

## **OLAF joins forces with EU customs authorities to track down counterfeit items linked to the Paris Games and Euro 2024**

**The European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) has joined forces with EU customs authorities to tackle a surge of counterfeit goods linked to the Euro 2024 Football Championship in Germany and the Paris Games this summer.**

The joint customs operation, led by French Customs and co-led by OLAF and the German Customs Investigation Bureau (ZKA), aims to prevent counterfeit and substandard items from entering the EU market, thereby safeguarding the economy and protecting consumer health and safety.

The Euro 2024 Football Championship in Germany and the Paris Games this summer attract worldwide attention, posing significant security challenges. As both competitions go on, demand increases for official products, such as apparel, accessories, electronics, gifts and souvenirs, intended for both contestants and the wider public. This attracts the attention of offenders eager to capitalise on these major sporting events, by penetrating the market with counterfeit products despite considerable risks for human health and safety.

The cross-border operation has already led to over 630.000 items seized, including sportswear, sports shoes, toys, and sporting equipment. While efforts are ongoing across Europe, these are the preliminary results with final numbers expected to be significantly higher as reporting continues.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said, *"Stopping counterfeit goods from flooding EU markets is one of OLAF's key priorities. Counterfeiting defrauds consumers, harms legitimate businesses, causes huge losses to public revenues and endangers citizens' health and safety. OLAF works closely with its partners to prevent and dismantle these practices."*

The operation has also been successful thanks to the mobilisation of the Member States' customs authorities to monitor the flow of goods at the EU external borders, in order to prevent the entry of counterfeit goods into the internal market well in advance of these sporting events.

### **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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