 2025, Customs seized a record amount of cocaine, totalling over 87 kg. The amount was over 30 kg more than in the previous year. Cocaine is smuggled into the country in lorry transports arriving by ship, sea containers, passenger traffic and postal and express freight consignments.

Security measures and measures by the authorities at major European ports have been stepped up, prompting criminals to move their activities to smaller, less closely monitored ports. This change has been noticeable in the Baltic Sea region, where the amounts of cocaine seized and shipment sizes have grown. For example, in Helsingborg, Sweden, there have been seizures of over a thousand kilograms. Sweden serves as a hub for cocaine

in Northern Europe from which the drug is smuggled to neighbouring countries such as Finland.

The rip-off method has become more common in smuggling cocaine to Finland. In this method, criminals break into a means of transport in which drugs are hidden and take the drugs before the shipment reaches its destination. In the spring of 2025, a group of Swedish citizens broke into the container yard at Vuosaari Harbour and retrieved approximately 87 kg of cocaine from a shipping container that had arrived from Colombia. The police managed to seize 44 kg of the shipment. In September 2025, Customs seized 45 kg of cocaine that had been smuggled from Ecuador to Vuosaari in the refrigeration unit of a shipping container. The street value of the shipment would have amounted to around EUR 4.5 million.

Marijuana in postal consignments and carried by air passengers

As in the previous year, Customs seized an exceptionally large amount of marijuana, 1 110 kg. Marijuana was smuggled into Finland from the United States, Spain and Thailand in particular. The substance mainly arrives in postal consignments and is carried by air passengers. Customs also seized a large amount of hashish, 53 kg in total.

In one case, a criminal group used an express carrier to smuggle 22 kg of marijuana from Thailand to Finland. At least 18 shipments of narcotics were imported into the country, four of which were seized by Customs. The main perpetrators sent the orders for drugs to Thailand and arranged the receipt of shipments in Finland. The other suspects handled customs clearance, pick-ups and deliveries. The declarations to Customs stated that the



shipments contained coffee, tea and dried chilli. In the case of one drug shipment, a 14-year-old individual was recruited as the recipient.

Finnish Customs seized a total of 55 kg of amphetamine in 2025. The amount is at the same level as in the previous years, with the exception of the exceptionally high amount in 2024. Amphetamines often come to Finland from the Netherlands or Germany. Methamphetamine currently accounts for a fairly small share of Finland's drug market. In 2025, the amount of methamphetamine seized was 200 grams.

In one case involving aggravated offences in the spring of 2025, an international criminal group was suspected of smuggling seven litres of amphetamine base from Tallinn to Helsinki by ship. The substance was transported in water bottles in the backpack of one of the suspects. A total of 38 kg of paste-like amphetamine suitable for sale was precipitated from the base at a holiday property rented in southern Finland. Finnish Customs seized over EUR 500 000 worth of amphetamine. It is suspected that some of the substance was distributed in Finland.

Of other narcotics, 18 630 tablets of ecstasy were seized, which is more than in the previous year. In contrast, significantly less LSD was seized than in previous years, amounting to 930 doses. Heroin seizures have been small in recent years. Customs seized 100 grams of heroin in 2025.

Alpha-PVP has entered the Finnish drug market with force

New designer drugs are constantly entering the Finnish drug market. The use of alpha-PVP has increased significantly in large Finnish cities in recent years. Previously, Customs seized less than half a kilogram of alpha-PVP per year, but in 2025, the amount seized rose to 11 kg. The amount was very large considering that doses of synthetic cathinones are measured in milligrams.

Alpha-PVP mainly arrives in Finland via postal and express freight traffic from Central Europe. The largest individual consignments were smuggled into Finland from the Baltic countries in passenger traffic. Together, Customs and the Police investigated a large import organisation that brought approximately 200 kg of alpha-PVP into Finland. A total of 12 kg of the amount was seized. Manufacturing alpha-PVP is relatively simple and inexpensive, and production of the substance has also been discovered in Finland.

Large quantities of designer drugs and narcotic drugs not classified as narcotics have been seized in recent years. GBL is prohibited in consumer markets, and a clearly higher amount of the substance was seized in 2025 than in the previous year – a total of 130 litres. In October 2025, Finnish Customs seized tablets containing protodesnitazene in Helsinki. This new synthetic opioid is a nitazene; the effects of this class of substances are significantly stronger than those of drugs such as heroin.

Smuggling of narcotic medications is on the rise – nearly one million tablets seized

In 2025, a record total of almost 934 500 units of narcotic medications were seized. Narcotic medications enter the country in heavy goods traffic, postal consignments and to some extent in passenger traffic. Benzodiazepines are often smuggled from the Balkan region. Smuggling narcotics is profitable because they are commonly used by Finnish drug addicts, and tablets can be sold at a large profit on the Finnish street market. In June 2025, Customs seized approximately 135 000 units of various narcotic medications from the structures of a passenger car that had arrived in the country. Their street value would have been EUR 300 000.

Subutex, a buprenorphine product, has maintained its position on the Finnish drug market. Its abuse is widespread and well established as a practice. The number of units of Subutex seized in 2025 was 32 800, approximately half as many as in the previous year. Subutex comes to Finland mainly from France.

Doping and medicine offences uncovered in postal traffic

In 2025, Finnish Customs uncovered more doping offences than in previous years, totalling at 509 cases. There were 20 aggravated doping offences recorded. The amount of seized doping substances decreased significantly from 2024. Finnish Customs seized a total of 26 600 tablets or ampoules of doping substances. The most commonly seized substances were anabolic steroids and injectable testosterone.

A total of 701 medicine offences and violations were recorded, almost the same number as in 2024. Customs seized slightly more medicines than in the previous year, a total of 80 300 units. Antibiotics and erectile dysfunction medications were the most commonly seized items. Ketamine has become more widely used as a drug in Finland in recent years. Customs seized 7.7 kg of ketamine. The majority of the offences and violations related to medicines and doping substances are uncovered in postal and express freight traffic, mainly in the international post arriving at Helsinki Airport.

Large-scale cigarette smuggling cases included in economic crime

In 2025, Customs registered 89 new reports of economic crimes, and completed the investigation of 126 economic crime cases. In economic crimes investigated by Customs, the principal offence is usually tax fraud or aggravated tax fraud. There were 141 cases of tax fraud recorded, which is clearly fewer than in the previous years. The number of cases of aggravated tax fraud was 67. The number of tax fraud cases has decreased due to the closure of the eastern border and the fact that cases of snuff smuggling are no longer investigated as tax fraud.

A large share of the tax fraud cases investigated by Customs concerned the smuggling of tobacco products. The illegal import of tobacco products into Finland has



increased, causing harm to the state economy, public health and legitimate business. In 2025, approximately 16.5 million cigarettes were seized in connection with criminal cases, which is by far the highest number in ten years. Most of the smuggling cases were detected in internal EU traffic, namely in shipping traffic from Estonia to Finland. In cases of smuggling illicitly manufactured cigarettes, the tax interest was often substantial.

Legal logistics chains and companies are used to cover up criminal activities. Pickup, transport, and storage of illegal goods is ordered in the same way as legal goods deliveries. In one case of aggravated tax fraud, over 10 million cigarettes were brought into Finland for sale. Logistics services were purchased from a legal foreign transport company. Import taxes of EUR 3.7 million should have been paid on the cigarettes. Finnish Customs seized more than three million cigarettes in the case.

In 2025, Customs seized a total of 1 950 kg of snus, which was significantly less than in the previous year. The border between Sweden and Finland remains the most common route for smuggling snus. In addition, large quantities of snus arrive in southern Finland by ship from Estonia and Sweden.

Alcohol offences are committed for criminal proceeds and competitive advantage

In 2025, Finnish Customs recorded 22 alcohol offences, which was the same as in the previous year. Significantly more alcohol was seized than in 2024, totalling at 7 330 litres. From passenger traffic, 38 consignments of beverages containing a total of 32 990 litres of alcohol were transferred for tax assessment. From commercial transport, 85 consignments of alcohol were sent for tax assessment. The alcohol tax fraud offences involved smuggling alcoholic beverages in intra-EU personal and passenger transport, as well as illegal online sales.

Illegal online sales of alcohol can generate considerable criminal benefit and competitive advantages over legal operators. Such activities have a negative impact on Finland's tax revenue. In one aggravated criminal case involving online alcohol sales, Finnish Customs suspected that a German company had sold alcohol to Finland without paying nearly EUR 40 million in excise duties and value added tax. Most of the sales were made through the company's online store, and the alcoholic products were delivered to the addresses of private individuals in Finland.

Investigating sanctions offences requires international cooperation

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Finnish Customs has detected more than 31 000 irregularities in goods traffic during sanctions enforcement and carried out 4 500 targeted controls. In addition, Customs has launched investigations into regulation offences related to violations of sanctions in 940 cases. Over 150 of them have been investigated as aggravated regulation offences.

In 2025, Customs became aware of 43 regulation offences, 17 of which were aggravated in nature. In May 2025, four new categories of sanctions violations were added to the Criminal Code: sanctions offence, aggravated sanctions offence, negligent sanctions offence and sanctions violation. Sanctions offences refer to violations of sanctions imposed by the EU or the UN, such as failure to comply with obligations related to freezing assets or trading with prohibited parties. The law also imposes significantly heavier penalties for violating sanctions. Customs registered three cases of sanctions offences in 2025.

Criminal investigations related to sanctions are time-consuming and require extensive cooperation between authorities in different countries. The operators are often foreign and use foreign procurement channels. Sanctions are circumvented by using complex international corporate networks, middlemen and front companies. Goods are often exported to Russia via third countries. Products may leave the European Union via countries such as Lithuania or Poland, for instance, and travel through Belarus to their final destination in Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

In one aggravated regulation offence investigated by Finnish Customs, a forwarding company operating in the Helsinki metropolitan area is suspected of having delivered EUR 300 000 worth of sanctioned goods to Russia from 2022 to 2025. The shipments were transported to Russia via third countries, and they contained bearings and motors suitable for industrial use, among other things. In addition, Finnish Customs stopped a shipment in which the company attempted to export goods classified as dual-use items directly to Russia without an export licence.

Environmental offences threaten the environment and human health

Food fraud and environmental and nature conservation offences are internationally significant phenomena that pose immediate threats to the environment and human health. Illegal activities are driven by financial motives. Although the number of such criminal cases recorded by Finnish Customs each year is low, the cases are often large and require extensive international investigation.

Waste trafficking from Europe to other continents is widespread. Illegal activities and related crimes, such as money laundering, have also been observed in the internal European waste trade.

Finnish Customs is responsible for enforcing compliance with the CITES Conventions on international trade in endangered species. The focus of customs enforcement is on the import and export of pets, for example. Enforcement has revealed situations arising from the ignorance of citizens, but also deliberate attempts at malfeasance and criminal activity.

The aim of combating environmental crime is to protect people and the environment and to prevent, detect and investigate criminal activity.

Port security will be improved under the leadership of Finnish Customs

The importance of sea transport to Finland and Finland's foreign trade cannot be overstated. It is often said that Finland is an island in terms of our foreign trade; the statement is becoming increasingly relevant. This has always been the case, but this characteristic of goods traffic across our borders has become even more prominent in recent years – today, more than 95 % of our foreign trade is carried by sea from Finland to other parts of the world and vice versa.

When it comes to sea transport and its safety, ports naturally play a key role. Sea transport is vital for Finland's foreign trade, and therefore ports as international logistics hubs are an integral part of Finland's critical infrastructure. The prevailing security environment is so unstable and unpredictable that the protection of critical infrastructure in particular is now receiving special attention.

Ports are an intrinsic part of the operating environment of Finnish Customs

Finnish Customs is the only Finnish security authority present at all Finnish border crossing points with the capacity, equipment and authority to monitor all traffic across Finland's borders. Consequently, ports are also – or especially – an intrinsic part of our operating environment. We are experts in international logistics and supply chains, and on the Finnish borders we are the first to encounter phenomena, whether welcome or unwanted, coming from all around the world. Finland is an integral part of global supply chains, which are also used by criminals. As a result, we are not immune to phenomena, in which international logistics and cross-border supply chains are used for criminal activities.

The improvement of port security must start now

The threat levels of sea transport and ports have risen significantly, and the methods used by criminals have diversified at an alarming rate. In Finland, there are already clear signs that the same criminal organisations that are causing major social challenges in Central Europe and elsewhere are also operating here and seeking to secure their foothold.

This is a critical time, and decisive action must be taken immediately. Addressing and responding to problems will be much more difficult if criminal actors have already managed to establish a position in the structures of legitimate business.

Action plan to combat organised crime at ports

Decisive action has been taken, and the situation is being addressed. In February 2025, the Government adopted the Government Resolution on a strategy and action plan to combat organised crime (2025–2030). The action plan included in the strategy contains 21 measures in total; the ninth measure is entitled “improving port security”.

The ninth measure identifies a number of different actions to strengthen port security and ensure the uninterrupted operation of ports. The aim of the measures is to combat and prevent organised crime from operating in ports and infiltrating the structures of legal business closely linked to ports. This is a very important issue for Finnish Customs, which has been identified as the main responsible body for the measure.

Working group and extensive cooperation bring results

For the port security measure, Finnish Customs has set up a working group with representatives from ministries, other authorities and organisations from the port, transport and logistics sectors. If necessary, the working group will also consult other experts. The operation of the working group started in 2025 and will continue until the end of 2030. Although the working group is still in its early stages, it is already clear that excellent results can be expected.

For decades, good cooperation between authorities has been one of Finland's strengths. However, the current security environment is so diverse and the threats are so complex that they cannot be addressed by the public authorities alone. Effective threat prevention also requires close and well-organised cooperation with other parties. Ports and the transport and logistics sector are naturally key players and key partners in the design and implementation of the measures.

The atmosphere at the first meetings of the working group has been very professional and committed. From the outset, there has been a common understanding of the needs and objectives, as well as the direction in which we are moving together to ensure that Finnish ports continue to function well and remain protected against new and constantly evolving threats.

The world around us is changing, as are the forms of security challenges, but we are ready to rise to the challenge. Finnish ports are not an environment conducive to criminal operations, not today and not in the future.

Finnish Customs uncovered a major cocaine smuggling operation

In 2025, Finnish Customs uncovered an exceptionally large cocaine smuggling operation, in which around 45 kilos of cocaine had been smuggled into Finland from Ecuador in a sea container. The case was uncovered through persistent intelligence gathering and monitoring of suspected preparations. The cocaine had a street value of around EUR 4.5 million. The entire drug shipment was seized, and none of it ended up in distribution.

Preparations for the operation were monitored for several days

The investigation was launched based on Finnish Customs' own observations. Five days before the final act, two foreigners arrived in Finland to survey the harbour area and obtain equipment for retrieving the drugs. The authorities systematically monitored the activities, which allowed them to document the preparations to commit the crime in real time for several days.

One night in September, the operation culminated with the suspects being spotted approaching Vuosaari Harbour in a boat they had previously taken from a nearby area. In the harbour, the suspects found the sea container they were looking for as well as the batch of cocaine hidden in it, concealed inside the container's refrigeration unit. The suspects were apprehended immediately after they left the harbour area.

The operation was carried out with extensive cooperation between the authorities. In addition to Finnish Customs, the police departments of Helsinki, Eastern Uusimaa and Western Uusimaaparticipated, as did the National Bureau of Investigation and Europol.

Criminals use legal logistics in addition to the rip-off method

The method used by the suspects is known as rip-off. Rip-off is one of the most common methods used by criminal networks to move large quantities of drugs from one continent to another.

The modus operandi involves hiding the drug in a sea container carrying a legal shipment without the parties that ordered or transported the shipment knowing about the prohibited substance. Later, a group of criminals breaks into the means of transport and retrieves the substance before the container is unloaded at its destination.

In some European rip-off cases, workers in the port and logistics sector have also been involved. Such activity requires careful planning, as well as operatives and resources in several countries, which is why, in practice they are always linked to international organised crime.



AI at Finnish Customs – experiments and responsible development



Artificial intelligence and related development projects are currently a hot topic both in the public debate and in different organisations. Finnish Customs is no exception because AI solutions can also be used in the work and processes of law enforcement authorities. During 2025, Finnish Customs has conducted several AI-related experiments which have provided valuable experiences for the future development of AI.

AI and its use are regulated by, for example, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and the national legislation implementing it.

In 2025, as an expert in the control of goods traffic and customs crime prevention, Finnish Customs participated in discussions and cooperation related to the implementation of the Artificial Intelligence Act in several national and EU working groups.

Strict compliance with the law

In addition to the general provisions on AI, the Artificial Intelligence Act contains provisions on the use of AI in the activities of law enforcement authorities. These provisions will be applied in stages. Some of the provisions are already in force, while others will only apply after the transitional periods.

It is essential for Finnish Customs to take detailed account of the legislation already in the design phase of pilot projects, as well as during further testing and in possible future production systems. As a public authority, all activities of Finnish Customs must be strictly based on the law, and this must also be taken into account when developing AI applications.

AI can only be used as an assistive tool

Finnish Customs has tried to take the potential of AI into account in all of its technological development. For example, Finnish Customs has been experimenting with different kinds of solutions to facilitate the daily work and everyday efforts of officials, such as tools for retrieving internal information and processing information. Pilot projects have also been carried out to improve the efficiency and capabilities of customs crime prevention operations.

The AI solutions in law enforcement information systems focus especially on data security, data protection and legal requirements. Another key aspect of legal protection is that AI is only used as a tool to assist public officials in crime prevention tasks, and that the final decisions are always made by a public official.

Efficiency and cost savings

Finnish Customs will continue to develop AI in the coming years, both by developing the technology in concrete terms and by participating in national and EU working groups on the regulation and application of AI. Artificial intelligence and its applications will certainly play some part in the future of Finnish Customs.

For example, AI applications of different kinds can increase the efficiency of operations and capabilities and bring cost savings, as long as the constraints imposed by the nature of the activity and the relevant legislation are properly taken into account at all stages of the development projects.

Stricter regulation of smokeless nicotine products

The Finnish Tobacco Act was amended on 1 August 2025. A definition of a smokeless nicotine product was added to the legislation, covering nicotine pouches and products closely resembling them. Smokeless nicotine products are now regulated in much the same way as tobacco products and nicotine liquids.

As a result of the changes to the Tobacco Act, ordering smokeless nicotine products from online shops was prohibited and time limits were placed on their imports by travellers. The age limit set out in the Tobacco Act was also specified and the restrictions on the amounts imported by travellers were tightened so that importing smokeless nicotine products will only be permitted for personal use.

According to the new provisions, as of 1 February 2026, a private individual may bring into Finland from

abroad a maximum of 1 000 grams of smokeless nicotine products that do not carry warning labels in Finnish and Swedish. Medicinal products containing nicotine that are authorised for sale will continue to be subject to pharmaceutical legislation.

Finnish Customs enforces compliance with the Tobacco Act

Finnish Customs enforces the import prohibitions and restrictions laid down in the Tobacco Act. Nicotine pouches ordered illegally from abroad are detected in customs controls almost every day. Nicotine pouches are mainly ordered to Finland from other EU countries. Finnish Customs seizes the illegal consignments that it detects in controls.

Criminals exploit legitimate logistics companies for illegal cigarette imports – Finnish Customs uncovered a large-scale smuggling operation

Today, the illegal import and distribution of cigarettes requires strong logistics expertise and knowledge of the operating methods of international logistics companies. Criminal organisations exploit the delivery reliability of well-known international logistics companies to achieve their own goals.

The modus operandi is that criminal organisations purchase the transport of illegal goods as a service from their own country to Finland, for example. Illegal goods are delivered from the Baltic states to destinations such as the Helsinki metropolitan area in less than 24 hours. Criminal organisations rent warehouse space from legitimate storage operators for their illegal goods. The logistics company delivers the illegal goods directly

to the warehouse without any middlemen. It is easy for criminal organisations to use the warehouse to split up consignments into smaller batches to be forwarded, for example.

Finnish Customs knows the operators and structures of international trade

Finnish Customs is at the heart of the flow of goods arriving from abroad. According to Finnish Customs' statistics, a total of 85.2 million tonnes of goods were transported to and from Finland in 2024, of which 44.7 million tonnes were imported into the country. Transport volumes increased by 13.3 percent from the previous year. Finnish Customs' strategy for 2025–2029 notes that Customs is

familiar with the operators and structures of international trade. It is important that we at Finnish Customs are also aware of how international logistics companies are developing their own operations and improving their logistics through new transport models.

Finnish Customs investigated a large-scale cigarette smuggling and distribution operation

In 2024–2025, Finnish Customs' crime prevention activities included investigating a smuggling and distribution chain of cigarettes imported illegally into Finland from abroad. Finnish Customs suspected that cigarettes had been transported to Finland by lorry in commercial traffic from August to September 2024. A total of 1 040 boxes, each containing 50 cartons of cigarettes, were imported on three separate occasions. All in all, more than 10 million cigarettes were smuggled into Finland.

The investigation into the case began when a criminal investigation by the Eastern Uusimaa Police Department revealed that a large quantity of cigarettes was stored in a warehouse in Hyrylä. At this stage, the entire investigation was transferred from the police to Finnish Customs.

On 30 September 2024, Finnish Customs conducted a search of the warehouse. The storage hall contained 321 white cardboard boxes, which in turn contained 16 068 cartons of Winston and Prince cigarettes – over 3 million cigarettes in total. Based on the storage location, packaging method and quantity of the cigarettes, Finnish Customs suspected that the cigarettes had been imported for commercial purposes. Finnish Customs seized the cigarettes.

The preliminary investigation revealed that a lorry driver living in Estonia had transported cigarettes to the warehouse in Tuusula on at least three separate occasions. All cargo shipments had arrived by ship from Tallinn to Helsinki and been unloaded into the warehouse. The surveillance recordings of events showed, among other things, the unloading and storage of cargo shipments. Four separate individuals were present to receive the cigarette deliveries.

Professionally managed and organised operations

Based on the preliminary investigation, the criminal activities were planned and organised. The import of cigarettes was managed by an organisation, in which each person had their own role.

CMR consignment notes were used for the import, and after unloading, the carrier delivered them to the company that sent the cargo. After that, the manager of the company that sent the cargo handed the consignment notes over to another company. The company that sent the cargo does not have copies of the consignment notes in its records or archives, and it has not been able to send them to the Finnish customs authorities. Based on this, there is reason to suspect that the CMR consignment notes were forged.

The warehouses used for storing cigarettes had been rented using false company information or in the name of another individual. The people who received and stored the cigarettes were responsible for their distribution. The preliminary investigation did not clarify where and to whom the cigarettes were forwarded or sold.

The amount of taxes evaded was nearly four million

The purchase or sale prices of the cigarettes were not determined during the preliminary investigation, which means that the financial gain obtained by the criminals is unknown. One individual was promised EUR 1 000 in compensation for storing cigarettes in the warehouse which the said individual had rented. It was not possible to determine the compensations offered to other people.

In a search conducted at the end of September 2024, Finnish Customs seized a total of 3 213 660 cigarettes. According to excise tax calculations, the import taxes (excise duty on tobacco products) evaded on this batch amounted to approximately EUR 1 136 350. According to the estimates of Finnish Customs, 7 186 340 cigarettes ended up in consumption during the two previous import occasions, resulting in approximately EUR 2 541 090 in evaded taxes.

All in all, approximately 10 400 000 cigarettes were imported and a part of them was consumed, resulting in a total evaded amount of about EUR 3 677 440 in excise duty to be levied on tobacco products.

Sentences for aggravated tax fraud and other offences

The criminal case was heard and sentences were handed down by the Eastern Uusimaa District Court in June 2025. The parties involved were sentenced to more than two years of imprisonment for aggravated tax fraud. The judgments are not yet final.



The OLAF Conference in Helsinki discussed current phenomena and challenges linked to tobacco smuggling and illicit trade

The OLAF Tobacco Conference, organised by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), brings the authorities responsible for combating smuggling and illicit trade in tobacco products together to discuss topical issues each year. The 2025 conference was organised in cooperation between OLAF and Finnish Customs in rainy Helsinki from 16 to 18 September. More than 100 people attended the conference, representing law enforcement authorities from all EU countries, selected non-EU countries, OLAF, Europol and the World Customs Organisation (WCO). This conference, which has already become a tradition, was held for the second time in Finland and for the 28th time in total.

A globally significant form of crime

The presentations and discussions at the conference addressed the current phenomena linked to smuggling and illicit trade in tobacco and nicotine products, and as well as the challenges faced by the authorities in combating this type of crime.

For a long time, smuggling and illicit trade in tobacco products have been a globally significant form of crime with major negative consequences for national economies, public health and legitimate business, among other things. It involves professional cross-border crime in many different and changing forms. New tobacco and nicotine products have entered the market, and along with them, related crime with its special characteristics has also become more widespread, requiring authorities to step up their efforts to combat it and cooperate with each other.

E-cigarettes as a topic

One of the main topics of the conference in Helsinki was stepping up the fight against smuggling and illicit trade in e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes are popular especially among young people. Their consumption has increased rapidly around the world, which in turn has increased smuggling and illicit trade in these products. The fight against cross-border crime related to e-cigarettes is hampered by the fact that there are still significant differences in the way products are regulated even between EU Member States. The conference also paved the way for carrying out the OLAF enforcement operation on e-cigarette smuggling at the end of 2025.

For a long time, smuggling and illicit trade in tobacco products have been a globally significant form of crime with major negative consequences for national economies, public health and legitimate business, among other things.

According to the observations by the authorities, smuggling and illicit trade in cigarettes and other traditional tobacco products also remains widespread and is becoming increasingly professional. Smuggling is fuelled by the illegal manufacture of tobacco products within the EU by criminal organisations. These criminal activities are motivated by substantial financial gain.

Exchange of information and active cooperation between authorities is key

Active cooperation between authorities, exchange of information and sharing of practices that have been proven to work between authorities in different countries and international organisations is key in the fight against smuggling and illicit trade in tobacco and nicotine products. In addition, up-to-date situational awareness of crime in all its forms is needed to enable the authorities to work together to target and coordinate their enforcement activities in the most appropriate way.

The annual OLAF Tobacco Conference provides an international forum on a unique scale for law enforcement authorities to promote these very objectives. Based on the feedback from the participants, the conference in Helsinki was also a major success in promoting these objectives.



Border control tasks electrify operations by Finnish Customs

There were no significant changes in the operating environment of border controls by Finnish Customs during 2025. Finnish Customs continued to carry out the border control of fishing and cargo vessels in ports as well as the border control of goods traffic at the Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa border crossing points. No new legislation, duties, operating models or technologies were introduced during the year, but extensive preparations for them were made with a view to future changes.

A challenging environment for border controls

The 38 border crossing points for water traffic under the responsibility of Finnish Customs are listed according to location in Government Decree 901/2006. The same location may have several ports, each with a different name, which means that in practice, Finnish Customs is responsible for border controls at 105 ports. The operating area is extensive and poses challenges to the performance of mobile teams, especially in terms of resources and technology.

In addition to its own border control responsibilities, Finnish Customs supports the Border Guard by providing administrative assistance in border control tasks at airports in Lapland, where the difficult weather conditions at the end of the year posed particular challenges

for the authorities. Based on feedback from the Border Guard, Finnish Customs' border control officers rose to the challenge.

Forged documents and tens of thousands of border controls

In 2025, the border control operations of Finnish Customs remained largely unchanged from previous years. The number of controls carried out at ports fell slightly from last year. In total, around 40 000 border checks on sailors were carried out during the year. The closure of the eastern border and the entry into force of the Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration meant that no border control for goods traffic was carried out at Nuijamaa or Vaalimaa.

In contrast, border controls were carried out in passenger traffic, as Finnish Customs conducted more than 1 000 controls of the personnel responsible for the maintenance of the Saimaa Canal and its leased area. Over the course of the year, sharp-eyed customs officers uncovered more than 30 forged documents, a new record for Finnish Customs. Special thanks for this excellent result go to the person in charge of document controls at Finnish Customs and the systematic development of the document control skills of Customs personnel.



EU Entry/Exit System (EES) in operation

The most significant change in the operations was the introduction of the Entry/Exit System (EES) in the EU on 12 October 2025. Finnish Customs adopted the EES system in early 2026. The EES allows information to be exchanged without delay between 29 EU countries and more than 120 000 border control officers across the EU. The system makes border controls more effective, improves immigration management and helps combat serious crime. In addition to border controls, authorities can use the EES data to identify people at external borders or in the interior, as well as for law enforcement purposes. Finnish Customs can use the EES system for both border controls and crime prevention duties.

With the EES, Finnish Customs' border control technology was also updated. Finnish Customs introduced new fingerprint readers, document readers and face cameras. In addition, the first portable border control equipment and its information system (mRATAS) were purchased. Thanks to the portable equipment, controls will no longer be tied to a patrol car. Instead, controls can be carried out flexibly by several officers in different locations at the same time. This will allow the development of control tactics for both border and vessel controls. The aim is to deploy the portable border control equipment in the spring of 2026.

The most visible change in the operations brought about by the EES system is that physical entry and exit stamps will be replaced by electronic stamps after the transitional period. The actual control process will however still take the same amount of time as before. A dedicated online service for citizens and transport operators will be set up to check the validity of visas and the authorised period of stay.

Developing border controls through training and working groups

Finnish Customs has continued to train personnel in border control activities together with the Border and Coast Guard Academy and the Gulf of Finland Coast Guard District. During the past year, three additional border control courses were organised for Finnish Customs with a total of 75 participants. In addition,

refresher training on the EES system was provided to all Finnish Customs border control officers. A national training event on border control was held in Tampere on 13 November 2025.

During 2025, preparations were made for the decisions to set up five working groups tasked with developing border control duties. The working groups will operate during 2026 with the aim of developing operations, training, powers, risk analysis and preparedness. In addition, several smaller developments were made to strengthen the role of Finnish Customs as a border control authority. Such developments included preparations for the participation of Finnish Customs personnel in Frontex operations.



New fuel analysis equipment for the Customs Laboratory with CCEI2 funding

The CCEI2 programme, which started in early 2025, will fund the acquisition of new and more efficient equipment for fuel analysis at the Customs Laboratory.

Liquid scintillation counter (LSC)

A liquid scintillation counter, or LSC, can be used to determine the bio-content of fuels such as diesel or gas oil. The bio-content of samples must be known for the classification of certain fuels (headings 2710 19, 2710 20 and 3826) or product groups (e.g. biodiesel and fossil-based diesel) and their blends, for example, for the purposes of determining customs duties and taxes. The sky's the limit for LSC product testing – in the future, it can be used to test marine fuels and other bio-based liquid products.

The Customs Laboratory has not had an LSC before. Together with the LSC to be purchased with CCEI2 funding, the existing fuel testing methods form a very comprehensive package for the needs of Finnish Customs and its stakeholders.

Sulphur analyser and Reformulyzer

The sulphur analyser is used to determine the sulphur content of fuels (petrol, diesel, fuel oil) for quality control according to Government Decree 883/2022. No other

instrument in the laboratory can be used to take these measurements in accordance with the process standard SFS-EN ISO 20846.

The Reformulyzer uses gas chromatography to determine the aromatics, olefins, benzene, oxygen, ethanol and ether content of petrol for quality control according to Government Decree 883/2022. These measurements (SFS-EN ISO 22854) cannot be taken with any other instrument, either.

With CCEI2 funding, the Customs Laboratory will be able to purchase new equipment to replace existing equipment.



Co-funded by
the European Union

The Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI) is a funding programme of the EU Commission for the period 2021–2027. The programme aims to strengthen the Member States' customs control capabilities by modernising and harmonising customs control equipment.

The CCEI programme is the most important source of funding for Finnish Customs, and it has enabled Finnish Customs to procure the latest technology, maintain operational performance and develop new procedures and personnel competences. Significant equipment investments at border-crossing points and in the Customs Laboratory have already been made with the funding.

The Corporate Audit Unit of Finnish Customs and the Tax Administration join forces to combat the shadow economy

The Corporate Audit Unit of Finnish Customs combats the shadow economy through post-clearance audits. In 2025, around 30 audits concerning the shadow economy were carried out, and they resulted in roughly EUR 2.2 million in additional customs duties or taxes imposed on businesses.

The post-clearance audits can also be used to monitor compliance with export and import prohibitions and restrictions concerning sanctions and dual-use products, for instance. These inspections have no fiscal impact, but they protect society both in Finland and within the EU.

All in all, the Corporate Audit Unit carried out around 700 audits in 2025, consisting mainly of business audits, document audits and warehouse audits. The amount of additional customs duties or taxes levied on businesses as a result of these audits was around EUR 15.7 million in total.

Challenges in accessing information have increased due to the changes in the operating environment

Finnish Customs' controls and right of access to information are governed by both Finnish and EU legislation. In practice, however, the ability to carry out administrative checks is based on the willingness of the subject of a control measure to meet their statutory reporting and disclosure obligations. In the case of shadow economy audits, accessing information on businesses is often challenging, as the requested information is not provided to auditors or is incorrect or incomplete.

Digitalisation and the migration of accounting records to electronic format pose their own challenges in terms of access to data. The data needed for the inspection may be technically located in different places and stored in different formats (e.g. in cloud services or on company equipment, servers or other electronic storage platforms). Finland's neighbouring countries have already recognised the challenges involved in gathering information for audits, and both Sweden and Norway have improved the powers of customs and tax authorities to carry out audits and seize materials related to audits.

The project concerning powers improves the efficiency of customs and tax controls

The Finnish Tax Administration and Finnish Customs are working on a joint project concerning powers in order to improve access to information in administrative audits. The project is part of the 2024–2027 strategy and action plan for tackling the shadow economy and economic crime. It was already started during the previous action plan (2020–2023), when the inspection powers for administrative checks by the Tax Administration and Finnish Customs were studied to determine whether they were sufficient. The project is now preparing the necessary legislative proposals to improve the audit rights of the Tax Administration and Customs, and to secure evidence in shadow economy audits.

The new powers would make it easier to obtain materials related to audits and present evidence when tackling shadow economy cases. The new legislation would allow for the seizure and copying of materials related to audits in situations in which an audit is highly significant in terms of taxation or otherwise, or in which the auditor has grounds to strongly suspect that the subject of the audit is not providing accurate and sufficient information or may destroy or falsify materials related to the audit. This would not apply to cases where the subject of an audit is suspected of a customs or tax offence, as in such cases an audit is carried out as part of a criminal procedure.

The digital forensics function for customs controls and tax audits proposed in the draft statutes of the project concerning powers would make the legislation correspond better to the current environment, where digitalisation is advancing rapidly and the information needed for control measures is mainly in digital format. Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool for the shadow economy, and countering it is challenging for the public authorities under the current legislation.

Customs and the Tax Administration have worked closely together during the project, and the aim is to submit the draft legislation to the Parliament for processing in 2026.



Cooperation also includes customs controls and tax audits

In addition to the project concerning powers, the Corporate Audit Unit of Finnish Customs as well as different units of the Tax Administration cooperate in their customs and tax control operations on various levels. Legislation on VAT and excise duties, among other things, requires good cooperation between tax and enforcement authorities. A comprehensive approach and

seamless cooperation between the authorities are also essential in identifying and combating various shadow economy phenomena, as well as in monitoring targets, as the shadow economy is rarely confined to a single tax category or involves only one authority. In 2025, Customs and the Tax Administration have intensified their operational cooperation in matters such as controls of imports related to the explosive growth of e-commerce.

A new liaison officer for international crime prevention cooperation in Kazakhstan

In the early summer of 2024, Finnish Customs decided to send a crime prevention liaison officer to Kazakhstan. Before that, Finnish Customs did not have a liaison officer in Central Asia. Liaison officers assigned outside the EU usually work at Finnish diplomatic missions abroad. In Kazakhstan, the office of the liaison officer is located at the Embassy of Finland in Astana.

The growth of Central Asian trade created the need for a liaison officer

The need for a liaison officer in Central Asia arose as foreign trade between Finland and Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan in particular, increased in 2023. As a result, the side effects of goods traffic and the risk of possible violations of export regulations also increased. Exports have declined since then, but the exchange of information continues to play a key role especially in preliminary investigations into the circumvention of sanctions.

It was found that there was an acute need for a liaison officer physically present on site. The assignment of a liaison officer in Kazakhstan is also expected to bring long-term benefits, as the amount of goods traffic through Central Asia is expected to increase significantly once infrastructure projects in the region are completed.

The liaison officer improves the exchange of information between authorities

One of the most important duties of a liaison officer is to establish a good and lasting relationship with the local authorities. The aim is to establish a smooth and mutually beneficial exchange of information. Active cooperation with the authorities provides Finnish Customs with

targeted and up-to-date information on goods traffic related to Finland. Effective information exchange is crucial for Finnish Customs to carry out its statutory duties.

The work of the liaison officer supports the statutory mission of Finnish Customs

Even though the environment in which the liaison officer operates is exceptional due to the international nature of the officer's duties and the different organisational culture, the objectives set for the liaison officer's work are not too different from the other core tasks of Finnish Customs. The most important task of the crime prevention liaison officer is to support the activities of Finnish Customs especially in law enforcement matters, and to provide information to the preliminary investigation authorities to ensure the establishment of criminal liability.

It could be said that supervisory authorities all over the world are assigned similar tasks and objectives. Moreover, the people who apply for jobs with public authorities around the world share many similarities, including the same values. This is also the case in Kazakhstan, where professional and motivated colleagues in the host country have made the cooperation very rewarding.

The liaison officer activities in Kazakhstan benefit several authorities

By the end of 2025, Finnish Customs has had a liaison officer in Kazakhstan for just over 1.5 years. Finnish Customs was one of the first European customs authorities to send its own liaison officer to Central Asia. This has proven to be the right decision in the changed operat-



ing environment, and it has benefited not only Finnish Customs, but also other national and international law enforcement authorities.

In the new organisation, the liaison officer of Finnish Customs in Kazakhstan will continue to work with other crime prevention liaison officers in line with the new stra-

tegy, supporting Finnish Customs' domestic law enforcement activities.

Image: The Baiterek tower is emblematic of Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, and one of its main attractions.

Preparedness and capabilities are in good shape at Finnish Customs

Preparedness means anticipating different kinds of disturbances, crises and emergencies and preparing for them. If something unusual happens, it may already be too late to practice what to do. Preparedness affects how we can manage these situations.

Capability or *capabilities* refer to the operational capabilities achieved through preparedness in the event of a disruption, crisis or emergency. Preparedness makes it possible to build up capabilities for dealing with a crisis in advance. For Finnish Customs, preparedness is mainly about planning ahead, acquiring and securing resources, training, making agreements and practising.

Customs control is crisis-proof despite massive flows of goods

In their current format, the normal operations of Finnish Customs are highly resilient in case of a crisis. Customs control is based on proactive risk analysis and target selection, which provide inspection targets for the mobile control teams of Finnish Customs. The approach enables effective customs control of massive flows of goods. Times have changed a lot since the days when importers used to present all of the goods that they imported to Finnish Customs at customs warehouses.

In 2025, Finnish Customs processed around 50 million express freight and postal consignments worth less than EUR 150, or around 1.6 consignments every second, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Processing every consignment manually would be impossible, which means that customs warehouses will not be making a comeback any time soon. In addition to these express freight consignments, Finnish Customs must of course handle all other goods traffic that crosses Finnish borders at land, sea and air traffic border crossing points.

For years now, customs clearance of goods has not been based on in-person visits, either. Today, customs declarations and their attachments are mainly submitted and processed in electronic systems, and stamping paper documents is only a memory. Finnish Customs has been a pioneer in the digitalisation of customer service in state administration. Today, at its simplest, customers can submit a customs declaration anywhere by using their mobile phone, and Finnish Customs' mobile control teams carry out physical controls at the most suitable location considering logistics and the location of the goods. This allows for a smooth customer experience for all those customers who take care of their customs obligations appropriately.

Customs control is based on proactive risk analysis and target selection, which provide inspection targets for the mobile control teams of Finnish Customs.

“The operations of Finnish Customs will not be interrupted”

The built-in features of Finnish Customs' core processes – that is, customs clearance and enforcement – in everyday operations are highly resilient by nature. This has already been put to the test a few times starting from the 2010s due to severe external disruptions.

In 2015, Finland faced a record wave of asylum seekers. Finnish Customs reacted quickly as the only competent authority at the internal border. Mobile control team personnel from practically all of Finnish Customs' mobile control teams across the country were deployed at the Schengen internal border between Finland and Sweden. Operations across unit borders had never been attempted on a similar scale before, but ground rules were set very quickly to get the ball rolling.

Moving from the office to safer working conditions was tested shortly afterwards during the COVID-19 crisis. Investigation and enforcement personnel had to expose themselves to human contact and thus to the spread of the virus while operating according to an adapted in-person work model. Customs clearances and other multi-location expert work at Finnish Customs mainly moved to the employees' homes. Even though the deadly virus had brought the whole world to its knees, legal foreign trade, the operation of logistics chains and customs declarations were not significantly disrupted.

In these situations, the critical issues for Finnish Customs' operations were identified and even tested in practice. We can happily state that the operations of Finnish Customs will not be interrupted.

Electricity and telecommunications links are critical in the digital society

Finnish Customs has focused its preparedness on securing the electricity supply in particular. Ensuring that customs offices have back-up power is expensive, and the budget framework for 2026 includes EUR 29 000

Finnish Customs as the Chair of the Nordic Customs Cooperation Council – a glance into history and current priorities

Perhaps the most important Nordic customs cooperation network and the one with the longest history is the Nordic Customs Cooperation Council (Nordiska Tulladministrativa Rådet), commonly known by its acronym “NTR”. NTR is a permanent joint body of the Nordic customs administrations. Its operations are based on a pragmatic approach, a smooth exchange of information and experiences, and a long tradition of cooperation between the Nordic countries.

The permanent members of NTR are the customs authorities of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, and the customs authorities of Greenland and the Faroe Islands that operate under their authority. Finland will chair NTR in 2026.

The cooperation started during the Cold War and focused on the fight against smuggling

The history of NTR dates back to the post-war period, when the Nordic countries began to dismantle barriers to trade and improve cooperation between their authorities systematically. Initially, the priorities were to harmonise customs formalities and streamline border traffic. At the same time, however, a foundation was laid for rapid and informal cooperation, including in operational issues.

During the Cold War, the cooperation in NTR focused largely on combating smuggling and on the exchange of surveillance information. Unsurprisingly, alcohol and tobacco products were major targets, but there was also cooperation concerning cash and strategic commodities. What was striking was that despite the tense security policy context, Nordic cooperation was continuous, pragmatic and technical.

A platform for cooperation that complements EU structures

The progress of European integration and especially the development of common customs legislation in the European Union in the 1990s led to significant changes in the functioning of NTR. Finland, Sweden and Denmark becoming EU Member States and the new role of Norway and Iceland as countries outside the European Union and the Customs Union in particular had an impact on the nature of Nordic cooperation.

NTR was characterised more clearly as a platform for cooperation complementary to the EU structures. Speci-

fic Nordic issues continue to be addressed, but in a more limited way than in the past, as the EU has exclusive competence in many areas. Cooperation is also limited by the different competences of customs authorities in the Member States. The same division is still reflected in NTR’s activities: three of the five member countries of the network represent the European Union, and two of the three, Finnish and Swedish Customs, also act as preliminary investigation authorities. The law enforcement role of customs authorities in other NTR countries is much more limited than that of Finnish and Swedish Customs.

Port security is a priority for the chairmanship

In recent years, NTR’s work programmes have reflected a wide range of themes, from training to risk management and drug crime prevention. Digitalisation, real-time information exchange and joint enforcement operations have also become important forms of cooperation in combating and preventing complex and international criminal phenomena.

During the Finnish chairmanship, NTR will focus on port security and more extensive security cooperation. Ports are becoming increasingly critical logistics hubs for international trade. They are used by both legal and criminal operators. Geopolitical tensions and hybrid threats are increasing the importance of ports in Finland and the EU, as well as globally.

In fact, the aim of the chairmanship is to develop the role of the Nordic customs authorities as part of overall security, and to deepen the cooperation between customs and other security authorities at the national and Nordic level.

As a whole, Nordic customs cooperation within the framework of NTR represents an important tradition of long-term and adaptable cooperation between authorities. During its chairmanship, Finnish Customs wishes to respect these traditions while also responding to an unpredictable and changing environment at the same time. In the future, customs authorities will play an increasingly central role in ensuring economic well-being and security of supply, as well as the internal security of our society.



Crime statistics

Crime overview	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Offences	5 402	6 482	6 245	5 527	5 078
Suspects of offences					
Foreigners total	1 723	2 160	2 171	1 828	1 518
All suspects	5 097	5 915	5 730	4 969	4 432
Impact of customs crime prevention (EUR million)					
Recovered proceeds of crime	32,1	71,2	37,1	56,3	54,1
Value of goods not seized	21,1	26	30,7	50	15,6
Evaded taxes	17,1	8,8	19,7	21,2	11,9
Total	70,3	106	87,5	127,5	81,6

Narcotics-related offences	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggravated narcotic offence	285	291	390	562	392
Narcotic offence	1 111	955	1 029	1 285	1 119
Preparation of a narcotics offence	78	96	103	146	99
Illicit consumption of narcotics	69	47	34	62	141
Total	1 543	1 389	1 556	2 055	1 751

Seized narcotics	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Amphetamine and methamphetamine (kg)	81	87	62	237	54,6
Alfa-PVP (kg)	0,005	0,221	0,006	0,448	10,6
Hashish (kg)	3,5	12,1	19	56,6	53,4
Heroin (kg)	0,11	0,002	0,088	0,02	0,1
Khat (kg)	276	926	563	353	1 137
Cocaine (kg)	55	4,8	16,2	53,1	87,4
Marijuana (kg)	262	318	465	1 321	1 108
Total (kg)	710	1 382	1 196	2 052	2 574
LSD (doses)	9 893	3 332	2 405	4 303	925
Ecstasy (tablets)	53 916	41 200	93 246	16 968	18 628
Buprenorphine (tablets)	41 108	4 115	44 066	68 266	32 770

Medicine offences	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Medicine offence	103	155	138	93	130
Medicine violation	828	1 175	801	617	571
Total	931	1 330	939	710	701

Seized medicines	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
(tablets)	1 537 444	355 956	142 055	75 901	80 347

Doping offences	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggravated doping offence	22	24	12	9	20
Doping offence	62	80	102	107	151
Petty doping offence	166	188	340	311	338
Total	250	292	454	427	509

Seized doping substances	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
(tablets/ampoules)	21 611	24 868	20 373	62 486	26 569

Seized cigarettes	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
(million pcs)	0,7	1,2	2,8	7,1	16,5

Seized snus (kg)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	9 104	4 460	857	4 815	1 949

Alcohol offences	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggravated alcohol offence	2	5	3	2	4
Alcohol offence	1	1	10	9	7
Alcohol violation	67	58	71	5	3
Petty alcohol offence	0	5	13	8	8
Total	70	69	97	24	22

Alcohol seizures	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
(litres)					
Neutral spirits	9	0,5	41,5	0	0
Others	10 975	21 795	2 019	1 515	7 330
Total	10 984	21 796	2 061	1 515	7 330

Firearms offences	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggravated firearms offence	8	3	1	1	1
Firearms offence	85	81	59	73	93
Petty firearms offence	56	77	94	80	113
Firearms violation	3	0	1	0	0
Total	152	161	155	154	207

Seized weapons	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Gas weapons	435	284	237	342	678
Firearms	56	20	15	8	11
Total	491	304	252	350	689

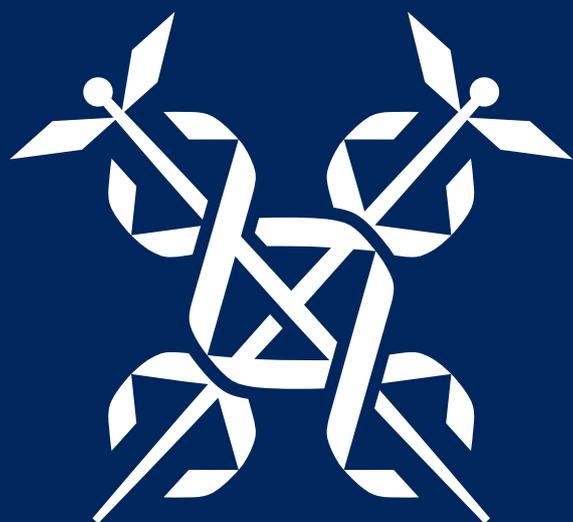
Tax frauds	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggravated tax fraud	96	122	107	71	67
Standard offence	156	113	109	95	33
Petty tax fraud	316	347	417	238	41
Total	568	582	633	404	141

Customs offence investigations 2025

Source: Customs Laboratory

Samples relating to suspected customs offences (pcs)	
Doping	1 009
Narcotics	1 629
Narcotics precursors	9
Pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics	420
Substances banned from the consumer market	479
Unclassified narcotic substances	48
Pharmaceuticals	1 598
Other crime-related samples	115
Negative	549
Total	5 856





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