

# **Eight people detained by the NAC and prosecutors in a smuggling and money laundering case. Illicit income obtained from the scheme exceeds 1 million euros**



Officers of the National Anti-corruption Centre (NAC) and prosecutors of the Balti Municipal Prosecutor's Office, main office, announce the detention of eight people in a criminal case targeting smuggling and money laundering activities, carried out through an organized network that operated on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and in several European Union states.

According to the materials collected during the criminal investigation, the group's members, including representatives of resident and non-resident companies, allegedly created and managed a well-structured criminal organization specializing in the illegal import of modern mobile phones into the Republic of Moldova and the laundering of proceeds from their sale.

According to the evidence administered, the goods were purchased from Italy and transported to the Republic of Moldova via regular passenger and parcel flights. To avoid paying import duties and customs control, mobile phones were introduced through border crossing points by not declaring them in customs documents, being hidden among the luggage and transported packages. Subsequently, the phones were distributed to individuals and legal entities affiliated with the group, who knew the illicit origin of the goods and sold them through specialized stores and online sales platforms. In this way, the members of the network obtained considerable income from the domestic sale of goods fraudulently introduced into the country.

The investigation established that the financial means resulting from these activities were systematically collected by persons responsible for the financial circuit of the scheme and temporarily kept in the premises of currency exchange houses in the municipality of Chisinau. After accumulating amounts ranging between 70,000 and 100,000 euros, the money was transferred to international passenger and parcel carriers, who, knowing their illicit origin, transported them clandestinely to European Union countries, mainly Belgium, without declaring the amounts to the customs

authorities.

Next, to create the appearance of the legality of the origin of the money, the financial means were introduced into the economic circuit through companies controlled by the group members and registered in Belgium. Subsequently, the funds were transferred to Italy, where they reached the final beneficiary of the criminal scheme.

During the documentation of the case, it was established that approximately 13 individuals and 6 resident and non-resident legal entities were involved in the illegal activity, including international transport operators and representatives of currency exchange houses. According to preliminary estimates, the members of the group allegedly illegally imported and sold mobile phones worth over 1 million euros on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, thus damaging the state budget and generating illicit income in particularly large proportions.

Currently, the NAC officers and prosecutors continue criminal investigation actions to identify all the people involved, establish the entire criminal chain and hold all participants in the scheme criminally liable.

We remind that any person shall benefit from the presumption of innocence until a final court decision is rendered.