

**PRESS RELEASE**

**EXPERTS GATHER TO COLLECTIVELY RESPOND TO  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME**

**Antwerp, Belgium**

Recent innovations on intellectual property rights' enforcement strategies is the focus of the first Europol Intellectual Property Crime Conference organised in Antwerp.

Some 400 senior law enforcement official, security and industry experts from 42 countries are attending this two-day conference (19-20 September), co-organised by Europol, the Belgian Customs Authority, UL (Underwriters Laboratories) and the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition (IACC). Participants will review emerging crime trends, as well as outline enforcement strategies and best practices on IP crime via operational case studies and industry perspectives.

According to a study conducted by the European Union Intellectual Property Office, infringements of intellectual property rights are a widespread and ever-increasing phenomenon worldwide. International trade in counterfeit products represents up to 2.5% of world trade, or as much as EUR 338 billion, based on the latest available data from 2013. This is the equivalent of the GDP of Austria, or the combined GDP of Ireland and the Czech Republic. The impact of counterfeiting is particularly high in the European Union, with counterfeit and pirated products amounting to up to 5% of imports, or as much as EUR 85 billion.<sup>1</sup>

"At Europol, we are working hard to identify, disrupt and dismantle the transnational organised crime networks behind IP crime. However, the problem of illegal networks cannot be solved by law enforcement alone. A robust and multi-pronged response is needed involving all stakeholders from the public and private sector. This is even more important, given that the rapidly- evolving digital world presents a range of new challenges for enforcement officers tackling this type of economic crime", said Rob Wainwright, Executive Director of Europol. "This conference offers the perfect opportunity to further develop synergies between all involved stakeholders and enhance our collective effort to tackle this crime".

"Stopping counterfeits at the EU borders is an important mission of customs authorities. The best way to avoid their import is to prevent the export at the countries of origin. The Belgian Customs therefore invests a lot in cooperation with

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<sup>[1]</sup>Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods: Mapping the Economic Impact, OECD/EUIPO (2016).

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customs authorities in these countries. For instance, just last week we went to China to set up practical arrangements", said Kristiaan Vanderwaeren, Administrator-General of Belgian Customs.

"The global, sophisticated nature of counterfeiting requires collaboration among all stakeholders and the sharing of resources, expertise and information to effectively combat the problem", said Bob Barchiesi, President of IACC. "I am confident that government and industry attendees will come away from the conference with better tools and strategies to address counterfeiting."

"We must have effective laws and enforcement of those laws for regulations to protect citizens and industrial innovation. UL is a strong supporter of public private partnerships to help law enforcement succeed. Our dedicated staff in Europe and around the globe partner with local customs and enforcement to identify counterfeits. Together, we carry out joint actions and prosecute counterfeiters, resulting in the search and seizure of counterfeit products bearing the UL Mark", said Gitte Schøtz, President of UL Software.

Due to the potential for high profit margins and the relatively low risk of serious legal ramifications, the manufacturing and distribution processes of counterfeits continues to evolve and become more sophisticated. It is for this reason that the conference is bringing together participants from different sectors, backgrounds and countries to deliver new insights and develop tangible action in the fight against international counterfeiting.

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