

## **Minutes of the 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN), 23-24 January 2020, Brussels**

### **1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of the previous meeting**

The agenda was adopted and the minutes of the 28th meeting (15-16 November 2018) were approved.

### **2. Nature of the meeting**

The meeting was non-public.

### **3. List of points discussed**

#### **Welcome address**

Mr Ville Itälä (VI), Director-General of OLAF, opened the meeting by outlining the guiding principles of OLAF's work: cooperation, transparency and trust. He underlined the importance of continuous cooperation with Europol and Eurojust, and of establishing a future close one with the EPPO. He explained how OLAF has adapted to the new Commission's priorities. VI emphasised the importance of transparency in earning trust from citizens, as well as in preventing fraud. However, the confidentiality remains an imperative principle. Acknowledging specific difficulties faced by communicators for law enforcement and investigative services, VI confirmed his full commitment to promote frank and open communication, not leaving gaps to be filled by misleading facts

In subsequent opening address, Mr Johannes Noack (JN), Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner Johannes Hahn, strongly welcomed the ambitious cooperation of the OAFCN network. JN echoed VI's remarks on how that OLAF's work depends on cooperation with Member States. He outlined new priorities of the von der Leyen's Commission, with focus on Green Deal. He stressed out that anti-fraud is also about protecting the industry and the single market against counterfeit goods and organised crime. Challenges in areas such as customs and e-commerce will require more cooperation. Changes proposed to address these challenges need political and citizen support, and this is where the OAFCN network comes in.

JN reiterated how much the Commissioner values the job done at national level and emphasised that the Commission is there to help.

#### **The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and cooperation with OLAF and the Member States – Mr Olivier Salles, Interim Administrative Director EPPO and Ms Irene Sacristan Sanchez, OLAF**

Olivier Salles (OS), interim Administrative Director of EPPO, presented the structure and competences of EPPO, reminding that the EPPO should be operational from November 2020.

OLAF's Head of Unit Irene Sacristan Sanchez (ISS) presented how EPPO will fit into the already existing EU system. OLAF is today the only body that is specifically tasked with protecting the EU's financial interests, and will therefore be one of the most impacted institutions. ISS explained that in terms of its investigative mission, OLAF will continue its tasks as it does today regarding irregularities of a non-criminal nature, Member States not participating in EPPO, and on serious misconduct of EU staff. OLAF's role as Commission service in charge of anti-fraud policy will not be changed. Both Offices investigate fraud in participating Member States, therefore, some competences will overlap. The role of OLAF will include exchange of information, reporting and sharing sources of cases. OLAF will provide support to the EPPO, with expertise, analysis and operational support, to avoid the duplication of tasks.

Questions from the audience covered how OAFCN network members can communicate on EPPO and what will happen in the future as it might be difficult to separate criminal from administrative issues, and possible coordination of info activities between the two Offices. OS explained that recruitments at the EPPO are ongoing, also for communication profiles. A swift creation of the website for the EPPO is a priority. He stressed the high complexity of the EPPO's set up and the joint responsibility with Member States for raising awareness and communicating about the EPPO. OS shared with the network what publications already exist with information about the EPPO. It can be ordered from the [publication office website](#), which also includes a brochure and a fact sheet (so far in EN, FR & DE) and it is also accessible on the [European Commission website](#). In addition, ISS mentioned the possibility of training of judicial authorities on the EPPO which has been developed by the European Judicial Training Network.

### **Anti-fraud training in France – Mr Bruno Nicoulaud, AFCOS France, Délégation Nationale à la Lutte contre la Fraude (DNLF)**

Bruno Nicoulaud (BN) presented DNLF's approach to raising awareness and increasing knowledge about fraud through anti-fraud training to regional managing authorities. In order to develop a new culture of anti-fraud, one priority in his role as AFCOS has been to deliver specific non-compulsory trainings for managing authorities in the anti-fraud area. The trainings were aimed at filling knowledge gaps in specific fraud prevention competences, and therefore, contained elements such as conflict of interest prevention, anti-corruption, fraud detection, irregularities sanctions, fraud risk assessment, communicating anti-fraud as well as the origins of fraud.

The trainings also aimed at the creation of links between customs and administration, and provide all tools necessary to identify fraud. So far, the training programme can be considered a success and 33 actions have been completed since 2017. Each year this accounts to approximately 30 working days and so far BN has worked with 9 out of 3 French local regions, and all five of the French overseas territories concerned.

On the question of what has been the impact of the trainings so far, BN said that all the authorities that have participated in the training programme are now actively communicating about fraud, are more aware of what anti-fraud is, and have increased their ability to detect it.

A representative from OLAF noted that sometimes conflict of interest could be a criminal offense, especially in combination with other. There is ongoing work at Commission level to establish guidelines on this and OLAF should soon be in a position to send this to national authorities.

### **Global Anti-Corruption Consortium (GACC). A brief introduction and why is it interesting for law-enforcement – Mr Adam Földes, Transparency International (TI)**

Adam Földes (AF), Legal Advisor at Transparency International presented the Global Anti-corruption Consortium. It is a joint project that links TI's 100 national chapters and an international secretariat with OCCRP's network of investigative reporters and journalism centres organised within 45 non-profit centres present in 34 countries across Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. Two networks work together in this Consortium to accelerate the fight against corruption around the world: investigative journalists and activists.

The speaker presented the main activities of GACC:

- Achieving greater impact from journalistic investigation on (i) money laundering in Western financial systems via professional "enablers", (ii) natural resource exploitation by the grand corrupt and (iii) corrupt state capture
- Cooperation between activists and investigative journalists, case investigations, and case-based advocacy
- Pro-active (fundraising and) grant-giving for these activities to TI chapters and partner organisations
- Establish a connection between investigative journalists and law-enforcement

Thereupon, two examples were presented to illustrate the work and the impact of GACC. The "Golden Visa" campaign, aiming at raising awareness of corruption and and the insufficient due diligence to control the applicants to Golden Visas in certain countries, and the Azerbaijani Laundromat investigation, which revealed a \$ 2.9 billion money-laundering operation and slush fund run by Azerbaijan's to influence European politicians, international organizations and journalists. TI prepared criminal complaints to national governments involved in the Azerbaijani Laundromat scandal and started a campaign. These efforts translated into policy results, namely, EU institutions increased the tightness of their code of conduct.

AF also drew attention to some of the challenges of investigative journalism, such as source protection. GAAC attempts to relieve some of the difficulties in the work of investigative journalists. What GAAC has already succeeded in, is:

- Overcoming data dumps
- Facilitating cross-border cooperation by providing the journalists with a broad and connected network
- The access to more information from several countries and from unpublished sources
- Partnership with NGO's, both as strategic partners in communications as well as in the advocacy for systemic reforms

AF underlined that OCCRP code of conduct requires investigative journalists to carry

out the liability check, always speak to alleged perpetrator to provide an opportunity to comment, and most importantly to carry out thorough fact-checking of all documents used for a given article.

Europol's spokesperson shared her experience on working with investigative journalists. She acknowledged that they can represent a valuable source of operational information, even when they cannot reveal their source.

### **Tour de table on members' recent communication activities**

Members were asked to talk about their services' current communication projects and speakers had prepared presentations and videos to illustrate their work.

Andrea Meszaros from DG COMM explained that the Commission is mapping all its communication networks existing in the Member States in order to get a picture of potential synergies and scope for cooperation between DG COMM's Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) and the networks of other DGs. As part of this exercise, DG COMM will develop a virtual map showing all national but also regional and local outlets of EU networks all over Europe, so that citizens could easily find the services they need in their respective areas. Between May and September this year, DG COMM will also organize 5 events in cross-border regions: France-Italy (13-15 May), Portugal-Spain (3-5 June), Austria-Hungary (1-3 July), Belgium-Germany-Netherlands (28-30 September) and Latvia-Lithuania-Poland (7-9 October). The plan is to bring together all the networks to allow them to meet personally and to understand how they can cooperate and coordinate better among each other at a regional level, for the benefit of citizens. She called on participants to share what they do in their countries in terms of communication and outreach and whether they are interested in participating in one of these cross-border meetings.

Head of Communication at Eurojust, Cecilia Thorfinn, presented Eurojust's most recent strategy focusing on stronger communication to the outside world. On 12 December 2019, Eurojust changed its name to "EU agency for criminal justice cooperation" and has since adopted a new visual identity. Furthermore, the team has implemented new tools for storytelling, enhanced the presence on social media (Twitter, LinkedIn), and introduced a quarterly newsletter in order to provide a continuous reporting. A new website will be launched in July 2020. It will include country-specific pages, tutorial videos on Eurojust key services for prosecutors available in all official languages, and information on operational results.

Dimosthenis Avarikiotis from the Greek AFCOS presented the newly established National Transparency Authority (NTA). The NTA, is set to achieve three strategic goals: zero tolerance against corruption, transparency for fair and sustainable development, and accountability for restoring society's trust in public institutions. With the establishment Law 4622/2019 the Greek NTA aims to achieve measurable results in the fight against corruption and raise awareness regarding these actions. The intervention logic of the NTA is a 3pronged approach based on detection, prevention and awareness raising as operational pillars of this approach. Additionally, the NTA is designated as the Greek AFCOS.

The Italian Custom and Monopoly Agency (Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli)

presented their communication campaign on dangerous toys. With the motto “We cannot play with the health of children”, the agency released three videos, with VIP testimonials who agreed to feature free of cost, aiming to raise awareness on the parents’ side not to buy dangerous toys for their children. The videos went viral in a couple of days on Facebook and the campaign was transmitted on Italian television, published in local newspapers and broadcasted on prominent national radio channels.

The Press Office of Italian Guardia di Finanza (GdF), showed two campaign videos. The first one, a collaboration between GdF and Sky, aimed to raise awareness of how illegal streaming services harm cinema and sport industries, and how GdF are working to combat them. The second video illustrates the role and scope of action of GdF officials in Italy and was created for the 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of GdF. Italian GdF is already active on social media but will further increase the visibility on more social network platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook. Their aim is to share information on operational activities and institutional projects as for example the “go fast” project which introduced special action cameras to monitor rescue team activities. Each GdF rescue team will receive his own action camera, which will enable the production of videos for communication campaigns.

Latvian AFCOS (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia) presented the third and final edition of its #FraudOff! Campaign. Starting in 2017 with a thematic focus on counterfeit goods, the second edition in 2018, tackled work ethics and tax culture. Finally, in 2019, the focus shifted to reporting of fraud. The campaigns grew into a movement involving the public sector and NGOs. The AFCOS wanted to bring their activities to a global level and participated in popular events, such as the 2019 Democracy Festival in Latvia, a prominent platform for democratic dialogue between politicians, business, media, academia and civil society.

Croatian AFCOS (Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds) is stepping up his communication efforts due to the Croatian Council presidency. The main event on the agenda, the Third Joint EU Cohesion Policy Conference, will take place in Zagreb on 11-13 May. It will be a critical debate between academics, Member State authorities and EU’s institutions representatives on cohesion policy.

OLAF Spokesperson, Jana Cappello, concluded the tour de table with the announcement that this year OLAF’s report will be focusing on investigation with environmental impact, in line with the Green Deal flagship initiative of this Commission. She added that OLAF is currently procuring a series of new promotional videos, which will be shared with OAFCN. She recalled the need to keep the OAFCN members mutually updated about their respective social media presence. To this end OLAF will circulate the list of members’ social media accounts to be updated with the newly created ones, as the last updated was done in April 2019.

## **Implementation of the 2019 OAFCN Action Plan and drafting of the 2020 Action Plan**

After a short discussion on the implementation of the 2019 OAFCN Action Plan in the participants’ respective countries, the debate was directed to this year’s Action Plan.

As suggestions for the 2020 Action Plan, OLAF's Spokesperson Jana Cappello proposed:

- The Hercule Twitter campaign:
  - OAFCN member services will support this campaign which will be a recurring communication action for the next few years (to be rebranded as PAF Twitter campaign in the next Multiannual Financial Framework period). Services should get back to OLAF if they are interested in joining and send pictures, visuals and success stories.
  - OLAF sent the OAFCN the Hercule annual work programme for 2020 and expects to publish the new call for tender on its website in early spring 2020, informing the OAFCN.
  - Whether or not they get involved in the Twitter campaign, members should still inform OLAF throughout the year if their service publicises Hercule-funded projects (conferences, launch of equipment etc
- Shared and mutually supported communication campaigns on fight against environmental fraud and activities with a "green" impact
- Publishing joint press releases
- Organising joint press conferences
- The creation of a joint image bank of pictures and videos:
  - OLAF has recently finalised a Vademecum for investigators on how to take pictures while on a mission, in order to achieve the right quality and refrain from any data protection or IPR infringement. These pictures can be made available for the OAFCN members

The next gathering of the network, will be a seminar and it will be co-hosted by Eurojust this year.

### **Working methods of investigative journalists – Mr Jacopo Barigazzi, Senior EU Reporter at Politico**

POLITICO Senior EU Reporter, Jacopo Barigazzi (JB), presented the work of investigative journalists. The main shared characteristic between prosecutors and police on the one hand, and investigative journalists on the other is the power to ask questions. What differs though, is that journalists lack power to enforce and are impacted by technology in a different way. They have to bear legal risks, which JB illustrated by using the examples of cases such as the Parmalat, the EU ambassador suspected spy, and CIA extraordinary renditions. He explained what problems can arise when journalists gather information, such as the anonymity of sources and the legal breaches that might arise from publishing these, the need for crosschecking of information, and the justification of the process through which information is gathered.

He concluded noting that the work of investigative journalists is undergoing a big change. New technology is coming as both a resource and a risk. On the one hand, it has brought software that are able to write stories by themselves. The job of journalists is increasingly more investigating, less about writing. On the other hand, technological tools are also increasing the difficulty of this profession: information is

shared at an increasingly higher pace, but the reliability of the data is harder to control.

OLAF's spokesperson asked how, given the current amount of fake news, investigative journalists can check the credibility of their sources. JB answered that even if the information appears to be coming from a reliable source, still, they need to double-check, via personal contacts, which might be not that easily replaced by new technologies.

### **The Power of Crowdsourcing: how Europol uses social media to catch criminals – Ms Tine Hollevoet, Europol**

Tine Hollevoet (TH) showcased how Europol have successfully used social media and crowdsourcing campaigns to aid their operational activities. The examples of Europol's 'Stop Child Abuse: Trace an Object' and 'Europe Most Wanted' campaigns, were used to highlight how the public has assisted Europol's investigations.

The first campaign involved posting images of everyday objects found in the background of sexually explicit photos involving minors. The aim was to obtain assistance from the public in order to geolocate the pictures by identifying the origin of the objects portrayed. On the first day the website had 356 000 visitors and 4500 tips, and out of 197 objects published 114 have been identified. 10 children and 3 offenders have been identified. Although Europol is very happy with the number as only saving one child would have been worth the campaign, this also shows the difficulty of tracing online photos.

The second example presented was the 'Europe Most Wanted' website and related social media campaigns. The aim of this campaign was to make EU's Member States' most wanted criminals known to EU citizens. TH described how the team had used social media campaigns to raise awareness of and attract traffic to the site. Since its launch, 82 arrests have been made and 30 are linked to the website and the campaigns around it. The campaign is a good example of how receiving help from general public can contribute to make Europe safer.

The audience asked more specifically what social media channels were used during the campaigns. TH explained that Twitter and Facebook were used mainly, but also LinkedIn and Instagram. On Twitter especially, they noticed a significant reach. The campaigns were done without additional budget, which also means no social media budget. That is why it was so important for Europol to have Member States authorities share the campaign.

A short debate followed on how to make anti-fraud issues more appealing to the general public as it can be a difficult topic to communicate about. It was agreed that communicators need to have a think about how we communicate and what is highlighted. It was suggested that one efficient way could be to show what could have been done instead with the money defrauded.

## **Maltese customs video game – Mr Matthew Cesareo, Malta Customs Department**

Matthew Cesareo (MC) from Malta Customs Department explained how his unit created an educational video game to overcome the lack of engagement with Maltese citizens and press. The 'Nothing to declare' game deals with the general problem of misinformation, which can lead to citizens not declaring goods and money as they should. The target group was children and youngsters which would serve as a good communication bridge with future generations. The game illustrates the tasks of a customs officer and provides knowledge on customs, duties as well as legislation. It is downloadable on Apple store in six different language versions (EN, FR, IT, ES, DE, NL).

MC said that the release of the game have led to some impressive results and they have received a lot of positive feedback. Since the release, the Customs Customers Care received more queries regarding fraud, and recruitment interest went up. The Ministry of Education also expressed its interest to cooperate. Maltese Customs have now introduced the game on school tablets and enclosed modules on Customs in Primary and Secondary schools curricula.

Asked what the impact of the video game has been in other countries, MC said that they have received very positive reactions from customs colleagues in other countries where the game has been used. Some are also looking to present the game in their national schools.

The AFCOS delegate from Malta also explained further education actions undertaken, for example the introduction of a module in universities about fraud that students need to validate in order to acquire their degree. Also, there was a quiz launched in primary schools, with questions such as; "If you buy something in a shop and they do not give you a receipt, what do you do?" He added that, sometimes it is good also to propose new ideas, new projects and not simply stay within the boundaries of what your duties are.

## **Danish customs communication on Brexit – Mr Jesper Thorndal Moll, Danish Customs Agency**

Jesper Thorndall Moll (JTM) explained how the Danish Customs Agency has approached the challenge of communicating Brexit, and shared lessons learned. In general, communicating on Brexit has proven particularly challenging as the outcome is still unknown and it is something that customs agencies have no influence over.

JTM explained that their successful communication campaign was made possible through the setting of a targeted framework for the communication with the twofold aim of on the one hand helping Danish companies get ready to deal with customs formalities when dealing with the UK, and on the other ensuring the general public that the Customs Agency is ready for Brexit.

As the readiness level of Danish companies appeared generally low, two key messages were chosen: (i) preparation is key, and (ii) Customs Agency is preparing



for a no-deal Brexit and is helping companies do the same. As it is generally difficult press-wise to show what customs operations do and how they facilitate trade, it was key to find tangible examples to do so.

What we know now is that nothing will happen customs-wise at the end of January 2020, but companies do not. JTM said that as the communication up to now have been that companies need to do something, now the communication will instead be expressing that for now they do not need to do anything.

There was a comment from OLAF's spokesperson that there also have been similar discussions in the Commission on how to communicate about Brexit at this point in time, as there have already been a campaign for past leave dates. The consensus is to re-use the campaign and save energy for when the transition period ends in January 2021.

## **AOB**

Cecilia Thorfinn from Eurojust, suggested to organise the next OAFCN seminar still in 2020. As they are already organising a workshop for prosecutions' communicators at Eurojust, with planned trainings on social media, report writing and campaign ideas, she proposed to join forces on this and also invite the OAFCN network to the Hague and Eurojust. This proposal was endorsed by the participants.

## **4. Conclusions and next steps**

Jana Cappello concluded the conference with reference to several points. She announced that OLAF will circulate the minutes within the next few weeks and that all featured presentations will be sent out to participants. She then encouraged members to follow each other and OLAF on social media, and share content as appropriate, in order to increase everyone's reach. She asked participants to inform OLAF in case any changes in the member's institutions occur. It is important to have contact details always updated. The point was raised that more pictures are also needed for the OAFCN webpage. While, on the side of OLAF, the network will be informed when the OLAF report will be ready. Last but not least, she called members to share ideas on possible communication campaigns on environmental issues.

## **5. Next meeting**

A training seminar organised jointly with Eurojust is scheduled to take place in 2020. The next meeting will be in 2021.

## **6. List of participants**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>NATIONALITY</b>
ANDREOU Christos	Police	CY
ANTALIK Peter	Government Office of the Slovak Republic	SK
AVARKIOTIS Dimosthenis	National Transparency Authority	EL
BERNACER Teresa	Spanish Tax Agency	ES
BRECKPOT Stephane	Customs and Excise	BE

CALLEJA Kevin	Internal Audit & Investigations Department (IAID) - AFCOS	MT
CESAREO Matthew	Customs Department - Enforcement Unit and Communications	MT
CHRISTOU Christos	Customs & Excise	CY
CORSETTI Carlo Felice	Gruppo giornalisti uffici stampa (GUS)	IT
DE JESUS SALVADOR Ismael	Republican National Guard - Unidade de Acção Fiscal	PT
DELIA Daniel	Customs	MT
DE WAELE Peter	EUROPOL	
DE ZUTTER Leen	EUROJUST	
DINTOI Bogdan Ionut	Fight Against Fraud Department - DLAF, Romanian Government	RO
FARRUGIA Yvonne	Police	MT
GIAKOUMELOS Nikolaos	Financial Economic Crime Unit (SDOE)	EL
GRINVALDE Lelde	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia	LV
HERVENT Ivan	Customs and Excise	BE
HOLLEVOET Tine	EUROPOL	
KEBLIENE Renata	Special Investigation Service (STT)	LT
KIPOURGOU Adamantia	Independent Authority for Public Revenue	EL
KPODENKON Jana	Financial Administration	SK
KWIECINSKA Dorota	Ministry of Finance - Department for the audit of public funds (AFCOS)	PL
LIZZI Luciano	Guardia di Finanza and Antifraud Counsellor at the PermRep of Italy to the EU	IT
MANEA Catalina	European Investment Bank	
MOTA TORRES Alexandra	Autoridade Tributária e Aduaneira – Tax and Customs Authority	PT
NICOULAUD Bruno	Délégation nationale à la lutte contre la fraude (AFCOS)	FR
PISONI Lorenzo	Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli (Customs)	IT
PRUDICOVA Hana	Customs Administrations of the Czech Republic	CZ
RAMANAČIENĖ Indrė	Customs department - Ministry of Finance	LT
RAMLJAK Ivana	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	HR
RASCANU Carmen	Fight Against Fraud Department - DLAF, Romanian Government	RO
ROMITELLI Gabriel	Guardia di Finanza	IT
SAID Mark	Internal Audit & Investigations Department (IAID) - AFCOS	MT
SCHMIDT Gábor	Office of the Prosecutor General	HU
SNELLMAN Alma	National Bureau of Investigation - Police	FI
THORFINN Cecilia	EUROJUST	
THORNDAL MOLL Jesper	Danish Customs Agency	DK

VALERI Mauro	Polizia di Stato - Police	IT
VITKAUSKAITĖ- ŠATKAUSKIENĖ Gintarė	Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania	LT
VINTRLÍK Jakub	Ministry of Finance	CZ