

OLAF in operation against counterfeit medicines

Under Europol's Operation SHIELD II, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) led an enforcement action targeting counterfeit and substandard hormonal substances, food supplements and medicines for erectile dysfunction. European consumers were protected from hundreds of thousands of dodgy tablets and vials.

OLAF investigators facilitated the cooperation and activities of customs and police authorities of 17 EU Member States that took part in the targeted action. Together, OLAF and national authorities found various irregularities and intercepted 254,731 tablets and 131,027 vials of various medicines and 278 kg of food supplements. The participating countries were: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

OLAF's targeted action was part of Europol's Operation SHIELD II. In the course of six months – April to October 2021 – Europol, OLAF and the countries that participated in SHIELD II looked to bust misused or counterfeit medicines, doping substances, illegal food or sport supplements and counterfeit COVID vaccines, sanitary products and medical devices.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"This is the second year of Operation SHIELD and the second year that OLAF participates and leads a targeted action. It is quite sad to see how criminals will not hesitate to put people's health on the line to make profit. Thankfully, we could get in their way by joining efforts with Europol and national authorities like we often do. We best protect EU citizens from dangerous or ineffective products when we work together, and I am proud whenever OLAF can act as a bridge between the different national authorities. Sharing intelligence is also key – that is why OLAF put its information-sharing platform AFIS at the service of this targeted action."*

More information on Operation SHIELD II can be found in [Europol's press release](#).

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.

Once OLAF has completed its investigation, it is for the competent EU and national authorities to examine and decide on the follow-up of OLAF's recommendations. All persons concerned are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in a competent national or EU court of law.

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