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More than 1m litres of counterfeit wine and alcoholic beverages seized under OLAF's lead

Customs and police authorities have seized over 1 million litres of counterfeit wine and alcoholic beverages in a targeted action led by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) as part of a joint Europol-Interpol operation dubbed OPSON IX.

OLAF was invited by Europol to take the lead on one of the specific actions carried out as part of the OPSON operation, targeting trafficking in counterfeit wine and alcoholic beverages. OLAF coordinated the activities of 17 EU and two non-EU countries that took part: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Norway and the UK. As a result of the operation, customs and police authorities in the countries taking part seized 1.2 million litres of alcoholic beverages, with the largest quantity being wine.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"Sales of illicit, counterfeit and adulterated alcohol not only undermine the legitimate businesses interests of European companies, but also put jobs at risk, lead to significant losses in public revenues from taxes and duties, deceive consumers and endanger their safety. Protecting citizens from the harm that these illicit products can bring is a key part of OLAF's work, and that is why we were happy to play our part in this important operation. The success of OPSON clearly shows the benefits of OLAF working together with Europol, national customs and police authorities. Together we make a real difference in keeping people safe, protecting vital sources of public revenue and ensuring that legitimate businesses can continue to trade safely and effectively."*

This was the ninth OPSON joint Europol-Interpol operation targeting counterfeit and substandard food and beverages, food frauds and economically motivated adulteration. The operation was carried out worldwide from December 2019 to June 2020.

See also

[Europol press release: 320 tonnes of potentially dangerous dairy products taken off the market in operation OPSON IX targeting food fraud](#)

[No fake rum in Spain for Christmas: nearly 150,000 bottles seized with OLAF's help](#)

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
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud



Chris JONES
Deputy Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
+32 2 29 91606
olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud

