

**Minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN), 16-17 February 2017, Brussels**

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

The agenda was adopted and the minutes of the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting (14 –15 April 2016, Brussels) were approved.

**2. Nature of the meeting**

The meeting was non-public

**3. List of points discussed**

**Welcome address**

OLAF spokesperson, Alina Burea (AB), opened the meeting by welcoming Marlene Holzner, Communication advisor at the European Commission in the team responsible for budget and human resources, and some new members to the network, including from the Belgian federal public service finance and the State police of Latvia who were attending for the first time. She also gave the floor to the new representative of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), general secretary Ricardo Gutierrez (RG), and reminded that they are observers in the network. RG said that national services could count on the EFJ to provide national journalist contacts.

AB introduced the new advisory board consisting of Ilona Skorobogatova (Latvian Ministry of finance), Elena Martinoniene (Lithuanian Prosecutor general's office), Ivan Hervent (Belgian customs & excise), Lorenzo Pisoni (Italian customs) & Gian Luca Berruti (Italian Guardia di Finanza – who was absent).

She gave the floor to Giovanni Kessler (GK), Director-general of OLAF, who started by highlighting two good examples of communication by the Network over the last year: a joint press conference in the field of customs by OLAF and Belgian customs, and a visit to the EU border on the occasion of a joint customs operation and press conference with Romanian DLAF. He emphasised however that members should play still a more proactive role in communicating on behalf of their national services. AB added that as communicators we will face communication challenges with the elections in several member states this year.

She concluded that the Network should continue the more dynamic approach this year. And clarified a new rule for future meetings, that only one member per service could participate and a maximum of 4 services per member state, other than in duly exceptional circumstances. She added that cancellations of issued travel tickets incur a loss for OLAF and should be avoided if at all possible.

**Regulation 515 communication campaign – Alina Burea/Silvana Enculescu, OLAF**

OLAF presented its communication campaign on an update to customs regulation 515, calling on the Network to promote it nationally as the main action point of the year. The amended regulation gives OLAF and customs authorities new IT tools to

fight customs fraud. By cross-checking container movements with customs declarations via a single platform, they can more easily identify discrepancies and fraud. The campaign aims to encourage customs services to use the tools and to inform maritime carrier companies of the information they should provide. AB clarified that, at a later stage, it was hoped that it would draw the interest of the media and the public.

To this end, OLAF has produced a video on the subject (a preview of which was shown) and would like to start a related twitter campaign in which OLAF and its partners (who have ports) track a container's movements across Europe, providing information on the new regulation along the way. OLAF will publicise the campaign via its EU network and is asking its OAFCN partners to translate and disseminate the video and to get involved in the Twitter campaign.

### **DG Regio's anti-fraud communication actions in the Member States – Agnes Monfret, DG Regional & urban policy**

Head of the Communication unit at DG Regional and urban policy (REGIO), Agnes Monfret, emphasised the importance of communicating about the good spending of the EU budget by the European Commission and member states. She summarised some communication activities to raise awareness about the fight against fraud that REGIO had recently organised in the member states. For example, together with Transparency International, they started in 2015 a pilot project to protect projects co-financed by EU structural and cohesion funds against fraud and corruption. This was carried out via so-called 'integrity pacts' - contracts between a contracting authority and economic operators that they will abstain from corrupt practices and conduct a transparent procurement process. The project was extended in 2016 for a further 4 years with 11 participating member states.

### **Communicating on tobacco smuggling – Mailin Aasmae, EE tax and customs board**

Estonian tax and customs changed their communication approach towards tobacco smuggling a year ago. It had previously targeted buyers and sellers but was later extended to include the community at large. Concretely, police and local municipalities attended meetings of apartment blocks to explain to the local community why it was important to care about what was going on around them in terms of the phenomenon. Tax and customs also issued a powerful anti-contraband campaign on packs and produced some low budget but successful videos.

In a follow-up discussion, the Latvian state revenue service said they produced infographs on cigarette smuggling and Danish customs said that they have used "fun facts" in their communication campaigns and messages, namely the comparison of how long it takes to heat a house based on the destruction of counterfeit goods. Both agreed to send OLAF examples by email to circulate to the Network. Belgian customs said they invite journalists to be present at the destruction of counterfeit goods and give them access to the footage. Ilona Skorobogatova from the Latvian ministry of finance voiced interest in regrouping these ideas for an anti-fraud day related to counterfeit goods they are preparing.

## **Workshop session: relation mapping in communication – Alessandro Rancati, Joint research centre**

In smaller working groups, participants were asked to come up with an idea for a new communication campaign (with a target audience, means of communication and multipliers of the publicity), either based on their possible national involvement in the 515 campaign or on a common one of interest. This resulted in interesting initiatives such as "If you lost it, customs found it" (related to the 515 campaign, and which would include live feeds on Twitter to track bananas), one with customs agencies publicising to tourists that they should not illegally import endangered species into the country, and one entitled "Who cares? Don't be a part of it" using famous people as social influencers to speak against counterfeit perfumes by telling stories for example of child labour in China. Alessandro Rancati agreed to share the mapping analysis after the event.

## **Implementation of the 2016 action plan and drafting of the 2017 action plan**

Silvana Enculescu presented an overview of what had been jointly achieved from the 2016 action plan. This included the compilation of 12 lists of national journalist contacts, the two joint press briefings with Romanian DLAF and Belgian customs mentioned above (with the latter producing considerable media coverage), and guest posting weeks on twitter with the Belgian ministry of finance, Dutch customs, Latvian police and Latvian state revenue service.

AB presented ideas for the 2017 action plan. These were:

- for national customs services to promote the video and take part in the twitter campaign for OLAF's 515 campaign
- to send OLAF by the summer 1 infograph per service on a successful anti-fraud case, which OLAF will put on its website and social media
- to share communication materials and visuals on anti-contraband (including tobacco smuggling and counterfeit goods)
- to hear the success stories of the services who had received Hercule grants in 2015 and 2016 - AB read out the list - of how they used the funds, via visuals such as pictures and videos
- to send OLAF national articles on upcoming Joint customs operations before the summer. (AB mentioned there would be some but couldn't specify which for investigative secrecy reasons)
- to pitch one interview with OLAF management (for example of their missions abroad) to key national media
- to pitch OLAF's annual report press materials to at least 3 national publications
- to volunteer to co-host a briefing for journalists with OLAF
- for the advisory board to produce a guidebook on the pros and cons of using social media
- to volunteer to do twitter guest posting weeks with OLAF, and for those who have corporate Facebook accounts to guest post with other OAFCN services
- for those countries who haven't already done so to send OLAF their national lists of journalists contacts

A good discussion started amongst member states on social media, with the Czech supreme public prosecutor's office saying they were not yet on social media and

asking other national prosecutor's offices to share their experience and advice. Romanian DLAF said they started a Facebook page this last year (but twitter is not so popular in Romania). The Latvian prosecutor general's office said they were on Facebook and Instagram, but faced the problem of visuals as the work mostly concerns documents. The European Investment Bank said they were on twitter and Facebook as an institution but not as an investigative department. AB said that Italy could be seen as a model for other countries as its prosecutors' offices can communicate at the trial, which is even before OLAF is able to. OLAF agreed to gather and re-circulate national service's presence on social media.

AB asked for topic suggestions for the next training seminar and volunteers to co-host it to be sent by email.

### **Pro-active communication strategy in times of crisis – Karin Burger, NL customs**

Karin Burger (KB) explained how Dutch customs survived a media crisis through an effective change in their communication strategy and shared their lessons learnt. The crisis concerned two customs officers who manipulated their position to be involved in large-scale drugs smuggling. The whole image of the organisation was tainted by wide and very negative media coverage.

An initial reactive strategy was deemed insufficient and a crisis team (consisting of the director-general, communication and policy units) was set up who decided to turn more pro-active. They stopped denying facts and instead explained what customs was doing to tackle the problem. They proactively invited critical journalists (keep your enemies close) and encouraged MPs to come to the port and see the reality of the difficulties they were facing, for example that it's not possible to scan every container. The director-general also reacted on her personal twitter account (with advice from the crisis team), adding a human touch. In terms of internal communication, in order to better equip staff to react in the face of criticism and as they had the possibility to read them anyway, it was decided to publish all articles for staff on their intranet ("getting the outside inside"). A year and a half on, the situation is getting better.

Asked about how they reacted to twitter criticism, KB said they only reacted to negative tweets occasionally to stop the situation getting out of hand and they had a moderator who removed abuse.

### **Free web survey software: a useful tool for communication officers – Ingrid Willems, BE Federal public service P&O**

Ingrid Willems gave an introduction on some free web survey tools available for designing, conducting and analysing online surveys. Such tools can be used, for example, to get feedback on test versions of websites and communication campaigns. She highlighted Lime survey as one with more possibilities than others to be used for larger and more complex surveying and she gave a demonstration of how it works. She said that it is important to communicate the results of the surveys and the action taken as a result to let participants know you've taken into account their feedback and so to encourage them to reply next time.

## **Young people shadowing professionals in Latvia – Ilona Skorobogatova, LV Ministry of finance**

Ilona Skorobogatova outlined an annual shadow day organised by a Latvian organisation called Junior Achievement which has been providing business education to young people and teaching them about wise spending since 1991. The shadow day takes place in February and allows young people to integrate the work place and make the link between their studies and working life by shadowing professionals for a day. The motto is to change tomorrow by equipping young people with the necessary skills to become future leaders in their field. In 2017, about 41,000 youngsters shadowed 1300 professionals.

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

#### **2017 action plan points for implementation**

- national customs services to translate and disseminate the video and take part in the twitter campaign as part of OLAF's 515 campaign
- send OLAF by the summer 1 infograph per service on a successful anti-fraud case to be put on OLAF's website and social media
- share communication materials and visuals on anti-contraband (including tobacco smuggling and counterfeit goods)
- feedback on the success stories of the services who had received Hercule grants in 2015 and 2016, of how they used the funds, via visuals such as pictures and videos
- send OLAF national articles on upcoming Joint customs operations before the summer
- pitch one interview with OLAF management (for example of their missions abroad) to key national media
- pitch OLAF's annual report press materials to at least 3 national publications
- volunteer to co-host a briefing for journalists with OLAF
- the advisory board will produce a guidebook on the pros and cons of using social media
- volunteer to do twitter guest posting weeks with OLAF, and those who have corporate Facebook accounts should guest post with other OAFCN services
- send OLAF your national lists of journalists contacts (if not already done so)

#### **Next steps**

- Implement the action plan points, listed above, and particularly get involved in OLAF's 515 campaign
- Send OLAF topic suggestions for the next training seminar and any volunteers to co-host it
- Latvian state revenue service and Danish customs to send OLAF their infographs and fun fact related to cigarette smuggling and counterfeit goods respectively
- OLAF will collect and re-circulate OAFCN services' presence on social media

### **5. Next event**

A training seminar is scheduled to take place at the end of 2017. The next meeting will be in 2018.

## 6. List of participants

Surname	First name	Organisation
AASMAE	Mailin	Tax & customs board - EE
ANGELIDES	Andreas	Police - CY
Aquilina	Raymond	Police - MT
Brodin	Katarina	Customs - SE
Burger	Karin	Customs administration - NL
Celikovic	Igor	DG TAXUD
Christou	Christos	Customs & excise - CY
Dalli	Antoine	Internal audit & investigations division - MT
De Beer	Lieve	Federal public service finance - BE
De Pablo Martin	Fernando	Tax agency - ES
Derkacz	Agnieszka	Treasury control department - PL
De Zutter	Leen	Eurojust - EU institutions
Erdosi	Dorina	Tax & customs administration - HU
Fatyka	Andrej	Control & anti-corruption section of the government office - SK
GENOVA	Viara	Customs - BG
Góngora Zurro	Ignacio	National anti-fraud coordination service - ES
Gravite	Simona	State police - LV
Gutierrez	Ricardo	European Federation of Journalists
Haubner-Immervoll	Veronika	Federal bureau of anti-corruption (BAK) - AT

Hervent	Ivan	Customs & excise - BE
Holzner	Marlene	European Commission - EU institutions
Jurić	Mirjana	Service for combatting irregularities & fraud - HR
Kaijanto	Piia	Customs - FI
Kaiopoulos	Konstantinos	Customs & excise - EL
Koumparouli	Eirini	General secretariat against corruption - EL
KURE	Irena	Budget supervision office - SI
KWIECINSKA	Dorota	Department for the protection of EU financial interests - PL
Lasco	Emidio	Guardia di Finanza - IT
Lascu	Mirela	European investment bank - EU institutions
Madsen	Rikke	Customs & tax administration (SKAT) - DK
MALY	Petr	Supreme public prosecutor's office - CZ
Martinonienė	Elena	Prosecutors general's office - LT
MASRI	Sami	Ministry of finance - LUX
Mota Torres	Alexandra	Tax & customs - PT
Nicoulaud	Bruno	Delegation nationale a la lutte contre la fraude - FR
Pakalne	Inese	State revenue service - LV
Pildava	Sigita	State police - LV
Pisoni	Lorenzo	Customs - IT
Pomponio	Alessandra	Court of auditors - IT

Prievalska Bartosova	Tatiana	Control & anti-corruption section of the government office - SK
Prudicova	Hana	Customs - CZ
Ramljak	Ivana	Service for combatting irregularities & fraud - HR
Rascanu	Carmen	Fight against fraud department (DLAF) - RO
Razmyte	Jurgita	Special investigation service - LT
REBECCHI	Paolo Luigi	Court of auditors - IT
Rodríguez Polack	Mar	National anti-fraud coordination service - ES
Schmidt	Gabor	Central investigation prosecutor's office - HU
Skorobogatova	Ilona	Ministry of finance - LV
ŠKRINJAR	Barbara	Finance administration - SI
Sutugina	Kristine	Prosecutors general's office - LV
Tsouknidas	Vissarion	General secretariat against corruption - EL
VAIDISOVA	Katerina	Ministry of finance - CZ
Vartic	Marius Catalin	Fight against fraud department (DLAF) - RO
Wildschütz	Steve	Customs & excise - LUX