

New national anti-smuggling campaign
"Smuggling is a serious condition!"

Bucharest, Ilfov county, September 30th - The national campaign *"Smuggling is a serious condition!"* was launched today, within a press conference that took place at the Romanian Customs Center for Canine Squads Training, recently established in Pantelimon.

"Smuggling is a serious condition!", a campaign launched in partnership with the National Agency for Fiscal Administration (ANAF), the General Directorate of Customs (DGCV), the Border Police, the Romanian Police, with the support of JTI Romania, aims to inform the public about the negative effects of smuggling on the economy and society. Through the strong message anchored nowadays, the campaign aims to capture a wide audience, contributing to raise awareness of the consequences of smuggling: the proliferation of crime, prejudice to the state budget, stopping economic development at the borders.

The campaign will be supported by street billboards in the counties most affected by illicit trade, in Bucharest and all border areas, as well as on TVR (Public Television) and online on www.faracontrabanda.ro and www.facebook.com/faracontrabanda.ro.

Pandemic traffic restrictions and the combined efforts of the authorities have led to historic declines in illegal trade (7.7% in July, the lowest level in 15 years). Once we return to normality the trend can be reversed.

The canine squads are amongst the most effective tools in the fight against smuggling. This fall, 19 dogs joined the Customs canine teams already involved in training.

"I welcome the initiative of all those involved in the fight against illicit trafficking, especially cigarettes. The good results of the General Directorate of Customs in protecting the revenues of the state budget should be mentioned. We will implement as many measures as possible to prevent and combat tax evasion, because we want to have a properly and fairly developed economy. Equipping Romanian customs points with high-performance scanning equipment is vital, especially since the benefits of this acquisition will offset the investments. This approach must be accelerated, that is why we have added in the National Program for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR) this component, of reform of the Customs Authority, amounting to over 64.3 million euros. However, regardless of the degree of technical sophistication, the skills and dedication of these canine squads, specially trained to be an effective means of combating smuggling, are remarkable ", said the Minister of Finance, Dan Vîlceanu.

"In 2020, the illegal trade in cigarettes recorded an average level of less than 10%, the lowest in the last 15 years. And in the current year, smuggling of tobacco products remains at the lowest levels. The General Directorate of Customs will continue to carry out large-scale actions to combat illegal trafficking, in close collaboration with the competent state institutions, as well as with the honest business environment. Currently, in the Romanian customs are active, including with JTI support, 44 mobile canine teams, specialized in detecting cigarettes, drugs and cash. We have also been running public campaigns for more than ten years with JTI to raise awareness of the profoundly negative effects of cigarette smuggling on the economy and society. Illegal trade in excisable products is a complex phenomenon, which can be combated only through collaboration and partnership ", said the general director of the General Directorate of Customs, Marcel Simion Mutescu.

"Combating the phenomenon of cigarette smuggling continues to be a priority for the Border Police, meaning that actions are carried out in all areas of competence, independently or in collaboration with other institutions with responsibilities in the field, taxation or public order and safety. And this year, the efforts of the border police were materialized in almost daily captures in the area of competence. Thus, in the first nine months, the border police seized for confiscation approximately 2.5 million packs of

contraband cigarettes with an approximate value of 30 million lei, as well as significant quantities of tobacco. Also, through partnerships with cigarette manufacturers, the prevention segment of this phenomenon has been developed, which damages not only the budget revenues, but also represents a real danger for society, fueling crime and organized crime. Over the years, the Romanian Border Police has collaborated with JTI Romania in a wider framework, being carried out several national and regional public campaigns to raise awareness of the negative effects of the illegal cigarette trade, which is a proof of the joint effort on which is submitted by the law enforcement institutions and tobacco producers to stop the illegal cigarette trafficking ", said the General Inspector of the Border Police, Chief Quaestor of Police Liviu Bute.

"The constant efforts of the Romanian Police, to prevent and combat cigarette smuggling, have led to the achievement of this minimum level of the black market. The sustained actions of the police officers proved their effectiveness, both by the volume of criminal cases investigated, controls carried out and by the number of arrests made. This approach could be accomplished only through close collaboration with institutional partners and representatives of the private environment ", said Chief Commissioner of Police Aurel Dobre, Director of the Directorate for the Investigation of Economic Crime, Romanian Police

"The decrease of cigarette smuggling means the increase of the legal market, materialized in higher revenues for the state budget. In 2020, a year of unprecedented crisis, excise revenues from cigarettes were the only ones to increase, by 10.9% more than in 2019. According to the budget execution for the first eight months of 2021, revenues from tobacco excise have increased by 11.3% compared to the same period last year. This is because the black market was below the European average of 10% in 2020, a trend that continued in 2021. Very importantly, fiscal policy was predictable, and the regulatory framework did not undergo radical and unexpected changes. We are convinced that these annual campaigns to inform the general public about the consequences of illegal trade on the economy and society over the last decade, as well as the partnerships initiated with law enforcement since 2005, significantly contribute to the decline of the black market. We will continue to be a solid taxpayer, involved in solving community problems ", said Gilda Lazăr, Director of Corporate Affairs & Communications JTI Romania, Moldova and Bulgaria.

JTI Romania has been running public anti-smuggling campaigns in partnership with the authorities since 2010.