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Information
on the
obligation
to verbally declare
cash money

Information on the obligation to verbally declare cash money and equivalent means of payment upon frontier passage into EU Member States

Obligation to verbally declare upon frontier passage into EU Member States

The circulation of cash money and equivalent means of payment across the German borders into other Member States of the European Union (EU) is monitored by the customs control units, the federal police and the regional police authorities of Bavaria, Bremen and Hamburg at the borders and within the country. Every person coming from an EU Member State and entering Germany with cash money or equivalent means of payment in a total amount of EUR 10,000 or more or leaving Germany for another EU Member State **is obliged to verbally report** this amount of money to the customs officer upon entry or exit **on request.** In case of non-declaration or false declaration of cash money or equivalent means of payment carried, a large fine may be imposed.

What is the purpose of the obligation to declare?

The obligation to declare aims at the prevention of illegal movements of money across German borders, thus combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism and crime.
However, the checks do not restrict the free movement of capital. Even in the future, cash money and equivalent means of payment may be carried in unlimited amounts without need of permission.

Who must declare the cash and equivalent means of payment?

Any person who is carrying more than EUR 10,000 in cash or equivalent means of payment (e.g. in their handbag, backpack or suitcase) has to verbally declare the full amount to the customs officers on request.
It is not relevant who is the owner of the cash and equivalent means of payment and why you are carrying the cash and equivalent means of payment.

For example:
A group of travellers – father, mother and 3 children – enters Germany by train, coming from Austria. The mother carries EUR 40,000 in her handbag. The money belongs to the father and the children. The group are asked about cash and equivalent means of payment by German customs officers.
The mother must verbally declare the EUR 40,000 as she carries the whole amount of money.

What is cash money and equivalent means of payment?

Cash money includes, for instance:
‣ banknotes and coins which are legal tender
‣ banknotes and coins that are no legal tender but can still be changed into a currency which is legal tender (e.g. Deutsche Mark, Austrian shilling, exchange into euros is still possible).

Equivalent means of payment include shares, precious metals, gemstones (raw or cut) and electronic money, for instance:
‣ passbook of a savings account
‣ savings bond
‣ cheque /traveller's cheque
‣ share
‣ draft
‣ platinum, gold, silver
‣ diamond, ruby, sapphire or emerald

Jewellery and other goods made of precious metals or gems are not deemed to be equivalent means of payment and therefore are not subject to declaration.

Foreign currency must be converted into euros using the exchange rate (buying rate for the customer) valid on the day of entry/exit.
For the calculation of the value of collector coins and bullion coins (e.g. "Maple Leaf". "Eagle", "Vienna Philharmonic"), the value is based not on the nominal value but on the actual value.

How should I report and what information do I have to give?

If in the course of a control you are requested to report cash money and equivalent means of payment, you have to verbally indicate the kind and the value of the cash money or equivalent means of payment as well as the origin, the beneficiary and the purpose.

In case of doubt as to whether or not the means of payment you are carrying are subject to declaration or other uncertainties you should, in your own interest, ask the customs officer. Supplying false or incomplete information can have serious consequences.

What happens when I have supplied all the information required?

If you have correctly declared the cash and/or cash equivalents to the customs officials and the information is complete and conclusive and there are no indications for money laundering or the financing of terrorism, you can proceed your journey unhindered, with your cash and/or cash equivalents.

What happens if there is reason to suspect money laundering or financing a terrorist group?

As a rule, doubts about the information or other indications of possible money laundering or financing a terrorist group cannot be clarified on the spot. The customs officers forward the case to the customs investigation office, which clarifies the facts by means of further research. If the matter cannot be clarified within a short time, the cash money or the equivalent means of payment carried is confiscated. If evidence of money laundering or financing a terrorist group is found, the customs investigation office starts preliminary proceedings.

What consequences can people expect if they supply false, incomplete or no information about the cash money or equivalent means of payment they are carrying?

Anyone who fails to declare in full cash money or equivalent means of payment when requested to do so, commits an offence. The offence can be penalized with a fine of up to one million euros.

What other tasks do the Customs have in supervising the movement of cash money and equivalent means of payment?

If any indication of the evasion of taxes or misuse of social benefits is found during the customs control of cash money or equivalent means of payment, this information may be forwarded to the competent authorities (e.g. State tax authorities, social security institutions) for further investigation.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any further questions relating to the duty to declare cash and/or cash equivalents, you can contact any office of the German customs service.

You can also find further information on the homepage of the German customs service at: http://www.zoll.de/DE/Fachthemen/Aussenwirtschaft-Bargeldverkehr/Barmittel-und-Bargeldverkehr/barmittel-und-bargeldverkehr_node.html