

Fighting the illicit activities of organised criminals in the field of EU financing: OLAF and the Italian National Prosecutor exchange expertise

EU funding provides opportunities to generate economic growth and to promote job creation across Europe. It is crucial that this funding fulfils its purpose and does not fall into the hands of networks of organised criminals whose sole intention is to draw illicit profit, defrauding the EU and national budgets alike. Given the increased need for coordinated action by law enforcement agencies to combat illicit activities, the OLAF Director-General, Giovanni Kessler, met with the Italian National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor, Franco Roberti, in Rome this week.

The discussion focussed on the possible infiltration of criminal networks in the processes of applying for and receiving EU agricultural funds. A roundtable was organised by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate (DNAA) between OLAF investigators specialised in this field and several national prosecutors from the Italian regions most affected by this phenomenon. They discussed better ways to coordinate their investigative activities and to reinforce their cooperation, within the ambit of their respective competences. With a view to further strengthening the protection of the EU's financial interests, the representatives of OLAF and the DNAA also exchanged views on a possible formal update of the existing Cooperation Arrangement that exists between the two bodies. This would allow OLAF and the DNAA to boost the efficiency of their joint work, identifying complex fraud structures and bringing fraudsters to justice more promptly.

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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