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OLAF in 2014: a strong investigative performance bringing tangible results for EU taxpayers

In 2014, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) achieved excellent results in the fight against fraud across Europe. OLAF completed a high number of investigations while continuing to reduce their overall duration. It issued a record number of recommendations in over five years. The Office recommended the recovery of EUR 901 million, which should progressively return to the EU budget and help fund other projects. The results reported for 2014, presented today, confirm that OLAF has become increasingly efficient over the last years, bringing tangible results for EU taxpayers.

"OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop fraud involving EU funds. Our work delivers concrete results. It ensures that EU taxpayers' money is used for the purpose for which it was originally intended, creating jobs and growth in Europe" said the OLAF Director-General, Mr Giovanni Kessler, at a press conference today. "The results of our investigative activity in 2014 confirm the strong performance reported by OLAF last year. We have concentrated on those cases where our intervention is most needed and can bring real added value – on complex investigations in areas such as structural funds, customs, smuggling, trade and external aid. These cases will contribute to substantial recoveries to the EU budget."

OLAF investigative performance in 2014: Key results

- OLAF received the highest number of allegations of possible fraud since its creation, 1417 items. This higher inflow of information does not necessarily mean that fraud has risen in Europe, but it shows the increased confidence that citizens, institutions and other partners place in OLAF's investigative capacities.
- Despite this higher inflow, OLAF succeeded in continuing to assess incoming allegations in a short time - 2 months on average - before deciding whether to pursue a case or not. Over the last three years, OLAF reduced the duration of the selection phase by 70% compared to previous years.
- OLAF opened a high number of investigations, 234. This confirms the trend reported over the last three years, when OLAF has substantially strengthened its investigative capacity. On average OLAF now opens 60% more investigations than before its reorganisation in 2012.
- 250 investigations were concluded. The average duration of investigations decreased to 21 months. This is the shortest average duration reported in over five years. By conducting investigations more efficiently, the likelihood of OLAF cases leading to tangible results on the ground is increased. This year, in order to respond to interest expressed by stakeholders, OLAF is presenting a breakdown of its concluded investigations, by Member State and by Institution.

- OLAF issued 397 recommendations for financial, judicial, administrative or disciplinary action to be taken by the competent authorities, a record number in five years.
- In 2014, OLAF also recommended the highest amount of financial recoveries to the EU budget in over five years, €901 million. These funds should progressively return to the EU budget and help fund other projects.

OLAF's contribution to EU anti-fraud policies

While OLAF remains fully independent in its investigative function, it actively contributes to the European Commission's legislative initiatives concerning the protection of the EU's financial interests against fraud and corruption. Throughout 2014, OLAF contributed to the negotiations on the setting-up of a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), as well as those on the Directive on the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests and to legislation enhancing effective customs cooperation.

OLAF also entered into Administrative Arrangements with several EU Institutions and other partners such as the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the World Bank, the UN Development Programme, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Such Arrangements will provide OLAF with faster, easier and more transparent cooperation procedures and information exchange with such bodies, prompting global action against fraud and corruption cases which often transcend national borders.

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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