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European Commission and Greece work together against fraud and corruption

On 26-27 February 2014, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is hosting a High Level Event in Athens on "Fighting fraud in the area of EU cohesion policy". This event, organised in close collaboration with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, brings together representatives of the Greek financial management authorities, the European Commission and Transparency International.

In his opening remarks, Giovanni Kessler, the Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), highlighted the efforts made by the Greek authorities in fighting fraud involving EU funds. He noted that *"The fight against fraud is an integral part of the strategy for economic recovery in Greece. The EU and the Greek authorities share the same vision on the need to curb fraudulent practices and to strengthen the rule of law to ensure that funding reaches the projects it is intended for and that taxpayers' money does not go to waste."* He added that OLAF will continue to support Greece in its efforts to prepare a solid national anti-fraud strategy. He also highlighted the importance for Greek authorities to designate an Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) which will serve as a contact point for OLAF on fraud cases, provide operational assistance in OLAF investigations, and coordinate national anti-fraud activities.

Walter Deffaa, Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy pointed out *"It is essential for the success of our cohesion policy that EU funding is really used to support growth and job creation and does not end up in the wrong pockets. People in Greece must not be cheated of the benefits of these important investments. The Commission will continue to support Greece in its efforts to fight fraud and corruption."*

Overall, the reformed EU cohesion policy (2014-2020) will make available up to EUR 351,8 billion to invest in Europe's regions, cities and the real economy. It will be the EU's main investment tool for delivering the Europe 2020 goals: creating growth and jobs, tackling climate change and energy dependence, and reducing poverty and social exclusion. The fight against the fraudulent use of such EU funds is thus a key priority for the EU and national authorities.

The High-Level Event discussions in Athens will focus on methods to design proficient national anti-fraud strategies and avenues to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the Greek authorities tasked with fighting fraud. A training seminar will also be organised with the aim of providing local authorities with state-of-the-art fraud prevention tools.

OLAF

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by investigating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it detects and investigates serious matters relating to the discharge of professional duties by members and staff of the EU institutions and bodies that could result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings; and it supports the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, in the development and implementation of anti-fraud legislation and policies.

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