



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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## **OLAF in 2018: major investigations put an end to cross-border fraud schemes, stop organised criminals**

**The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) maintained a strong investigative performance in 2018, focusing its efforts on the areas where it could bring the highest added value to European citizens – complex, transnational cases that would be impossible to tackle by national authorities alone. Whether in the field of Structural Funds, Customs or Direct Expenditure, OLAF's unique expertise and its team of highly-qualified investigators, forensic experts and analysts have helped the Office solve even the most difficult cases, and stop organised criminals from defrauding the EU budget.**

*"OLAF's results show that our work is making a difference. We are protecting not only the EU financial interests, but also the health and wellbeing of European citizens," said OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä.*

### **OLAF's investigative performance in 2018 in numbers:**

- OLAF concluded **167 investigations**, issuing **256 recommendations** to the relevant national and EU authorities
- OLAF recommended the recovery of **EUR 371 million** to the EU budget
- OLAF opened **219 new investigations**, following **1259 preliminary analyses** carried out by OLAF experts

### **Trends in anti-fraud investigations:**

The transnational dimension of its work allows OLAF to form a unique view of the changing nature of fraud across Europe. Therefore, OLAF took the opportunity to present an analysis of some of the most striking trends revealed by its investigations:

- Setting up **fake companies** and **disguising falsified business transactions** in order to obtain EU funds
- Fraud in the **promotion of agricultural products**, with money often being **laundered through third countries**
- The **evasion of customs duties** orchestrated through transnational criminal schemes

## **OLAF protects EU money from organised criminals**

This year's Report also focuses on the ways in which OLAF foils the plans of organised criminals attempting to pocket EU money. When it comes to fighting complex fraud cases perpetrated by highly-organised criminals, experience comes in handy. OLAF investigators are not only dedicated, they also have years of practice behind them. This helps them quickly identify patterns and apply their knowledge to solve cases quicker and to identify new areas of fraud.

## **Contribution to the EU policies to fight fraud**

In addition to its investigative work, OLAF plays an active role in the development of the anti-fraud policies of the European Union.

In 2018, OLAF was instrumental in the development of the new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy, and will now be the one steering its implementation. The strategy proposes enhanced data analysis for evidence-based anti-fraud policy measures, as well as a more comprehensive analysis of fraud risks which should lead to better deployment of anti-fraud controls.

## **Better tools, fit for an evolving anti-fraud landscape**

In May 2018, the European Commission also adopted a proposal to amend OLAF's legal basis. The Commission proposed to strengthen the admissibility of OLAF evidence in national courts, to grant OLAF access to bank accounts, facilitate on the spot checks and provide the Office with the necessary tools to fulfil its mandate in the area of VAT. The amendment aims to ensure that OLAF is able to efficiently work alongside the new European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), complementing the work of the EPPO for the benefit of European citizens.

To read the full report, please click [here](#).

### **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.

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