

Importing counterfeit products to the EU: more expensive than expected

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Like every year, hundreds of thousands of tourists are leaving for exotic vacation spots during the holiday season. Once arrived at their destinations, travelers are greeted by a well-established tourist industry, including markets with branded products at extremely low prices: counterfeit products.

Import of counterfeit products to the EU and Germany

While they look deceptively real, such products may lead to unpleasant surprises upon returning to the home country. Basically, it is not prohibited to import counterfeit products into the EU, as long as they are not used for commercial purposes. They are to be declared at customs like any other goods if their value exceeds travelers' allowances.

Always keep the receipt

Since counterfeit products are usually bought at the vacation destination without receiving a receipt, German customs may consider the deceptively genuine-looking counterfeit products to be actually 'genuine'. If this is the case, it is up to the traveler to prove that the product is not real, but was bought at a fraction of the value of a genuine product. Often, this will be difficult to prove because travelers did not even think about requesting a receipt at the vacation destination since the price had been so ridiculously low.

Travelers' allowances are quickly exceeded

Quite often, there have been cases in which tourists were forced to pay customs duties and import VAT for counterfeit goods when returning to the home country. These charges are then based on the prices of genuine products. Since travelers' allowances are then quickly exceeded, fines for import tax evasion will usually be collected as well.

When buying souvenirs, the best bet for tourists is therefore to make sure right away that any counterfeit goods cannot be confused with genuine products upon returning. This strategy will be easier on their nerves as well as on their budget for the next vacation trip. Our specialized attorneys will be pleased to assist you regarding any further questions about German customs law.

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