

PRESS RELEASE No 15/2023

15 September 2023

## **OLAF, candidate countries and potential candidates joining forces in fighting fraudsters**

AFCOS Seminar, Budva, Montenegro, 12-13 September 2023

**The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) organised a two-day seminar for Anti-Fraud Coordination Services (AFCOS) of the EU candidate countries and potential candidates. The seminar held in Budva, Montenegro, brought together the relevant authorities active in the fight against fraud to discuss the challenges and opportunities in the protection of EU financial interests.**

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä underlined *"the challenges we faced over the last few years – the pandemic, the energy crisis, the war on Ukraine – created new opportunities for fraudsters. To deal with these complex fraud schemes, we need to work together even closer and to share intelligence efficiently. The AFCOS and similar contact services are on the frontline of the fight against fraud, with unique expertise and knowledge that can help us deliver better results in stopping fraudsters and ensuring that EU funds are well spent."*

The participants from the ten candidate countries and potential candidates, representatives from three well established AFCOS in EU Member States, as well as colleagues from EU Delegations and Offices in the region had the opportunity to discuss topics of interest in the area of fighting and preventing fraud, with particular emphasis on investigations, new trends in data analysis, as well as potential benefits of joining the Union Anti-Fraud Programme. The issue of enhanced and efficient cooperation was prominent throughout the discussions.

The Latvian, Romanian and Spanish AFCOS presented concrete examples on how they cooperate with OLAF before, during and after investigations, including by providing information on bank accounts and transactions, supporting OLAF in case of resistance of economic operators during an on-the-spot check, as well as in the field of data analysis.

In the margins of the seminar, the Director-General of OLAF also met with the State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro, the Montenegrin General Prosecutor and the Director of the Montenegrin Agency for Prevention of Corruption.

OLAF considers the cooperation with the AFCOS in candidate countries and potential candidates to be a vital priority and an investment in the future of the EU.

OLAF will organise an AFCOS Conference in Brussels next year, which will bring together the representatives of all Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates offering a unique opportunity to exchange best practices at an even larger scale.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
<https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu>

