

Hercule II Programme: EU financial support helped Member States obtain tangible results in their fight against fraud

The European Commission's Hercule II Programme, which made available almost EUR 100 million for anti-fraud actions between 2007 and 2013, achieved its goals and brought tangible results at national level. These are the main findings of a Commission report adopted today and addressed to the European Parliament and to the Council on the achievement of the objectives of the Hercule II Programme.

The Commission report, which is based on an independent evaluation as well as an internal analysis, assesses the extent to which the Hercule II Programme achieved its objectives and had the intended impact at national level.

The evaluation finds that the support granted to Member States led to better transnational and multidisciplinary cooperation between authorities in their activities seeking to protect the EU's financial interests. The Programme contributed to strengthening the operational and investigative capacity of its main beneficiaries, such as police forces, customs authorities and other law enforcement agencies.

The Hercule II overall budget was spent on more than 500 different actions in three different sectors of activities: Technical Assistance, Training and IT support. The Programme provided financial support to Member States' authorities for the purchase of x-rays scanners and technical equipment in operations to protect the EU's financial interests. For example, thanks to Hercule II funding, the Hellenic Financial Police in Greece purchased forensic software and surveillance devices used for operations against cigarette and fuel smuggling. The Spanish Guardia Civil bought technical equipment (such as false document detectors, monitoring software and tracking devices) to target cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting.

The Programme also supported training activities and conferences aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of the Member States and third countries to better fight fraud and irregularities committed against the EU's financial interests. For example, thanks to Hercule II funding, the Italian Customs Agency implemented training on the "Illicit trafficking of cigarettes in the Western Balkans Region, Turkey and Italy" to which senior customs officers from eight other countries participated. Several other Hercule conferences brought together experts from anti-fraud coordination services from Member States, candidate countries and potential candidate countries working on issues related the management of EU funds and irregularity reporting.

The assessment presented today concludes that the actions undertaken could not have been fully achieved without the financial support of the EU channelled through Hercule funds. Moreover, the activities funded by the Programme enabled the creation of networks that allow the exchange of best practices between experts, such as law enforcement staff or forensic experts, across Europe.

The report also contains suggestions to improve the impact of further action in the anti-fraud field by facilitating staff exchanges and ensuring that the Programme reaches more beneficiaries. The needs to strengthen the reporting on the Programme's activities, as well as the monitoring of the results, have also been highlighted. They will be addressed appropriately under the new Hercule III Programme.

Background

The Hercule programme is the only instrument specifically dedicated to protecting the financial interests of the EU by supporting the fight against irregularities, fraud and corruption affecting the EU Budget. The Hercule Programme is administered by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), which in this policy field acts as a Directorate-General of the European Commission.

The Hercule II Programme was the successor to the first Hercule programme which started in 2004 (Decision 804/2004/EC) and was extended under the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 (Decision 878/2007/EC). The current programme Hercule III makes available EUR 104.9 million for the period 2014-2020 (Regulation (EU) 250/2014). The Programme is named after a fictional character created by Agatha Christie ("Hercule Poirot").

Related documents

- The **Commission report** and the **independent evaluation** of the Hercule II programme can be found on the [Hercule II Reports page](#) of the OLAF website
- **Press release** no. 4/2015: "[Hercule III programme: New funds available for the fight against fraud in the European Union](#)"

OLAF

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by investigating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it detects and investigates serious matters relating to the discharge of professional duties by members and staff of the EU institutions and bodies that could result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings; and it supports the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, in the development and implementation of anti-fraud legislation and policies.

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