

PRESS RELEASE No 14/2020

06 May 2020

WCO and OLAF: One seizure – one report

The World Customs Organization (WCO) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) are stepping up their joint efforts to fight fraud through improved information sharing. Customs administrations worldwide will now have access to non-personal data on tobacco smuggling within 24 hours of it being shared by their counterparts in the EU Member States.

The global fight against tobacco smuggling took another leap forward last month with the linking of the WCO's Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) database and the Customs Information System (CIS+) of OLAF. The machine-to-machine connection was launched on 22 April 2020 and it now enables the fully automated transfer of data on tobacco seizures carried out within the EU between the two anti-fraud bodies.

The CEN is a database of seizures and offences required for the analysis of illicit trafficking in the various areas of customs' competence. It allows users, among other things, to mine data in order to help define strategies, prepare risk indicators and identify trends in order to better tackle tobacco smuggling.

The CIS is part of the Anti-Fraud Information System (AFIS) managed by OLAF and allows the designated competent authorities in each of the EU's Member States to exchange, store and share information, boosting cooperation between the various national authorities and improving control procedures.

The WCO and OLAF have shared data on tobacco seizures since 2003, on the basis of "one seizure, one report". This has significantly simplified the work of customs administrations when it comes to sharing information that is automatically replicated in different databases and IT systems. Given the advances in digital technology, and with the mutual goal of making reporting easier for their members, both organisations agreed to develop a machine-to-machine connection between their respective databases.

"With this automated transfer of fraud case data, the WCO and OLAF have now taken a new step in the fight against tobacco smuggling and have demonstrated the effectiveness of a joint and coordinated approach to data analysis. There is much more to be done in the future and the WCO will continue its joint work with OLAF", said WCO Secretary General Dr Kunio Mikuriya.

Ville Itälä, Director General of OLAF, said: *"OLAF and the WCO have a shared goal in customs enforcement and ensuring that societies do not lose out on legally-due revenues and the services they help ultimately to fund. By its very nature, customs fraud is an international issue, and tackling it effectively requires cooperation and information sharing between customs*

services and organisations at national and international level. The interconnection of our databases is just the latest step in the ongoing cooperation between OLAF and the WCO, and we will continue to work closely together to improve the support we can provide to our respective members.”

More information on the CEN:

- <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/enforcement-and-compliance/instruments-and-tools/cen-suite.aspx>

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.

WCO mission, vision, values

Vision

Bringing Customs together for a safer and more prosperous world. Borders divide, Customs connects.

Mission

The World Customs Organization develops international standards, fosters cooperation and builds capacity to facilitate legitimate trade, to secure a fair revenue collection and to protect society, providing leadership, guidance and support to Customs administrations.

Values

- We are a knowledge-based and action-oriented organization.
- We believe in transparent, honest, and auditable governance procedures.
- We are responsive to our Members, stakeholders in trade, and society.
- We capitalize on technology and innovation.
- We believe in inclusiveness, diversity and equitable treatment and opportunities for all.

For further details:

Jana CAPPELLO

Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
Phone: +32 2 29 85549
[E-mail: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud



[@OLAFPress](#)

Chris JONES

Deputy Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
+32 2 29 91606
[Email: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud



[@OLAFPress](#)

Ludovic THANAY

Head of Communication
World Customs Organization (WCO)
+32 2 20 99420
[Email: communication@wcoomd.org](mailto:communication@wcoomd.org)
<http://www.wcoomd.org>



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