

Minutes of the 25th OAFCN meeting, Brussels, 20 March 2015

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with no further amendments.

Approval of the minutes of the 24th OAFCN meeting (Zagreb, 12-13 June 2014)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendments and will be published on OLAF website as well as on the OAFCN Extranet.

Agnes Horvath (AH) welcomed participants and reminded that all presentations would be available on extranet after the meeting.

The importance of the fight against fraud and corruption, the perspective of the new Commission - Michael Jennings, communication advisor to Vice-President Georgieva

Michael Jennings (MJ) conveyed VP Georgieva's praise for the work of the Network and her strong belief that together with our national counterparts we can communicate more and better. He stressed the Commission's Vice-President's policy of zero-tolerance against fraud and her policy of an EU *budget focused on results*: (1) the need to reap concrete results from the funds invested (2) the need to have good control mechanisms to prevent errors and (3) the need to fight fraud. He also emphasized the importance of continuously informing the public by communicating the actions that have been developed to combat fraud and corruption, especially the successful results achieved and the collaboration between OLAF and other institutions. He also referred broadly to the new Commission communication policy which will focus on a more effective approach, with fewer spokespersons and more comprehensive messages, encompassing several policy fields.

Welcome message by OLAF's Director-General Giovanni Kessler

The Director-General of OLAF, Giovanni Kessler (GK) welcomed the OAFCN members and in particular the new representatives from the national antifraud coordination services (AFCOS), which have been recently created (on the basis of the new OLAF Regulation of 2013) and were all invited to join the Network. The public opinion is very concerned with fraud and the actions taken to prevent it, so it is vital to communicate what is being done, using concrete examples. Mr Kessler underlined that communicating what we do and, even more important, the positive results of it is crucial to spread the "*zero tolerance*" message and approach towards fraud. If the public does not believe in the competent institutions' capacity to fight fraud, this may damage the European project, therefore communicating is as important as detecting and preventing fraud. The mission of the OAFCN is not only to raise awareness, but also to communicate about the positive outcome of cases in order to fill the communication gap between what we concretely do in the fight against fraud and the public opinion's perception. GK acknowledged this might be challenging due to the legal framework (*E.g.* legal confidentiality that sometimes prevents us from communicating about a case until it is closed in court, sometimes only years later). Hence we need a communication effort to find new ways to communicate what OLAF and the OAFCN members do, within the legal framework.

AH welcomed the new AFCOS representatives: Beatriz Molinuevo, from the Spanish AFCOS (Intervención General de la Administración del Estado, IGAE) and her colleague Alejandro Blanco from the Spanish Permanent Representation in Brussels; Maruta Lage and Aiva Avota from the Latvian AFCOS (Ministry of Finance); Bruno Nicoulaud from the French AFCOS (DNLF); Richard Gordon from the British AFCOS (City of London Police); Justin Flannery from the Irish AFCOS (EU Budget Section International & EU Division); Dries Vriens, from the Belgian AFCOS (Permanent Representation of Belgium). She also welcomed the other newly appointed OAFCN members: Beata Łaszyn, from the Treasury control section within the Polish Ministry of Finance; Klaus Kaartinen, new head of Communications at the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and Ulf Bergström, new Head of Communications & External Relations at Eurojust.

Policy update on the Hercule III Programme - Winfried Kleinegris, OLAF

Winfried Kleinegris (WK) reminded that the Hercule III Programme aims to promote activities in the field of the protection of the financial interests of the EU. The programme's major goal is to assist the competent authorities within the Member States. The programme has a budget of 105 million Euros over 6 years (2014-2020), which means 14 million Euros per year. OLAF will launch in April 2015 a call for proposals for 80% co-funding of training projects and workshops related to anti-fraud, legal training and studies. WK explained how the programme works and reminded that Member States can apply either separately or jointly. The results of the Hercule II Programme will be presented in April. WK stressed that the guidelines to make a proposal are available online.

25 meetings of the OAFCN in images (this meeting was the 25th meeting of the OAFCN)

AH introduced a video with a short recollection of images of the OAFCN events from its creation in 2001 (1st meeting) until the last meeting in Zagreb in June 2014 (24th meeting). AH thanked her OLAF colleague Claudia Köver for creating it and informed that the video will be available after the meeting on OAFCN Extranet.

Implementation of the OAFCN Action Plan 2014 and drafting of the new Action Plan for 2015

Gian Luca Berruti (GLB – Guardia di Finanza, IT), member of the OAFCN Advisory Board and moderator of this session, engaged the audience around a few questions, which led to a vivid discussion on the 5 items of the action plan:

(1) Briefing for journalists

Many OAFCN members stressed the lack of specific expertise in fraud by the media and the need to organise training for them. Karin Burger asked if journalists are really needed as a vector to the public, since we can engage directly with the public using social networks. GLB suggested that the OAFCN network should keep working with journalists, while, step by step, exploring social media.

Dorota Kwiecińska (MoF, PL) mentioned the linguistic barriers amongst journalists. AH gave the example of a joint OAFCN briefing for journalists in Germany that went quite well because there were German speakers among the OLAF team. Otherwise interpreters could solve this issue. Florian Oel, OLAF Deputy Spokesperson (FO), described how the joint OLAF-ZKA briefing for journalists in

Germany was organised. Journalists were invited for a background session about fraud affecting European financial interests, based on concrete case studies. It was explained how OLAF cooperates with national partner services and the OAFCN. On this occasion, OLAF also prepared a fact sheet about the OAFCN.

Rikke Madsen (SKAT, DK) said that journalists in Denmark have a limited interest in OLAF and in its activities since they are not very familiar with its activities. She suggested preparing a leaflet/factsheet for journalists, explaining what OLAF is and how it works. FO added that the interest of journalists is higher in special occasions such as the publication of reports and in events relevant for media (e.g. PIF report). FO stressed the impossibility to speak directly with 500 million Europeans and argued that media are good multipliers to reach people and raise awareness regarding fraud. Nevertheless, the option to engage directly with people in social media could be explored too.

Briefings for journalists, possibly joining several OAFCN partners should continue.

2) Image Bank

GLB explained for the new members that there is a shared image bank within the European Commission Mediathèque to which all the members of the OAFCN are contributing and which is available to all of them. Jiří Barták (Customs, CZ) said that the image bank is a really good achievement, but journalists are looking just for attractive photos and videos, while sometimes the nature of the investigations means the use of very neutral pictures that are not appealing for the media. AH reminded the OAFCN members to send any interesting images in high resolution regarding national operations (i.e. customs controls/seizures, counterfeit goods etc.), together with the copyright forms, otherwise neither OLAF nor the OAFCN members can use them. She also asked members to send suggestions of any topic areas missing.

3) Joint Communication specific media campaign

GLB praised the efforts done in relation to media campaigns and reminded that this action can only be implemented if any JCOs go ahead in 2015. Sabina Langus Boc (SLB - Customs, SI) stated that JCOs are one of the best opportunities to release joint content for the Network and that we still need to continue working on it.

The OAFCN will continue its efforts in this sense.

4) Joint press releases

GLB underlined the need to improve the results related to joint communication and joint press releases.

FO stressed that joint press releases (about cases where two or more OAFCN partners worked together) require a very good coordination in advance between the press offices, as it has been done recently with Italian Guardia di Finanza and German customs. He also said "mirror" press releases issued at the same time have proved to be quite successful. He asked the Network to inform OLAF what can OLAF do to facilitate this kind of cooperation and he insisted on the importance to alert the OLAF team in advance of any big cases/operations OAFCN services might have in cooperation with

OLAF. AH suggested that the OLAF spokesperson will produce a template document to give some guidance to the members.

Ernesto Bruno (Guardia di Finanza, IT) confirmed that joint press releases are a usual practice in Italy, when organisations work together (e.g. GdF and Customs). The procedure is simple; in addition to the press release, realised jointly, there are media contacts made separately by each partner. Beatriz Molinuevo (IGAE, SP) added that this procedure is also quite usual in Spain.

5) Social Media

GLB recalled that in line with the OAFCN Action Plan, OAFCN members who are officially engaged on social media are encouraged to exchange content and information regarding any antifraud communication activities and/or strategies also through this channel, and to keep the Network informed when they do so.

Karin Burger, (KB - Customs, NL) gave tips and guidelines on how to develop a strong and coherent strategy for social media. She pointed out the importance of: a) establishing an online strategy agreed with the management; b) investing in training for the team publishing and answering the comments (call centre or internal team); c) defining the public/target group, the message and the appropriate social network. KB also advocated that a good strategy should rely on 60% of images and 30% text, because people are more responsive to pictures, animations and movies than text. Rikke Madsen (RM - SKAT, DK) added that from her professional experience about Facebook, the content must be positive to be shareable. When asked about how the impact of social media can be measured, KB referred to measuring tools such as the reach per post (that conveys precise numbers), Web Scraping that allows measuring the sentiment (positive, negative...) around the message and web monitoring.

AH informed all the members that the communication/educational materials produced by OLAF (quizzes, games, brochures, etc.) are available to everyone for any national events or programs organised by the OAFCN partners (i.e. Maltese quiz for children; Luxembourgish Customs open Day, etc.).

OAFCN Action Plan: wrap up session and conclusions

AH drew some short conclusions on the discussion about the Action Plan:

- The OAFCN should organise press briefings on a regular basis.
- the image bank should be kept updated and enlarged to cover more areas of fraud; this has to be done by respecting the technical conditions mentioned before
- an OAFCN joint media campaign should be organised around any future JCOs
- joint press releases should be further used. OLAF will work on a possible template/ check list to ensure an easier joint approach. It will also provide a fact sheet about OLAF, for information and media purposes.
- organisations who already have a social media strategy are encouraged to share it within the Network; this might facilitate other members to possibly develop their own.
- antifraud messages could also target young people and schools. OAFCN members are encouraged to share best practice in this regard.

Furthermore, AH thanked the 6 members of the Advisory Board¹ for their valuable help and, as there were no objections, it was decided that their mandate will be prolonged until the next OAFCN meeting in spring 2016.

13th OAFCN Training Seminar

AH informed the members that the next OAFCN training seminar will be co-organised by OLAF and Luxembourg Customs and, budgetary authorisations pending, will be held in Luxembourg on 2-4 December 2015, under the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU. Nico Dusseldorf (Customs, LU – ND) made a short presentation to introduce Luxembourg and the seminar's possible venues. AH introduced some first ideas about the possible topics for the seminar (i.e.; how to convey OAFCN messages through the traditional channels; information vs data protection; etc.) and she invited the audience to send any further contributions regarding the topic and/or the speakers to OLAF.

MS case study: Bruno Nicoulaud, DNLF (France)

Bruno Nicoulaud (BN) started his presentation by introducing his service, Délégation Nationale à la Lutte contre la Fraude (DNLF), which is also the French AFCOS. He presented DNLF's main actions in the fight against fraud and its cooperation with other national administrations. BN stressed the importance of exchanging information and knowledge between the partners involved in the fight against fraud as well as the coordination and enhancement of the actions implemented by the CODAF, the antifraud committees at local/departmental level. Moreover, he explained how DNLF values OLAF activities in communicating with the public, mainly through its official website. The aim is to convey the message of collaboration and commitment of various organisations and in the fight against fraud. He added that journalists, public administrators and citizens are able to subscribe to DNLF newsletter and to the French Antifraud Report. BN also gave his view on the way the OAFCN should engage with journalists and the importance to select interesting stories and cases (from the journalists' point of view) to get media attention.

MS case study: Andrei Chendi, DLAF (Romania)

Andrei Chendi (AC) started with a brief presentation of DLAF, whose structure and way of working were inspired on OLAF's. He then briefly explained the Romanian investigation experience with a specific case and its repercussions in the mass media. The misspending of 2 million euros in EU funds was prevented, but the case also clearly showed the challenges and opportunities of communicating with the media. Initially, communication to the media was done by a press release, but not much could be said about the findings, in order to ensure the presumption of innocence. The media conducted its own investigations and somehow the case was leaked. DLAF decided to seize this opportunity to better clarify who they are and to increase public confidence in them.

MS case study: Lorenzo Pisoni, Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli (Italy)

Lorenzo Pisoni (LP) presented a major investigation case of November 2014 on cigarette smuggling. This case had its roots spread within several countries and is an example of close collaboration between Italian Customs, Guardia di Finanza, German customs and OLAF. Indeed, the criminal

¹ Sabina Langus Boc (Customs, SI); Gian Luca Berruti (GdF, IT); Lorenzo Pisoni (Customs, IT); Dorota Kwiecinska(MoF, PL) Nico Dusseldorf (Customs, LU); Wolfgang Schmitz (ZKA, DE).

organisation had headquarters in Germany, while the cigarettes were manufactured in Italy. This illegal enterprise exported cigarettes for the eastern countries outside of the EU with more favourable tax regimes. Then they were reintroduced in EU countries paying neither VAT nor excise duties. As a consequence of the investigation 12 people were imprisoned and both the cigarette factory and the scheme were dismantled. A press conference was held, involving all the organisations which took part on the investigation. Its aim was to present the findings of the investigation. It raised a lot of media interest due to the transnational nature of the case and international cooperation. Prestigious magazines, newspapers, as well as TV coverage of the case has given awareness to fraud issues and to OLAF. Mirror press releases were issued by all the law enforcement agencies involved and the case has also been included in the latest OLAF Annual Report.

MS case study: Sabina Langus Boc, Customs & Drago Menegalija, Police (Slovenia)

Sabina Langus Boc (SLB) and Drago Menegalija (DM) presented Turn Back Crime, a global campaign on counterfeits launched by Interpol and carried out in Slovenia in June 2014. This campaign slogan "Crime starts with money, don't let it be yours", aimed to raise people's awareness towards fake goods commerce, which is a funding source for organised crime (illicit drugs or weapons, etc.). Most counterfeit goods come to Slovenia by sea, through the port of Koper and then are introduced in other EU countries. Year by year the number of seizures is growing, so it was decided to make a press conference in the container terminal showing counterfeits, sniffer dogs, police and customs equipment *in loco*. Two months of preparation were necessary both to coordinate every institution and set up all the logistics, before the one hour and a half press conference. An Interpol representative was invited as main speaker and content for the social media was also prepared. This action aroused media attention to authorities and their role in fraud fighting. SLB and DM explained that the event and the campaign were warmly welcomed by the public and they stressed that this is an example of good cooperation among international (Interpol) and national (police and customs) authorities, as well as public and private sector (e.g. the owner company of port of Koper).

MS case study: Luis de Luis Otero, Agencia Tributaria (Spain)

Luis de Luis Otero (LdLO) gave a presentation on Fiscal Education, a tax education programme which has been promoted for more than 10 years in Spain. Children between 9 - 12 and 15 - 16 years are educated to get a strong and collective attitude against tax negligence and in favour of voluntary compliance: taxes are associated to public services and tax fraud is inadmissible, since it is detrimental to everyone. The programme includes Open Days in customs and other fiscal delegations, where the school children are invited to play didactic games and know more about the daily life in these agencies. Visits are organised both by Agencia Tributaria and/or Ministry of Education for primary school. In 10 years more than 400 000 schools and 16 000 teachers took part of this actions. This programme is intended to be extended to Universities and to be included in the official school curriculum, in the form of ethics and financial matters courses. Materials dedicated to different school phases and studies are available on the website of Agencia Tributaria, as well as presentations dedicated to taxes and their influence in everyday life.

Any other business (AOB)

AH informed the Network about the following updates on OLAF side:

- Due to the transfer of competencies for the Euro protection from OLAF to DG ECFIN, OLAF's website has changed; moreover a new section "OLAF and you" has been added to the menu navigation. As a consequence, numerous URL addresses have been changed and therefore need to be updated by OAFCN partners when they link to the OLAF page.
- OLAF developed some didactic materials for the European Commission's Open Day to be used by the OAFCN (i.e. an I-Pad quiz related to OLAF and a hopscotch game for kids etc.). This material is available, upon request, for any communication event organised by OAFCN members.
- OLAF Report 2014 will be published in June 2015: as usual, OAFCN members are kindly invited to share the press release (which will be sent in advance) and the Report with interested media and stakeholders after the publication.
- OLAF is currently involved in two joint communication campaigns at EC level (*EU is working for you* from DG COMM and the *European Year for Development* of DG DEVCO). These pilot projects aim at making citizens aware of the benefits that the EU brings to their daily lives. OAFCN members are encouraged to read more about these campaigns (<http://europa.eu/workingforyou/en/content/european-anti-fraud-office-protecting-eu-budget-against-corruption-and-fraud>; <https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/european-union/stories/operation-velvet-glove-olaf-investigation-external-aid>) and to share their results.

End of Meeting