

12th OAFCN Training Seminar

Rome, Italy

BSR Introduction to the Seminar

Tuesday 23 April from 9.45 to 10.00

Circolo Villa Spada

Via Castiglion Fiorentino, 50 – 00138 Roma, Italy

Draft Speaking notes

Introduction:

Good morning General Commander, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be in Rome, and I would like to thank first of all the Guardia de Finanza for their efforts in preparing this Seminar and the beautiful environment they have chosen for it.

The theme of this seminar is “Combatting Fraud by Educating with New Communication Tools” and will focus on the use of new communication tools and strategies, including social media, to target anti-fraud messages at different audiences, with an emphasis on young people as they are the ones using these new tools (twitter, linkedin, foursquare, instagram, facebook, tuenti, ...)

The main purpose is to foster communication and to prevent fraud through a ‘free-flow’ of information (prevention is better than cure)

The OLAF anti-fraud communicators’ network (OAFCN) plays a pivotal role in communicating the threat of fraud to the public. This includes the effects of fraudulent activities and the efforts made by national and European investigative authorities to combat them.

Fraud can only be fought effectively through close cooperation between OLAF and its national investigative partners. I'm therefore particularly happy about the positive and close cooperation we have with Guardia di Finanza. This was further strengthened on 5 June 2012, when OLAF and Guardia di Finanza signed an Administrative Cooperation Arrangement, offering new and targeted means of international cooperation, intended to combat the most recent and dangerous types of fraud.

In the present climate of financial hardship, we in the public sector are on the one hand facing budgetary constraints, whilst on the other hand the fraud investigations we are trying to tackle are becoming more complex and trans-national in nature. In order to succeed in fighting this fraud, not only do our services

need to work closer together, but so do we as Communication representatives.

Communication and fraud prevention:

Fraud negatively impacts on the credibility of the European Union. Communication is an invaluable means of preventing and deterring fraud. Fraud affecting the EU and/or Member States' budgets is often complex and it is difficult to draw citizens' attention to these technical issues. To gain the trust of our citizens, we need to inform them that fraud is a criminal activity which directly affects their financial interests and that we do our best to make sure that their money is well spent. It is only by making citizens aware of the efforts we are making and of the problems we are confronting that they will, in turn, understand that fraud needs to be taken seriously, and the importance of reporting it.

New communication tools:

In today's society, we rely on images for acquiring information.

Pictures, whether still or moving, are a powerful means of communication: pictures speak even more than words and they can be highly effective in conveying messages to a wider public.

This seminar entitled "Combatting fraud by educating with new communication tools" is in line with our OAFCN motto of 'deterring fraud by informing the public'. Communication is moving ever faster and constantly evolving. We also need to take advantage of developments in new technology, if we do not want to be left behind. We need to find ways of effectively reaching not only our traditional target audiences, but also different and greater audiences, with our anti-fraud messages.

Keeping abreast of new technology and new ways of communicating in a digital era are also crucial to us for attracting a new generation of talented young people into our

services. Social media adds a further level of transparency and accountability to the public. By opening ourselves up to dialogue with the public, we might get a better understanding of the real needs and concerns of citizens. Whilst it is not without risks, this provides a real chance to either reinforce or prevent those front-page headlines with the effective use of social media.

Social media and the EU institutions

The EU institutions are increasingly moving towards the use of social media as a means of communication. In 2010, the European Commission started to use social media on a regular basis. In June 2012, out of 45 DGs, 21 were using Facebook and Twitter regularly. The Spokesperson Service and Commissioners' Cabinets use Twitter to communicate their activities. For example, the EC tweets daily press releases and speeches.

Closing words:

As spokespersons and communication officers from anti-fraud services, your work and our cooperation in this context are of the utmost importance, and OLAF relies on your assistance to convey to EU citizens the results and successes of our joint initiatives both at national and international level.

This afternoon there will be a 4 hour workshop session hosted by a professional facilitator. We would like you to brainstorm on the way we can use these tools to convey our message further and to a larger audience. This will result in a brochure of ideas on using new communication tools to communicate anti-fraud messages collected by the workshop groups. The OAFCN members will be invited to pick at least one of these ideas, try it back home, and report back at the next OAFCN meeting. I am confident on the synergies of having 90 participants of 24 Member States.

Finally, let me thank personally Ms Horvath and Giglio and Messrs Augelli and Berruti for their efforts in the last weeks to make this seminar a venue to remember.

Thank you for your attention, and enjoy the seminar!