Issue Monitoring

Tobacco Industry Progress Report

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TRAFFIC FLUIDIZATION AT THE BORDERS WITH BULGARIA. Through a memorandum adopted last week, the Government plans to streamline the intense road traffic from the Romanian-Bulgarian border area and reduce waiting times at border crossing points. At the same time, the two sides agreed (1) to create an artery for trucks without cargo and those carrying perishables goods, (2) to implement a solution to allow bridge toll payment online/via SMS, (3) to install a system to restrict access to the Friendship Bridge, in order to prevent traffic jams, but also (4) to eliminate weighing activities on the way out of Romania. Now adopted, this memorandum allows the Romanian authorities to start applying the agreement.

NCTS5-RO APP. the NCTS5-RO application is available for testing, according to the Romanian Customs Authority. The use of the new declaration system in transit NCTS5-RO is no longer based on the submission of declarations and documents on paper. Moreover, the new system allows information to be collected exclusively electronically and errors in the declaration of goods to be detected when the declarations are submitted to customs offices. Thus, in a first stage, the application will be available to economic operators and customs workers from the customs offices: Constanța Sud, Constanța, Sculeni, Albița, Otopeni Călători și Galați Airport, following that in the future, the test sessions will be extended within other customs offices. Economic operators who submit transit declarations at these customs offices and who wish to test the NCTS5-RO application, can request a login link, user, and password to the email address nctshelpdesk@customs.ro.

SMUGGLING CASES. Customs inspectors from the Sulina Border Customs Office - Galați Regional Customs Directorate discovered, following the entry control carried out on a Lebanese-flagged Brave Leader ship, no less than 25,000 cigarettes without a tax stamp. In another case, customs inspectors and border policemen from the Otopeni Airport Border found 30,880 undeclared cigarettes, which were seized from a passenger traveling on the Otopeni-Luton route, with a value of the seized cigarettes of approximately RON 52,500. Similarly, 14,000 Dunhill brand cigarettes, were also seized from a passenger traveling on the Otopeni - Stansted route, with a value of approximately RON 14,040.

International news

2023 GLOBAL PROGRESS REPORT – WHO FCTC PROTOCOL. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) published the "2023 Global Progress Report on Implementation of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products", the second in the series of reports prepared since the entry into force of the Protocol in 2018. This Global Progress Report provides information on 28 substantive articles of the Protocol. It also features several examples of implementation of the various requirements under the Protocol by the

Parties, including 15 case studies containing more detailed information. For a more precise analysis of the data, you can consult the report **here**.

FCTC COP 10 CANCELED. The meeting of Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) member states, known as COP 10 has been postponed until next year due to violence in the host country Panama, as reported by WHO. The meeting, which sets tobacco policy for most of the world, was due to take place in Panama from 20-25 November. However, the meeting has now been postponed with the FCTC Secretariat citing "*the current security situation*" in Panama as the reason behind the postponement. The sessions are expected to be held in Panama, as early as possible in 2024, at dates to be confirmed.

EUROPE

IRELAND VAPE SALES TO BE BANNED FOR UNDER-18S. According to the Irish press, a new bill due to be passed before Christmas will ban the sale of vapes to under-18s with those ignoring the new rules punished with fines or six months in prison. It was also reported that the Irish Health Minister is also looking into a second piece of legislation that will ban single use vapes altogether for all ages.

UNITED KINGDOM: KING CHARLES CONFIRMS PLANS FOR "SMOKE FREE GENERATION". Last week, during his first King's Speech to Parliament, UK King Charles III confirmed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill that would see children born after 2009 never being able to legally purchase tobacco in the country. In this way, he publicly supported Prime Minister`s Rishi Sunak plan to ban anyone born after 1 January 2009 from buying tobacco, which he unveiled back in September, saying back then that "*a 14-year-old today will never legally be sold a cigarette and that they and their generation can grow up smoke-free*". The aim of the Bill is to reduce the number of smokers by 1.7 million by 2075 and possibly eliminate smoking amongst young people by 2040.

USA

FDA WARNING LETTERS. FDA issued several warning letters to online retailers for selling unauthorized e-cigarette products. The warning letters cite the sale of popular and youth-appealing disposable e-cigarette products, which lack authorisation. Warning letter recipients are given 15 working days to respond with the steps they'll take to correct the violation and to prevent future violations. Failure to promptly correct the violations can result in additional FDA actions such as an injunction, seizure, and/or civil money penalties.

Main legislative updates

PL-x 609/2023 – *draft bill on the verification of identity documents of buyers, when purchasing tobacco products*

Status: On November 8, the Defence and Public Order Committee issued a favorable notice and on November 9, the Public Administration Committee issued also a favorable notice.
Next step: Issuance of the joint report (overdue deadline: November 7).

PL-x 711/2023 (former L487/2023) – *legislative proposal on extending protection for non-smokers, in particular for children, by completely banning smoking in new public spaces*
Status: On November 6, it was registered in the Chamber of Deputies and sent to the Health Committee for a report (deadline: November 22).
Next step: Issuance of the report.

Pl-x 706/2023 (former L499/2023) – *legislative proposal which regulates products similar to tobacco products*
Status: On November 6, it was registered in the Chamber of Deputies and sent to the Health, Industries and Culture Committees for a joint report (deadline: November 22).
Next step: Issuance of the report.

Government Decision on National Public Order and Safety Strategy 2023 – 2027 – *The strategy aims to increase the degree of safety of citizens, including measures against smuggling.*
Status: On November 9, it was approved by the Government
Next step: Publication in the Official Gazette.

Customs Authority draft order - *Technical Rules for the presentation of goods to customs in places approved by the Customs Authority, other than the customs office, in the case of export, re-export and exit of the goods from the customs territory of the Union*
Status: On November 7, it was published on the website of the Customs Authority.
Next step: Publication in the Official Gazette.

NAFA order – *Amendments on current legislation regarding organization of the administration activity of large and medium taxpayers*
Status: On November 9, it was published for public debate on the NAFA website,
Next step: Publication in the Official Gazette.

COMMITTEES' AGENDAS

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Human Rights Committee – November 14, for a **notice**

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Issue Monitoring provides companies and business associations with real time alerts and periodic reports on various policies that are under debate in Parliament, Government or Authorities. The monitoring includes the entire legislative life cycle of draft bills, relevant news in mass media and stakeholders' profiles. For an in-depth monitoring, experts are present at public debates and industry events, providing a detailed synthesis of discussions.