

PRESS RELEASE No 17/2021

22 July 2021

Over 1 million litres of wine and alcoholic beverages seized under OLAF-led operation

European customs and police authorities have seized nearly 1.8 million litres of wine and alcoholic beverages in a targeted action led by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), as part of the joint Europol-Interpol operation OPSON X.

Each year, Operation OPSON targets counterfeit and substandard food and beverages; the action led by OLAF focused specifically on the trafficking of counterfeit wine and alcoholic beverages. OLAF coordinated activities of 19 EU Member States and three non-EU countries that took part: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, North Macedonia, Norway and the UK.

As a result of the action, customs and police authorities seized more than 215,000 litres of counterfeit alcoholic beverages, mostly wine and vodka. Fiscal infringements and food safety frauds were also uncovered by the OLAF-led operation, resulting in additional seizures of approximately 460,000 litres of various alcoholic beverages and wine and more than 1 million litres of beer.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"Illicit, counterfeit and adulterated alcohol can cause real damage to law-abiding manufacturers and traders in the European Union, as well as on the wider economic interests of the EU, through the loss of taxes and duties. They can also pose a real health risk to European consumers. This action on counterfeit wine and alcoholic beverages demonstrated once again how successful cooperation between OLAF, Europol and national customs and police authorities can bring real benefits in protecting public revenues, legitimate businesses and the health and safety of consumers worldwide."*

This was the tenth OPSON joint Europol-Interpol operation targeting counterfeit and substandard food and beverages, food frauds and economically motivated adulteration. The operation was carried out worldwide from December 2020 to May 2021. More details 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.

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

