



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE No 14/2016

12 July 2016

OLAF and United Arab Emirates authorities join forces to counter fraud affecting the EU financial interests

European Anti-Fraud Office officials and counterparts from the Dubai police and the Dubai Customs met yesterday to discuss joining forces to counter the illicit trade in tobacco products and other counterfeit goods. This is the first formal step paving the way for more structured cooperation between OLAF and a country in the Gulf region, against the backdrop of global efforts to fight against smuggling.

Hosting more than 8000 international companies, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the largest free zone in the Middle East and North Africa Region and a major hub for trade to and from the European Union. Within the broader framework of the Cooperation Agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union, OLAF and the UAE authorities are reinforcing their willingness to work together to prevent smuggling.

"We need strong international partners in order to make a difference in stemming illicit trade that harms revenues worldwide. I welcome the commitment of the UAE authorities to join forces with OLAF", OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler said.

On the basis of the commitment expressed today as well as their respective mandates, OLAF, the Dubai Customs and Dubai Police will explore the possibility to cooperate on investigative cases and aim at developing joint investigations. This cooperation intends to minimise the potential for fraud and the risk of the UAE Free Zone being misused for unlawful practices harming the financial interests of the EU. Partners will also explore the possibility to provide each other with information and documents that may be admissible as evidence in legal proceedings involving EU Member States and the UAE.

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.

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