

# Finnish Customs Enforcement 2021



**TULLI**

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## Securitas via collaboratore – a challenge or an opportunity?

Just when it feels like the world around us cannot change more unexpectedly or rapidly, new changes come along... A large part – maybe even the largest part – of these changes are such that Finnish Customs can only react to them, because the overview to the future and the overview to preparing for the future are inadequate. Why are we in such a situation? Because we (read: employees and operations of Finnish Customs, and the customs authorities) are strongly affected by all the changes around us, in our operating environment and in our regulatory framework, and these usually take place without Finnish Customs being involved in the key forums in which these changes are drafted or preparations are made. Furthermore, because we are not involved in defining the future, we can only react to future changes – and often “a little too late”.

Having to react or being “a little too late” in preparations is not only an organisational weakness (or like it is said nowadays: “a development area”) because we can also avoid all kinds of whims and fast-paced fashion trends – especially if the organisation has enough resilience, a sufficient ability to be agile when reacting to the unexpected, and the necessary understanding of implementing the lessons learned as part of regular future activities.

What is the point of analysing or trying to smartly predict the future and proactively anticipate potential changes, especially if this “eats up” a significant amount of resources? In this way, changes are not unexpected, but the logical next step or merely a new assignment, the comings and goings of which rarely even leave a trace.

What does all of this have to do with us? Are we supposed to be proactive or “a little too late”? Being traditionally involved in commercial policies and a significant tax authority, Finnish Customs is largely – and will be even more in the future – a national supervisory authority and a national law enforcement agency. What is more, all other authorities (similarly to regular customs activities) rely on the analytical expertise of this authority and on its ability to conduct concrete supervisory activities across the country and especially on its borders.



Well, rely and rely... At least I believe that other authorities certainly rely on such an authority and partner that has not only the ability to react to changes, but also the will and ability to have a proactive impact on decision-making in relevant bodies to make these changes reasonable and feasible in real life. What gives this “will and ability” to an organisation? They are based on first-rate professional skills, high-quality work and a professional pride that convince others, and indicate that we are worth listening to. We should also be heard when we not only shout out to be heard, but provide information when separately asked to do so.

I understand that the changes described above are ongoing and never-ending, and that Finnish Customs is listened to more than before (read: respected), because we can produce added value for other authorities and, in this way, broadly for Finnish society at large. I could write down a long list of such concrete situations taken place throughout the 2000s, but their frequency has increased in recent years. Let’s take care of our territory and our activities, as well as those of others, so that we can truly feel like we are providing security through cooperation. As a result, we will also be invited to central bodies – and we will especially be listened to.

Thank you all for the past year! You have given your everything and performed incredibly well under these truly exceptional circumstances.

On Shrove Tuesday 2022

**Sami Rakshit**

Director of the Enforcement Department

# Crime overview

Protecting citizens, society and the environment is one of the main tasks of Finnish Customs. This task is carried out by such means as ensuring the safety of goods, the appropriateness of foreign trade and preventing cross-border crime.

In 2021, citizens' health and safety were threatened not only by the coronavirus pandemic, but also by the smuggling of banned substances, food fraud, waste crime, the 3D printing of firearms and illegal trade in the darknet. Ensuring citizens' health security is one of the most important tasks of Finnish Customs, to which special resources have been allocated.

**Criminal activities are often disguised as part of societal structures by pursuing them under the cover of legitimate business.**

## New technologies challenge crime prevention

Crime is becoming increasingly international and shifting to more and more advanced technologies. Criminal activities are often disguised as part of societal structures by pursuing them under the cover of legitimate business. Criminals know legislation like the back of their hand and exploit the structures of foreign trade and declaration processes. During the coronavirus period, criminal activities have targeted new international supply chains and logistics solutions, as well as products related to the pandemic. The exceptional circumstances have also offered opportunities for new types of economic crime.

Keeping up with the increasingly digital and more complicated operating environment sets a challenge for crime prevention. For example, strongly encrypted messaging channels and devices, payment innovation and solutions that enable the automatic destruction of evidence are exploited in narcotics crime. During 2021, the authorities were able to break in to several messaging systems used by criminals. Using the messaging app developed in the international Anom operation, Finnish Customs seized significant amounts of narcotic substances in Finland.

## Finnish Customs targeted its operations successfully

The smuggling of banned substances and products subject to restrictions has decreased in passenger transport now that passenger volumes have been low during the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, the illegal importation of these products in postal, express courier and cargo services has increased. Heavy goods traffic has continued normally, and commercial vehicles have especially been used to import narcotic substances, snus, cigarettes and alcohol illegally into Finland.

As a result of the declined passenger volumes, the total number of customs offences continued to decrease in 2021. In 2021, Finnish Customs uncovered a total of 5,402 criminal cases, down by more than 1,200 from the previous year. In particular, the number of tax fraud and pharmaceutical offences has decreased. As passenger volumes are lower, fewer tax fraud cases have been uncovered. In addition, the number of standard narcotics offences in postal traffic has decreased for a few years now. This can partly be explained by the ability of Finnish Customs to significantly intervene in online sales of narcotic substances.

In 2021, the impact of crime prevention by Finnish Customs was high, totalling EUR 70 million. The majority, EUR 32 million, consisted of recovered proceeds of crime. These excellent results indicate that the operations of Finnish Customs were targeted successfully.

## International crime phenomena land in Finland

Criminals are arming themselves increasingly in Europe, and a similar trend has also been seen in Finland. In 2021, Finnish Customs seized a large number of firearms (491) like in the previous year. The majority of these were gas weapons, which have been under enhanced control in recent years. Gas weapons are popular because they do not require any licence and can easily be modified into firearms. Finnish Customs seized gas weapons from postal deliveries sent from the Czech Republic and Estonia, and from passengers arriving from Sweden and Estonia. More firearms were seized in 2021 than in previous years (56 in total). Most firearms are discovered during house searches involving investigations of other offences.

In the spring of 2021, Finnish Customs uncovered the first workshop for 3D printing firearms in Finland. The property located in Tampere was expressly designed for building firearms. Finnish Customs seized two operational submachine guns and a number of firearm parts and accessories from the workshop. Similar workshops have been discovered in Spain, for example.

Crime in the food chain is an international phenomenon manifesting as various types of crime in Finland. Operations are organised and lucrative, while the risk of getting caught and sanctions are low. Climate change and the coronavirus pandemic have provided criminals with new opportunities to gain profits. For example, in food fraud, a product's country of origin and ingredients may have intentionally been reported inaccurately. Financial gains may also have been sought by leaving statutory fees unpaid during such steps as importing. Finnish Customs has investigated cases of misuse related to dietary supplements, berries and meat products.

High profits and low risks also attract criminals to conduct environmental offences. This may also increase organised environmental crime pursued as part of business in Finland. This phenomenon is linked to the shadow economy, as waste crime, for example, is used in money laundering. In the waste business, European waste is often seen as raw material in Asia or as a used product in Africa, for which markets can be found. Construction waste and cars waiting for scrapping have

been exported illegally from Finland. During the coronavirus pandemic, the volume of household waste has grown globally, which may increase misuse related to the handling and transport of household and electronic waste.

In recent years, criminal cases related to threatened and protected animal and plant species have increased in Europe, with the cases coming in all shapes and sizes. Organised crime has expanded to illegal fishing and the smuggling of fish products. Collecting bird eggs and running illegal bird farms have also increased in the Nordic countries. Trade in threatened animal and plant species involves large amounts of money.

Food fraud and environmental and conservation crime are internationally significant phenomena. They involve various offences that pose a direct threat to people's health and safety. Even though Finnish Customs only registers a small number of these criminal cases annually, they are often large-scale operations that require extensive international investigations.

### **More narcotics offences than in the previous year**

In 2021, the number of narcotics offences registered by Finnish Customs was a little higher than in the previous year. Finnish Customs uncovered a total of 1,543 narcotics offences, of which 285 were aggravated. There were more aggravated narcotics offences than in the previous year, and







the threshold for an aggravated offence was exceeded especially in cocaine, amphetamine and marijuana seizures. The number of standard narcotics offences, mainly uncovered in postal traffic, remained at the previous year's level. More offences involving the use and production of narcotic substances were uncovered than in the year before.

Finland is part of the European narcotics market. The major narcotics cases investigated by the law enforcement authorities show that narcotics trading is a professional operation and largely run by organised groups of criminals. Finnish criminals have established partnerships especially with Estonian, Lithuanian, Dutch and Spanish criminal organisations that sell narcotics. The share of foreign suspects in the aggravated narcotics offences was roughly 45% in 2021.

The coronavirus pandemic has not had an impact on the narcotics situation in Finland. Unlike in the other EU Member States, narcotics have been available in Finnish street and online sales as usual, and prices have remained relatively unchanged. Due to low passenger volumes, the smuggling of narcotic substances in postal, express courier and cargo services has increased. Criminal groups have especially exploited heavy goods traffic. Narcotics are smuggled into Finland by sea and air from the Baltic countries and Western Europe. Substances are also imported from Sweden, particularly across the northern land border. In addition, large narcotics shipments are sent through postal and express courier services

from such countries as Germany and the Netherlands. Finland has also been used as a transit country when smuggling narcotics and their precursors from Asia to Europe.

Narcotics trade in the darknet has been changing ever since the authorities and site administrators shut down several popular sites. International narcotics trading appears to have become decentralised across different electronic platforms, at least in part. In Finland, the narcotics market has become fragmented and unstable. There have been rapid changes in online sales and sales platforms in Finland, and narcotics trading seems to have shifted increasingly to instant messaging services and regional sales groups. The use of Monero, a cryptocurrency that is difficult to trace, has increased as a payment instrument in narcotics trading in the darknet.

### **Record-high volumes of cocaine and pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics**

In 2021, Finnish Customs seized a total of 710 kilograms of narcotics. The drop from the previous year can be explained by the further decrease in the amount of seized khat, which was 150 kilograms lower than in 2020, totalling 276 kilograms. As a result of the coronavirus restrictions, airline passengers imported practically no khat or hashish. Similarly, the amount of seized hashish was low, totalling less than four kilograms.

## **According to wastewater surveys conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the use of cocaine has increased significantly in Finland in recent years.**

In 2021, a record-high volume of cocaine of 55 kilograms was seized, largely consisting of two major seizures. According to wastewater surveys conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the use of cocaine has increased significantly in Finland in recent years. Large seizures have most likely caused temporary disruptions in the availability of the substance, while the use of cocaine remained at a record-breaking level in 2021. Its consumption is the highest in the largest cities, while being lower than average when compared internationally. Cocaine is smuggled into Finland by lorries and airline passengers.

The volume of seized marijuana was high as in the previous year at 262 kilograms. Marijuana is imported into Finland through international goods traffic, express courier services and passenger transport. In many cases, marijuana comes from Spain, from where criminal organisations smuggle it to the rest of Europe.

Finnish Customs seized a total of 81 kilograms of amphetamine and methamphetamine, nearly double compared to the previous year. Methamphetamine accounted for roughly half a kilogram. Currently, methamphetamine plays a small role in Finnish narcotics markets. In addition, Customs seized five litres of amphetamine oil. This volume would have been sufficient to make roughly 13 kilograms of amphetamine. Amphetamine has a strong foothold in Finland, and demand is high. THL's wastewater surveys show that its use has, however, decreased from the peak figures in 2020. Amphetamine is often made in the Netherlands. It is imported into Finland mainly by sea from Estonia and Sweden.

A total of 433,550 pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics were seized, marking a new record. The total number was significantly raised by a single case, in which some 250,000 tablets of benzodiazepines were seized in heavy goods traffic. Pharmaceutical classified as narcotics were also imported in high volumes through postal services and in smaller volumes by passengers. The amount of Subutex, a buprenorphine prod-

uct, remained high, with a total of 41,110 tablets being seized. Subutex still mainly comes from France, from where it is smuggled into Finland by road and sea.

With regard to other narcotics, a large amount of LSD was seized, totalling 9,890 units. Finnish Customs seized 100 grams of heroin, nearly as small an amount as in previous years. A total of 53,920 tablets of ecstasy were seized, significantly fewer than in the previous year. Similarly, the amount of GBL, banned on the consumer market, was much lower than in 2020, totalling 162 litres. According to the Customs Laboratory's statistics, a total of 4.2 kilograms of new psychoactive substances were discovered. Of these, the most popular appears to be alpha-PHP, of which 1.5 kilograms were discovered. In addition to synthetic and powder substances, Finnish Customs discovered 16.5 kilograms of kratom which is a plant belonging to the *Mitragyna speciosa* family and contains mitragynine, a substance stimulating the central nervous system.

### **Huge volumes of nicotine pouches seized**

Finnish Customs recorded a total of 931 pharmaceutical offences and violations, significantly fewer than in the previous year. However, more than 1.5 million pharmaceuticals were seized in 2021. This figure increased by more than a million from the previous year as a result of large seizures of nicotine pouches. Pouches that contain more than four milligrams of nicotine are classified as pharmaceuticals and require a prescription. Nicotine pouches are mainly imported from Sweden through postal services, but they are also delivered by road through Tornio and by sea. Nicotine pouch imports have also been detected in traffic from Estonia and in postal shipments sent from other Baltic countries.

In addition to nicotine products, large volumes of erectile dysfunction drugs, antibiotics and cannabidiol were seized. Finnish Customs also seized ivermectin, which is used as an antiparasitic and is alleged to be effective against COVID-19. Despite warnings, Finnish consumers have increasingly ordered pharmaceuticals online during the coronavirus pandemic. The active substances or other ingredients of products ordered online may be incorrect, ineffective, unhygienic or even hazardous to health.

In 2021, Finnish Customs uncovered 250 doping offences, the most in five years. In particular, the number of standard doping offences increased. A total of 22 aggravated doping substances were registered, nearly the same number as in 2020. However, the number of seized doping substances was small like in the previous



year, being 21,610 tablets or ampoules. Seizures mainly involved testosterone, anabolic steroids and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA).

The majority of individual offences and violations related to pharmaceuticals and doping substances are uncovered in postal and courier services, mainly in international mail at Helsinki Airport. Individual cases are also uncovered in vehicle, air and sea traffic. The largest seizures are usually made in conjunction with criminal investigations. Finland's geographic location and good flight connections make it an ideal transit country for smuggling doping substances and pharmaceuticals. In recent years, Finnish Customs has uncovered several large cases in which pharmaceuticals and doping substances have been illegally transited, placed under customs warehousing or manufactured.

## **The majority of the tax fraud cases investigated by Finnish Customs in recent years have involved the smuggling and illegal trading of snus.**

### **Exploitation of business activities and customs procedures**

During the coronavirus pandemic, the number of economic crime cases investigated by Finnish Customs has decreased regarding nearly all types of offences. Furthermore, the amount of assets seized in conjunction with economic crime has decreased significantly. In 2021, Finnish Customs recorded 91 new economic crime reports, and the investigation of 122 economic crime cases was completed. Economic crime often exploits the structures of legitimate business and customs procedures. Criminals use shell corporations and invented invoicing chains, and they circulate goods and declaration documents.

Aggravated tax fraud, classified as economic crime, included the illegal importation of cigarettes, alcohol and snus, as well as cases related to excise duties and value added tax, anti-dumping duties and customs warehousing. The number of intellectual property offences and counterfeit products has remained low. Counterfeit COVID-related products such as protective equipment, pharmaceuticals and vaccines have been uncovered in foreign online shops. However, not

many such products have been detected in Finnish darknet markets and sales platforms.

### **The volume of seized snus continued to increase**

As in the previous year, the number of tax fraud cases investigated by Finnish Customs decreased significantly as a result of restrictions on international passenger transport. In 2021, Finnish Customs recorded 568 tax fraud cases, of which 96 were aggravated. Previously cigarettes, snus and alcohol were mainly smuggled by passengers, while more cases have been uncovered in postal and express courier services and commercial goods traffic during the coronavirus pandemic.

The majority of the tax fraud cases investigated by Finnish Customs in recent years have involved the smuggling and illegal trading of snus. In 2021, nearly 240 snus cases were recorded. A record-high volume of snus was seized, totalling 9,104 kilograms, equalling 606,930 cans when converted into snus cans of 15 grams. This volume was more than 2,000 kilograms higher than in the previous year. Snus has still been imported actively across the land border between Finland and Sweden. In addition, Finnish Customs has seized large amounts from lorries in ferry traffic between Finland and Estonia. In recent years, snus smuggling and sales have continued to become more professional operations.

Significantly fewer cigarettes (660,000) were seized and detained in conjunction with criminal cases than in the previous year. As in previous years, small batches of cigarettes were uncovered from lorries and cars arrived from Russia, hidden in the boot or vehicle structures. Some cases involved air traffic and cargo vessels.

In 2021, Finnish Customs also uncovered several cases of waterpipe tobacco smuggling. Products were purchased from such countries as Germany and Turkey, and they were smuggled in postal and express courier services, commercial goods traffic and passenger transport. The largest cases involved hundreds of kilograms of waterpipe tobacco.

Travel restrictions have significantly reduced the number of alcohol offences, with Finnish Customs recording 70 alcohol offences in 2021. However, alcohol was seized in large volumes as in the previous year, 10,980 litres in total. In passenger transport, 170 beverage consignments, containing 63,940 litres of alcohol, were reported for imposing taxes. In commercial transport, corresponding figures were 556 and more than five million respectively. Alcohol purchases and sales have increasingly gone online.



# Operation Opson IX uncovered counterfeit food products

The coronavirus pandemic has had a diverse impact on different societal functions which has also been reflected in operations. The pandemic has had a negative impact on normal flows of commercial goods and, to some extent, also on the international transport of food products.

In 2020, Finland participated in Opson IX, an operation targeted at counterfeit and low-quality food products, organised by Europol and Interpol. The operation period ranged from 1 December 2019 to 30 June 2020, and it involved a total of 77 countries. Finnish Customs was responsible for the national coordination of the Opson IX operation. Having also coordinated previous Opson operations, Finnish Customs has been engaged in close and productive cooperation with the Customs Laboratory, the Finnish Food Authority and municipal food safety authorities. Participation in international operations and engaging in international cooperation has been very useful, and it will be continued in the future.

## Opson IX produced excellent results

The goal of the international Opson IX operation was to prevent the access of counterfeit or low-quality food products to consumer markets, combat the activities of criminal groups, and identify the operating methods of criminals. The globally fairly comprehensive participation and productive international cooperation helped achieve these goals.

During the Opson IX operation, nearly 30,000 inspections were carried out in shops, markets and industrial properties, as well as at airports and ports in the participating countries. As a result of the operation, a total of 12,000 tons of counterfeit or low-quality food products ineligible for the consumer market were withdrawn from global food markets. Most findings concerned various non-compliant animal-based foods, while alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, olive oils, fruit, vegetables, milk products and other foods were also seized in large quantities.

## Olive oil and wines withdrawn from the markets

As a result of the operation, large quantities of non-compliant olive oil were withdrawn from

## Opson IX involved a total of 77 countries.

Finnish consumer markets. The olive oil was indicated to be extra virgin olive oil, but based on the Customs Laboratory's tests, the product did not meet the requirements set for extra virgin olive oil.

During the Opson IX operation, Greek authorities also discovered large quantities of oil claimed to be extra virgin olive oil which, after testing, was found to be artificially dyed seed oil. Such seed oil is not suitable for human consumption and may be hazardous to health.

Furthermore, Italian authorities uncovered a large counterfeit wine operation, in which low-quality wine was bottled into previously collected empty bottles of valuable wines and sold to consumers. The Italian authorities seized a total of 1,200 bottles of counterfeit wine.

## Most findings concerned counterfeit alcoholic beverages

Counterfeit food products accounted for roughly nine per cent of all findings made during the Opson IX operation. The majority of these, i.e. 40 per cent, involved counterfeit alcoholic beverages. The remaining seizures and withdrawals from consumer markets were related to product safety, fiscal violations, damaged products and other fraud related to food products. Overall, the number of findings made during the Opson IX operation decreased slightly from the previous Opson operation.

## Supervision of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment intensified

Other control operations were carried out at the same time as the Opson IX operation which targeted pharmaceuticals and medical equipment and in which the participating countries used more supervisory resources than normal. Interpol has also found hints that organised crime may have shifted from food products to pharmaceuticals and medical equipment during the pandemic.





# Finnish Customs combating food fraud

In the national strategy 2020–2023 for combating the shadow economy, Finnish Customs has been named as the responsible authority to develop the prevention of food fraud. Activities are developed in a project together with the Finnish Food Authority. In 2020, Finnish Customs established a separate project team to define how to improve the efficiency of food safety, identify any misuse associated with it, and prevent and uncover food crime. In the spring of 2021, a project manager was appointed for the project team and cooperation with the Finnish Food Authority started.

## **Finnish Customs supervises the safety of food products**

Finnish Customs plays an important part in preventing food fraud in commercial imports. It supervises the safety of imported non-animal-based food products and certain consumer goods, as well as their compliance with regulations. In addition, Finnish Customs supervises certain “combination foods” that contain processed animal-based ingredients in addition to plant-based ingredients. Product samples are examined in the Customs Laboratory, and results are reported regularly to the Finnish Food Authority and the EU Commission, among others.

Finnish Customs also assists other authorities and has taken an active role in international Opson operations of Europol and Interpol, the goal of which is to uncover food fraud. The coronavirus pandemic has affected international food fraud and offered more opportunities for fraud, especially through the online sale of food products.

## **Food fraud threatens people’s health**

There is no standard definition of food fraud in the EU. However, the Commission has set four criteria for food fraud: violation of EU rules, intention, undue advantage, and deception of customers.

There are two types of food fraud: faked foods and food fraud. Faked foods mean that food products have been modified in one way or another, while food fraud covers a broad range of problems associated with the food chain. Food fraud may threaten people’s health, safety in society and trust, as well as healthy and well-functioning competition in the food sector.

The aim of food fraud is to intentionally deceive consumers or other members of the food chain. According to studies, the goal of fraud is financial gain. It is sought by evading taxes and other statutory fees and by neglecting the obligation to report information. Fraudulent activities related to food products and the food chain can take place in any part of the chain, also between companies, such as the importer and retailer.

## **Various offences**

Food fraud is an international phenomenon that involves organised crime. Criminals are attracted by the low risk of getting caught and relatively mild punishments compared to the financial gain sought. According to estimates, food fraud cases generate annual costs of roughly EUR 8–12 billion for the EU. Food fraud causes adverse impact on law-abiding traders and also presents risks to the health and safety of citizens.

Misuse related to food products may meet the characteristics of several different offences. Crime may be investigated not only as fraud, but also as public health offences, forgery, marketing offences, the endangerment of health, violations of intellectual property rights, doping offences, pharmaceutical offences or smuggling. In addition, crime may threaten people’s lives. Food fraud may also involve economic crime, such as tax fraud and accounting offences, if the perpetrator evades taxes or neglects their other statutory obligations.

## **National and international cooperation**

The primary purpose of the joint project between Finnish Customs and the Finnish Food Authority is to identify, prevent and uncover food fraud in cross-boundary goods transport.

The project’s goal is to develop the activities of Finnish Customs and intensify cooperation with the Finnish Food Authority. Another goal is to build effective cooperation channels between different authorities for preventing and uncovering food fraud and to increase different authorities’ awareness of Finnish Customs’ role in these activities.



## The Customs Laboratory protects people's health security

Health security means preventing, identifying and combating infectious diseases and biohazards. Health security is maintained by combating physical, chemical and biological factors that threaten people's health. This is done by ensuring that food products are clean and the living environment is healthy.

The annual product safety control plan of Finnish Customs also includes the supervision of health security. In 2021, the Customs Laboratory conducted health security examinations for 804 food products and inspected 13 community face masks. This means that eight per cent of all samples sent to the Customs Laboratory in 2021 for examination underwent health security examinations.

### Microbiological quality of food products

The Customs Laboratory conducted 3,831 microbiological examinations for different food products. Harmful microbes such as *Salmonella* and *Bacillus cereus* contaminate food products and cause food poisoning. The food products examined ranged from fresh, frozen and dried vegetables to such dried products as spices, blends of spices and tea products.

*Salmonella* was found in 14 food products. In recent years, *Salmonella* has annually been discovered in 1–5 food products. This means that the number of *Salmonella* findings in 2021 was considerably higher than in previous years. It is also worth noting that *Salmonella* was found in several different products, including sesame seeds, spices and blends of spices, herbs and leaf vegetables. *Salmonella* is one of the most common causes of food poisoning globally, and it is transmissible through food products.

In addition to *Salmonella*, *Bacillus cereus* was found in five food products, *Escherichia coli* in four food products and *Clostridium perfringens* in one food product.

### Food radioactivity testing

In 2021, the Customs Laboratory examined radioactive contamination in 14 wild berry samples. The examined lingonberries, cranberries and bilberries came from Latvia, Estonia, Russia and Ukraine. All samples met the regulations set for them.

Radioactivity testing is conducted to measure contamination by the fallout caused by the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents in imported food products. The activity concentration of



caesium-137 can be much higher than normal in natural products or in food products than contain them if they are contaminated by a radioactive fallout caused by a nuclear power plant accident.

### **Examination of community face masks**

Finnish Customs also examined imported community face masks. The Customs Laboratory examined 13 different community face masks, including reusable cloth face masks and disposable nonwoven fabric face masks that do not carry the CE marking.

For example, the concentration of formaldehyde was measured in community face masks.

Formaldehyde irritates the skin, eyes and respiratory tracts, and it can be allergenic or even carcinogenic. In addition, seven face masks underwent the examination of substances of very high concern, in which 211 different chemicals hazardous to health were analysed in samples.

No compounds hazardous to health were found in the community face masks, but deficiencies were discovered in the packaging labels of a few product batches. Packaging labels must carry the warnings required by law and information significant for product safety. The information must be given in Finnish and Swedish.

## **Traces of herbicides still encountered frequently**

The ground rule in the control of imported food products is that the farther away a food product is imported, the more likely it is that the product contains traces of herbicides, for example. The use of herbicides is regulated by EU law, while regulations outside the EU may differ or be non-existent. In 2021, the majority of samples found to be non-compliant with regulations due to herbicides were imported from South America, Asia or Africa. However, elevated concentrations of traces were also found in food products imported from the EU, even though all member states are governed by the same requirements, i.e. these products should comply with the regulations. In products produced in the EU, the quantities did not, however, usually exceed the permitted maximum limits with the exception of a few individual cases.

### **Substances suspected to be hazardous found in food products**

Last year, Finnish Customs rejected nearly 50 batches of plant-based food products as non-compliant with regulations and found elevated concentrations of traces in more than 30 batches. As a result, elevated or excessively high concentrations were found in roughly five per cent of the investigated product batches. These results are along the same lines as in 2020 when more non-compliant product batches than in previous years were discovered.

High concentrations of traces of herbicides were still found in rice imported from India and

Pakistan, and not all of the identified compounds were approved in the EU. There were a total of ten rejected rice batches. During the first part of the year, several batches of Egyptian oranges were also rejected, totalling more than 100,000 kilograms. Four out of five rejected orange batches contained chlorpyrifos, a pesticide. Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate, and its use in the EU was prohibited at the end of 2020, as its health security could not be exhaustively verified. During 2021, chlorpyrifos caused the rejection of 18 product batches. All of the rejected product batches came from outside the EU.

Six food product batches were rejected due to ethylene oxide, a disinfectant. Ethylene oxide is suspected to be carcinogenic, which is why its use in the EU is prohibited. Finnish Customs started to examine traces of ethylene oxide in imported food products after the EU identified high concentrations of it in sesame seeds imported from outside the EU at the end of 2020 and later in other dried food products.

### **Traces of herbicides also found in organic feed**

In addition to food products, Finnish Customs investigates whether plant-based organic feed products contain any traces of herbicides. One of the two organic feed batches examined last year was found to contain traces of herbicides. However, this organic soy from Kazakhstan only contained a small amount of herbicides, and it would have been acceptable as regularly produced feed.

## Developing X-ray controls on the eastern border

X-ray controls in the Customs offices of Vainikkala and Vaalimaa underwent major changes in 2021. The procurement of two X-ray scanners for trains and a new X-ray facility proceeded well during the year.

The installation of the X-ray scanners for trains were completed in the Customs offices of Vainikkala and Imatra in the autumn, after which they entered the testing stage. Following the supplier's tests, a project team of Finnish Customs started conducting the contract and regulation acceptance test (CRAT) in accordance with its quality control process. The scanners have been tested in temporary facilities in the vehicle inspection office.

The modernisation of the Vaalimaa X-ray building was completed before the end of the

year, and the building contractor has vacated the worksite. The scanner supplier has continued its installation and testing activities. Before the building can be handed over to Finnish Customs, the facilities must be equipped and the X-ray buildings must be completed. At the beginning of 2022, the installation of the X-ray scanners was still in progress. The goal is to move back into the X-ray building in the spring of 2022.

After the operational tests and the final inspection later in the spring of 2022, the aim is to practise the joint use of the X-ray scanners and the X-ray facility in the customs offices on the eastern border.

## Funding for new detectors applied for from the Commission's CCEI

In the spring of 2021, Finnish Customs and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) established a joint working group to identify the need to develop radiation detectors on the eastern border and on the border between Norway and Finland. It was soon discovered that the status of detectors in other customs offices and their possible development also needed to be identified. To this end, Finnish Customs also established an internal working group.

The identifications focused on detectors in line with the 2021–2027 funding period of the Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI). CCEI is an EU instrument aimed to secure the level and up-to-date status of the customs authorities' monitoring equipment and the effectiveness of physical inspections. It provides funding for monitoring equipment to enable effective inspections without tampering with the object being inspected.

The identifications were carried out in close cooperation between STUK and customs offices. The most significant areas of development were found to be radiation and X-ray detectors, as well as automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) devices. Following the identification phase, the preparation of the funding application started under funding coordinators.

After the laborious identification process, the application is expected to be completed in early 2022 in close cooperation and with a positive team spirit. During the spring, it will be identified whether the Commission approves the application and for what equipment Finnish Customs can start preparing procurement plans.



# Finnish Customs with a more independent role in animal health control

In 2021, the animal diseases act and the act on animal transport expanded the powers of Finnish Customs in animal health control. This clarifies the role of Finnish Customs in supervising the EU internal market.

## Parallel supervisory powers in animal health control

Provisions on the prevention and control of animal diseases transmitted from one animal to another and from animals to people are laid down in the Finnish Animal Diseases Act. The new Act entered into force on 21 April 2021 and, even though the system of authorities and the distribution of responsibilities remained unchanged, it brought a major change in the powers of Finnish Customs regarding the EU internal market.

According to the new Animal Diseases Act, Finnish Customs can independently supervise compliance with provisions on animal health on the EU's internal borders. In its supervisory activities, Finnish Customs controls, for example, that pets imported from another EU state are ID-marked, that they have pet passports and that they have been vaccinated against rabies. In addition, dogs must have received medication against echinococcus.

Finnish Customs works alongside other animal health authorities based on parallel supervisory powers. According to the new Act, Finnish Customs can order an animal to be isolated, returned or killed or a product to be withdrawn if it discovers any deficiencies in the preconditions for entry into the country.

It was particularly necessary to extend the powers of Finnish Customs in the supervision of pets and food products carried by passengers. The extended powers make border inspections simpler, smoother and more frequent, and also increase the effectiveness of supervisory activities outside service hours.

## Finnish Customs also supervises animal transport

The legal act amending the Animal Transport Act entered into force on 1 July 2021. Accordingly, Finnish Customs can also independently supervise animal transport on the EU's internal bor-



ders. This amendment also aims to improve the effectiveness of supervisory activities. Previously, Finnish Customs was able to provide official assistance in controlling transports of animals on internal borders as requested by other supervisory authorities. In other words, no responsibilities were transferred from other supervisory authorities to Finnish Customs, as Finnish Customs supervises animal transports alongside other supervisory authorities.

The amendments to the Animal Diseases Act and the Animal Transport Act aim to prevent the illegal transporting of pets from one member state to another relating to puppy farms. The aim is to reduce any animal welfare problems due to puppy farms and illegal transport.

## Limiting the quantity of pet birds

The amended decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also entered into force on 17 October 2021. It restricts, for example, how many pet birds can be transferred to Finland from another EU state. Following the amendment, at most five birds can be transferred to Finland as pets.

## Cooperation and a shared operating model

Integrating Finnish Customs into the animal health control mechanism calls for close cooperation between Finnish Customs and different animal health authorities, such as the Finnish Food Authority and the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Effective joint supervisory activities also require a shared operating model that has been prepared in as much detail as possible.

# Pharmaceuticals ordered online involve many risks

Many online shops sell pharmaceuticals at attractively low prices. They may not always even require a prescription, even if one was needed to buy a similar product in Finland. The website may be in English, or it may be translated poorly. Furthermore, the website may not mention the country from which the pharmaceuticals are delivered.

These are but a few warning signs that tell consumers that they should reconsider the reliability of the website. Consumers should think whether the website is operated by a legal party or by a party whose activities are not reliable or safe for consumers. In addition, it is illegal to receive pharmaceuticals by post from outside the EEA.

**There is no authority to supervise whether the online instructions for making doping substances are accurate or what risks the end product can pose to health.**

## Discussion of illegal pharmaceuticals

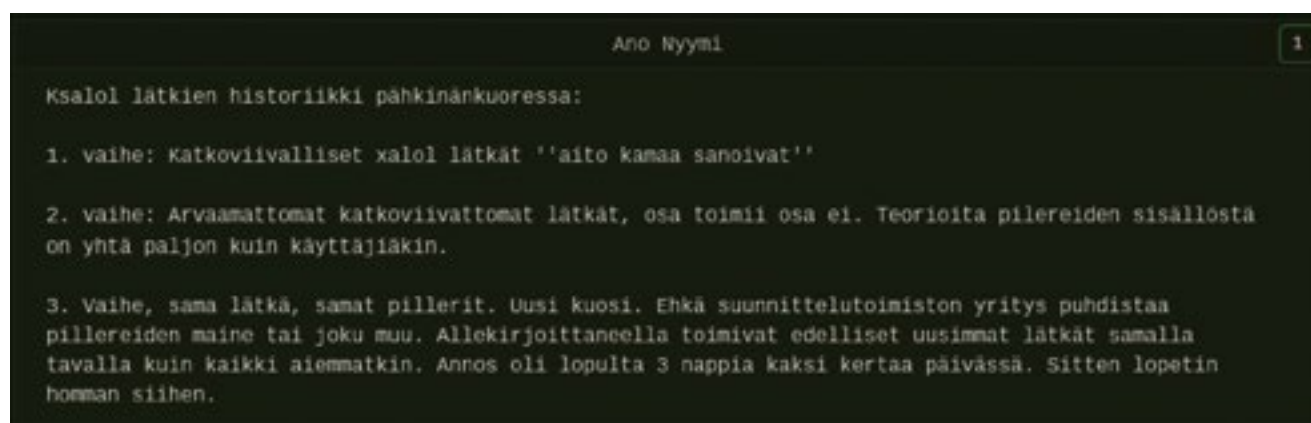
Pharmaceuticals ordered online may be discussed in the illegal Tor network, for example. A fairly frequent topic in the Finnish discussion forum

is the use of different narcotic pharmaceuticals and how to buy them online. It is often asked what versions of a certain pill have the expected effects. Discussions are full of experiences in ineffective pharmaceuticals. These discussions typically concern pharmaceuticals acquired from illegal sources.

## No guarantees of the safety of doping substances

Not only has the Internet made it easier to order doping substances, but it also gives easier access to their ingredients. However, making doping substances at home involves risks, as the safety of the ordered ingredients cannot be guaranteed. There is no authority to supervise whether the online instructions for making doping substances are accurate or what risks the end product can pose to health.

Homemade doping substances may not include the promised active substance or the quantities of ingredients may not match the quantities indicated in the label. Then again, another risk is whether doping substances have been made so clinically that an injected substance can be used safely. It is also unclear how much can be used safely and for how long a product remains safe to use.



Source: Finnish discussion forum in the Tor network





Image: Emmi Korhonen/Lehtikuva

## The number of medicine offences remains high

During the coronavirus pandemic, more pharmaceuticals have been ordered online than ever before. In 2020, the number of medicine offences and violations investigated by Finnish Customs doubled from the previous years. In 2021, the number remained high. Plenty of pharmaceuticals were also ordered online in 2021 as a result of the prolonged pandemic.

### Pharmaceuticals primarily for personal use

The majority of the offences related to pharmaceuticals that Finnish Customs investigated were uncovered in postal traffic. Pharmaceuticals are ordered on the websites of foreign pharmacies and in other foreign online shops. Most often, pharmaceuticals are ordered online for personal short-term use, in which case the volume of pharmaceuticals is usually low in individual seizures. It has not been detected that pharmaceuticals would be ordered in large quantities for purposes of sales and distribution.

Different drugs for erectile dysfunction and melatonin products continue to be the most popular pharmaceuticals ordered online. More than 20,000 erectile dysfunction drugs and more than 6,000 melatonin products were delivered to the Customs Laboratory in 2021 for examination. In 2021, various dietary supplements, classified as pharmaceuticals in Finland, were also ordered online in large quantities.

### The pandemic increased medicine offences

Travel restrictions resulting from the coronavirus pandemic are one of the largest reasons for the increased number of medicine offences. Other reasons for the popularity of ordering products online is the ease of ordering, the broad product range and prices that are lower than in Finnish markets.

Finnish Customs has uncovered a few cases where relatives have sent pharmaceuticals to Finland from other countries or brought them to their relatives living in Finland due to travel restrictions. Brexit has also slightly increased the number of medicine offences uncovered by Finnish Customs. At present, no pharmaceuticals can be received by post from the UK, nor from any other countries outside the EEA.

### Many risks associated with online orders

Consumers order pharmaceuticals from various online shops without considering whether they are legal or safe. However, online orders always carry risks, as consumers cannot always be certain that a website is reliable or that they will receive the same pharmaceuticals they ordered. Furthermore, it cannot be known for certain that the pharmaceuticals are safe. Pharmaceuticals may be counterfeit or even hazardous to health. When ordering online, a consumer may also commit a criminal offence.



## Organised smuggling of snus

In 2021, Finnish Customs seized a total of 9,104 kilograms of snus, being the largest amount seized in a year this far.

During 2020 and 2021, investigations focused on several criminal operations related to the smuggling and distribution of snus, their combined impact being several millions of euros. Finnish Customs believes that the avoided taxes totalled EUR 5 million. During the preliminary investigations, Finnish Customs seized several thousands of kilograms of snus. Suspects have included 53 individuals, and several individuals have been in custody during the investigations. The cases were investigated as aggravated tax fraud, smuggling and unlawful dealing in imported goods. The suspects are citizens of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

It is believed that snus was mainly imported into the Helsinki region where it was also distributed. During the preliminary investigation of the snus cases, several other serious offences were also uncovered, such as an aggravated narcotics offence, aggravated money laundering and a firearms offence. Finnish Customs was engaged in close cooperation with authorities from sev-

eral different countries during the preliminary investigations.

### Smuggling from Estonia into Finland

Several pallets of snus were seized on the border from lorries that arrived in Helsinki from Estonia. In addition, snus was seized from rented warehouses and containers located in the Helsinki region, to which they were carried after being imported on the lorries arrived through Estonian cargo services. Finnish Customs suspects that private individuals had rented the warehouses and containers for storing snus. The smallest seized batch contained 130 kilograms of snus, while the largest contained 1,500 kilograms. A single package of ten cans contains 160 grams of snus. In addition to snus, several hundreds of kilograms of nicotine pouches, classified as prescription medicines due to their nicotine content, were also seized. Unlike snus, nicotine pouches do not contain any tobacco.

In the early spring of 2021, Estonian Customs stopped a lorry departing for Finland at the Port of Tallinn, from which it seized nearly a thousand

kilograms of snus. Finnish Customs conducted the preliminary investigation of the case in cooperation with Estonian Customs and based on the investigation, it was suspected that the seized snus batch was intended for illegal markets in Finland.

### **Organised crime**

The criminals have probably exploited the differences in snus provisions between different EU member states. The imported snus is suspected to be of Swedish origin, from where it was transported to the Baltic countries via Central Europe and finally to Finland where it was distributed in illegal markets. In addition, legal cargo services between Finland and Estonia were exploited. Snus was imported using incomplete or misleading documents by indicating Finland as a transit country. Based on the preliminary investigation, there is however reason to suspect that the snus has remained in Finland.

Finnish Customs suspects that the smuggling operation was particularly systematic and organised. According to the preliminary investigation, it is likely that several people participated in the smuggling chain, with each having their own role in the operation. The operation was most likely run from abroad, and the illegal proceeds from snus sales are also suspected to have ended up there. Finnish Customs suspects that foreign individuals stayed in the Helsinki region and probably rented warehouses and containers for storing snus and distributed snus to sellers living in Finland. Based on the preliminary investigation, the intermediaries and sellers did not agree

upon deals with each other, as both parties were notified of the time and place of each deal from abroad.

### **Snus also from Haparanda**

The regular snus smuggling channel from Haparanda to Finland via Meänmaa continues to be used frequently. The ways of smuggling snus have also become more diverse and, in addition to road traffic, the Torne River has also been crossed using motorboats and fishing boats during summer. During winter, snus has been smuggled using snowmobiles to pull large sleds. Many tens of kilograms of snus have even been imported on single occasions. Smugglers have mainly acquired snus in Sweden using cash purchases, with a single purchase amounting up to tens of thousands of euros.

Practically all snus smuggled from Sweden into Finland is very strong, differing from the types of snus used most commonly in Sweden. Finnish users prefer stronger snus.

### **Snus storage maintained in a van**

Finnish Customs is also investigating a case where a man living in Southern Finland is suspected of having maintained a snus storage in a van and distributing snus by carrying it directly to buyers using the van. Last December, Finnish Customs seized a total of 148 kilograms of snus from the man's van.





## International Anom operation – the authorities’ messaging app uncovered a large number of various offences

In recent years, Finnish Customs has, similarly to other criminal investigation authorities, run increasingly into encrypted messaging apps. Primarily, these apps have been found on the phones of individuals suspected of narcotics offences. Finnish Customs seized the first encrypted smartphone in 2016. By engaging in international cooperation, the authorities have been able to uncover and close encrypted messaging services, such as EncroChat and SkyECC.

### A messaging app built as part of an FBI operation

In 2021, the National Bureau of Investigation, Finnish Customs and Finnish police departments, together with Europol and authorities from 15 other countries, were able, almost in real time, to monitor messages exchanged by suspects in the international Trojan Shield operation. The operation was run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) from the US, and the police authorities of Australia, the Netherlands and Sweden. As part of the operation, the FBI built the encrypted Anom messaging app for Google Pixel phones. All messages sent in the service were saved on the FBI’s servers, from where it transferred them to authorities from the countries participating in the operation for preventing and uncovering crime. The app had some 12,000 users in more than a hundred different countries who sent a total of 27 million messages.

### Finnish Customs investigated several criminal offences

In Finland, an organisation consisting of members of the Police of Finland and Finnish Customs was established for analysing and saving the Anom service’s messages and for identifying users. Six investigators from Finnish Customs participated in the analysis of messages, processing more than 150,000 messages over four months. Based on information obtained from the Anom app, Finnish Customs units investigated several criminal offences during the spring of 2021.

The Anom service was shut down at the beginning of June, when a considerable number of apprehensions and searches were also made in Finland. On the day of the operation, Finnish Customs units made six apprehensions and more than ten house or location searches supported by the National Bureau of Investigation and the police departments of Helsinki and Eastern Uusimaa. One of the searches was conducted in a motorcycle club’s facilities in Tuusula. During the search, a marijuana grow system, marijuana and firearms were seized. On the day of the operation, more than 13,000 ecstasy tablets, roughly a kilogram of marijuana, three firearms and more than EUR 13,000 were seized in Finland.

### Marijuana in cookie packages

At the beginning of March, Finnish Customs seized some 106 kilograms of marijuana based on Anom messages. The marijuana was discovered at a warehouse located in Heikinlaakso in Helsinki and during searches conducted in the suspects’ homes. The marijuana batches had been smuggled into Finland from Spain in international cargo hidden in cookie packages. During the searches, three 3D printed submachine guns were also seized. During the preliminary investigation, it was discovered that the suspects had also smuggled another marijuana batch of roughly 70 kilograms into Finland in the same way in January 2021. The preliminary investigation is still in progress.

### Marijuana in hot water boilers

At the end of March, Finnish Customs, together with the police departments of Eastern Uusimaa, Western Uusimaa and Helsinki and the National Bureau of Investigation, investigated a case where a marijuana batch of 145 kilograms was smuggled from Spain inside hot water boilers for distribution in the Helsinki region. As part of the criminal operation, Finnish Customs seized some 40 kilograms of marijuana in Espoo. The seized batch was to be sent to individuals who were suspected of smuggling 121 kilograms of amphetamine, five





A seized 3D printed submachine gun.



Marijuana packages found inside hot water boilers.



Cocaine brick found inside a truck that arrived in the Port of Hanko.

kilograms of cocaine and 21,500 ecstasy tablets into Finland in February–April. During the preliminary investigation, aggravated doping offences and pharmaceutical offences were also discovered. The preliminary investigation has ended.

### **Cocaine in a lorry at the Port of Hanko**

In April 2021, Finnish Customs seized some 11 kilograms of cocaine from a lorry arrived at the Port of Hanko from the Netherlands. After the seizure, the organisation started to smuggle smaller batches of cocaine into Finland via Estonia. During the operation, 195 kilograms of hashish and marijuana were also seized in Sweden and two kilograms of cocaine were seized in Estonia. The preliminary investigation is still in progress.

### **A weapons workshop in Tampere**

As a result of the operation, Finnish Customs also uncovered a weapons workshop in Tampere, which was exceptional even on an international scale. The workshop was used to manufacture, partly using a 3D printer, operational and highly dangerous submachine guns that could also fire automatically. Submachine guns manufactured at the workshop were seized during several different preliminary investigation cases.

### **The largest international operation in years**

Based on the Anom operation, Finnish Customs investigated a total of 30 aggravated narcotics

offences, five aggravated firearms offences, one aggravated doping offence, two pharmaceutical offences, two firearms offences and two minor firearms offences. In conjunction with the preliminary investigations of the uncovered cases, a total of 219 kilograms of marijuana, 18 kilograms of cocaine, 110 kilograms of hashish, 290 grams of amphetamine and more than 13,000 ecstasy tablets were seized in Finland and other countries. The total street value of the seized narcotics batches and those ended up in consumption would have been roughly EUR 20 million. In addition, nine firearms and some EUR 27,000 in cash were seized.

### **Closer cooperation between Finnish authorities**

Participation in the Anom operation made the already effective cooperation between Finnish Customs, the National Bureau of Investigation and different police departments even closer. The expertise of Finnish Customs in the inspection and profiling of heavy vehicles, in particular, proved invaluable during the operation. Finnish Customs uncovered the transport units used to import the banned substances and, in this way, played a part in uncovering practically all the smuggling cases investigated in Finland. Participation in the operation strengthened the role of Finnish Customs in the prevention of serious and organised crime and showed that Finnish Customs is among the international leaders in this area.



A box of cocaine hidden inside a cargo of coniferous plants.





## Firearms manufactured from 3D printed parts in Tampere

In 2021, the Tampere investigation unit of Finnish Customs investigated an extensive criminal case where a man living in Pirkanmaa was suspected of having manufactured and sold particularly dangerous firearms. The firearms were partly manufactured using 3D printed parts.

At the end of May 2021, Finnish Customs searched a property located in Tampere where the man was suspected to manufacture firearms. During the preliminary investigation, it has so far been discovered that the suspect had rented facilities from the property in his company's name.

During the search, it was however discovered that the facilities did not accommodate regular business activities, but a weapons workshop.

### Several 3D printers and 3D printed firearm parts found at the workshop

When the workshop was searched, two operational submachine guns, a number of completed 3D printed firearm parts, equipment related to manufacturing firearms and several 3D printers for printing firearm parts were discovered.

A shooting range was also discovered in connection with the workshop for testing the firearms.

During the preliminary investigation, it has been discovered that the parts required for a single firearm were 3D printed in approximately one week. The main suspect ordered the filament required for printing the firearm parts from Sweden on several separate occasions. In addition, the main suspect ordered such equipment and parts required for manufacturing firearms which do not require an import licence from Chinese online shops. Alongside the main suspect, at least one other person living in Pirkanmaa has built firearms at the workshop.

### Several suspects apprehended

During 2021, several searches and apprehensions were made. Seven persons have been suspected of the crime, one of whom has been in custody. Some of the suspects also have a criminal history.

The preliminary investigation is partly in progress at the time of writing this article.



Nine 3D printers printing firearm parts were discovered at the workshop.





There were two operational firearms that were partly manufactured from 3D printed parts.



Tools for manufacturing firearms.

# Impact of the coronavirus pandemic on customs enforcement

According to the Finnish Government's general decision, Finnish Customs shifted to the extensive remote working model in March 2020 in tasks where this was possible. However, the majority of customs control personnel continued to work in their office or location following new instructions. Before this, Finnish Customs had already established a COVID working group, consisting of representatives of different departments and meeting regularly every two weeks. The team discusses the coronavirus instructions and policies of Finnish Customs, covering the entire organisation, and communicates them on the intranet. The team also discusses any challenges and seeks solutions to them.

**One of the greatest challenges presented by the pandemic has been the definition of safe operating methods for tasks that require employees to be present in offices or at border crossing points.**

## **The use of protective equipment to continue**

One of the most significant themes requiring instructions has been the use of protective equipment. To this end, a separate working group was established to prepare detailed instructions for protective equipment to be used in different types of situations and for the correct ways to put it on, take it off and dispose of it. All COVID instructions at Finnish Customs will be revised and specified as required by national instructions and based on feedback given by Customs employees. In addition, Customs is monitoring the instructions of other authorities and other organisations operating in the same workplace, as well as international instructions and recommendations issued by the European Commission and the World Customs Organization, among others.

Finnish Customs has outlined that face masks and respirators must be worn in all work situations as instructed, also when working in offices. Customs extended this policy to the end of 2021,

even though some authorities ended their face mask obligations in November 2021 when the pandemic improved temporarily. However, it was agreed that representatives of other authorities will also wear face masks when they are in the same facilities with Customs representatives. The extensive remote working obligation ended at Customs in November 2021 following national instructions, but it was reintroduced a month later when the number of infections started to rise. The use of face masks continues at Customs.

In addition, Finnish Customs' employees must use tactical protection when working in offices and with customers. The customer facilities of Finnish Customs are equipped with protective plexiglass shields, and customers are instructed to maintain safe distances and use hand sanitisers.

## **Working at border crossing points**

One of the greatest challenges presented by the pandemic has been the definition of safe operating methods for tasks that require employees to be present in offices or at border crossing points. Border crossing points have been kept open throughout the pandemic, even though passenger volumes have decreased considerably. In some locations, opening hours have been reduced and passenger traffic has been limited. Only goods traffic has continued without any restrictions throughout the pandemic.

At border crossing points, the pandemic has caused many changes in the organisation of work. Shifts have been planned so that employees working in different shifts cannot be in contact with each other during shift changes. Key employees and their substitutes also work in turns. Contact has been minimised in the use of work equipment and vehicles, and work equipment is cleaned and disinfected more frequently. The flexitime system has been expanded during the pandemic so that commuting is possible outside rush hours in certain situations.

In the north on the Swedish and Norwegian borders, the pandemic has caused changes in customs control. It has been agreed that resources can be temporarily transferred between different locations when necessary. Similarly, customs control employees have acted as replacements in locations where the number







of Finnish Customs' personnel is normally low. As permitted by its resources, Customs has also assisted other supervisory authorities in internal border control.

In addition, the Animal Diseases Act amended in October 2021 gave Finnish Customs the right to assist health authorities in checking EU Digital COVID Certificates. Customs has received several requests for administrative assistance, and has checked certificates across the country since October.

### Work independent of location is the new normal

Finnish Customs survived the first two COVID years with fairly low infection and quarantine

figures, and it did not have to adjust its activities due to absences. At the beginning of 2022, infections also started to spread through Finnish Customs. During the past two years, Finnish Customs has already become accustomed to the changes caused by the pandemic and adopted new ways of working. More and more negotiations are held remotely which has considerably reduced the need for work-related travel. The ways of working have also become more diverse. When the pandemic eventually ends, many tasks will have permanently become independent of location, and the diverse ways of working will have become the new normal.

## Crime statistics

Crime overview	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Offences	9 409	8 943	7 835	6 641	5 402
<b>Suspects of offences</b>					
Foreigners total	2 902	2 919	2 856	2 121	1 723
<b>All suspects</b>	<b>8 525</b>	<b>8 222</b>	<b>7 520</b>	<b>6 216</b>	<b>5 097</b>
<b>Impact of customs crime prevention (EUR million)</b>					
Recovered proceeds of crime	28,00	30,80	24,50	26,00	32,10
Value of goods not seized	5,03	4,17	21,49	19,58	21,07
Evaded taxes	48,11	8,64	24,20	11,60	17,09
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,14</b>	<b>43,61</b>	<b>70,19</b>	<b>57,18</b>	<b>70,26</b>

Narcotics-related offences	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Aggravated narcotics offence	271	281	389	272	285
Narcotic offence	2 829	2 403	1 527	1 114	1 111
Preparation of a narcotics offence	39	12	34	35	78
Illicit consumption of narcotics	90	57	70	21	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 229</b>	<b>2 753</b>	<b>2 020</b>	<b>1 442</b>	<b>1 543</b>



<b>Seized narcotics</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Amphetamine and methamphetamine (kg)	58,8	46,3	24,2	42,4	<b>80,8</b>
Hashish (kg)	675	34	47	0,7	<b>3,5</b>
Heroin (kg)	0,3	0,1	7,3	0,04	<b>0,11</b>
Khat (kg)	2 304	711	1 313	427	<b>276</b>
Cocaine (kg)	3,5	8,2	32,9	10	<b>55</b>
Marijuana (kg)	115,2	199,9	255,6	280,4	<b>261,7</b>
<b>Total (kg)</b>	<b>3 175</b>	<b>1 060</b>	<b>1 714</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>710</b>
LSD (doses)	4 950	6 039	3 671	1 699	<b>9 893</b>
Ecstasy (tablets)	19 034	187 784	40 935	79 451	<b>53 916</b>
Buprenorphine (tablets)	15 136	33 375	14 868	54 518	<b>41 108</b>

<b>Medicine offences</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Medicine offence	110	80	117	456	<b>103</b>
Medicine violation	632	633	564	1 015	<b>828</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>1 471</b>	<b>931</b>

<b>Seized medicines (tablets)</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>265 406</b>	<b>56 009</b>	<b>83 843</b>	<b>370 385</b>	<b>1 537 444</b>

<b>Doping offences</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Aggravated doping offence	6	13	9	23	<b>22</b>
Doping offence	37	50	47	46	<b>62</b>
Petty doping offence	186	167	150	169	<b>166</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>250</b>

<b>Seized doping substances</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>(tablets/ampoules)</b>	<b>121 301</b>	<b>587 445</b>	<b>298 326</b>	<b>34 678</b>	<b>21 611</b>

Seized cigarettes (million pcs)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	3	2,7	2,7	4,5	0,7

Seized snus (kg)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	2 390	6 744	4 940	7 011	9 104

Alcohol offences	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Aggravated alcohol offence	1	0	2	7	2
Alcohol offence	3	3	4	16	1
Alcohol violation	0	4	1	1	0
Petty alcohol offence	339	358	321	88	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>70</b>

Alcohol seizures (litres)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Neutral spirits	6,5	210	0,5	4,4	9
Others	1 051	2 320	1 272	11 732	10 975
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 057,5</b>	<b>2 530</b>	<b>1 272,5</b>	<b>11 736</b>	<b>10 984</b>

Firearms offences	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Aggravated firearms offence	1	2	0	6	8
Firearms offence	22	31	33	103	85
Petty firearms offence	96	143	146	66	56
Firearms violation	1	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>152</b>

Seized weapons	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gas weapons	96	127	187	506	435
Firearms	16	20	45	28	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>491</b>

<b>Tax frauds</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Aggravated tax fraud	83	116	149	98	<b>96</b>
Standard offence	181	251	256	231	<b>156</b>
Petty tax fraud	822	927	957	588	<b>316</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 086</b>	<b>1 294</b>	<b>1 362</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>568</b>

## Customs offence investigations 2021

Source: Customs Laboratory

<b>Samples relating to suspected customs offences (pcs)</b>	
Doping	<b>546</b>
Narcotics	<b>1 616</b>
Pharmaceuticals classified as narcotics	<b>312</b>
Substances banned from the consumer market	<b>412</b>
Unclassified narcotic substances	<b>43</b>
Pharmaceuticals	<b>1 101</b>
Other crime-related samples	<b>111</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 141</b>

<b>Samples processed by the Customs Laboratory (pcs)</b>	
Controls of foodstuffs	<b>3 085</b>
Phytosanitary controls	<b>915</b>
Controls of consumer goods	<b>1 464</b>
Illegal importation	<b>5 221</b>
Business-related examination services	<b>110</b>
Other examinations for Customs	<b>72</b>
Fuel quality control	<b>561</b>
Cooperation between authorities	<b>653</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 081</b>

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