

OLAF curbs cross-border fraud and closes record number of investigations in 2015

In 2015, the work of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) was as diverse as it was significant. Complex cases ranged from investigating fraud in an ecological project in Africa, to co-operating with Japanese and Malaysian authorities on a multi-million case of evasion of anti-dumping duties, or dismantling a criminal network producing counterfeit shampoo in Spain. OLAF reported an excellent investigative performance, concluding the highest number of investigations in the last years, curbing cross-border fraud and bringing tangible results in protecting EU taxpayers' money.

"Our investigations in 2015 have once again proved that illegal activities do not stop at national borders," OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler said. "Through our strong investigative performance and high number of concluded investigations, I believe we have successfully served European citizens and helped ensure EU money goes where it is most needed instead of being pocketed by fraudsters," he added. "However, what we need now is an appropriate framework that allows countries to effectively work together in combatting fraud, so we must progress in establishing a European Public Prosecutor's Office."

OLAF 2015 investigative performance, in numbers:

- In 2015 **OLAF concluded 304 investigations**, a record number for the Office, and concentrated on reducing the number of long-lasting investigations in its portfolio.
- The Office opened **219 new investigations** in 2015, a particularly high number achieved against the backdrop of a decrease in investigative staff.
- OLAF assessed more items of information of potential investigative interest in less time, completing 90% of its **1442 selections** within two months.
- In the course of the year, OLAF issued **364 recommendations** to the relevant Member State and EU authorities. These will enable the recovery of EU funds inappropriately spent and facilitate bringing fraudsters to justice.
- With Structural Funds once more providing the bulk of its investigative work, OLAF recommended to national and EU authorities a total of **EUR 888.1 million for financial recovery** to the EU budget.

OLAF reaches "cruising altitude" after its reorganisation

This year's results also prove that four years after its reorganisation in 2012, the Office is considerably more efficient in all areas of its work. Not only has OLAF both opened and closed more investigations than before its reorganisation: 83% more investigations opened post-reorganisation, and 93% more investigations concluded, it has done so faster than

ever. OLAF has also almost halved the percentage of long-lasting investigations compared to the period before 2012.

OLAF concentrates on the fight against cigarette smuggling

OLAF has progressed in its efforts to fight the illicit trade in tobacco products. Through its investigation and coordination cases and in the course of the Joint Customs Operations that the Office organised with EU Member states and third countries, OLAF helped national authorities seize 619 million cigarette sticks in 2015.

OLAF advances European anti-fraud policies

Throughout 2015, OLAF made important contributions to the European Commission's legislative initiatives, taking a particularly active role in the on-going negotiations on the European Commission proposal for the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). OLAF believes the EPPO would streamline the process of identifying fraudsters and bringing them to justice more swiftly. It would significantly boost the protection of the EU budget and reduce the current fragmentation of national law enforcement efforts in this field.

In 2015, OLAF also signed important Administrative Cooperation Arrangements with international organisations, including with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Food Programme. These arrangements will help OLAF to further its fight against cross-border fraud, particularly in the area of EU external aid.

To read the full report, please click [here](#)

OLAF mission, mandate and competences:

OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop fraud with EU funds.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud and corruption involving EU funds, so as to ensure that all EU taxpayers' money reaches projects that can create jobs and growth in Europe;
- contributing to strengthening citizens' trust in the EU Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU Institutions;
- developing a sound EU anti-fraud policy.

In its independent investigative function, OLAF can investigate matters relating to fraud, corruption and other offences affecting the EU financial interests concerning:

- all EU expenditure: the main spending categories are Structural Funds, agricultural policy and rural development funds, direct expenditure and external aid;
- some areas of EU revenue, mainly customs duties;
- suspicions of serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU institutions.

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