

14th OAFCN Meeting, 4 December 2008, Brussels.

Text amended and adopted by OAFCN members at the 15th OAFCN meeting on 8 May 2009

1. *Approval of the agenda.*
2. *Follow-up of the 8th OAFCN Training seminar, Nicosia, Cyprus, 2008 "Anti-Fraud Communication and web 2.0: new technologies, new tools, new audiences."*

The meeting began with thanks to Cyprus for hosting the previous conference, which was an all-round success. Cyprus commented that the issue of how new technology can assist in daily professional life was new for them, and that they also learnt a great deal from the experience. Mr Michael Cassar reiterated Mr Alessandro Buttice's (AB) thanks to the speakers for their lucid and professional presentation of highly technical issues. Ms Anikó Fazekas took the opportunity to introduce her new colleague, Mr David Szeverenji, before asking for concrete details of how to apply the theory of the seminar and overcome its associated financial implications. She also asked for the content of the Round Table to be put on-line. In response, AB introduced Ms Anna Giglio who will work exclusively on the OAFCN and thus help to overcome the Network's lack of resources. He also suggested putting the contact details of OAFCN members on the OLAF website to ease communication and the exchange of information.

AB then introduced Ms Reneta Nikolova from the Bulgarian Club Journalists against Corruption (BCJAC) and asked for 5 minutes of silence for filming.

3. *TV fiction project: update. Discussion of the proposed European TV series that will raise public awareness of the fight against corruption and fraud that affects EU financial interests (follow-up of the 7th OAFCN Training seminar, Vienna, Bratislava, 2007 "Fight against Fraud on Vision – Television Drama as a Means of Fighting against Fraud and Corruption. What has been achieved?")*

AB introduced the project as a concrete result of the 7th seminar. Mr Hajek, producer of 'Kommissar Rex', has started work on a TV series based on OLAF and its partners. The theme, investigators of different Member States working together, will shine a spotlight on corruption and its associated problems. AB stated that OAFCN members' support for the film project, particularly that of the host country, is important, and asked if anybody would not be able to lend a hand: no one believed this would be a problem, and **all supported the motion to assist as required**. AB stated that OLAF strongly supports this initiative, which is crucial not only to *fraud prevention* but also *integration* as the portrayal of Member States acting together will counter national stereotyping. Mr Ovidiu Dobleaga stated that Romania is open to the project and proposed organising a seminar there between the OAFCN, producers and national authorities. AB supported this idea, reiterating that the producer is taking a financial risk which demonstrates his faith in the project's commercial appeal.

Mr Julien Coudray (JC) was then invited to share the experience of a TV series that has been made in Marseille on the French customs. JC described the 'ping pong' between fiction and reality that took place in the process of making the series: the desire to attract a wide audience whilst representing the Customs responsibly. To strike the correct balance, a guide was provided to give advice, and technical apparatus (helicopters and vehicles) were made available. The central theme of the series is

the battle between Marseille customs and drug gangs, and each of the 6 episodes has a different sub-story.

Clips of the first three episodes were then shown. Subsequently, the issue of the payment of guides was broached, with the conclusion that this is viable as it is an artistic project, provided that those concerned are on leave. AB wished France well in this project. Mr Jacques Graff then spoke on behalf of the Federal Police of the Belgium experience. He raised the issue of protecting the private life of police officers, and avoiding an inappropriate relationship forming between the media and customs, which prompted AB to remind the group that this is a fictional project and will not be based on the lives of actual customs officers.

4. *TV documentary / Bulgaria: Club Journalists Against Corruption's project for the Bulgarian audience "The role of audio-visual communication as a powerful means of informing the public and preventing the misuse of EU funds", including shooting during OAFCN meeting, 4-5 December 2008, Brussels.*

AB re-introduced Ms Nikolova, Chair of the BCJAC (see Annex 1, hand-out). RN made a presentation '*Mastering the Experience of OLAF's Communication Network and the new European model of partnership with Judicial Power.*' AB subsequently reminded members that Bulgaria is experiencing a particular moment of high mediatisation as a result of their funds being frozen, which renders the issue of awareness raising even more salient. Therefore, even more encouragement at European and international level is necessary. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) support is therefore a positive asset for the Club. The BCJAC plans to host a seminar in February to which all members were invited. AB recalled that he was pleasantly surprised at the general accuracy of journalism whilst he was in Bulgaria, and reiterated the importance of educating and training journalists to be accurate notwithstanding the pressures of the modern media.

5. *Working project "Tapping the Experience of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN) and the New European Models of Partnership with the Judiciary" within the Operational Programme Administrative Capacity, (follow-up to Sofia press conference 27 October 2008.)*

Cynthia Jaerling (CJ) began by extending her apologies on behalf of UNODC's Head of Communication who was unable to attend. The mandate of UNODC has three areas: crime- most relevant to the OAFCN- drugs and terrorism. UNODC provides technical and legal assistance, loans and grants to governments aiming to combat corruption. The campaign vs. corruption aims to increase citizens' awareness of corruption, thereby empowering them to act against it. CJ then introduced the slogan to the UNODC campaign '*Your No Counts*' and expressed the agency's enthusiasm to create partnerships.

AB extended OLAF's support to UNODC whilst reiterating that corruption isn't the primary focus of the Office. He then informed members of a joint press release between OLAF and the OAFCN that was to be held the following week on the occasion of Anti-Corruption Day. He reminded members that there remains room for improvement in all Member States in creating an environment of social responsibility and demonstrating that corruption affects us all: Europe needs to speak with one voice in order to bring about concrete results. Mr David Jones then asked the speaker to comment on UK investigations and a UN report on companies that have broken sanctions and bought illegal Iraqi oil. CJ said she was unaware of such a report.

AB concluded by praising UNODC on creating a communication campaign with such a transnational scope. **He asked members if there were any objections to the OAFCN's support of UNODC, and no objections were raised.**

6. *The 10th Anniversary of OLAF: 1999-2000- possible activities in the framework of the OAFCN.*

Some ideas to exploit the full pedagogical and PR potential of the 10th anniversary were mooted, namely the BCJAC's film documentary, web pages, and an image bank to which all members will have access. Mr Cassar commented that the occasion should show the spirit of OLAF: its achievements, hopes, and plans for the future as well as how it has helped the EU citizen. He stated that it should be visual, and not too lengthy. AB's view was that OLAF should be represented as a cornerstone of European Cooperation, and Mr Gennaro Vecchione commented that the anniversary is an opportunity to show OLAF's strength and scope.

AB suggested that the anniversary celebrations need a concrete idea. The film project will fulfil this function, and, in addition, members should keep each other informed about satellite events happening within Member States. The second central point raised regarding the anniversary was that it should fulfil an explicative function, explaining to citizens how their money is spent and how OLAF is able to recover incorrectly used funds. AB responded that the TV fiction series could also serve this purpose. The final point was that the anniversary should provide the opportunity to produce a communication package dedicated to all the activities and achievements realised by OLAF over the course of the last ten years. Mr Lieven Muylaert, Head of Communication, Belgian Customs, shared experiences of the EU Customs Union's 40th anniversary and Mr Carlo Felice Corsetti then suggested organising a press conference with journalists from all 27 Member States. AB agreed was an excellent idea, adding that the Open Day may be the best opportunity. Mr Coudray suggested organising an open doors exhibition on OLAF's work in advance. Mr Vecchione added that the conference should have an up-to date and international dimension and Ms Dorisa Tetakova concluded by saying that OLAF should show its other activities beyond customs.

7. *Planning for the next OAFCN meetings/training seminars and the European Institutions Open Day, Saturday 9 May 2009 based on the theme "European Year of Creativity and Innovation" (date to be confirmed by the European Parliament.)*

The 15th OAFCN meeting is scheduled for May in conjunction with the European Institutions' Open Day, in which the OAFCN members are participating together with OLAF as in previous years. Poland confirmed its interest in hosting the 9th OAFCN training seminar in Warsaw in 2009. Italy also expressed its interest. AB asked Poland to confirm its willingness in writing in January, and noted Italy as a reserve for 2010.

The theme of the seminar was then discussed. Mr Cassar suggested 'Ten Years of OLAF: the way forward', Ms Cinthia Fenti suggested coordinating an Open Study studio, and Mr Gian Luca Berruti was interested in the role of social networks in the domain of anti-fraud. Ultimately, two ideas were put to a vote: the first was Belgium's suggestion of a juridical exam of different systems of communication, and the second was Mr Jones' idea to revisit the theme of the first OAFCN seminar which focused on the different styles and modes of journalism across Member States. **The latter option carried at 23 votes to 18.**

8. *Communicating Europe – development at European level: Journalist/Spokesperson of the Year prize. Feedback from Forum Bologna (Giornalismo Premio.)*

Mr Corsetti introduced the project which involves approximately 70 journalists who participate every year. The project is relevant to the OAFCN and offers the network the possibility to convey its message. A vote was taken as to the propriety of the OAFCN acting as a patron for this group of press officers, and no objections were raised.

9. *Membership of the OAFCN: Scope and criteria.*

This section aimed to define the levels of OAFCN membership, which has become necessary owing to the way the network has evolved since its foundation. The examples of Aidan White (Secretary General of the IFJ) Eurojust, Eurojust, Mr Corsetti (now retired from the Comando Generale Arma Carabinieri) and Ms Nikolova (who has resigned from her position as media advisor in the Ministry of Finance,) were cited. AB stated that these cases demonstrate the need for 'atypical' membership in exceptional cases. Mr Jones agreed that these candidates are invaluable to the OAFCN, yet expressed concern as to the constraints on time and budget. AB replied that both Mr Corsetti and Ms Nikolova had been willing to pay their own travel expenses, and that this practice would be adopted for all atypical members unless they were charged with preparing seminar speeches. Further, atypical membership has to be squarely in the interests of the fight against fraud. Mr Jones suggested e-mail submissions in order to define what these criteria might be.

The appropriate terminology for this type of membership was then discussed. 'Invited', 'exceptional' and 'associate' membership were suggested, and the latter of these, associate membership, was decided on. It was agreed that membership should be decided on a case by case basis. Further, 'Associate Members' will be invited to all OAFCN seminars as well as to OAFCN meetings which are of interest to them, although they will not be allowed to vote during these. Mr Corsetti was then asked to leave the meeting room whilst a vote was taken as to the group's willingness to accept him and Ms Nikolova as members. **Both candidates were unanimously accepted.**

10. *Development of relations with the International Federation of Journalists.*

AB stated his satisfaction at the IFJ's support for the OAFCN, and accepted his criticism that the network is yet to fulfil its full potential. He added that a discussion panel could help to prevent against unprovoked attacks on national authorities by journalists based on miscomprehension, and that mutual respect of the principles underlying the IFJ and the OAFCN will be necessary for the successful realisation of this collaboration.

11. *Any Other Business.*

A question was raised by Marleen van den Oetelaar on how members should deal with questions regarding OLAF's internal problems such as the press coverage of a NL MEP's 'revelations' concerning alleged irregularities in OLAF. AB expanded on this issue for those who weren't up-to-date, and then explained how OLAF is responding to it. He concluded that the Office has nothing to hide and that journalists' freedom of expression must be respected notwithstanding that it can be frustrating and time-consuming for everyone involved.