

## CEP Magazine – February 2018

# Why should you care about money laundering in a personal way?

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Restaurants, gas stations, airlines, malls, companies dedicated to cattle, agriculture, mining, tourism. Name any other industry or business line, and money can be laundered through it.

The reason: It is estimated that the amount of money laundered in a year is 3% to 5% of the gross domestic product worldwide or, in other words, \$2 to \$3 trillion US dollars. And these numbers are increasing daily. Do you see how much money is generated? This is why criminals have expanded to other activities.

So until now, you could think, “Well, this is for companies. It impacts them only; nothing to be worried about.”

Answer: No! You should care about money laundering, because it can affect you, your family, or your friends.

### Effects of illicit commerce

Let me explain this with real cases, starting with something that you and I could think about as a “harmless” action: illicit commerce.

China is the number one country known for producing counterfeit products: Bags, glasses, watches, CDs, DVDs, tennis shoes, cars, medicine, among other things. Name something and it can be forged. For this case, we'll choose two items: bags and medicines.<sup>[1]</sup>

Italy has one of the largest seaports in Europe. It is estimated that almost 65% of all containers come from China. In ports, governments don't have the infrastructure to review more than 3% to 5% on average of all incoming containers. Criminals know this, so it's easy for them to smuggle products or mix counterfeit goods with the original. Those bags are sent to Naples, Italy. There they'll be distributed to Nigerians. How?

As we all know, illegal immigration is happening everywhere in the world. It has many causes, but let's focus on a poor country such as Nigeria. Due to its economic conditions, people pay to get to Europe illegally for better job opportunities. But it isn't easy to do; they exchange their freedom for money. This is “debt slavery,” where they have to sell forged items to get some money. And they become the illegal network of workers for organized crime. You can see them on almost every street in several cities: in Madrid, in Mexico City, in New York. The money coming from those sales doesn't make them rich or help them to get out of poverty. It makes the head of a crime ring richer than he already was. That money has to be laundered; it has been proven that the Italian mob does it by construction.<sup>[2]</sup> They construct several apartments or houses with dirty money. After they sell them, the money has been cleaned. Do you think they use the best quality materials to construct? No. They don't care. They don't even bother to comply with safety regulations. There have been cases where buildings have collapsed and people have died or been injured. Who is to blame?

Have you recently bought a house or an apartment? If so, how can you be sure that the documentation shown is

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not false (construction permits, certification of the materials, safety regulations, etc.)?

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