

18th OAFCN Meeting
The Hague, 9-10 December 2010

Day 1

1. Welcome Address by the President of Eurojust

Aled Williams (AW) welcomed everybody to the conference. He said that this was an important period for Eurojust and referred to a Deloitte report, which concluded that the relationship between Eurojust, Europol, and OLAF should be strengthened.

2. Welcome Address by the Deputy Mayor of The Hague

Marjolein de Jong welcomed participants to The Hague and outlined the city's history of peace and justice.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Adopted without comments/amendments

4. Presentation of Eurojust

Joannes Thuy (JT) traced the history of Eurojust from its creation in 2002 and considered its future under the terms of the Lisbon Treaty. He offered insights into working with Member States and international organisations before closing with some Eurojust case studies, such as the Eckert case. JT underlined the importance of being part of the OAFCN because, as he repeated several times, by working together we can make a difference.

5. Approval of the Minutes of the 17th OAFCN Meeting

Minutes approved without comments or questions

6. OLAF's Fraud Notification System – Follow-up

Florin Postica (FP) (OLAF) gave an update on the FNS that was presented at the 17th OAFCN meeting. He stressed the importance of anonymous reporting because most fraud is discovered through anonymous tips. He went through statistics revealing a high level of interest in the new system. He mentioned that some people expressed reservations about anonymous reporting, but stressed that such type of reporting was important for OLAF fraud.

7. Joint Customs Operation Sirocco

Isabel Caiola (IC) (OLAF) presented the results of the Joint Customs Operation "SIROCCO", carried out in June 2010 and coordinated by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The operation involved customs authorities from the 27 EU Member States and 11 Non-EU partner countries from the Union for the Mediterranean. It had the support of the European Commission, the World Customs Organization, Europol and Interpol. The seizures made during the operation averted potential losses of customs duties and taxes in the EU of approximately € 8 million.

8. Football Fraud in Belgium

Johan de Volder (JDV) (Belgian Federal Police) gave an overview of football fraud in Belgium and described how it had become big business. He showed that it affects players, trainers, referees, and managers. He also explained how Belgium introduced hotlines to encourage the reporting of it.

PB thanked Eurojust, interpreters, and all those who worked on the meeting. JT thanked his team and offered a gift to the OAFCN, which PB accepted on its behalf.

End of Day 1.

Day 2

9. Presentation of Europol

Gerald Hestzera (GH) (Europol) gave an overview of the mission and methods of Europol. He detailed joint operations with Member States and approaches to media work, then he gave the floor to Søren Pedersen (SP), Europol Spokesman.

SP discussed aspects of Europol's communications work and highlighted two networks: the PR Specialists Annual Seminar and the ELEMENT network of editors of law enforcement magazines. He encouraged OAFCN participants to sign up for the next Law Enforcement Communications Meeting.

GH informed members there would be three presentations from Europol area experts.

Marcin Skowronek (MS) (Europol) – Forgery of Money

MS described the ways that Europol seeks to disrupt the networks/manufacturers of fake money and cooperate with Member States. He explained that cases about forgery of money produce some of Europol's most successful media work.

During the Q&A session MS pointed out that Europol can ask Member States to investigate cases and that these requests are almost always accepted. GH added he wasn't keen on the idea of Europol becoming some kind of European FBI.

Mari Hamalainen (MH) (Europol) Strategic Analysis at Europol

MH explained Europol's data collection work and cooperation with Member States. She highlighted the systems Europol uses to detect new/future patterns of organised crime.

Hervé Lebrux (HL) (Europol) Intellectual Property Crime

HL detailed the dangers of counterfeit goods with a number of case studies. He described an industry of low risk and high profit that has become a massive concern.

During the Q&A session, HL said that companies were often reluctant to publicise the dangers of counterfeit goods because they fear it will damage sales. Wolfgang Schmitz (WS) suggested using examples of poisonous/dangerous fake goods to mobilise public opinion against the counterfeiters.

PB brought the item to a close and asked participants to assemble for the OAFCN family photograph during the coffee break.

10. Future of the OAFCN

(Detailed speaking notes of the five presentations were circulated at the meeting – see annexes)

Pavel Borkovec (PB) opened the session by explaining this agenda item had its origins in a discussion with David Jones (DJ) at the last OAFCN meeting. DJ was asked to draft a note on how the OAFCN could evolve. PB told members that his primary concern was to listen to what they had to say and he asked them to voice their comments even when they agreed with what was said.

PB informed members that DJ was ill and Paul Matthews (PM) would be standing in for him.

PM (UK, HM Revenue & Customs) delivered some comments of his own before going through the main points of DJ's review. He praised the network as a useful space to share best practice and called for more use to be made of case studies. He requested members to

share their forward planning in order to maximise impact. He also remarked on the benefit of using external moderators, as at the previous OAFCN meeting.

Referring to DJ's review, PM doubted the need for 3 OAFCN meetings each year and questioned whether OLAF should pay for more than one delegate from each institution. He suggested the number of OAFCN delegates at the EU Open Day could be reduced. To conclude, he passed on DJ's fear that the productive OAFCN social activity would be seized on by cost-cutters.

PB handed the floor to Mario Debono (MD) (Malta, Internal Audit & Investigations Division)

MD began his presentation by calling for OAFCN meetings to be limited to 2 a year. He also argued that the number of delegates should be restricted to one per organisation, unless the organisation in question was willing to pay for more. He suggested having one different representative per Member State at the Open Day each year. He encouraged members to make more use of the OAFCN Extranet to exchange best practice.

MD stressed the need to be more efficient and to establish targets at meetings. He recommended that OAFCN members be obliged to report back on follow-up activities, and cited Belgian football fraud (as presented by JDV) as an example around which concrete goals could be established.

MD drew attention to the OLAF Annual Report 2010 and regretted that there hadn't been the same drive to promote it as there had been in previous years.

MD urged members to coordinate more closely, for example when issuing press releases. Finally, he said that the OAFCN agenda items should be examined more closely so that more members could actively contribute to presentations.

PB came back to MD on the Annual Report, saying its launch was deliberately kept low key because OLAF was without a full DG. He also noted that nobody was planning to impose further costs on members. He nevertheless reminded that it is unacceptable for OLAF to pay for no-shows and that members who confirmed their attendance to OAFCN events should inform OLAF if they cannot participate anymore.

PB handed the floor to Johan de Volder (JDV) (Belgian Federal Police)

JDV began by agreeing with MD and said he would be glad to report back about his work on Belgian football fraud.

JDV started by introducing the pervasive criminality and fraud that afflicts parts of Mexico. He asked OAFCN members to applaud themselves because their work had helped to make Europe much safer than Mexico. He implored members to KISBI (keep it simple but interesting) in order to communicate better. He also called on them to share concrete examples of good practice.

PB gave the floor to Sabina Langus Boc (SLB) (Slovene Customs)

SLB began by recognising the benefits of an EU-wide community of skilled and experienced professionals when communicating anti-fraud messages. She went on to question whether OAFCN was getting out as much as was being put in. She said that a clearer view of what OAFCN members' tasks were would help the Network to work more effectively. SLB ended with a SWOT analysis of the OAFCN in order to provoke discussion.

PB gave the floor to Wolfgang Schmitz (WS) (Germany, Zollkriminalamt)

WS gave his presentation from the point of view of a father raising his child. OAFCN was the ten-year-old child and different approaches would be needed throughout its life. WS pushed for OAFCN to grow, to go forward to university not backwards to kindergarten. He reminded members that the OAFCN was a unique network and shouldn't be considered as other expert groups. He warned of the dangers of cutting costs. OAFCN members should be proud, but recognise that not everything is perfect.

WS questioned the decision to interpret only in EN, FR and DE. He remembered that during the first OAFCN events, where no DE interpretation was provided, he could not speak and he questioned whether it was the correct way to work together.

WS expressed his reservations about restricting the OAFCN training seminars to OAFCN members only. He considered it more productive to provide training to directors and people outside the network, for example MEPs. He asked members to carefully target audiences and consider the intended impact of actions. WS concluded with a video of the Eurovision song contestant Lena, who won the competition because, according to polls, she was considered quintessentially European.

After WS's speech, Lorenzo Pisoni (LP) read a notice from Italy's Customs Agency (in Italian), which called on the OAFCN to maintain Italian as a working language at meetings.

Paolo Rebecchi (PR) (Corte dei Conti – IT) appreciated the way the OAFCN could bring together investigative and judicial representatives. He said the OAFCN should concentrate on communicating positive stories rather than emphasising the negative. He agreed that the Network had to be careful with money and he was not against the reduction of OAFCN events from 3 to 2 per year. He also encouraged more exchanges throughout the year between meetings. PR welcomed WS's proposal to involve our directors. PR ended by agreeing with LP that meetings must be interpreted in Italian. He wondered why no Spanish delegate was present and implied it was because of a lack of Spanish interpretation.

PB came back on the issue of languages, saying he didn't know why there wasn't a Spanish delegate present, and that he regretted it. He explained that the absence of a permanent OLAF DG had meant the postponement of certain strategic decisions.

PB suggested that small task-forces are better equipped to deal with the ideas like those put forward by WS. He brought the meeting back to the question 'Where shall we go?'

WS replied that members could have an evaluation to decide, and he produced a questionnaire from his folder that he hoped would receive broad feedback (in all languages). He said he believed this would lead to proactive proposals that could be presented to the new OLAF DG.

PB welcomed the proposal and asked for volunteers to participate in the task-force. WS's questionnaire was distributed. 16 members volunteered for the task-force: Johan De Volder, Wolfgang Schmitz, Lorenzo Pisoni, Carlo Felice Corsetti, Paolo Rebecchi, David Jones, Paul Mathews, Sophie Hoquerelle, Jiri Bartak, Miroslav Bednar, Reneta Nikolova, Dorota Kwiecinska, Sabina Langus Boc, Anette Malmberg, Gerald Hesztera, Joannes Thuy.

Florin Postica (FP) (OLAF) reminded members that the new DG wouldn't be able to change things alone. He urged delegates to always ask why. And he appealed to all members to comment, even if the comment was no comment.

Anna Giglio (AG) (OLAF) proposed a *tour de table* so that everybody could contribute.

The *tour de table* kicked off with Gerald Hesztera (GH) (Europol) who noted the concerns around interpretation and said that it was extremely rare for Europol to be able to offer Italian interpretation.

PM said he had no further comments to add to his previous presentation.

Maria Kompisova (Slovak Republic) raised the issue of communicating anti-fraud messages relating to structural funds. She offered positive comments about tackling issues with small working groups.

SLB (Slovenia) reported that she was glad a debate had started and thanked colleagues for raising difficult questions. Irena Kure (Slovenia) warned colleagues to avoid excessive cost-cutting: OAFCN need to improve quality but not necessarily reduce quantity.

Anette Malmberg (Sweden) underlined the importance of the Network. She agreed it was good to start the discussion and also favoured using a small task-force.

Carmen Rascanu (Romania) echoed this proposal of small working groups and she underlined the need for the commitment of all OAFCN members to support its work. She also added that NGO representatives are a necessary part of the network.

PB interjected that the scope of the review should be defined. Volunteers could then draft some proposals that other members should comment on.

Paula Gonçalves (Portugal) also agreed with the establishment of a small group to undertake the review.

Dorota Kwiecinska (Poland) had no comments but supported the review and said she would consult colleagues in Poland.

Maltese delegation had no further comments to add to the earlier presentation by Mario Debono

Johan Wullt (JW) (OLAF) said that the OAFCN needed to unite around a concrete action and this should begin in early 2011. He suggested a Europe-wide news release about the dangers of counterfeit goods would be relevant to all members and would get good media coverage.

Agnese Grinberga (Latvia) agreed a small group should take on the reflection on the future of the OAFCN.

No comments from Lithuania.

Gennaro Vecchione (Italy) informed the OAFCN colleagues that the Italian government's position could be found in the letter that Minister Andrea Ronchi sent to OLAF last September. He felt that discussions could be a way of procrastinating and asked members to adopt Malta's proposal, which was something concrete. He also pointed to the Hercule programme as a good example of concrete success. He agreed the OAFCN should present activities to people outside the Network.

Tom Kelly (Ireland) agreed with JW's proposal of a coordinated campaign on counterfeiting and the need for a small working group.

David Szeverenyi (Hungary) agreed OAFCN should concentrate its activities on some interesting topics.

Ioannis Rountos (Greece) echoed earlier calls for more languages to be interpreted, including Greek.

WS (Germany) responded to FP's comments about the new OLAF DG, saying that the OAFCN message should target not only the OLAF DG, but also the commissioner or the EP. He underlined the importance of close cooperation between OLAF and the Member States by recalling Anette Malmberg's speech made for OLAF's 10th anniversary.

Sophie Hoquerelle (France) thanked participants for a constructive debate that allowed members to express their views. She called for more active and concrete contribution from Member States. She liked the idea of increased contact between meetings, including through mail exchanges and the OAFCN Extranet, and welcomed the participation of journalists. She voiced concerns about restricting the number of delegates because it would detract from the Network's richness.

Mailin Aasmäe (Estonia) remarked that the OAFCN had an identity crisis and wondered what the outcomes of the meeting were.

Reneta Nikolova (Bulgaria) said she had been an OAFCN member since 2003, though as an associate member she could not vote. She asked the OAFCN to maintain this category of membership because associate members brought concrete results.

Jiri Bartak (Czech Republic) agreed with the proposal to use small working groups.

Michalis Katsounotos (Cyprus) said he saw the arrival of a new OLAF DG as great opportunity.

JDV (Belgium) urged participants to act on the ideas discussed.

Christian Führnstahl (Austria) agreed with the establishment of small working groups. He also agreed that the OAFCN must make itself known internally as well as externally.

Mauro Valeri (Italy) thanked the conference organisers and compared the OAFCN to another working group he's a member of, which may be useful make some ties with. He welcomed the input of journalists.

It was agreed that further discussion about the future development of the OAFCN would take place at the 19th OAFCN meeting in May 2011.

11. Involving the University World in the Fight Against Fraud

Gennaro Vecchione (GV) (Guardia di Finanza, Italy) introduced an Italian information campaign about the correct use of EU funds and gave the floor to Ms Giannamaria Nanna (GN). GN detailed the activities undertaken across Italy as part of this multi-level 'cultural' operation designed to prevent the misuse of EU funds – particularly structural funds –, which included seminars, vocational training as well as a Master's course for "European finance experts". This cultural operation was given wide publicity in the press and broadcast media. PB elicited further details from GV and GN, who communicated their availability and willingness to use their experience to assist OAFCN members who would like develop similar schemes in their own country.

12. Illegal Cigarette Factories and the Media

Eleni Brokou (EB) (Greece, Financial and Economic Crimes Agency) gave an abridged version of her planned presentation because of time constraints. She reported on an operation against illegal cigarettes from 2009 that demonstrated successful cooperation

between Member States, notably Germany and Greece, and with OLAF, who coordinated the investigations. After the joint operation in September 2010, the result was widespread print, broadcast and online media coverage in a number of countries.

13. Facing EU Citizens

Reneta Nikolova (RN) (Bulgarian Club of Journalists Against Corruption) and Wolfgang Schmitz (WS) (Germany, Zollkriminalamt) gave a presentation about two videos that were produced to communicate anti-fraud messages. Motivated by the core message of the 7th OAFCN Training Seminar "Deterring fraud by informing the public - Fight against fraud on Vision" (Vienna and Bratislava, 23-26 September 2007), for the first time in the history of the Network, 5 MS – Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy and Bulgaria – joined forces to work on a common project and applied for Hercule financing. RN ran through the production process and publicity of the films. WS called for their wider use because audiovisual media produces good results. PB enquired about making the raw footage available on the extranet and said he would find out about how to add the film to the European Commission library collection.

Following the presentation PB decided to leave Gian Luca Berruti's (Guardia di Finanza, Italy) proposal of a media awareness campaign (previously circulated to members) until the 19th OAFCN meeting because, due to health reasons, Gian Luca was not present.

14. Organisation of OAFCN Events for 2011

PB announced the following dates:

- 7 May: Open Day 2011 with the involvement of the OAFCN
- 6 May: 19th OAFCN regular meeting in Brussels

PB informed the Network that, pending new Director General approval, OLAF Management scheduled the 11th OAFCN training seminar for 16-18 November. He invited venue proposals. As the Italian delegation was unable to confirm the candidature presented in the two previous years, WS suggested holding it in Berlin. No objections were raised, so the proposal was adopted.

15. Any Other Business

No AOB. PB asked everybody to complete the evaluation form and thanked the hosts, staff, and interpreters.

End of Meeting