

## **Rising to the challenge – Economic Crime Agencies cooperate in fight against cross-border infringements**

**Overcoming obstacles in international cooperation and limiting the circulation of cash will top the agenda at the 4th annual meeting of the Economic Crime Agencies Network (ECAN), which will be hosted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) on 2-4 March in Brussels.**

ECAN is a high-level worldwide network of law enforcement organisations, primarily involved in the investigation and prosecution of economic crimes. With OLAF as one of the founders and boasting members such as the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong, China (ICAC), ECAN encourages organisations to co-operate in the fight against complex, cross-border economic crimes, including those of a cross-jurisdictional nature, to disseminate information and share best practice.

Members have successfully worked together on a number of investigations, sharing intelligence and supporting one another to achieve optimal results. For example, the Serious Fraud Office of New Zealand assisted the Hong Kong ICAC in interviewing a number of witnesses in a corruption investigation concerning a listed company in Hong Kong involved in the acquisition of a venture for a dairy farm business in New Zealand. The investigation resulted in three persons, including two senior executives of the listed company as well as the vendor, being charged with offences of conspiracy to defraud and of dealing with crime proceeds. The criminal proceedings are ongoing.

*"In a world in which economic crime operates across borders, it is essential that we, as law enforcement bodies, step up our international efforts to combat it,"* said OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler, who will chair the meeting.

### **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:**

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