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## **OLAF and partners strengthen EU–Africa cooperation in fighting fraud against the EU budget**

**On 8 and 9 October, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and its African partners met in Brussels to discuss how to strengthen their cooperation in the fight against fraud and corruption. Participants included representatives from 10 African countries and 16 national, European or international institutions, such as national financial inspection and audit bodies, anti-fraud and anti-corruption offices, the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank and several EU delegations.**

OLAF can investigate wherever European Union funds are spent, within or outside Europe. Currently in its ninth edition, the event was organised to strengthen the cooperation between OLAF and investigative authorities in Africa but also to establish new channels of cooperation by enlarging the scope of the event to new institutions, such as investigative bodies in South Africa and Uganda.

The two-day agenda particularly focused on the powers of participating institutions in fighting fraud and corruption, to what extent these powers allow for performing investigative activities on behalf of or in cooperation with OLAF, as well as on their limitations and how to overcome them. It also presented examples of recent investigations conducted by OLAF and the EIB together with African authorities and explored new perspectives for closer cooperation.

Director-General of OLAF Ville Itälä shared his impressions: "Africa is a priority partner for the EU, the Commission and for OLAF. Today's discussions in the Pilot Group meeting were lively and inspirational, whether on the handling of incoming information, proactive communication with citizens, protection of whistle-blowers, as well as on principles of good prevention and anti-fraud strategies or access to databases. This is promising for OLAF's future cooperation with African partners."

### **Background:**

OLAF cooperates with a large number of partner organisations in non-EU countries to ensure that EU development and humanitarian aid reaches its intended beneficiaries, without being diverted by fraud and corruption.

The meeting between OLAF and its African partners, which took place this year on 8-9 October in Brussels, is part of a series of Pilot Group meetings which started in 2007. The Pilot Group was created to strengthen the cooperation between OLAF and African national authorities, as well as to enhance EU-Africa and trans-African cooperation. The participation of other important international donors underlines the importance of this event and of cooperation in general.

**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.

**For further details:**

Jana CAPPELLO  
Spokesperson  
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)  
Phone: +32 2 29 85549  
E-mail: [olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud)



Silvana ENCULESCU  
Deputy Spokesperson  
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)  
+32 2 29 81764  
[olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud)

