

12 Jul 2023 -16:15

## Customs : Cocaine seizures in Antwerp - Results First half of 2023

Today, Vincent Van Peteghem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in charge of Anti-Fraud Coordination and the National Lottery, and Kristian Vanderwaeren, Administrator General of the General Administration of Customs and Excise (GAC&E) gave an interim overview of drugs seized during the first 6 months of 2023 in the Port of Antwerp at the Border Inspection Post, Left Bank (GIP Linkeroever). An Memorandum of Understanding with terminal operators and the Port of Antwerp was also signed during the occasion.

Drugs continue to flood the port of Antwerp. Between January and June 2023, more than 43 tonnes of cocaine, 2,800 kilos of heroin and 161 kilos of MDMA were already seized at the port of Antwerp. Looking at the figures for cocaine seizures, the figures for the first six months of 2023 are already 21% higher than those for the same period last year.

The top three countries from which cocaine is seized at the port of Antwerp are Ecuador (10,421.28 kg), Panama (5,260.99 kg) and Brazil (3,450.86 kg). With even an increase in the number of cases compared to last year, the rip off method remains the most popular way to hide drugs. This involves loading drugs at the port of departure and collecting them at the port of destination, usually without the sender or recipient of the legal shipment knowing that their container is being used to hide drugs.

To combat drugs, Customs has several lines of defense ready. It can rely on customs officers who carry out many different tasks every day with support equipment such as fixed scanners, mobile scanners, backscatter and handheld scanners. By the end of 2023, the 100% scanning of high-risk containers project will further materialize and make a significant contribution to the fight against drugs. Five additional mobile scanners will be commissioned step by step, the 108 recruitments will have taken place to deploy the scanners operationally and the further development and roll-out of AI models will also take place.

Cooperation will also continue and expand nationally and internationally. Today, for instance, the signing of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with terminal operators and the Port of Antwerp took place. This aims to achieve the objectives of the 100% scanning of high-risk containers project, with the active cooperation of the terminal operators and the Port of Antwerp. They also make an important contribution to the fight against drug imports.

Federal Public Service Finance  
North Galaxy  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II 33/70  
1030 Brussels  
Belgium  
+32 2 572 57 57  
<http://finances.belgium.be>

Francis Adyns  
Spokesman (NL) FPS Finance  
+32 470 76 22 44  
[francis.adyns@minfin.fed.be](mailto:francis.adyns@minfin.fed.be)

Florence Angelici  
Spokeswoman (FR) FPS Finances  
+32 470 775 728  
[florence.angelici@minfin.fed.be](mailto:florence.angelici@minfin.fed.be)