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OLAF and Greek authorities stop over 15 tonnes of illicit refrigerant gases

The Greek authorities have seized 15.6 tonnes of illicit refrigerant gases thanks to support provided by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). F-gases – or HFCs – are used in refrigerant equipment like air conditioners or refrigerators. However, because of their negative impact on climate, they are subject to strict quota in the EU and to a gradual phase down.

The seizures were made following on-the-spot checks by the Greek authorities and OLAF investigators. Over 6 tonnes of f-gases lacked the necessary authorisations, and an additional 9 tonnes of f-gases were counterfeit. The economic operators in breach of EU regulations received fines for over 200,000 euro.

OLAF worked closely with DIMEA (the Greek interagency for market control), the Hellenic Police and Hellenic Customs. DIMEA coordinated activities at the national level. OLAF provided intelligence on the suspicious economic operators that were checked, helped coordinate activities, and ensured cooperation with the industry operators affected by the imitations. The involvement of the private stakeholders allowed for an efficient identification of the cylinders of counterfeit f-gases and for their subsequent treatment.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"I congratulate the Greek colleagues on this successful action and I am glad of our very good cooperation. The gases seized are extremely harmful for the environment, and they can be flammable and hazardous. OLAF has been very active in the fight against smuggling of refrigerant gases and has recently obtained the global Montreal Protocol award for its work in the domain"*.

More information is available in the [press release](#) issued by DIMEA.

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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