

Hercule III Programme: new EU funds to fight fraud

The new anti-fraud Programme Hercule III enters into force today. It makes €104.9 million available to support Member States in fighting fraud, corruption and other illegal activities. The Programme helps finance concrete projects such as the purchase by national authorities of x-ray scanners and other technical equipment to stamp out smuggling and other criminal activities against the EU's financial interests.

"The new Hercule III Programme will support Member States in their efforts to fight illegal activities against the EU budget. It will help finance projects aiming to ensure that fraudsters are caught and that taxpayers' money is protected." the Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), Giovanni Kessler, said.

A major novelty under the new Programme is that Member States can apply for more funding: potential beneficiaries are now allowed to submit an application for funding even in cases where there can be only little national co-funding. This means that for actions aimed to strengthen the technical and operational capacity of customs and law enforcement agencies, Member States can apply for funding of up to 80% of the overall costs. This is particularly important in the current difficult economic conditions, where many national budgets are severely constrained.

The fight against tobacco smuggling continues to be an important area of focus under this Programme. Tobacco smuggling is estimated to produce losses of at least EUR 10 billion to national and EU budgets every year. Through the financing of x-rays scanners and other technical equipment in harbours and airports, for example, Hercule III funding can boost Member States' capacity to fight this criminal activity. More than EUR 70 million will be earmarked for these activities.

Hercule III will also finance training activities. It will help facilitate the exchange of best practices through seminars and conferences, dedicated, for instance, to preventing corruption in procurement procedures. Training will also be provided for law enforcement staff to strengthen and continuously update their digital forensic skills.

Please consult the dedicated OLAF page for more information on the work programme and calls for tenders regarding Hercule III:

http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/about-us/funding/hercule-iii/index_en.htm.

OLAF

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by investigating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it detects and investigates serious matters relating to the discharge of professional duties by members and staff of the EU institutions and bodies that could result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings; and it supports the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, in the development and implementation of anti-fraud legislation and policies.

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