

**PRESS RELEASE No 17/2016**

**21 September 2016**

## **High-level meeting focuses on efficiency and capacity-building in fight against fraud**

**Developing clear goals and effective strategies in the fight against fraud involving European Union funds topped the agenda of the roundtable organised by the Romanian Fight against Fraud Department (DLAF) in cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) on 21 September in Bucharest. With speakers including OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler and DLAF head Marius Cătălin Vartic, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Justice, National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), National Integrity Agency (ANI), Ministry of European Funds and Audit Authority, the roundtable facilitated a discussion on stepping up Romania's efforts in detecting and preventing fraud with EU funds. Participants emphasised the need for more cross-border efforts to counter fraud, as well as the importance of operational support among the different bodies tasked with the protection of the EU budget at national and European level.**

"I am very pleased to see that Romanian authorities recognize the fight against fraud as a top priority," Giovanni Kessler said. "Romania has made significant progress in this area, and it is crucial to keep this momentum going, particularly through judicial follow-up. It should be very clear for fraudsters that they cannot and will not be able to go about their business with impunity," Kessler added. The OLAF Director-General also praised the good cooperation between his institution and DLAF, calling it a good practice example.

Romania was the second European Union Member State to develop and implement a National Anti-Fraud Strategy in 2005. The country is currently engaged in updating this roadmap, enhancing the efficiency of investigations and strengthening the capacity of staff. OLAF is helping European countries improve their capabilities to identify and prevent fraud, providing them with practical tools to recognize red flags and supporting them in monitoring high-risk projects.

"Throughout all these years, DLAF has proven it is a trustworthy partner for OLAF and for the European Institutions, as a result of the professionalism and dedication of its staff, who are committed to both preventing and fighting fraud with EU funds," Marius Cătălin Vartic said. "Protecting the EU's financial interests is protecting Romania's financial interests as well, as combatting fraud is crucial for the economic and social development of the European community Romania is a part of," Marius Cătălin Vartic added.

## **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.

### **For further details:**

Alina BUREA  
Spokesperson  
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)  
Phone +32(0)2 29-57336  
Email [olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
<http://ec.europa.eu/anti-fraud>



[@OLAFPress](https://twitter.com/OLAFPress)

Silvana ENCULESCU  
Deputy Spokesperson  
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)  
+32(0)2 29-81764  
[olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
<http://ec.europa.eu/anti-fraud>



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