

## Around 6 million litres of illicit alcoholic drinks seized

**Customs and police authorities in Europe have seized about 6 million litres of illicit alcoholic beverages, wine and beer in a targeted action led by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). OLAF's targeted action was part of Europol-Interpol operation OPSON XII.**

Every year, Europol-Interpol Operation OPSON targets counterfeit and substandard food and beverages, and food fraud in general. Similarly to previous years, OLAF took part in the operation and led a targeted action focused specifically on illicit alcoholic beverages. OLAF coordinated the activities of 24 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Norway.

As a result of the action, national customs and police authorities seized around 6 million litres of counterfeit, substandard or contraband alcoholic beverages, wine and beer.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: "*OLAF acted as a coordinator and link between the national authorities of 24 countries. Together, we tackled illicit alcoholic drinks. The issue goes well beyond public revenue – we also protected the health and safety of European consumers as well as legitimate businesses. OLAF continues its good cooperation with Europol in operation OPSON and in many others*".

The twelfth edition of Operation OPSON was carried out worldwide from December 2022 to May 2023. More information on Operation OPSON XII is available in [Europol's press release](#).

### **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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