



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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OLAF Unveils Fraudulent Misuse of EU Funds in Romania's Danube Delta Development Projects

OLAF played a pivotal role in uncovering a major fraud case in Romania, revealing that EU funds intended for development projects in the Danube Delta were misused through fraudulent schemes. OLAF's investigation carried out in close cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), unveiled a significant misuse of funds in over 30 EU-financed projects.

The Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is among Europe's most ecologically vital regions. The EU funds allocated to this region through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are vital for its maintenance.

Acting on an initial request from EPPO, OLAF carried out an investigative analysis into allegations of EU fund mismanagement and delivered its results to the European Delegated Prosecutor.

One of the projects under investigation was co-financed under the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020. In particular, it sought to expand a transport company's activities to include construction services, relied on EU and national contributions covering 70.95% of eligible costs.

OLAF revealed that the company's legal representative had submitted falsified documents, including forged bank statements, to falsely portray financial capacity for the project, which led to their unlawful acquisition of the EU-funded tender.

Financial recommendation for over half a million euro

These fraudulent actions resulted in the unlawful acquisition of approximately EUR 593 000 in EU funds and EUR 104 000 from Romania's national budget. Throughout the investigation, OLAF collaborated closely with the EPPO, sharing evidence and coordinating efforts to ensure a thorough and effective inquiry.

In July 2024, OLAF concluded its investigation and issued a recommendation to the European Commission to recover EUR 593 000 as a result of the misappropriation of EU funds. This case highlights OLAF's instrumental role in complementing EPPO's efforts to safeguard EU financial interests and ensure the proper use of public resources.

Recently, EPPO indicted one individual and one company implicated in the investigation. Should the individual be found guilty, he could face a prison term

ranging from three to ten and a half years. The company, in turn, could incur fines of up to EUR 420 000 and risk confiscation.

For more information, please see EPPO's press release on the matter: <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/media/news/romania-two-indicted-fraud-involving-funds-development-danube-delta>

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.

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