

14 tonnes of illicit, climate-damaging gases seized thanks to OLAF intelligence

Dutch authorities last week seized approximately 14 tonnes of illicit refrigerant gases bound for the EU, with a potential environmental impact equivalent to 38 return flights from Amsterdam to Sydney. This successful operation was the result of close cooperation between the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and authorities in three EU countries – the Netherlands, Lithuania and Poland.

The gases in question were hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which although they are used in refrigerated units can nonetheless be dangerous for the environment. This is why the import of HFCs into the EU is subject to strict quotas and regulations. The shipment in question, which came from China, contained refrigerant gases packaged in non-refillable cylinders, which are banned in the EU.

OLAF's investigation began when it identified a suspicious cargo destined for a consignee in Lithuania that was not registered to receive imports of this nature. In addition, the shipment coming from China was initially discharged in the port of Hamburg and declared in transit towards Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, despite the fact that the final destination was Lithuania.

OLAF alerted Lithuanian and Dutch customs, which in turn liaised with the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. Further investigations established that the cargo was destined for a storage facility in Poland. The Dutch authorities seized the shipment in Rotterdam, and OLAF informed Polish customs of the location of the suspicious storage facility.

According to calculations by the Dutch authorities, the gases contained in the illegal shipment have a high global warming potential, estimated to be 200 of times more than their own mass, giving them a carbon footprint of roughly 2,807 tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

OLAF Director-General, Ville Itälä, said: *"The fight against the illegal import of HFCs into the EU is one of OLAF's operational priorities, in line with the European Commission's ambition to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050 with its European Green Deal. As the calculations relating to this shipment clearly show, the environmental impact of these illicit imports can be devastating. Preventing them from entering the EU is OLAF's contribution to protecting citizens and the environment and the legitimate trade. The successful seizure of these dangerous imports once again underlines the importance of accurate intelligence from OLAF and good cooperation with national authorities in keeping people safe."*

More information about this case can be found on the website of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management ([in Dutch](#)).

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.

For further details:

Jana CAPPELLO
Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
Phone: +32 2 29 85549
E-mail: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud



Chris JONES
Deputy Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
+32 2 29 91606
olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud

