



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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Commission earmarks more than 14 million euros for fight against fraud

The European Commission has pledged 14.5 million euros to support Member States in fighting fraud, corruption and other illegal activities. Under the Hercule III Anti-fraud Programme, the Commission will finance projects such as training customs officers to better recognize illegal trade or investing in x-ray scanners to help stamp out smuggling.

"Member States must be properly equipped to address fraud against the EU budget," said Giovanni Kessler, Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). "That is why we are financing tangible projects, which can ensure fraudsters are caught and taxpayers' money is protected," he added.

As set out in the Commission decision adopted on 17 February, the budget available for the Hercule Programme has been increased from EUR 14.1 million in 2015 to EUR 14.5 million in 2016. More grants will be available for Member States' national and regional authorities to purchase specialized technical equipment, following the continued, massive interest for Hercule Technical Assistance grants. As part of the Programme, OLAF will strengthen its cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), to enable Member States' administrations to obtain access to maritime data for investigation purposes. Hercule III will also fund a study to develop a methodology to measure the illicit tobacco trade from third countries into the European Union. Moreover, OLAF will join forces with Member States' customs and police forces, to organise common purchases of investigation equipment.

Speeding up the implementation of the Hercule III Programme, the European Commission will publish three Calls for Proposals in March 2016. Customs, tax authorities, universities and legal experts in the Member States will have the opportunity to present proposals for innovative projects that can truly protect the EU budget from fraud and corruption.

Background:

Further information for applicants is available on the website of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) who is managing the Hercule III programme on behalf of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/policy/hercule/index_en.htm

Hercule III is a financial programme specifically dedicated to fighting fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the EU. It provides for the collective procurement of specialised equipment and databases to be used by national law enforcement agencies and training for anti-fraud specialists. The programme covers the period 2014-2020 and will provide a total of EUR 104.9 million of support to Member States.

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.

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