

Executive summary
Report MiSE – UNICRI

The report “*Counterfeiting as an activity managed by transnational organized crime - The Italian case*” was aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the involvement of transnational criminal networks in counterfeiting activities. The existing situation on the Italian territory has been analysed as a case study, through the mapping of the involvement of criminal organizations in Italy, their connections to other criminal groups and to other illicit traffics managed by transnational criminal networks.

The analysis was aimed at:

- Identifying court cases, data and information that reveal the involvement of organized crime in counterfeiting;
- Highlighting the transnationality of counterfeiting and the related functioning of criminal networks;
- Presenting the specific role played by counterfeiting in organized crime as a significant source of funds and an effective money laundering mechanism.
- Examining court cases and data proving the interconnection between counterfeiting and other illicit traffics: drug trafficking, arms smuggling and human trafficking;
- Investigating the effects of counterfeit products on consumers’ health and safety, and on the society at large.

A preliminary assessment of the existing situation at national level was carried out by UNICRI in the first phase of the research. The collection of data and court cases has been carried out thanks to the cooperation with the Italian Guardia di Finanza (The Italian police body in charge of financial regulation) Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (National Antimafia Bureau), Procura di Napoli (Naples’ Prosecutor Office) and Europol. In addition, UNICRI carried out a number of interviews with national and international experts on this topic – as *opinion leaders* – in order to validate and expand the main hypothesis of the research.

The analysis of the identified court cases confirmed the actual involvement of organized crime in different phases of the management of counterfeiting crimes in Italy. As for the production phase and the retrieval of raw materials, it was found that nowadays almost everything is produced and imported from Southeast Asia, as it is more cost efficient. Ordering counterfeit products through online catalogues is increasingly widespread within the organized crime strategies. Nonetheless, we can still find a local production mainly concentrated in the hinterland of Naples, in Lombardy and Tuscany.

One of the most interesting aspects highlighted by the report is the increasing penetration of counterfeit goods into the regular selling channels. It appears that while in many cases the sellers are informed about the real nature of the goods and they are partners in crime, in other cases they are themselves victims of organized crime, which often imposes the selling of counterfeit products as a form of extortion.

The analysis also outlined the important involvement of the Camorra and the main clans active in counterfeiting activities in both the South and North of the country. An increasing interest by the 'Ndrangheta was also revealed, mainly concentrated in the area of the Gioia Tauro's seaport. For what concerns Chinese criminal networks, they appear to be more and more organized, mainly involved in counterfeiting as well as smuggling of illegal goods, illegal migration, extortion and money laundering. The court cases analysed show that these Chinese organisations often operate in agreement and in cooperation with the Camorra.

The research will serve as a basis for the design of a more comprehensive strategy of the Italian government in the field of counterfeiting and organized crime.