

# Finnish Customs Enforcement 2018



**TULLI**  
TULL • CUSTOMS

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Editorial

## WHAT NEXT? (SO WHAT OR WHAT NEXT?)

Yet another year is behind us. Yet another year that can be characterised by “less is more.” In addition to finally being able to stop our budget deficit for the first time during this decade, our results were once again excellent. I would like to thank all our employees in the customs enforcement sector for a job well done. Although there are always changes, with the next ones already being on the drawing board, some of which are a success, while some are waiting to be implemented, our employees are always committed and productive! This is simply incredible!

At long last, we are starting to see new faces in our local working communities. By holding on to these new customs officers and integrating them into our units, we can make sure that we only lost one generation during our ten-year financial slump.

Recruitment processes will continue at the same pace this year as well, and every one of us needs to ensure that our working communities maintain their welcoming atmosphere, bringing people together and encouraging others to

mutual competition. At the same time, managers and supervisors need to see to it that daily tasks offer motivation and that employees are allowed to develop their competence. This also requires that we adopt new technologies and continue to learn.

The world around us is changing and evolving – how about us? We are no longer able to foresee upcoming changes in our operating environment. Can we ready ourselves for changing situations and are we able to react quickly when necessary? Tools and skill requirements develop along with technologies and understanding. Are we capable of continuous development and, in particular, advancement? Are we ready to carry out more demanding tasks, more independently?

More and stricter requirements will be set to ensure that authorities comply with legislation. Can we still have an impact on our work in order to lighten the conventional ways of working and our work processes? Government resources will not increase. How can we ensure that our employees are motivated and engaged under heavier workloads?

So many questions, so few answers. I hope that we are all ready to move on and to find proper solutions, even if not all of these questions have straightforward answers.

No matter what anyone else

says, virtual reality, artificial intelligence and robots will not take over our work. These will certainly offer much help, as long as we can harness them to support us. We also need to be patient. If we take digital leaps that are too long and rush into things unnecessarily, our operational development cannot keep up with technological advancement. The thing is that work that requires interaction between people and will be done by actual people.

However, we need to start investing in the methods and skills in which Customs specialises and which we can turn into national (international even) spearheads. These areas where we are already good at and where we want to be pioneers in the future are certainly related to data – its procurement, classification, assessment and analysis.

Some data is given to us, some we need to retrieve from our customers, and some we also need to collect without the target’s knowing. This applies to all enforcement sectors, in which the systematic and comprehensive collection of data will be emphasised in order to maintain our high level of quality and productivity, also in the future.

*Thank you all for our experiences and accomplishments in 2018!*

**Sami Rakshit**  
**Director of Enforcement**

# CRIME OVERVIEW

The total number of customs offences investigated by Customs decreased in 2018 from the year before, partly due to a decrease in the number of basic narcotics offences. Considering the overview, the most recent phenomenon in terms of customs offences is the exponential increase in the illegal trading of snus, alongside an increase in new narcotic substances.

Regulation on snus resembles the prohibition, which has made snus an attractive commodity to smuggle for young amateurs and also increasingly for professionals who have previously operated in other fields. Arguably, the use of snus is estimated to be more common now than when it was legal. In other words, prohibitions have not reduced any health problems but given birth to a new profitable criminal enterprise.

In recent years, customs offences have increasingly shifted towards online trading. Due to its speed and ease of use, it offers an excellent setting for illegal purposes. In addition, new cybercurrencies that are difficult to track have made it easier to pay for illegal articles than when using conventional payment instruments. However, old-school smug-

gling is still going strong, for example, in the illegal trading of conventional narcotics, and cash has not fully lost its importance in criminal activities.

## Narcotics and pharmaceuticals

As the number of basic narcotics offences is decreasing, the number of aggravated narcotics offences has remained high as in previous years in cases investigated by Customs. One reason for this is that the smuggling of particularly dangerous narcotics into Finland has not slowed down.

During many years, significant amounts, even on an international scale, of new psychoactive substances have been discovered in Finland, mainly originating in China but ordered from European marketplaces via the Darknet.

Last year, several furanylfentanyl cases were also uncovered where the darknet was used to order substances. Fentanyls have already caused multiple deaths in Sweden and Estonia. As regards pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics, Subutex which is imported from France seems to maintain its popularity.

Classic narcotics have kept their position alongside new substances. Cannabis is still used frequently, but it seems that marijuana is more common than hashish. A record amount of marijuana was seized, compared with the past five years, mainly from air passengers from Spain.

The amount of methamphetamine decreased significantly last year, even though amphetamine in general has a strong foothold among the most addictive narcotics in Finland. This is also proven by wastewater surveys. According to these surveys, the use of cocaine seems to be increasing. This is also supported by the amount of cocaine Customs seized last year.

The total amount of narcotics seized by Customs decreased significantly last year due to the lower amount of imported khat.

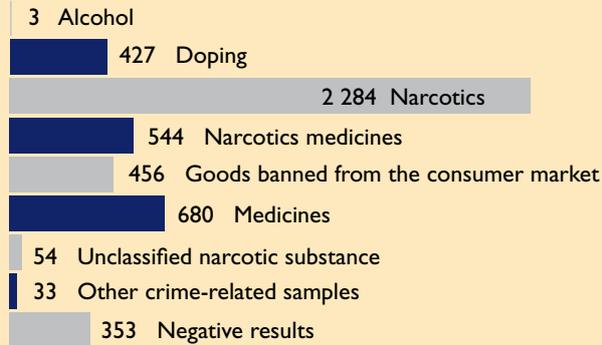
## Economic crime

Last year, an increase in all forms of tax frauds was the most notable change in economic crime investigated by Customs. Tax frauds have mainly involved high-tax products such as cigarettes, snus and cars, as well as value added tax.

Crime overview	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Offences	9 879	9 656	9 581	9 409	<b>8 943</b>
<b>Suspects of offences</b>					
Foreigners total	4 225	4 010	3 216	2 902	2 919
<b>All suspects</b>	<b>9 036</b>	<b>9 066</b>	<b>8 950</b>	<b>8 525</b>	<b>8 222</b>
<b>Impact of customs crime prevention (EUR million)</b>					
Recovered proceeds of crime	17.50	10.70	19.30	28.00	26.10
Value of goods not seized	82.20	1.79	197.40	5.03	4.17
Evaded taxes	26.50	3.45	8.12	48.11	8.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>126.20</b>	<b>15.94</b>	<b>224.82</b>	<b>81.14</b>	<b>38.91</b>

### Customs offence investigations (number) – Illegal imports in 2018

Source: Customs Laboratory



The number of environmental and intellectual property offences regarded as economic crime was fairly low last year. This applied to customs clearance and regulatory offences and the illegal export of defence materiel.

Currently, most alcohol cases are uncovered in the EU single market, and they are mostly processed as tax cases in an administrative procedure. As a result, alcohol is rarely seized. However, more than 2,000 litres of alcohol was seized

last year, making the year an exception considering recent years.

The smuggling of tobacco products has shifted strongly to snus. Smoking is becoming a part of history in Finland as, according to recent studies, only 13% of men and women smoke cigarettes. Young people seem to be more interested in snus than in cigarettes, and the use of electronic cigarettes does not appear to be increasing.

Most illegally imported cigarettes have been and are still im-

ported from Russia hidden inside compartments in lorries and vans. A positive change is expected, as cigarettes were added to the list of strategic articles in Russia. Products on this list are monitored closely both in terms of imports and exports.

Last year, the Federal Customs Service of Russia reported cigarette batches on their way to Finland that it had stopped.

### Impact of crime prevention by Customs

The impact of crime prevention by Customs has been monitored for 25 years using comparable indicators. This impact is assessed on the basis of criminal benefits recovered from investigated cases, the value of articles not confiscated and the amount of evaded taxes.

Last year's results were a little higher than the five-year average. After the first three quarters, the value of this impact was more than EUR 25 million, even though this figure does not include the significant amounts of bitcoins seized by Customs.

## CUSTOMS INVESTIGATION

Customs Investigation is part of the Enforcement Department and consists of the Investigation Unit and the Intelligence and Analysis Unit. In addition, it includes the Legal and International Affairs Unit which is in charge of international cooperation and legality enforcement.

In Finland, Customs has carried out investigations related to customs offences ever since a customs fiscal was appointed in the Swedish customs administration 330 years ago to investigate customs offences and to take legal action. The cus-

toms fiscal was in charge of investigating customs offences and taking legal action in Finland until 1972 when these tasks were transferred to public prosecutors in conjunction with the public prosecution reform. After this, the Customs Offence Office was in charge of the investigation of customs offences. It was followed by the Investigation Office.

Increases in international trade and tourism have resulted in an increase in customs offences, which has forced crime prevention by

Customs to be developed in order to respond to growing threats. In 50 years, the small investigation office of a few officials has evolved into the current customs investigation organisation which employs 250 people in investigation tasks and 70 people in intelligence and analysis tasks.

### The role of Customs in law enforcement

The main objective of Customs Investigation is to be the lead-

ing authority in Finland in the prevention of economic crime and of cross-border, professional and other serious crime. Special expertise in foreign trade and international logistics provides Customs with the best opportunities to combat cross-border economic crime and illegal trade.

As a special law enforcement authority, Customs is only in charge of the investigation of customs offences. Typical customs offences include tax frauds related to foreign trade and excise taxation, and offences related to import restrictions, such as trading on narcotics, pharmaceuticals and doping substances. The activities of Customs have also expanded to the investigation of, for example, offences related to intellectual property rights and the environment, as well as money laundering cases related to these.

When tax collection tasks transferred from Customs to the Tax Administration, it was realised that Customs Investigation continues to focus on customs procedures and processes, and it was decided that Customs continues to investigate offences regarding tax types transferred to the Tax Administration.

## Security through cooperation

In Finland, Customs, the Finnish Border Guard and the Police of Finland work closely together. This cooperation is based on the law and dates back to the 1920s. It is also regarded as an exemplary form of cooperation within the EU, guaranteeing effective cooperation and the productive exchange of information in the field of law enforcement. These authorities have set up a joint intelligence organisation, and they also work together when maintaining contact with international law enforcement agencies, such as Europol.

Other important partners of Customs Investigation include internal specialists of Customs in foreign trade and corporate audits, the Tax Administration and a group of other authorities that are responsible not only for taxes, but also for restrictions and control related to imports and exports.

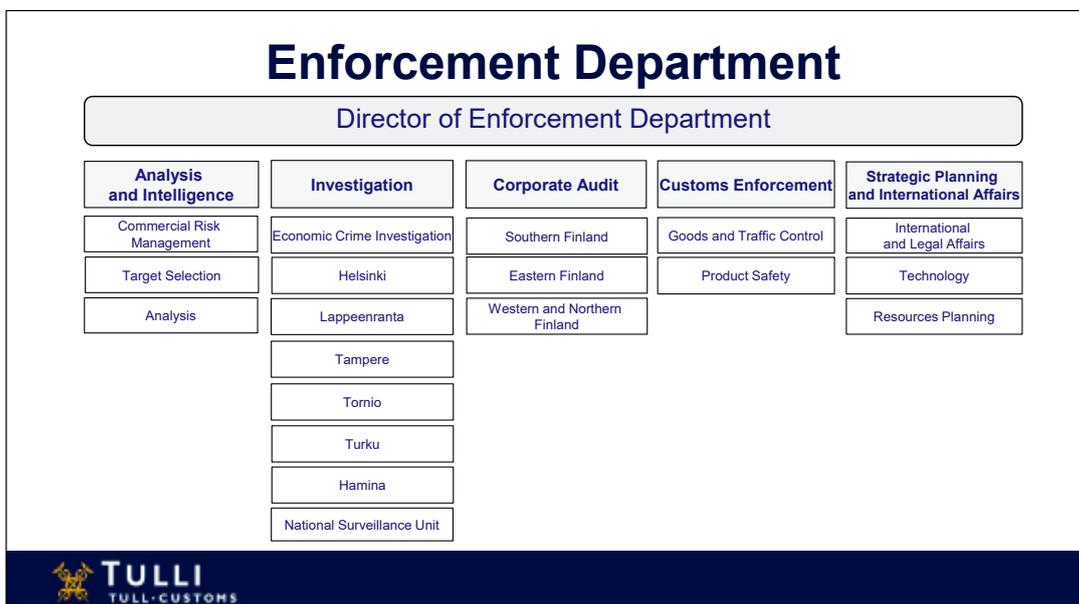
Customs Investigation is often linked with business life, which is why Customs has built a comprehensive partnership network with private organisations, i.e. MOU partners. Using memoranda of understanding (MOU), Customs has set up a common set of rules for the exchange of information and

societal relationships with companies and business communities.

Since customs offences are often related to cross-border activities, international relationships are vital for Customs Investigation. For example, 45–55% of suspects in cases investigated by Customs are non-Finnish. International cooperation has always been an important part of the basic activities of Customs, be it with the World Customs Organization (WCO), the European Union, Nordic cooperation or bilateral cooperation with different countries.

Customs has entered into bilateral agreements in order to exchange information and offer and request official assistance with crime prevention authorities in many countries. In addition, Customs participates, together with the Finnish Border Guard and the Police of Finland, in the EU's EMPACT projects, being in charge of its area of responsibility.

Customs also works locally with the customs authorities of other Nordic and Baltic countries and Russia as part of its basic crime prevention tasks. Furthermore, Customs has liaison officers for crime prevention in Tallinn and St. Petersburg who work as part of the Nordic network of liaison officers and as part of the Europol National Unit.



# CRIME PREVENTION INVOLVING ONLINE TRADE

In 2018, Airport Customs X-rayed more than 347 000 international postal shipments. This ensures that the customs clearance procedure and any bans and restrictions are followed. While the number of employees remained unchanged from the year before, they X-rayed 47 000 shipments, or 16%, more than in 2017.

In total, 24 200 inspections were made, resulting in more than 2 000 reports of offences. Narcotics offences were uncovered the most in 2018, comprising more than half of all offences. These were followed by offences related to pharmaceuticals, smuggling and doping substances. In addition, more than 2 000 minor cases of illegal importing were uncovered. These were processed in an administrative procedure. More than 200 000 shipments were referred to customs clearance, and nearly 20 000 customer queries were processed, mainly via email.

High-speed transport and the high volume of goods require rapid actions and cooperation, which was highly productive in 2018 between Customs Investigation, Customs Enforcement and other authorities. Due to an increase in traffic volumes, activities were not targeted and mobility was not increased between different logistics terminals quite as planned. During 2019, these aspects will be developed in order to increase the risk of getting caught and to obtain information about the risk level in transport more effectively.

The active control of bans, restrictions and customs clearance procedures and the prevention of the shadow economy will continue in accordance with the online sales control plan, both internally and with different interest groups.

Cooperation helps to improve expertise and to exchange up-to-date information with other authorities.

## Challenges set by changes in online sales

International online trade is increasing rapidly. It uses different innovative solutions, artificial intelligence, analytics and automated marketing. The growth potential and opportunities for using new technologies of online trading are manifold compared to the present situation – they have only started their development path. Competition between companies over consumers and purchasing decisions is progressing in many ways and also has a significant impact on the activities of Customs.

From the viewpoint of Customs, it is important to bring customs clearance and customs control procedures together, also when it comes to future changes, so that transport systems remain smooth and effective. International agreements, laws, rights and responsibilities, correct and accurate information and confidential cooperation

with all the parties involved play an important part. Continuity, also in exceptional circumstances, can only be ensured through close cooperation and better integration with logistics operators.

In order to be able to make decisions on whether controls are necessary or unnecessary in the correct part of the logistics chain, Customs requires electronic data systems that support online trade processes and high-tech automated control systems that are able to combine, compare, identify and analyse different types of data. Customs may soon require new tools and powers to prevent international online crime that makes use of the structures of online trade, such as narcotics offences, frauds and counterfeit products.

Customs has applied for and obtained EUR 1.5 million from the government for building an automated control line. The related development project is underway. The project team and steering group consist of representatives of all departments, and cooperation has been close and enthusiastic between them.

In addition, Customs is working more closely with Posti, and their shared vision of the operating model has been shaped on the basis of the needs of both organisations, by using tools and plans.





# ILLEGAL ONLINE TRADE

The Internet offers an effortless channel, independent of time and place, for trading on different products and services. Today, online trading is a large-scale international business.

The increase in online trade is also increasingly reflected in the day-to-day activities and tasks of Finnish Customs. Parties and criminals involved in illegal online trade act alongside, and also in concert with, legal online trading. This presents challenges to the conventional ways of Customs to monitor goods traffic, and to identify and prevent any criminal activities and parties involved.

Illegal and criminal activities related to online trading are visible to the authorities in different ways. It goes without saying that it has many links to different types of crime, such as frauds and economic and narcotic offences, as well as identity theft. Advanced communications and encryption technologies also speed up the expansion of international and organised crime towards the use of new operating models in order to gain illegal financial benefit. The large number of young people involved in illegal operations is also a cause for concern.

In recent years, organised on-

line trade in narcotics, pharmaceuticals, doping substances and snus in encrypted networks and social media services has kept Customs Investigation busy. The increased use of alternative payment instruments, such as virtual currencies, in illegal trading has also created new opportunities for international money-laundering operations.

Customs has been heavily involved in the prevention of online crime, on both national and international levels. Smooth cooperation between authorities and the determined development of activities have also helped to improve the results of online crime prevention. The criminal investigation of Sipulikanava, an onion service maintained in the encrypted Tor network, is a good recent example of national activities.

However, illegal online trading does not only involve hidden and anonymous online marketplaces. Criminal activities are often present where a large number of potential customers are easily available. In addition, the functions and the user-friendliness of online platforms are more significant factors than what is often estimated. Self-monitoring systems, such as customer feedback on products, also challenge the

methods and behaviour of criminals related to online trading.

Through online channels, special international expertise in illegal and criminal activities is available to more and more parties, without any particular IT skills. Information and points of contact can be found fairly easily from different online forums, depending on the level of interest. Therefore, it is likely that crime as a service will increase significantly in the future.

Illegal online trading and crime on the Internet will remain a key challenge for Customs control, also during the next few years. The effective prevention of online crime requires seamless and open cooperation and exchange of information not only between internal Customs units, but also between external interest groups.

Crime via data networks is in an ever changing and moving form of crime which develops and adopts new technological innovations in a quick and agile way. In order to keep up, Customs must also be able to react and develop its operating capacity to respond to future challenges.

## HISTORY AND REGULATIONS

The sale of snus was banned in all EU countries in 1992 on the recommendation of the World Health Organization. However, the production and sale of snus is permitted in Sweden based on an exemption. In mainland Finland, the sale of snus was banned in 1995.

According to the Tobacco Act, a private person can import at most 1 000 grams of snus per calendar year for personal use.

The tobacco tax levied on seized and sold snus is approximately EUR 0.37 per gram. In addition to criminal consequences, excise duty running into hundreds of thousands of euros may be imposed on a person who has imported snus for commercial purposes or held snus in their possession.

Regardless of restrictions set out in EU regulations and the Finnish Tobacco Act, the smuggling and illegal sale of snus has increased significantly in Finland in recent years. Currently, snus can be obtained fairly easily from illegal markets in Finland.

Smoking has decreased among young people in particular, and snus has partly replaced cigarettes. Fewer and fewer young people in Finland smoke cigarettes, while the use of snus among boys under 18 continues to increase. In addition to adults and young people, snus is offered illegally to children, and used bags of snus can even be found from outside schools.

### **A significant smuggling article between Finland and Sweden**

The route from Haparanda to Finland via Meänmaa and down to user markets in Southern Finland has become the most frequently used smuggling channel.

Attempts to bring snus into Finland hidden from Customs involve various methods. So far, the largest discovered loads have consisted of 350–400 kg of snus smuggled in fully loaded vans, while the smallest loads have been packages of a few kilos carried on foot across the

border.

The last time smuggling was this active on the border between Finland and Sweden was decades ago when import regulations were in place. The most popular articles smuggled at the time included butter and coffee. Another primary route for importing illegal snus into Finland include ports in Southern Finland, through which snus is imported from Sweden and the Baltic countries.

In ferry traffic, snus has also been seized from lorries operating in commercial transport. In a few smuggling cases the aim has been to smuggle snus from Finland into Russia where there is also a demand for this “black gold from Sweden.”

Smuggled snus is sold and distributed from hand to hand and, in particular, through social media services and encrypted online sales channels. The illegal sale of snus is a profitable business. Because of the illicit profits to be made, it is popular among new sellers and many who have been caught before.



# SNUS CASES AND SEIZED SNUS

During 2018, a total of 240 snus cases were registered. This was much more than in 2017 when there were approximately 150 snus cases. In 2018, a total of 6 744 kg of snus was seized, equivalent to roughly 449 600 fifteen-gram cans. In 2017, the corresponding figure was 2 390 kg, corresponding to 159 333 cans. This means that the amount of seized snus tripled from 2017.

Seized snus (kg)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total</b>	542	1 204	3 442	2 390	<b>6 744</b>



## Snus from Haparanda

The smuggling of snus, that black current flowing into Finland, kept many northern customs offices busy and resulted in many criminal investigations during the year. We can go so far as to say there are torrents of snus flowing into Finland through every border-crossing point between Finland and Sweden.

Currently, Customs has an ongoing criminal investigation, the largest of all time in Finland, of aggravated tax fraud related to the smuggling of snus. Customs received various tip-offs regarding the operation from different authorities and civilians. The official tip-offs concerned financial transactions be-

tween private people in Finland and snus sellers in Sweden, whereas the civilian tip-offs were related to the loading of boxes of snus into different vehicles outside snus shops.

To verify the accuracy of the civilian tips, Customs made some preliminary investigations and gathered information. Fairly quickly,

customs officials realised that snus smuggling had evolved into a highly professional activity, in which every member played a fairly independent and highly significant role in delivering snus to Finland.

Customs discovered that this operation involved a father and son in Haparanda, Sweden, whose task was to send snus from Sweden into Finland. Snus was bought by a person who arrived from Finland and who, soon after making these purchases, returned to Finland to wait for it to be delivered to a pre-defined location. After obtaining the snus, he loaded it into his van.

During the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that 50–100 kg of snus was imported loaded into a private car on every occasion. The operation also involved a person whose task was to monitor and observe whether or not customs officials were present at the border-crossing point.

The snus smuggled into Finland was first delivered inland and forward to Eastern Finland and the Helsinki region.

To uncover this criminal operation, Customs set up a joint inves-



tigation team consisting of representatives of the investigation units of Tornio, Lappenranta, Tampere and Helsinki Customs. After some colourful events, the perpetrators were apprehended in Kainuu on 3 April 2018. During the apprehension, Customs confiscated 175 kg of snus from inside a van.

After this, matters proceeded rapidly. Members of the operation working in the Helsinki region heard almost immediately that the load of snus had been seized and they managed to leave the country the next day before Customs caught them. However, eight people

suspected of the case have been questioned in relation to aggravated tax fraud and smuggling.

During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that the operation started in 2016. Between 2016 and 2018, a total of 12,700 kg of snus was imported from Sweden into Finland, on which excise duties of EUR 4.6 million should have been paid. The preliminary investigation will be completed and the case will enter into indictment proceedings in early 2019.

## Snus smuggling gang

Since July 2018, Customs has been investigating a large-scale snus smuggling operation by an Estonian gang. The preliminary investigation started when Customs was able to track down two Estonian men through its intelligence gathering activities in July and confiscated 381 kg of snus from them.

The two men had rented a camper van from Finland and taken it on a ferry from Helsinki to Stockholm to pick up snus. They returned on a ferry operating from Kapellskär to Naantali. Customs stopped the camper van in Järvenpää, confiscated the snus load and apprehended the men.

During the early stages of the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the snus smuggled by the two men also involved a third Estonian man. It was also discovered that snus had also been smuggled earlier and that the snus loads were delivered to individuals who, judging from the amounts of snus delivered, seemed to be retailers.

When Customs continued to investigate the role of the third Estonian man, it was fairly quickly discovered that his task was to receive smuggled snus loads and deliver them to Finnish wholesalers in the Helsinki region. In September, Customs stopped the man in Vantaa

when delivering snus. He had given four boxes of snus from his van to another man. Customs searched the van and confiscated 61 boxes of snus. A single box contains 24 packs of 10 cans. The Estonian man was apprehended.

A few hours prior to the apprehension, Customs identified the Estonian man in Mäntsälä, inside which an Estonian lorry with a trailer had been reversed. According to information obtained by Customs, this lorry had arrived in Naantali from Sweden in the morning of the same day. Based on observations, the lorry driver and the Estonian man unloaded the

content of the trailer into the warehouse. This took roughly 15 minutes, after which the lorry exited from the warehouse. Soon after the lorry left, the Estonian man drove away from the warehouse in a van which had been inside the warehouse.

After the man was apprehended, Customs searched the warehouse. There were two pallets on which boxes of snus had been stacked. Plastic film had been wrapped around the boxes. In total, there were 101 boxes on the two pallets. There were several empty pallets and piles of removed plastic film in the warehouse. This indicated that other smuggled snus loads had been delivered earlier into the warehouse. In addition, there was an electric pallet truck, which had been used to unload the pallets from the truck.

As the preliminary investigation continued, Customs started to suspect that an Estonian man living in Estonia led and planned the operation. He was suspected of maintaining contact with wholesalers in Sweden, of paying for the snus loads and of organising their import into Finland. Customs started to realise what kind of a gang was running the operation.

The two Estonian men received orders from illegal Finnish wholesalers and accepted payments from them. One of these two men then delivered the money personally to the organiser living in Estonia. The organiser arranged importers for the smuggled snus loads.

Customs confiscated the third snus load in October. At the time, one of the two men apprehended in July travelled from Tallinn to Helsinki on a ferry, using the identity of another person. In Helsinki, he was given a Finnish van which he drove to Tornio in northern Finland. Before crossing the border into Sweden, he attached Swedish registration plates to the van. When returning to Finland, he used the same registration plates to avoid being inspected by Customs. He removed the registration plates in Finland and

drove to Helsinki. In Helsinki, Customs stopped the van and confiscated 183 kg of snus. The man was re-apprehended.

The man suspected as the leader of the gang arrived in Helsinki from Tallinn on a ferry in October 2018. He used the identity and identification card of another person. He was apprehended for a preliminary investigation.

Customs investigates the case as aggravated tax fraud and smuggling. On the basis of the preliminary investigation, Customs suspects that the gang started the snus smuggling

operation in March 2018 and that it smuggled a large number of snus loads.

The total amount of smuggled snus is estimated to be 5 000 kg, of which Customs has seized 960 kg. In total, nearly EUR 2 million in excise duties have been evaded. Altogether 11 persons are suspected of being involved in the criminal operation, four of whom have been imprisoned. In addition, the suspected wholesalers, i.e. the Finnish men living in the Helsinki region, have been apprehended.

## Aggravated tax fraud using forged customs documents

A person is suspected of aggravated tax fraud using customs documents with forged content and, therefore, taking possession of undeclared goods. The goods were removed from the scope of customs supervision when the warehouse operator transferred them from temporary storage against forged customs documents. Therefore, the goods were undeclared, and the proper duties and taxes were left unpaid. A customs debt was incurred when the goods were removed from the scope of customs supervision contrary to regulations.

Using forged documents, the person was able to take possession of articles made from valuable metals. During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that most of the goods were delivered as air cargo to interim storage in Southern Finland. So far, several dozens of transit documents with forged content have been found.

During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that the suspect took possession of many thousands of kilos of articles made from valuable metals using forged customs documents. According to current knowledge, the amount of evaded taxes is more than EUR 8 million. The final amount will be specified later during the preliminary investigation. The suspect has been convicted in absentia and a European arrest warrant (EAW) has been issued.

The Foreign Trade and Taxation Department of Customs has taken administrative action of more than EUR 1.5 million regarding the case.



Marble cigarettes seized in the West Harbour of Helsinki.

## Cigarettes from Latvia

On 9 February 2018, Customs inspected a van that arrived from Tallinn to the West Harbour in Helsinki on the M/S Star after a cigarette sniffer dog showed significant interest in the van.

During the inspection, 350 cartons of Route66 cigarettes, i.e. 70 000 cigarettes, and 250 cartons of Marble cigarettes, i.e. 50 000 cigarettes, were discovered packed into brown cardboard boxes inside the van. The cartons did not carry Finnish and Swedish warning labels.

The driver of the van said that

he took the trip with two men, at their request, and that the cigarettes were purchased and loaded in Riga, Latvia.

According to the preliminary investigation, the three men arrived in Finland under a mutual agreement, so that the driver drove the van out of the ferry on his own and the other two men arrived on foot. When the driver's apartment was searched the next day, notes related to the sale of cigarettes, alcohol and snus were discovered. It took a month to track down the two

men who arrived on foot and place them under preliminary investigation.

The three men evaded tobacco taxes of EUR 28,290 on the illegally imported cigarettes.

The preliminary investigation of aggravated tax fraud and smuggling has been completed, and the case was transferred to the Prosecutor's Office of Helsinki for indictment proceedings.



Seized cigarettes which had been hidden inside a load of woodchips.

# SMUGGLING GBL

Many European countries classify gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) as a narcotic substance and supervise its import and use. However, there are many European countries in which GBL has not been classified as a narcotic substance. These include the Czech Republic, Germany, Croatia, Greece, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia and Spain.

The low number of GBL batches confiscated prior to 2016 hinted that GBL had disappeared from Finnish markets. This was possibly affected by the efficiency of Dutch authorities in preventing the smuggling of GBL. However, the smuggling of GBL has not stopped in Europe. It has been relocated to Poland where GBL is classified as a

psychoactive substance in consumer markets.

Later in 2016, Polish authorities were able to stop the smuggling of GBL from Poland, after which the criminals who smuggled GBL moved to Lithuania.

During the past two years, GBL has been smuggled from Lithuania via couriers not only to Finland, but all over the world. Finnish Customs has repeatedly confiscated GBL shipments sent from Lithuania by post. According to the statistics of the Customs Laboratory, Customs confiscated 143 litres of GBL in 2018, which was slightly more than in 2017 (125 litres).

## Future challenges

On 1 December 2018, GBL was classified as a narcotic substance in Lithuania. Using new regulations, Lithuanian authorities can better tackle the smuggling of GBL and punish persons taking part in smuggling operations.

Immediately following the changes in Lithuanian laws, the GBL smuggling operation moved to another European state. According to the most recent findings, GBL is now being smuggled from Slovenia which is a former Eastern Bloc country, similarly to Poland and Lithuania.

It is expected that the race between authorities and smugglers continues, until GBL is classified as a narcotic substance in all parts of Europe.



GBL canisters.



## SIPULIKANAVA – UNRESTRICTED NARCOTICS SALES IN THE TOR NETWORK

In 2014, a discussion forum called Sipulikanava opened in the Tor network. It quickly spread from discussions to the sale of illegally imported narcotics. It turned out to be a popular service and quickly grew into one of the largest Finnish websites for the sale of narcotics. To demonstrate the site's popularity, some 3 000 messages, mainly dealing with the sale or purchase of narcotics, were posted in the forum every day before Customs shut it down.

During 2016 and 2017, a total of 199 reports of offences were registered in the Data System for Police Matters. These concerned organised trading in drugs via Sipulikanava. Of these, 37 offences were aggravated.

Users did not need to register in order to use Sipulikanava. This means that anyone was easily able to sell anything, without any interference by system administrators. The site was divided into location-specific sections where buyers were able to find sellers of narcotics in the area where they lived.

There were also separate sections for mail order and large orders of narcotics.

The common practice was that a seller posted a message in Sipulikanava listing what they were selling, where they were selling and how they could be contacted. Messages nearly always included a photo of the narcotics being sold. Potential buyers browsed through different messages, forming a connection between the buyer and the seller. Details of the sale were mainly defined using highly encrypted instant messaging applications, such as Wickr.

The site's ease of use and high functionality, also on mobile devices, made it very easily accessible, also to minors.

Customs started to investigate Sipulikanava in 2017 when it discovered that a suspect in an ecstasy case previously investigated by Customs had also been involved in selling drugs in Sipulikanava. As a result of investigations and official cooperation, Customs was able to identify one of the administrators of

Sipulikanava during 2017.

The investigations also confirmed that the administrator had made trading in drugs easier and smoother via the website by constantly modifying it on the basis of requests from buyers and sellers. The administrator also built a feature allowing sellers to improve the visibility of their advertisements in exchange for bitcoin.

At the end of 2017, the house of a middle-aged man suspected of being one of the administrators of Sipulikanava was searched. Customs was assisted by the Police Special Intervention Unit of the Helsinki Police Department and the National Bureau of Investigation. As a result, a large amount of digital evidence, including the Sipulikanava servers, was seized.

In the charges placed at the end of 2018, the prosecutor demanded a sentence of at least seven years for the suspect for an aggravated narcotics offence. The case was processed in a district court in January 2019. The court will issue its verdict in February 2019.

# NARCOTICS OFFENCES AND PRECURSORS

In 2018, Finnish Customs registered altogether 2,753 narcotics offences, much fewer than in 2017. The most distinctive decrease was seen in standard narcotics offences, as their number fell by more than 400 cases.

However, the number of aggravated narcotics offences increased slightly to 281 in 2018. A total of 193 individuals were suspected of aggravated narcotics offences. Of these suspects, 42 per cent were non-Finnish, mainly from Estonia, Gambia, Morocco, Sweden and Lithuania. The standard offences were mostly detected in customs controls of postal traffic. Based on this, it is evident that large amounts of narcotics are being ordered on the Internet.

In 2018, Customs confiscated 1,060 kg of narcotics. This is much less than in 2017 (3,175 kg). This can be explained by the decrease in the amount of seized khat from 2,304 kg to 700 kg. In addition, the amount of seized hashish decreased by approximately 640 kg.

Narcotics are mainly imported to Finland from the Baltic countries

and Western Europe. Finland is also a transit country for narcotics that are smuggled to Russia and Western Europe. Of the other Nordic countries, narcotics are smuggled especially to Norway through Finland.

## Synthetic drugs

The volume of amphetamine and methamphetamine seized in 2018 was 46.3 kg. Methamphetamine only accounted for roughly 1 kg. This quantity is less than in 2017 (58.8 kg). Most often, amphetamine and methamphetamine were smuggled by foreign citizens on passenger ships. Significant amounts of amphetamine also arrived in Finland by letter, for example, from Germany.

Amphetamine remains one of the most popular narcotics in Finland. According to the statistics of narcotics seized in 2018 and wastewater surveys conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), it seems that there is practically no methamphetamine in Finnish narcotics markets. The wastewater surveys also indicate

that the use of amphetamine has increased dramatically, at least in the Helsinki region.

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are still a problem, and their variety is huge. Statistical comparisons of these substances have proven difficult, as they can be classified into three groups: narcotics, psychoactive substances banned from the consumer market, and unclassified substances.

New substances enter and old ones exit the market continuously. In 2018, some 90 new psychoactive substances were discovered in analyses conducted by the Customs Laboratory. Of these, 10 were substances that the Customs Laboratory had never encountered before. The Government decree on psychoactive substances banned from the consumer market entered into force on 20 December 2014 when substances previously classified as pharmaceuticals were included within the scope of the Narcotics Act.

However, the legislation has not put a complete stop to the import of new substances to Finland. The

Narcotic-related offences	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Aggravated narcotics offence	300	199	254	271	281
Narcotic offence	1 641	1 819	2 810	2 829	2 403
Preparation of a narcotics offence	52	88	39	39	12
Illicit consumption of narcotics	218	206	84	90	57
<b>All narcotics offences</b>	<b>2 211</b>	<b>2 312</b>	<b>3 187</b>	<b>3 229</b>	<b>2 753</b>
<b>Seized drugs</b>					
Seized amphetamine (kg) (incl. methamphetamine)	187.8	135.9	56.2	58.8	46.3
Seized marijuana (kg)	151.7	63.9	25.4	115.2	199.9
Drug seizures in cases investigated (kg)	3 488	1 277	1 036	3 175	1 060
Seized ecstasy (tablets)	58 289	9 791	107 000	19 034	187 784
Seized buprenorphine (tablets)	15 459	18 675	20 994	15 136	33 375

sample volumes examined by the Customs Laboratory have remained nearly at the same level as before the legal amendments were introduced.

Synthetic opioids have become a major problem elsewhere in Europe and in North America. They have also found their way into Finland, as large amounts of one derivative of fentanyl were seized from postal consignments during 2018. These substances were ordered from the Darknet. Customs statistics and wastewater surveys show that the previously popular alpha-PVP has disappeared from our markets.

In 2018, a total of 187 784 ecstasy pills were seized. This figure is nearly ten times higher than in the previous year. This total amount mainly consists of the batch of 130 000 seized pills, the largest batch in the history of Finnish Customs, which was probably intended to be sent to Russia. Ecstasy has maintained its popularity after its return to the market in 2012.

According to the national wastewater survey of THL, ecstasy is used particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. This supports previous assumptions that ecstasy is used largely by young adults during weekends as a party drug.

## Subutex

Subutex is still a very popular substance among drug users and it is smuggled to Finland in large quantities. In 2018, Customs confiscated about 33 000 Subutex tablets, double the amount seized in the year before.

Subutex is most often smuggled in consignments containing thousands of tablets from France to Germany and Sweden, and on to Finland in sea traffic. The abuse of the substance as an intoxicant is still common and has spread all over the country. Of foreign nationals, smuggling is mainly done by persons of North African origin, and by Lithuanian and Estonian persons.

The street prices of Subutex

tablets are still very different in southern and northern Finland. In the Helsinki region, the street market value of Subutex is EUR 30–50 per tablet, whereas in northern Finland the price can reach EUR 100–120. In prisons, the price of a single tablet can be several hundreds of euros.

In addition to the high demand for Subutex, it is also popular because of the profit gained from its sale. The acquisition price of a single tablet in France is only a few euros.

## Cannabis

In 2018, Customs seized a total of 34 kg of hashish, much less than in the year before. Altogether 199.9 kg of marijuana were seized, significantly more than in 2017.

Cannabis is the most commonly used narcotic in Finland. The smuggling of marijuana from Spain and Portugal by air increased notably during 2017, and the same trend continued in 2018, with individuals of North African origin and citizens of many different European countries acting as couriers. Hashish was also smuggled to Finland by drug couriers inside their bodies during 2018.

## Cocaine

In 2018, Customs seized 8.2 kg of cocaine, much more than in the previous year. On the basis of seizure statistics, cocaine smuggling to Finland has increased significantly since 2014. Individual quantities seized have increased for a few years now.

On the basis of THL's wastewater surveys, the use of cocaine increased heavily in the Helsinki region in summer 2016, after which it remained stable until the end of 2017. During 2018, the use of cocaine doubled.

## Khat

In 2018, Customs confiscated 711 kg of khat, much more than in the

previous year. On the basis of cases discovered by Customs, the import of fresh khat has decreased slightly, even though it is still smuggled directly from its production areas in Africa.

Large amounts of dried khat were imported using postal consignments and couriers. The increase in the proportion of dried khat, which is lighter than fresh khat, partly explains the significant decrease in the seized quantity. However, it is not likely that the use of khat has decreased. It is still a popular substance among particular minority groups.

## Precursors

Very small quantities of substances classified as precursors are seized at an annual level. In 2018, unclassified substances and equipment that can be used for legal purposes or for the production of narcotic substances arrived in Finland from Asia via air traffic and express cargo.

Finland cannot be considered a major country of production or origin in terms of narcotics, but phenomena related to drug crimes detected elsewhere in Europe have very often occurred in Finland as well. It is likely that the production of synthetic narcotics will increase in Finland, at least to a lesser extent. Finland is also used as a transit country when smuggling precursors or substances used in their manufacture from Asia to Europe.

GBL is classified as a psychoactive substance prohibited in the consumer market, but internationally it is regarded as a precursor, as inside the body it changes into GHB, a narcotic. In 2018, high quantities of GBL were discovered and Customs seized about 140 l of GBL. In 2018, the substance was mainly imported to Finland from Lithuania in canisters of one or five litres.

A single dose of GBL is 1–2 ml, meaning that one litre provides as many as 1 000 doses. Lithuania classified GBL as a narcotic substance on 1 December 2018. The impact of this decision will be seen during 2019.

## Aggravated narcotics offences by men from Lithuania

Last year, Customs investigated a criminal operation related to smuggling amphetamine and cocaine.

The preliminary investigation started when, at the beginning of February, Customs monitored two men from Lithuania in relation to a drug smuggling operation. The men were apprehended after one day of monitoring. One of the suspects entered a car with a Finnish registration number carrying suspicious bags. The car was stopped, and the Lithuanian suspect and Finnish driver were apprehended on suspicion of an aggravated narcotics offence.

During the same evening, the hotel room in which the two Lithuanian men were staying was searched. One of the two Lithuanian suspects was apprehended in the hotel room. Several mobile phones were seized from the room.

The next day, one of the phones started to receive text messages, on the basis of which monitoring began of a Lithuanian truck and trailer arriving from Estonia the same morning.

The vehicle was stopped and inspected in the Helsinki region the same day. A powder fire extinguisher containing 5 000 ml of liquid amphetamine was seized from the cab. The concentration of amphetamines in the liquid was 79 per cent. It could have been used to produce more than 19 kg of amphetamine sulphate for street sales (95 000 doses). In addition, a package containing 501 grams of cocaine was seized from a bucket of salt located in the cabin.

The purity of the cocaine was 91 per cent, which means that it could have been used to produce

approximately 2 kg of cocaine for street sales. Other ingredients required for the production of amphetamines were also seized from the vehicle. The total value of the seized narcotic substances was roughly EUR 822 000.

During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that, in October and November 2017, the two suspects had also smuggled 500 g of cocaine and 2 000 ml of liquid amphetamine, which could have been used to produce 7.5 kg of amphetamine for street sales. The total street value of the narcotic substances was roughly EUR 420 000.

During the preliminary investigation, four Lithuanian and Finnish men born in the 1970s or the 1980s were placed in custody. Three of them are full members of Finnish and Lithuanian sections of an international motorcycle club.

The aggravated narcotics offences have been processed in Helsinki District Court, but the decisions are not yet legally valid.

## PHARMACEUTICALS CLASSIFIED AS NARCOTICS, MEDICINES, DOPING

### PHARMACEUTICALS CLASSIFIED AS NARCOTICS

Offences involving pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics are regarded as narcotics offences, and there are no separate official statistics on them.

During 2018, Customs seized altogether 78 192 tablets of pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics. The quantities of seized pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics decreased significantly, i.e. 54 per cent, from the

previous year's corresponding review period. Compared with 2017, the quantity of seized buprenorphine more than doubled from 15 136 to 33 375 tablets.

According to the statistics of the Customs Laboratory, buprenorphine was among the pharmaceuticals seized in the highest quantities in 2018, along with diazepam, alprazolam and clonazepam. Of all

pharmaceuticals seized during 2018, roughly half were benzodiazepines classified as narcotics. The other half comprised opioid-based pharmaceuticals, of which buprenorphine was clearly the most common. When measured by the number of items, it was also the most commonly seized pharmaceutical. Buprenorphine was followed by diazepam, a benzodiazepine, account-

ing for 47 per cent of all benzodiazepines. Other seized pharmaceuticals included alprazolam and clonazepam, which are also benzodiazepines. Alprazolam made up 33 per cent and clonazepam 14 per cent of all benzodiazepines seized.

Some quantities of other substances classified as opioids, such as methadone, codeine and oxycodone, were also seized in 2018. In addition, small quantities of methylphenidate, rarer benzodiazepine de-

rivatives, and dexamphetamine were discovered.

By far the most, i.e. 91 per cent, of all pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics were seized from postal and courier consignments in 2018. Five per cent of these pharmaceuticals were seized from air traffic, whereas sea and road traffic accounted for four per cent.

The pharmaceuticals seized during 2018 were mainly sent from the UK, Portugal and Hungary. Of all

postal and courier consignments containing pharmaceuticals, 26 per cent were sent from the UK, 18 per cent from Portugal and 8 per cent from Hungary.

In most cases, the suspect was Finnish, with Finnish citizens accounting for 81 per cent of all suspects. In individual cases, suspects were Russian, Norwegian and Spanish citizens.

Seized narcotic medicines (tablets) (incl. buprenorfin)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total</b>	<b>35 202</b>	<b>36 921</b>	<b>82 115</b>	<b>170 052</b>	<b>78 192</b>

## PHARMACEUTICALS

In 2018, the total number of pharmaceutical offences recorded by Finnish Customs decreased slightly, i.e. four per cent, from the previous year's corresponding period. The number of standard pharmaceutical offences decreased by 27 per cent from the previous review period, whereas the number of pharmaceutical violations remained unchanged from the previous year. The majority of all recorded cases were processed as pharmaceutical violations. These often lead to the confiscation of the substances in question.

During 2018, significantly fewer tablets were seized than in 2017. In total, 56 009 tablets were confiscated in 2018, while the corresponding figure in 2017 was 265 406 tablets,

showing a decrease of as much as 79 per cent.

Clenbuterol, various cancer drugs and opioid-based painkillers represented the majority of all pharmaceuticals seized by Customs in 2018. Clenbuterol is mainly used to treat equine asthma, and it has no other medical use in the EU. In addition, cancer drugs, such as exemestane, letrozole and anastrozole, were seized during 2018. Tramadol, an opioid-based painkiller, was the third most common substance seized.

Seized pharmaceuticals also included erectile dysfunction drugs and a variety of medicines used to treat illnesses or their symptoms, such as high blood pressure,

pain, allergies or depression. When comparing the development of the quantities seized in 2017 and 2018, changes can be seen in certain groups of pharmaceuticals. The quantities of seized exemestane, letrozole and anastrozole increased by 80 per cent and those of seized tramadol increased by 28 per cent from 2017.

Most pharmaceuticals were seized from postal and courier consignments. A total of 88 per cent of all standard pharmaceutical offences recorded in 2018 were discovered by monitoring postal and courier consignments. Of all pharmaceutical violations, postal and courier consignments accounted for 91 per cent.

Medicine offences	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Medicine offence	190	124	144	110	<b>80</b>
Medicine violation	561	682	710	632	<b>633</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>713</b>
Seized medicines (tablets)	90 792	282 908	225 564	265 406	<b>56 009</b>

In terms of pharmaceutical offences, substances were mainly sent from India, the USA, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Of all pharmaceuticals discovered by Customs, 15 per cent were sent from India. It was followed by the USA, Switzerland and the Netherlands, each accounting for 13 per cent of all confiscated pharmaceuticals. With

regard to pharmaceutical violations, substances were mainly sent from Switzerland, accounting for 28 per cent of all seized pharmaceuticals, the USA (20 per cent) and India (11 per cent). In a few individual cases, pharmaceuticals were sent from various countries. Most of the postal consignment inspections were carried out using X-ray machines.

Of all suspects of standard pharmaceutical offences, 66 per cent were Finnish. Six per cent of all suspects were Russian citizens. Of all suspects of pharmaceutical violations, Finnish citizens made up 79 per cent and Russian citizens 3 per cent. Other nationalities were only involved in a few individual cases of offences and violations.

## DOPING SUBSTANCES

During 2018, Customs uncovered altogether 230 doping offences, i.e. roughly the same number as in the previous year. Of these, 13 were aggravated offences. The number of standard doping substances increased by 35 per cent, whereas the number of minor doping offences decreased by 10 per cent from 2017.

The number of seized doping substances remained unchanged from 2017, while the amount of substances increased significantly in 2018. The large individual batches seized during the final quarter of 2018 raised the full-year amount of seized substances much higher than in the previous year. Altogether 587 445 tablets or ampoules of doping substances were seized in 2018. This number is more than four times higher than in 2017 when a total of 121 301 tablets or ampoules were seized.

According to the statistics of

the Customs Laboratory, by far the majority of all doping substances confiscated in 2018, up to 93 per cent, were anabolic steroids. The most common substance was stanozolol which accounted for half of all seized anabolic steroids. It was followed by oxandrolone which, together with stanozolol, made up 80 per cent of all anabolic steroids seized in 2018.

Testosterone only accounted for a very small proportion, i.e. three per cent, of all doping substances seized in 2018. All testosterone seized in 2018 came in an injected form, whereas the majority of seized anabolic steroids were tablets. Some antiestrogens and growth hormones classified as doping substances were also seized.

The majority (80 per cent) of all doping substances were confiscated from postal and courier consignments. Six per cent of all substances were seized from air traffic, five per

cent from road and rail traffic and three per cent from sea traffic. The remaining substances were confiscated during investigations. The majority of all doping substances were seized from international postal consignments at Helsinki Airport.

In 2018, the postal and courier consignments that contained doping substances were mainly sent from Poland and the USA, each accounting for 18 per cent of all cases. These were followed by the UK (10 per cent) and Hungary (9 per cent). Eight per cent of all consignments were sent from Singapore, while individual consignments were sent from various countries.

Most of the suspects (83 per cent) of doping offences were Finnish. In a few cases, suspects came from Iraq, Russia and Poland, and citizens of other countries were only involved in a few individual cases of doping offences.

Doping offences	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Aggravated doping offence	17	29	35	6	13
Doping offence	256	154	49	37	50
Petty doping offence	52	160	160	186	167
<b>Total</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Seized doping substances (tablets/ampoules)</b>	<b>87 491</b>	<b>110 442</b>	<b>28 188</b>	<b>121 301</b>	<b>587 445</b>

# Doping substances from Bulgaria

In October 2018, Customs seized a large amount of doping substances from two parcels addressed to a single recipient. The parcels were sent from Bulgaria, and their total weight was 21 kg.

In total, 3,830 ampoules and 1,850 pills of anabolic steroids and testosterone were seized from the parcels. This amount would be sufficient for 269 use cycles, and the street value of the substances would be roughly EUR 25 000. In addition, 1 150 pills of Clenbuterol, a prescription drug, were seized from one of the two parcels. This case is being investigated as an aggravated doping offence and a smuggling offence.



## CUSTOMS LABORATORY TESTS AND ANALYSES

In 2018, the Customs Laboratory tested some 5,000 samples related to illegal importing. For many years, the number of samples continued to increase. Now, this increase has been stopped by eliminating any samples sent unnecessarily to the Customs Laboratory. At the same time, the level of analytics has been improved and new measuring devices acquired in order to analyse more demanding samples.

Customs is often the first authority that runs into new phenomena when it monitors the flow of goods. The Customs Laboratory also plays an important part in discovering these new phenomena. All new designer drugs and doping substances, as well as pharmaceuticals, must be analysed. This requires modern analysis equipment.

The most recent addition to the already impressive list of equipment is the gas chromatography-infrared detector (GC-IRD) acquired with the help of the EU's Internal Security Fund (ISF). It can, for example, detect any minor differences in the structure of designer drugs. Funding obtained from the ISF was also used to acquire eight portable Raman measuring devices that allow customs officers to identify different

substances in field conditions.

Similar developments have been seen among the customs authorities of many EU countries in order to make a rough distinction between legal and illegal shipments in the field using various portable units. This speeds up the flow of goods. In this way, the Customs Laboratory can focus on the analysis of the most demanding samples that are relevant in terms of investigations. As a result, the overall process becomes quicker and more cost-efficient.

New laboratory and field measuring devices are introduced at an accelerating pace. Keeping up with this development, testing devices and acquiring them through bidding processes is time-consuming and, as resources are often limited, it must always be ensured that the basic

task laid down in the legislation is always fulfilled without any problems. However, it is not possible to resolve tomorrow's problems using yesterday's equipment. Therefore, it is vital to follow current trends.

Maintaining clear and updated lists of pharmaceuticals, narcotics and doping substances would benefit Customs and citizens. These would eliminate unnecessary work and many mix-ups, which in the worst case are thrashed out in different courts of law. The Customs Laboratory is also working on these, but the real power lies in the relevant ministries.

However, the parties have maintained a positive dialogue, which continues to be necessary in order to reduce any legislative problems that interfere with customs enforcement.

*New phenomena and technological development are not the biggest challenges for the Customs Laboratory and, thus, for monitoring illegal importing: the slow pace of the legislative process in this constantly changing world ties the hands of Customs. A continuous game of cat-and-mouse is going on in the world of designer drugs and designer doping substances.*



## End of an online store

Last year, Customs completed extensive preliminary investigations of the import and online sale of narcotics in 2017.

The preliminary investigation started in autumn 2017 when 100 g of cocaine arrived at Helsinki Airport from the Netherlands. The cocaine was hidden inside two candles and addressed to a private residence in the Helsinki region. A few weeks later, two letters were sent to the same address from Germany, from which Customs confiscated 193 g of amphetamine.

During the preliminary investigation, Customs was quickly able to track down the suspects. Using various investigative measures, Customs discovered that the narcotics were received by a 30-year-old man who lived in the Helsinki region. The suspect had outsourced the pick-up of shipments to his partners who, earlier in the spring, had picked up four shipments from the post office sent to the same address.

The Dutch authorities provided more information about these previous shipments. They had seized the computer of a local online seller of narcotics. It produced evi-

dence, for example, of the narcotics sent to Finland. Four of these shipments were addressed to the residence of the suspect who was under investigation by Customs, and the content of two of these shipments was uncovered on the basis of information obtained from the Dutch authorities.

A shipment sent to Finland in March contained 3 000 diamond-shaped ecstasy pills, and another shipment sent in June contained 50 g of cocaine with a purity of 86 per cent.

During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that the main suspect had sold the imported narcotics in a marketplace located in the Silkkitie (Valhalla) service between April and October 2017. In total, the main suspect sold 117 g of pure alpha-PVP, 223 g of MDMA, 72 g of amphetamine, 125 ecstasy pills, 580 Rivotril 2 mg pills and 20 OxyContin 80 mg pills. In addition, 50 g of cocaine and 3 000 ecstasy pills ended up in street sales.

A small cabinet for growing cannabis was also discovered during the preliminary investigation.

## Sentences for aggravated narcotics offences

During the preliminary investigation, Customs seized the main suspect's computer and mobile phone, which contained the addresses of bitcoin wallets used in trading in drugs. The Vantaa District Court ruled that the computer and mobile phone should be seized.

In total, the case involved nine suspects. Vantaa District Court sentenced the main suspect to more than seven years in prison. In addition, he was ordered to hand over nearly EUR 80 000 in criminal gains to the state along with the other suspects.

One man who also received and sold narcotics was sentenced to four years in prison. The men who picked up the narcotics from the post office received prison sentences of two years and four years.

The other suspects received sentences ranging from fines to short suspended sentences. Not all sentences are yet legally valid.

# EU K9 UNIT NETWORK – INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN CANINE OPERATIONS

Late in summer 2016, Finnish Customs, together with Danish Customs, was selected on the basis of proposal by the EU Commission, to lead a canine operations project called the EU K9 Unit Network under the Customs 2020 programme. Finland was elected to chair the project. The EU Commission had noticed the unusually long-term and successful partnership between Finland and Denmark in canine operations, dating back to the early 1980s, and proposed that these two countries head the project.

Before the project was launched, an action plan was prepared for the EU Commission. One of its ambitious goals was to use customs dogs jointly in the EU area. Another goal recorded in the action plan was the optimal use of customs dogs in different traffic areas.

One of the missions of dogs is to protect EU citizens against risky shipments that are sent to the EU territory and also to safeguard the EU's financial interests. Therefore, it was necessary to establish a well-functioning canine network across Europe in order to protect citizens and the environment. The purpose of the project is to build a strong and long-lasting cooperation network within Europe for canine operations – a cost-efficient mechanism.

The joint use of customs dogs was rehearsed in practice in summer 2018 when the EU Canine Unit Network Exercise was held in Finland. The one-month exercise involved 26 dogs with their handlers from 11 different countries. The participating dogs represented all kinds of breeds.

From Finland, 14 dogs with their

handlers participated in the exercise. All in all, the exercise involved a large group of canine professionals.

The exercise was held in summer 2018 during the FIFA World Cup in Russia. During different periods over four weeks, dogs were assigned in Imatra, Nuijamaa (Vainikkala), Vaalimaa, Kotka, Airport Customs, and Helsinki ports. The purpose was to identify and develop the best ways of work. It was also possible to compare operating practices between different countries, and the participants talked actively about their methods.

The exercise required demanding preparations, and it was a challenge to assign dogs and handlers to correct traffic areas in accordance with the training of each dog. Accommodation and transportation also required complicated arrangements but, in the end, everything went smoothly. The project required hard work and the input of volunteers in order to succeed.

## Future dog activity

The participating units, handlers and the mobile enforcement team proved to be valuable assets. The Police Dog Training Centre kindly allowed one of its dog trailers to be used in the project. Briefly said, the exercise was a success.

The EU K9 Unit Network project was launched at a kick-off event held in Kuusamo in November 2017, with representatives of nearly all participating countries being present. The framework of the project was outlined during the event. At the next seminar held in Malta, guidelines were defined for activi-

ties and, for example, for the joint exercise to be held in 2018. In addition, an action plan was prepared to define details of the project's goals and priorities, as well as the tasks and schedules of different sub-committees.

The results of the exercise held in summer 2018 were discussed at a seminar in Helsinki in November 2018. There, plans were also prepared for the last two years of the project, and changes made to the action plan were approved.

The main idea is to divide the participating countries into smaller groups for which different service tasks will be assigned. Finland's task, together with the Czech Republic and Lithuania, is to plan how the efficiency of tobacco detection dogs could be improved. Denmark is expected to join this group.

Plans are already well underway, but their practical implementation requires precise schedules, for example, regarding official visits and coordination meetings. In Finland, the results of this group are expected to be visible later this year through the more effective selection of targets and the use of tobacco detection dogs.

The project's conclusion in 2021 is approaching, but it is already quite obvious that it will continue in the form of a new customs programme. The project helps us to improve our skills and modernise our activities.



*CBRNE exercise at Airport Customs in October 2018.*

## CBRNE – PRESENTATION OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

CBRNE stands for hazards resulting from chemical (C), biological (B), radioactive (R), nuclear (N) and explosive (E) materials, as well as from the lack or misuse of related know-how.

Finnish Customs has participated in official cooperation in this sector from the beginning. The Police of Finland led the establishment of a cooperation forum in 2008. Its members have included both practical specialists and academic experts. In addition to cooperation activities, an annual ship seminar has been held for ten years now.

In 2017, the Ministry of the Interior issued the first national CBRNE strategy which was prepared by a

strategy working group established in 2015. Customs had representatives in the strategy team and the former cooperation forum, the last name of which was the 2nd subdivision of the CBRNE strategy working group. The CBRNE strategy working group finished its work in 2018 and concluded that cross-administrative cooperation between authorities is needed in terms of CBRNE, also in the future.

Customs acts as the radiation detection supervisor in close cooperation with the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK). STUK owns and maintains the radiation detectors used by Customs, both fixed gate monitors and port-

able devices. Customs is also actively involved in testing new technical solutions developed by STUK. If there are any problems, Customs employees can contact STUK's 24/7 emergency service. Customs employees have also participated in radiation detection training in Europe, and Customs has established a permanent radiation detection team with Russian Customs which meets regularly. In November 2018, this team organised a joint radiation detection exercise in Russia, in which some ten customs officers participated from Finland.

In October, Customs, in cooperation with various authorities, organised a CBRNE exercise at Airport Customs and participated in a major accident exercise at Musalo harbour in Kotka. Customs was in charge of organising the exercise held at Airport Customs. Other parties involved were Posti, the Keski-Uusimaa Rescue Department, Finavia's rescue services, the Itä-Uusimaa Police Department and STUK. Trafi participated in the role of an observer. The exercise was the first of its kind, and its goal was to assess how cooperation between different authorities works in threatening situations.

The exercise included a simulated situation where a letter containing a hazardous chemical breaks in the facilities of Customs, causing one Customs employee to be exposed to the chemical. The contaminated area was cleared and isolated, other employees were evacuated and first aid was administered to the exposed official. The alerted rescue units moved the chemical into a fume hood. Next, fire-fighters dressed in chemical-resistant coveralls identified the substance using the chemical analyser of Customs before packaging it into transport containers.

During the second phase of the exercise, the detection of a radiating substance from parcels was simulated. Customs officials also contacted STUK's emergency services for further instructions.

Both phases of the exercise were a success, and all the participating parties stated that CBRNE exercises are necessary and that new ones need to be organised in the future. Coordinating the activities of the authorities is vital in these types of situations so that all goes smoothly and without any delays. It is equally important to build well-functioning communication

channels.

Various CBRNE situations have been identified at Customs, such as narcotics and powders sent by post. It has been stated that common guidelines are needed for CBRNE monitoring. The goal of these guidelines is to harmonise and simplify the CBRNE practices of Customs in different locations, while addressing occupational safety and health.

These guidelines will first be prepared for Airport Customs. Following the piloting phase, they will be customised for different modes of transport and different locations. The guidelines will include instructions on what to do in the case of emergencies, contact information, and information about protective equipment and about how to use it.



*Customs officials inspecting a scrap metal load using radiation monitoring equipment in Tornio in October 2018.*

A large-scale radiation inspection operation was held in Tornio in October 2018. The operation started when a load of scrap metal was delivered to the Outokumpu steel mill in Tornio for melting, causing a radiation alarm. The load contained radioactive americium which is used, for example, in industrial measuring devices.

The metal batch was most likely sent from outside Europe. After this incident, Customs actively monitored scrap metal loads sent to the steel mill for a few days, but no new findings were made. Radiation sources that have not been processed properly can occasionally be found from among recycled metal. This operation was a good example of the need for radiation monitoring, also outside border-crossing points.

# PRODUCT SAFETY CONTROLS

## TOYS AND VEGETABLES FORM MAJORITY OF REJECTIONS

This year's hit toys – soft plastic Squishies that attract small children, in particular – were found to be dangerous, and the import of all of their batches was prohibited. Small parts that compress and slowly return to their original size can be easily removed from Squishies toys. If a child puts one of these pieces in their mouth, it may cause suffocation when it swells up. Customs prohibited the import of many large Squishies batches and reported these products to the EU's Rapex database.

Slimes were other favourite toys that were often found to be in breach of regulations. On the basis of observations made by Customs and many other member states, boron is a common problem in slimes. Any excess concentrations of boron in slimes were also reported to the Rapex database.

In 2018, Customs tested the compliance of a total of 4,072 samples (batches) with regulations within the scope of the enforcement of product safety. This fell well short of the target level of 5,000 samples. Therefore, the enforcement rate was 81%. The number of samples was mainly affected by the nearly year-round lack of personnel resources in key functions.

A total of 1 798 samples of consumer goods, also including goods intended to come into contact with food products, and 2 274 samples of food products were tested.

Enforcement focused on the import of consumer goods from outside the EU and the single market trade on food products. It was discovered that roughly 25% of food products imported from the single market came from outside the community.

Furthermore, 25% of all products tested under the enforcement of product safety were found to

be in breach of valid regulations. In terms of quantities, vegetables and vegetable products formed the largest group of rejected food products, as they were found to contain traces of pesticides and their microbiological quality was found to be poor. In total, 486 of these products were tested.

Toys formed the largest group of both rejected and tested consumer goods, totalling 624 samples. Defects in toys were mainly related to mechanical properties, hazardous substances and markings.



*In 2018, Customs sent 92 reports to rights holders regarding consignments that were suspected to contain forged products. In total, Customs tested 126,169 articles. The value of articles leading to further actions was EUR 2 176 665.*

*The continuing increase in online sales is reflected in statistics of product stops, as 93% of all stops concerned postal traffic or express cargo. Stopped products that were destroyed during customs enforcement included game consoles, electric guitars, smartphones, phone batteries, clothes and shoes.*



## MANU – THE CUSTOMS SNIFFER DOG OF THE YEAR

The Finnish Kennel Club nominated the service dogs of the year 2018 at the Dog Fair Finland. Selected the Customs sniffer dog of the year, Manu, a Labrador Retriever who works in Airport Customs, has revealed 870 narcotics smuggling cases in four years. Manu helped to uncover, for example, a large-scale smuggling operation when he identified a drug courier who, after investigation, was found to have smuggled narcotics on a total of 50 occasions.

Manu, also known as the Columbo of Varjoaho, has an incredible motivation that shows no signs of decrease, even though Manu is already six years of age. Every morning, Manu goes to work as excited as every other day. So far, Manu has already revealed 34 aggravated narcotics offences. Being self-confident, Manu

detects even the faintest smells. He gets an energy boost from findings. Detecting narcotics is a serious business for Manu, even though it involves play.

Manu works seamlessly with his handler, which is reflected in the number of uncovered narcotics cases and well-functioning cooperation between the police, Customs and border control. What is more, Manu's accuracy is among the highest in Finland: for example, nearly one third of all inspections made in 2018 were productive. The handler's determination and professional and motivated attitude towards work has had a significant impact on Manu's fantastic results.

Manu will retire in a couple of years, even though he has remained healthy and in excellent condition. Manu's handler also wants Manu to enjoy his retirement.

### Customs detector dog activity 50 years

*Canine operations of Customs comprise close cooperation, as well as productive and visible activities to protect society in passenger and goods transports. Customs has close to 50 sniffer dogs who work in extensive and mobile operations on Finland's external and internal borders. Sniffer dogs are used to control material prohibitions and restrictions in road, air, rail and sea transport.*

*Customs has trained and used sniffer dogs since 1969. In addition to detecting narcotics, Customs trains dogs to detect cigarettes, snus, cash, weapons, explosives and foodstuffs of animal origin.*

*The year 2019 marks an anniversary for Customs canine operations that started 50 years ago.*

*In spring 2019, a festive exhibition of canine operations will be on display at the Customs Museum. In addition, a history of sniffer dogs will be published during the year.*

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