

**Question for written answer E-007823/2017
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Belarus to increase its production of cheap white cigarettes

The Government of Belarus recently announced that a private investor will increase the manufacturing capabilities of the Grodno Tobacco factory. According to the announcement, the increase is due to start in January 2018, in response to a growing demand for Belarusian cigarette brands. The EU is among the target markets.

Belarusian cigarette brands manufactured at the Grodno Tobacco factory are actually smuggled into over 20 Member States where they cannot be legally sold, and already represent around EUR 1 billion in yearly tax losses.

In the context of the upcoming EU-Belarus Coordination Group meeting (19-20 December):

1. Will the EEAS address this issue with the Government of Belarus?
2. Will the EEAS request information about the Member State markets on which Belarusian cigarette brands can legally be sold and how the exports will be tracked to avoid ruptures in the supply chain?
3. Will the EEAS point out that low taxes applied in Belarus on cigarettes are the incentive for smuggling into the EU?