

“Smuggling is theft! It puts you in jail.”

A new anti-smuggling campaign in the border areas

Satu Mare, March 16, 2018 - A new public awareness campaign regarding the negative effects of smuggling was launched today at the Prefecture of Satu Mare County, in partnership with the Border Police, the Romanian Police and the General Customs Direction of the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, with the support of INACO (Initiative for Competitiveness), JTI and the Pastel communication agency at www.faracontrabanda.ro. Called **“Smuggling is theft! It puts you in jail”**, the campaign will be implemented in March-April in the border counties located in the North, North-West, North-East, West, South-West and in Bucharest.

According to the most recent study performed by Novel Research, in January 2018 the cigarette black market at national level reached 15.6% of the total consumption. According to the study, the rate is slightly under the average percentage of the illegal trade recorded in 2017, of 16%. In the North-West, cigarette smuggling is almost at 20%, which means that one in five cigarettes traded in this area is smuggled. The North-Eastern counties remain the most impacted by illegal trade this year, with a percentage of 37.6%, higher than in November 2017, because of a sudden revival of the smuggling of tobacco products from the Republic Moldova.

“Cigarette smuggling represents the main criminal phenomenon present at Romania’s northern border with the Ukraine. This has made the operative forces of the Inspectorate particularly active. In addition to exercising their duties related to surveillance and control at the State border, as well as the prevention of illegal migration and the facts specific to trans-border criminality perpetrated in their jurisdiction, a priority objective is the fight against cigarette smuggling. The integrated approach guiding the actions of our workers from prevention to the actual enforcement of the law is based on the efficient cooperation between the bodies in charge of law enforcement and fighting trans-border criminality”, stated the Police Quaestor Liviu Bute, Border Police.

“Ensuring the legitimacy of the business environment by combating smuggling and the illegal trade of smuggled cigarettes represents one of the priorities of the County Police Inspectorate of Satu Mare. To fight these criminal phenomena our institution assigns significant resources, both human and material. Thus, actions aiming to identify both persons with criminal intent related to the introduction of smuggled cigarettes in the country and those who transport, store or market such products are being organized. At the same time, we consider that the prevention of the criminal phenomenon contributes substantially to the reduction thereof, which is why we welcome the initiative of the campaign ‘Smuggling is theft! Puts you in jail.’”, stated Commissary in Chief Sorin Stan, head of the County Police Inspectorate of Satu Mare.

“The illegal trade in tobacco products is often considered not to pose a social danger. As a result, this type of activity has in many cases turned into a main source of income. Buyers looking for bargains and ambulant merchants are unfortunately not aware that they contribute to illegal trafficking, smuggling being a felony related to organized crime and punishable by imprisonment. Smuggling and illegal smuggling of tobacco are not viable solutions for survival; there is a need for an economic development strategy of the border counties. We all want a better society, but good intentions are not enough. We have a duty to act effectively, to support the authorities and to express ourselves publicly when we have clear information on serious phenomena affecting the community. Even more so, as a single percentage point of the illicit trade in tobacco products leads to losses of 35 million Euro to the country's budget. We cannot build a competitive nation without cooperating or acting against the illegal trade in all the forms it can take”, stated Andreea Paul, president of the non-governmental organization INACO.

The campaign **“Smuggling is theft! It puts you in jail.”** will be broadcast in partnership with TVR, particularly by the regional TV stations, and shall have a significant street billboard component in the counties of Satu Mare, Botosani, Iasi, Neamt, Suceava, Maramures, Timis, Caras-Severin, Mehedinti, Dolj, Olt and Bucharest. The campaign shall also be visible at the border crossing points through the use of informative materials.

Further information and communication materials are available at www.faracontrabanda.ro.

“Smuggling is theft! It puts you in jail.” is the seventh regional anti-smuggling campaign aimed at not only awareness of the negative effects of the phenomenon, but also the reduction of the illicit cigarette trade. The previous campaigns have resulted in significant drops of the black market in the regions and periods in which they were developed.