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OLAF and Eurojust sign new Working Arrangement to step up cooperation

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and Eurojust have concluded a new Working Arrangement to enhance their cooperation in the fight against fraud, corruption, environmental crime, intellectual property crime and other crimes affecting the EU's financial interests. The Working Arrangement was signed today by Eurojust President Mr Ladislav Hamran and OLAF Director-General Mr Ville Itälä during their high-level meeting in The Hague.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"Institutional and legal changes have called for adaptations in the way that OLAF and Eurojust work together, while maintaining our strong ties and good collaboration. The new Working Arrangement formalises our cooperation, with the aim of making the fight against fraud and other illegal activities affecting EU financial interests as efficient as possible"*.

Eurojust President Ladislav Hamran said: *"This new Working Arrangement reinforces our existing close partnership and will help both Eurojust and OLAF to better tackle those crime areas that have a devastating impact on the EU's financial interests. It paves the way for a more practical and operational cooperation, enabling us to offer the strongest possible protection of taxpayers' money"*.

The new Working Arrangement outlines the practical details of the institutional, strategic and operational cooperation between Eurojust and OLAF. It builds on the work of dedicated liaison teams and foresees the preparation of action plans on common cooperation priorities.

Eurojust and OLAF have agreed on several concrete ways in which they can cooperate, including mutual advice and assistance, participation in each other's operational meetings and joint investigation teams. This practical approach will create optimal synergies between the work of both organisations, while allowing them to benefit from each other's unique expertise.

Background

The Working Arrangement replaces the 2008 Practical Agreement, which had become largely outdated as a result of the significant changes in the institutional and legal landscape over the past 15 years, particularly the revisions of OLAF's and Eurojust's respective Regulations. The new Working Arrangement will enter into force tomorrow with immediate effect.

Eurojust, the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, is a unique hub based in The Hague, the Netherlands, where national judicial authorities work closely together to fight serious organised cross-border crime.

The **European Anti-Fraud Office** (OLAF) conducts independent administrative investigations into fraud, corruption and irregularities affecting the EU's financial interests, investigates serious misconduct by staff and members of EU institutions, and develops policies to counter fraud.

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.

For further details:

Kirill GELMI
Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
Phone: +32 2 29 88146
E-mail: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
<https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu>



Theresa ZAHRA
Deputy Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
+32 2 29 57270
olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
<https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu>

