



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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OLAF hosts G7 Sub-Working Group on Export Control Enforcement

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) hosted the first in-person operational meeting of the G7 Sub-Working Group on Export Control Enforcement. Experts from the Group of Seven countries and OLAF met in Brussels on 16-17 April to exchange information and operational results. Participants had the opportunity to discuss latest trends in research and analysis to further strengthen the fight against the circumvention of sanctions against Russia and Belarus.

The meeting brought together action officers working on the primary objective for which the group was established – the illicit trade of battlefield products. Experts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States shared operational intelligence and the latest knowledge on the evasion patterns and outreach efforts in third countries in an effort to improve the enforcement of the existing rules.

Ville Itälä, Director-General of OLAF, said: *"We are glad to be able to support our partners in such a sensitive and crucial effort as the enforcement of the EU's export sanctions. We are helping to provide, collect and exchange intelligence and data analysis so that national customs authorities can intercept any suspicious shipments. In some cases there are clear red flags that set investigators into motion. Other cases require more in-depth analysis which OLAF can provide efficiently as this has been part of our work against smuggling, counterfeiting and other kinds of customs fraud for decades."*

Since the summer of 2023, OLAF has been coordinating an operation that targets prohibited exports from the EU of so-called dual use goods – items that usually have a normal civilian use but which can also be used as components for the battlefield. Customs authorities from the EU's Member States participate in the operation that also receives support from third countries such as the U.S., Canada and Ukraine.

To date the OLAF operation has resulted in the interception of 233,000 items including telecommunication equipment, electrical circuits, computer chips and routing devices, for a current total value exceeding 2.3 million euro. OLAF's investigators and data analysts also identified several suspicious companies and shipments to be tracked, ensured cooperation with third countries and established the most frequent modi operandi.

Background

OLAF [has been monitoring](#) trade flows and performing analytical work to detect possible fraudulent circumvention of import/export sanctions since the European Union adopted the first measures in 2022. In June 2023 OLAF hosted a [joint enforcement meeting](#) to tackle attempts of circumvention of the EU's sanctions against Russia and Belarus.

The International Group of Seven (“G7”) is an intergovernmental forum whose members include the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, and Japan, with the European Union as a “non-enumerated” member. In February 2023 the G7 announced the creation of a new Enforcement Coordination Mechanism “to bolster compliance and enforcement of our measures and deny Russia the benefits of G7 economies.”

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.

Once OLAF has completed its investigation, it is for the competent EU and national authorities to examine and decide on the follow-up of OLAF’s recommendations. All persons concerned are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in a competent national or EU court of law.

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