



## PRESS RELEASE

**Fully equipped state-of-the-art factories used for tobacco processing, production and packaging, located in regions of Attica. Over 2,3 tonnes of tobacco and over 82.000 brand identity tobacco packages seized. Six (6) people arrested.**

Two important cases of illicit manufacturing and trafficking of tobacco were handled by the Directorate of the Financial Police, in the context of controls and investigations, carried out in co-operation with the Operational Coordination Center against excisable product smuggling.

**In the first case**, a transnational organized criminal group (OCG), manufacturing and smuggling tobacco products, was dismantled. Following an organized police operation, six people aged 49 to 64 years were arrested on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, including a 60-year-old leading member of the OCG.

In particular, after months of investigation, it was deducted that the arrested persons had formed the OCG, exhibiting sustained and operationally structured action. They joined together with unknown to the Authorities associates for the purpose of gaining illegal income from manufacturing and smuggling of illicit tobacco products both to the Greek market and abroad.

Specifically, in February 2019, the 60-year-old "leader" of the OCG rented a space in the Attica region, where he installed a complete state-of-the-art illegal tobacco processing and packaging plant, with equipment capable of producing large quantities of packaged tobacco.

Additionally, after ongoing investigations, the Police located the house of the 64-year-old arrested man. The 64-year-old was found in the basement, along with three other detainees, aged 61, 62 and 55, to pack brand identity tobacco.

After searching the house of the 60 year old "leader" of the OCG, the Police found and seized EUR 1.450 and five cell phones, while in his own car, the Police detected two keys and the remote control, which as it turned out, corresponded to the warehouse used by the OCG members.

Investigations carried out in the rest of the areas used by those arrested, as well as in their homes, revealed the following seized items:

- (1.254) brand identity tobacco packages of fifty (50) grams each,
- (34,5) kg of fine cut tobacco,
- humidifying roller used in tobacco processing
- (10) transparent film rolls used in tobacco packaging,
- branded compressor and crane,
- liquid fuel colored heater,
- yellow-black colored diffuser
- liquid fuel heater
- tobacco sheet cutter machine with two generators
- (2) conveyer belts
- manual lift forklift machine
- (2) tobacco packaging machines
- (8) rolls of adhesive tape used for tobacco packaging
- (5) precision scales,
- (2) small containers-bottles and containers with aromatic tobacco liquid
- (5) kg of raw tobacco leaves,
- cell phone,
- (4) cartons containing lots of empty brand identity tobacco packages, as well as empty transparent packages, and
- (4) knives.

The packages of the seized tobacco lacked the manufactured tobacco tax stamps, while tax evasion and other charges estimated to the amount of EUR 23.528.

Judging by the capacity of the seized machinery, the total tax evasion and other charges from the overall operations of the illegal factory are estimated to hundreds of thousands of Euros.

The detainees were charged with felony for composing an OCG, violating the Customs Code, and possessing weapons, while yesterday (November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019) they were led to the Athens Prosecutor's Office.

**In the second case**, after a proper data evaluation and exploitation, a fully equipped tobacco packaging factory was located on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, in an area of Attica.

Following an investigation conducted in the aforementioned illegal factory, in the presence of judicial officer, the following were found and seized:

- (80.700) brand identity tobacco packages of 50g,
- (2.310) kg of bulk tobacco,
- cellophane wrapping machine
- (25) cartons with lots of unused branded tobacco packages,
- lots of rolls with tobacco package sealing stickers and

- (6) transparent cellophane rolls.

Evasive duties and taxes amount to EUR 1.535.884,18.

Investigation to identify the perpetrators continues.