



# Anti-counterfeiting and Online Brand Enforcement: Global Guide

2025

**Greece: IP authorities establish new digital units to handle surge in online fakes**

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**Generated: June 29, 2025**

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# Greece: IP authorities establish new digital units to handle surge in online fakes

**Miranda Theodoridou** and **Stavroula Politi**

Dr Helen G Papaconstantinou and Partners Law Firm

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Counterfeiting remains a persistent threat to both consumers and businesses in Greece. From luxury goods and electronics to pharmaceuticals and automotive parts, counterfeit products infiltrate various sectors, undermining brand value, compromising safety and distorting market competition. Greece, as a member of the European Union, has adopted robust legal tools and institutional frameworks to fight counterfeiting. This guide provides a detailed overview of the anti-counterfeiting landscape in Greece, focusing on its legal foundation, enforcement mechanisms and strategic preventive measures.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The key legislative instruments governing anti-counterfeiting enforcement in Greece include:

- the Trademark Law 4679/2020, which implements the EU Trademark Directive (2015/2436/EaC) and the EU enforcement of the IPR Directive (2004/48/EC);
- Law 2121/1993 on copyright, related rights and cultural issues, as amended;
- Law 2417/1996 on the ratification of the Hague Agreement concerning the international deposit of industrial designs, Presidential Decree 259/1997 on implementing the provisions of the Agreement and Presidential Decree 161/2002 implementing the EU Designs Directive (98/71/EC) and the EU Designs Regulation 2024/2822 (amending Council Regulation (EC) No 6/2002 on Community designs) – fresh Greek legislation should be expected in implementation of the newly established Regulation;
- Law 1733/1987 on technology transfer, inventions and technological innovation, as amended, and Law 3966/2011, implementing the IPR Directive (2004/48/EC);
- the Unfair Competition Law 146/1914;
- the Criminal Code;
- the Code of Criminal Procedure;
- the Code of Civil Procedure;
- EU Regulation 608/2013 on customs enforcement of IP rights, as implemented by Regulation 1352/2013 and amended by Regulations 582/2018, 1209/2020 and 2024/2399;
- Law 4712/2020 (as amended by Law 4753/2020), amending Law 3377/2005, establishes the inter-agency market control unit and regulates the seizure and destruction of counterfeit and pirated goods; and
- Law 5099/2024 implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on the Digital Services Act (DSA), establishing a Digital Single Market and amending Directive 2000/31/EC.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

Greece's geographic location, economic profile and trade routes make it particularly vulnerable to counterfeiting, especially as a transit country between Europe, Asia and Africa. According to recent data from the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Greece is among the top EU countries affected by counterfeit trade in proportion to its GDP.

Key national characteristics:

- The ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki, along with key land border entry points such as Kipoi in Evros, Promachonas in Serres and Kakavia in Ioannina, serve as major gateways for the entry of counterfeit goods into Greece.
- Tourism fuels seasonal spikes in counterfeit sales, particularly in popular destinations.
- Informal markets, such as flea markets and street vendors, remain hotspots for counterfeit distribution.

Despite these challenges, Greece has improved its enforcement infrastructure over the past decade, bolstered by EU support and better inter-agency coordination.

## **BORDER MEASURES**

Border measures form a critical component of Greece's anti-counterfeiting regime, particularly given the country's geographic location. Greece's position along key trade routes between Asia, the Middle East and Europe – especially through the Port of Piraeus – makes it a natural hub for the inspection, interception and seizure of counterfeit goods in transit or destined for local markets.

The most frequently intercepted counterfeit products include clothing, footwear, accessories, electronics, perfumes and toys. The majority of these goods originate from countries such as China and Turkey. Interceptions commonly take place across a variety of channels, including container shipments, postal and courier services, and air cargo transport.

Greek border enforcement is governed by Regulation (EU) No 608/2013, which lays down the rules concerning customs enforcement of intellectual property rights. This Regulation is directly applicable in Greece and sets out procedures for detecting, detaining and destroying counterfeit goods at the border.

## **CUSTOMS APPLICATION FOR ACTION**

Rights holders must submit an application for action (AFA) via the IP Enforcement Portal (IPEP) to initiate surveillance and enforcement of their IP rights at the border. There are two types of applications:

- national AFA: valid only in Greece, processed by the National Customs Administration; and
- EU AFA: submitted to a competent authority in one EU member state and valid in multiple selected member states, including Greece.

The AFA must include:

- details of the IP rights to be protected (eg, trademarks and designs);
- information on genuine goods (eg, packaging and labels);
- identification tips for spotting counterfeit products; and
- contact persons authorised to confirm infringements.

Once granted, the AFA is valid for one year and can be renewed annually.

## **DETECTION AND SUSPENSION OF SUSPECT GOODS**

When goods suspected of infringing IP rights are detected:

- customs authorities suspend the release or detain the goods;
- rights holders are notified and must confirm within 10 working days whether the goods in question are counterfeit. If no response is received within this time frame, the goods will be released;
- importers or consignees are also notified of the detention and may either consent to or oppose the suspension of goods, or choose not to respond to the customs notification; and
- if importers or consignees object to the suspension of goods, rights holders must promptly initiate legal proceedings to determine whether an intellectual property right has been infringed and notify customs accordingly, to ensure that the goods remain detained until the conclusion of the litigation proceedings.

To support the detection process, Greek customs officers use:

- risk analysis systems to assess the origin, type and consignment patterns;
- targeted inspections at high-volume points of entry, such as the Port of Piraeus, Elefsina, Thessaloniki and Athens International Airport; and
- X-ray scanning and physical checks, especially for containers originating from high-risk jurisdictions.

Greek customs are known to be responsive and willing to cooperate with rights holders, who often provide training sessions or updated brand manuals to help inspectors identify suspicious goods.

### **SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE AND DESTRUCTION OF GOODS**

If the rights holder confirms that the goods are counterfeit and the importer does not object to their destruction, customs can proceed with the simplified destruction procedure under Article 23 of Regulation 608/2013.

Key features:

- No court proceedings are required if there is no objection from the importer within the specified period.
- Goods are destroyed at the expense of the rights holder.
- Storage costs are also borne by the right holder, particularly in cases of seizures carried out by the major Customs offices, such as those in Piraeus and Thessaloniki.

This procedure is efficient and widely used in Greece, enabling the rapid blocking of counterfeit goods.

### **SPECIAL CASES: IN TRANSIT GOODS**

A common challenge in Greece, given its shipping prominence, involves goods in transit – ie, items entering Greek territory destined for non-EU countries. Regulation 608/2013 does not set out any provisions intended to render *Philips/Nokia* (C-446 and 495/09) ineffective or, at least, mitigate its impact. Nevertheless, the Greek Trademark Law introduced a provision – already included in the EU Trademark Regulation (2017/1001) – that permits customs

authorities to intervene in cases involving goods in transit if those goods bear a trademark that is identical to, or cannot be distinguished in its essential elements from, an EU or Greek trademark, even when the goods are not destined for the EU market. This right is extinguished if the holder of the goods provides evidence demonstrating that the trademark owner would not be entitled to prohibit the use of the mark in the country of final destination. This legal mechanism allows customs to seize counterfeit goods declared as in transit, shifting the burden of proof to their holder to establish non-infringement.

Nonetheless, the principles established in *Philips/Nokia* remain pertinent in areas beyond trademark law, and in some instances, they present significant hurdles to the seizure of counterfeit goods that clearly infringe copyright protections.

### **MARKET ACTIONS**

While border control is crucial in stopping counterfeit goods before they enter the country, market surveillance and enforcement within Greece are equally essential in tackling the domestic distribution and retail of counterfeit products. Market actions are aimed at detecting, seizing and removing infringing products from circulation once they have bypassed border control or been produced domestically.

These actions are undertaken by various state authorities, often in cooperation with rights holders, and target a wide array of environments – from physical retail shops and open-air markets to warehouses and storage facilities.

### **RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES**

Several Greek institutions and enforcement bodies are empowered to carry out anti-counterfeiting actions within the market, including:

- Interagency Unit for Market Control (DIMEA): established under Law 4712/2020, DIMEA is a specialised inspection unit responsible for tackling illicit trade, including counterfeits. It is currently the leading agency in anti-counterfeiting raids and seizures in the domestic market.
- Hellenic Police (Economic Crime Division): conducts criminal investigations, raids and arrests in coordination with public prosecutors, particularly in cases involving organized crime.
- Financial and Economic Crime Unit (SDOE): a special investigative body under the Ministry of Finance that targets high-level financial crimes, including IP crimes when they relate to larger criminal networks or tax evasion.
- Municipal police and prefectural authorities: often involved in inspections of small-scale retail shops, flea markets and open-air stalls.
- the coastguard and Customs.

These authorities often conduct joint inspections, especially in high-risk areas such as tourist zones, street markets and commercial hubs known for counterfeit activity.

### **SCOPE OF INSPECTIONS AND RAIDS**

Market actions target various forms of counterfeit distribution:

- retail shops suspected of selling counterfeit goods;

- street vendors and informal markets, especially in tourist-heavy areas such as Plaka in Athens, Monastiraki, Omonia, Thessaloniki, and islands such as Rhodes, Crete and Corfu;
- storage warehouses and logistics centres that hold counterfeit goods prior to distribution;
- wholesale suppliers selling bulk counterfeits to smaller vendors;
- seasonal businesses and pop-up stores that exploit periods of high demand; and
- inspections may be performed either ex officio by the authorities (systematic operations based on risk profiling) or following complaints, tip-offs or intelligence provided by the right holders.

During an inspection, authorities typically seize goods suspected of being counterfeit, prepare a seizure report specifying the quantity of the items and the relevant infringed IP rights and promptly notify the rights holder – providing sample photographs of the seized goods to enable confirmation of their counterfeit nature.

Depending on the authority conducting the raid, as well as the urgency and specific circumstances of each operation, rights holders should promptly confirm whether the goods in question are counterfeit. Infringers may either acknowledge the counterfeit nature of the goods or raise objections.

### **DESTRUCTION OF COUNTERFEIT GOODS**

Once seized, goods that without objections have been deemed infringing are promptly destroyed using any available means. Conversely, if the seizure is contested by the infringer, the goods are securely stored until a final determination is made. Destruction is conducted under the supervision of public officials. The process aims to prevent any possibility of re-entry into the market.

Costs for storage and destruction may be borne by the rights holder or the infringer, depending on the applicable proceedings.

Notably, in cases involving DIMEA where the infringer acknowledges the counterfeit nature of the goods, the counterfeit items are destroyed at no cost to the rights holder. In such instances, rights holders are neither notified of the seizure at the time it occurs nor required to confirm the counterfeit status of the goods. Monthly reports are issued, detailing the quantities seized per brand without disclosing the identities of the infringers. Furthermore, specific information regarding each seizure – including the number of items seized and the corresponding seizure reference number – is uploaded to the rights holder's 'suspicious case room' in IPEP for informational purposes.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTIES AND SANCTIONS**

When counterfeit goods are identified during market surveillance operations, the responsible parties may be subject to both administrative penalties and criminal prosecution, depending on the scale of the infringement and the enforcement authority involved.

DIMEA primarily focuses on the seizure and destruction of counterfeit goods and is empowered to impose administrative fines of up to €100,000, depending on the quantity of items confiscated. Criminal proceedings are initiated ex officio only when DIMEA's operations are conducted in collaboration with another enforcement authority, such as the Hellenic

Police. In contrast, the Police and SDOE usually form criminal case files, which are referred to the public prosecution's office.

### **NOTABLE OPERATIONS AND SUCCESSES**

In recent years, DIMEA and other enforcement bodies have carried out significant enforcement actions:

- In a single operation carried out in February 2025 at a warehouse in Thessaloniki, DIMEA, in cooperation with other enforcement authorities, seized 62,915 counterfeit items, including pyjamas and tracksuits. A fine of €100,000 was imposed on the infringer, and criminal proceedings have been initiated.
- In July 2024, the Hellenic Police dismantled a criminal organisation involved in the importation and distribution of counterfeit goods via social media platforms and dedicated websites. The total value of the counterfeit products that were circulated exceeds €3.3 million.
- In early November 2022, the Hellenic Police dismantled a criminal organisation involved in the importation and distribution of counterfeit goods via social media platforms and dedicated websites. The investigation revealed that the members of the organisation had created and operated four separate websites, through which they had facilitated over 23,000 shipments of counterfeit products, with a total estimated value exceeding €1.5 million.
- In 2021, 285,000 counterfeit items were seized and destroyed by DIMEA, while the fines imposed for counterfeiting amount to €2,847,550.

These operations demonstrate the Greek state's increasing commitment to enforcing IP laws through domestic market action.

### **COOPERATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

To enhance enforcement capabilities, Greece participates in several collaborative initiatives:

- operations within the EMPACT framework, such as Operation Fake Star (targeting counterfeit goods that violate well known brands' IP rights Europe-wide), Operation LUDUS (targeting counterfeit toys), Operation Aphrodite (targeting counterfeit cosmetics) and Operation OPSON (targeting counterfeit food and beverages);
- EUIPO's Anti-Counterfeiting Intelligence Support Tool and IP Enforcement Portal; and
- World Customs Organization training and cross-border coordination projects.

Additionally, the Hellenic Industrial Property Organisation (OBI) regularly conducts training seminars for enforcement authorities – in collaboration with the EUIPO – aimed at enhancing their ability to detect counterfeits and stay abreast of evolving trends in product imitation.

### **CRIMINAL PROSECUTION**

According to Article 45 of the Trademark Law, various acts of intentional trademark infringement constitute criminal offences. Criminal prosecution does not take place ex officio, but rather following the filing of a related criminal complaint by the rights holder.

The infringer may be sentenced to imprisonment of at least six months and fined no less than €6,000. Professional and commercial-scale infringements are considered aggravating

circumstances, and a minimum of two years imprisonment and a fine from €6,000 to €30,000 is imposed for the unlawful use of identical marks for identical or similar products, when particularly high profits are sought or very significant damages are threatened and the infringement is on a commercial scale, or when the infringer is a professional offender.

Under Article 66 of the Copyright Law, copyright infringement is a criminal offence, which is prosecuted *ex officio*. Infringers are liable to imprisonment of no less than one year and a fine from €2,900 to €15,000. If the financial gain sought or the damage caused is particularly great, the offender may be sentenced to a minimum of two years' imprisonment and a fine from €6,000 to €30,000. Imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine from €15,000 to €60,000 is imposed if the infringer acts by profession, on a commercial scale or is considered a serious threat to the protection of copyright and related rights.

In cases of IP infringement and counterfeiting, general criminal law provisions (eg, those regarding forgery, fraud and the acceptance and distribution of illicit goods) may also be applicable, depending on the circumstances of the case. Criminal provisions are also included in the unfair competition legislation. Design, patent and plant variety infringement are not criminalised under Greek law.

### **CIVIL ENFORCEMENT**

Greek IP legislation has fully implemented the EU Enforcement of IPR Directive (2004/48/EC). In cases of IPR infringement, action may be pursued before the civil courts.

### **MAIN INFRINGEMENT ACTIONS**

In the context of main infringement actions, the rights holder may request:

- permanent cessation of the infringing activities;
- refrainment from future infringing activity;
- destruction, confiscation or withdrawal of the infringing products;
- moral and material damages; and
- publication of the judgment in the press or online, at the infringer's expense.

Remedies under the first three of these points are also available against intermediaries. In many cases, courts may caution the losing party with a penalty for each breach of the judgment.

When calculating damages, the negative economic consequences suffered by the rights holder – including loss of profits and profits made by the infringer – are taken into account. Damages may also be calculated based on hypothetical royalties.

The rights holder may file a petition for injunction before the competent first-instance court. Injunctive measures are ordered, provided that the element of urgency is prevalent in the circumstances of a particular case.

When filing the petition for injunction, the rights holder may also apply for a temporary restraining order, which is granted in cases where the petitioner proves the existence of a *prima facie* serious infringement as a matter of exceptional urgency. *Ex parte* proceedings are possible in this context but rare in practice.

### **MEDIATION**

Law 4640/2019 introduces a compulsory initial mediation session before the courts prior to the hearing of cases arising from patent, trademark and industrial design infringements. This session, along with proof of the lawyer's compliance with the obligation to inform the client in writing about the option of mediation, has become a prerequisite for the admissibility of a main infringement action under the new provisions.

### **ANTI-COUNTERFEITING ONLINE**

The rapid expansion of e-commerce and social media-driven commerce in Greece has significantly reshaped the landscape of counterfeit trade. As traditional marketplaces become more regulated, infringers increasingly exploit the anonymity and global accessibility of online platforms to promote and distribute counterfeit goods to Greek consumers. Addressing this digital threat has become a key priority for Greek authorities, rights holders and platform operators alike.

The most commonly used digital environments for the sale and promotion of counterfeit goods include:

- Online marketplaces: platforms such as Skrouz.gr, Amazon, eBay, AliExpress and other Greek-language retail websites are frequently used. Counterfeiters often conceal themselves among legitimate sellers, offering branded products at suspiciously low prices.
- Social media platforms: Facebook (particularly Marketplace), Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp are increasingly exploited for peer-to-peer sales and hidden storefronts, enabling covert transactions.
- Fraudulent e-shops: these are cloned or deceptive websites designed to imitate legitimate brand or retailer sites, tricking consumers into purchasing fake goods.
- Drop-shipping platforms: these facilitate the direct shipment of counterfeit products from foreign suppliers to Greek consumers, with limited traceability and minimal physical presence.

In many cases, counterfeit sellers operate without a formal business entity, relying on encrypted messaging, disposable accounts and offshore hosting to avoid detection and enforcement.

Although online IP enforcement in Greece remains in a developmental phase, several authorities have begun to actively address the digital dimension of counterfeiting:

- Cybercrime Division of the Hellenic Police: this unit conducts digital investigations, seizes domain names and facilitates the shutdown of infringing social media accounts in cooperation with prosecutors and brand owners.
- DIMEA: a specialised directorate within DIMEA has launched initiatives to monitor e-commerce platforms and social media for counterfeit-related activity. When online infringements are identified, the directorate may request the Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT) to deactivate the infringing websites, if falling within its jurisdiction. Notably, in April 2023, the Administrative Court of Appeal upheld a DIMEA order instructing EETT to delete a website engaged in counterfeiting.

In addition to these specialised bodies, traditional enforcement agencies such as SDOE also investigate online counterfeiting cases. Authorities may act ex officio or in response to complaints filed by rights holders – particularly when supported by digital evidence such as screenshots, transaction data or test purchases.

Greece has also incorporated the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) into national law through Law 5099/2024, which reinforces intermediary obligations and consumer protection.

Furthermore, rights holders may request the removal or blocking of illegal online content under Articles 11 and 13 of Presidential Decree 131/2003, which transposes the EU e-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) into Greek law. Upon becoming aware of infringing activity, rights holders can initiate takedown procedures.

For online copyright infringement, Article 66E of the Greek Copyright Law establishes an expedited extrajudicial 'notice and takedown' mechanism. Rights holders, including collective management organisations, can file an application with the Committee for the Notification of Copyright and Related Rights Infringement on the Internet. If infringement is verified, the Committee instructs internet service providers (ISPs) – and, where applicable, hosting providers or site administrators – to remove or disable access to the infringing content using the most effective technical means. Additionally, Article 64A allows rights holders to seek injunctive relief against intermediaries, such as ISPs, whose services are misused for infringement.

Online counterfeiting is a growing problem in Greece, but the country has taken significant steps to combat it. Through the combined efforts of rights holders, online platforms, enforcement agencies, and consumers, Greece is making strides in reducing the sale of counterfeit goods online. However, it remains an ongoing challenge that requires constant vigilance, technological innovation and cross-border cooperation.

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND STRATEGIES

Beyond enforcement, a comprehensive anti-counterfeiting strategy includes preventive measures aimed at deterring counterfeit trade before it occurs.

Key preventive strategies include:

- IP rights registration and Customs procedures: rights holders should ensure that their intellectual property rights are properly protected and regularly updated in Greece. In addition, they should submit applications for customs intervention and maintain valid customs decisions to enable timely and effective border enforcement.
- Training for enforcement authorities: some progress is being made in this area through the implementation of a training programme by the OBI in collaboration with the EUIPO. This initiative contributes to equipping customs and law enforcement officials with the necessary skills to identify and act against counterfeit goods.
- Supply chain controls: implementing robust monitoring and auditing mechanisms for suppliers and distributors is critical to prevent unauthorised manufacturing and diversion within the supply chain.
- Market and online monitoring: rights holders should consistently monitor both physical marketplaces and digital platforms for unauthorised use of their intellectual property, enabling early detection and response to infringement.
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Consumer education: awareness-raising efforts targeting consumers are also underway, notably through OBI's participation in the AUTHENTICITIES programme. These initiatives help highlight the risks associated with counterfeit products and the value of genuine goods.

- Adoption of anti-counterfeiting technologies: brand owners increasingly employ technologies such as holograms, QR codes, RFID tags, and blockchain-based tracking systems to authenticate products and deter counterfeiters.
- While encouraging steps are being taken in the areas of enforcement authority training and consumer education, further coordinated efforts are needed in Greece to advance the remaining pillars of a holistic anti-counterfeiting strategy.



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**Miranda Theodoridou**  
**Stavroula Politi**

[m\\_theodoridou@hplaw.biz](mailto:m_theodoridou@hplaw.biz)  
[s\\_politi@hplaw.biz](mailto:s_politi@hplaw.biz)

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2 Coumbari Street, Kolonaki, Athens 10674, Greece

Tel: +30 210 362 5757

<http://www.hplaw.biz>

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