

Minutes of the 28th meeting of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN), 15-16 November 2018, Brussels

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda was adopted and the minutes of the 27th meeting (16-17 February 2017, Brussels) were approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

Welcome Address - Mr Ville Itälä, OLAF Director-General

Mr Ville Itälä, the new OLAF director-general, was pleased to hear about the joint activities of the OAFCN over the last year: a press conference with Belgian customs, press releases with Romanian DLAF and the Italian Guardia di Finanza and twitter guest-posting with the Latvian Ministry of Finance. He urged the Network to support OLAF in its initiatives and campaigns and, in a spirit of mutual cooperation, encouraged services to invite him to their events and press conferences.

He sympathised that it is not easy working as communicators for law enforcement and investigative services, because on the one hand we need to communicate to citizens the positive impact of our work, and on the other we are faced with investigative confidentiality and data protection requirements. But in a period of "alternative facts" and "post-truths", it has never been more important for us to be a credible source of information to citizens. To communicate well, we need to be always prepared, even if we ultimately decide not to communicate, the information we provide must be reliable and easy to understand and the timing of it is very important.

Theory vs reality in the face of crisis. What is a nightmare for communicators? - Elena Martinoniene, Lithuanian prosecutor general's office

Elena Martinoniene from the Lithuanian prosecutor general's office engaged participants in a workshop-style discussion about the main problems communicators face in times of crisis. Her advice about how to counter negative information that spreads quickly, based on her own experience, was:

- Make sure you are the first and not the last to know information
- Stay calm but react quick – it's all about timing
- Exploit social media to get your messages across quickly

Cyprus police affirmed the power of Facebook and Twitter in spreading information which helped them to find a suspect.

Storytelling workshop session - Carolien Peeters, DG Communication

Carolien Peeters from the Directorate-General of Communication presented several corporate campaigns they had produced based around storytelling. The main goal was to reconnect with citizens who either have a negative perception of the EU or who know very little about what the EU is doing and who need to be helped to make an informed vote at the upcoming European Parliament elections.

The three campaigns (InvestEU, EUandME and EUProtects) tell stories through real-life and fictional films of how the EU directly benefits and protects its citizens. Carolien said the films are used as a way of triggering interest in the greater campaigns - people seeing them and the related social media campaign are insighted to go to the website to read the background. According to her statistics, the campaigns seem to be meeting their intended goal: for EUandME for example, over half (57%) of the target audience has been reached by one or other video. The films also won prizes in Cannes' corporate festival.

She encouraged OAFCN members who know people in their service or at national level who have somehow helped protect citizens and so can be considered as 'heroes' to get in touch with her.

Carolien's advice to create effective storytelling campaigns was:

- have just one focus to your story - don't put too much in
- make sure you get the right tone: young people need to be addressed differently to older generations
- invest in professionals, like a good copywriter.

A workshop session followed whereby groups thought up and then presented a story which featured a citizen's concern, an EU promise to address it, and real-life proof that the promise works. This resulted in stories addressing the lack of protection for whistleblowers, fake medicines preventing a sick child from getting better, and a parent's concerns about the safety of the food she is feeding her children.

Tour de table on members' recent communication activities

Members were asked to talk about their services' current communication projects, with an interest for citizens.

Although Maltese customs couldn't be present, OLAF showed a video promoting their development of a video game to celebrate the 50 years of customs union.

A representative of the Guardia di Finanza (GdF) from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU, Luciano Lizzi (LL), said the GdF produces an annual report (available also in English). Communication initiatives also include: a manual/guidelines on communication for GdF officers; special summer campaigns, targeted to the public, on economic and financial irregularities or fraud; an initiative on counterfeiting called "off-side counterfeiting" (in particular on football merchandise); the 7th edition of a comic book about public expenditure fraud. The GdF plans to better exploit its social media networks (Twitter, YouTube and Telegram). LL encouraged OAFCN colleagues to join the GdF's Telegram page.

Portuguese tax and customs said they promote the OLAF annual report. They have a programme called "lucky invoice" whereby citizens can send in their invoices and so get a better notion of their tax obligations. It's also to make citizens aware of the need to get an invoice for every transaction.

Polish AFCOS (Department for the audit of public funds under the Ministry of finance) recalled that Poland celebrates this year its 100th anniversary of regaining its independence – there are communication campaigns on this. They also communicate on their service's successes in terms of tobacco seizures, VAT-related fraud and also recently of fraud with amber. In terms of revenue, they are proud of the diminishing VAT gap and are communicating about this through various channels: films, spots and social media. They are also promoting safe transactions to entrepreneurs.

LV AFCOS (Ministry of Finance) is targeting its #FraudOff! campaign at children, in cooperation with schools. They will work on communication related to a Latvian parliament vote on a national law to protect whistleblowers.

Slovenian AFCOS (Budget supervision office under the ministry of finance) publishes OLAF's report on its website and informs partner institutions about it. It attends an annual inter-ministerial working group meeting related to cooperation with OLAF.

Slovak AFCOS (Control section of the Government office) has been trying to educate children about the fight against fraud and corruption, since 2013, in cooperation with schools and the ministry of education. In so doing, children's knowledge is tested and there will be statistics published in January 2019. It will hold a seminar on the protection of EU financial interests on 21 November.

FR AFCOS' (Délégation nationale à la lutte contre la fraude) OLAF correspondent, Bruno Nicoulaud, gave an interview on 17 October on the DNLF's role in fighting fraud harming EU financial interests and the importance of this, particularly in these times of European elections when citizens want to know that their money is being well used. They posted their video on Twitter and OLAF retweeted it.

Implementation of the 2018 OAFCN Action Plan and drafting of the 2019 Action Plan

Alina Burea said OLAF would send the OAFCN a recap of the actions jointly carried out in 2018.

For the 2019 action plan, she proposed the following actions:

- a Hercule Twitter campaign (main action – see below)
- aim to target youngsters and youth issues (as several services are doing)
- organise an OLAF-OAFCN anti-fraud day

In response to a request from Denmark, OLAF will let the OAFCN know in advance the focus of its annual report (as part of a toolkit). In addition, the OAFCN will continue to produce joint press releases, organise joint press conferences, and send OLAF images, videos and materials for its communication database.

New EU Anti-Fraud Programme, followed by development of a related campaign for 2019 - Jérôme Broche and Sorina Buksa with OLAF Press Office

OLAF's Hercule team said that the new EU antifraud programme will take over from its predecessors, Hercules I-III, and run for the next multi-annual financial framework (2021-2027). Like Hercule, it will support Member States in preventing and fighting fraud, corruption and other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the EU by providing specialised technical assistance (including equipment), training (including on risk analysis) and other actions. The programme has a budget of about EUR 180,000 million.

Although very similar, the differences to Hercule are:

- it will include financing of the Anti-Fraud Information System (AFIS) and the Irregularities Management System (IMS)
- it will be possible for third party authorities to apply for funding
- the funding of large-scale customs equipment will be taken out of the new programme (as it will be provided via a separate instrument)
- the reporting obligations of beneficiaries will be lightened.

A new Hercule call for tender will be published in March 2019. The information will be published on the OLAF website and OLAF will send it to the OAFCN.

Jérôme Broche (JB) said the annual work programme could benefit from more visibility in the Member States and said OLAF will send the annual work programme, after its adoption at the end of the year, to the OAFCN. He asked members to disseminate it at national level.

He said the European Commission needed to better communicate on the achievements of the programme and gave the floor to two services who have benefitted from Hercule funding:

- Piia Kaijanto said Finnish customs received Hercule funding for a mobile x-ray unit scanner. The scanner was presented at various events, including those marking Finland's 100-years of independence in 2017. Pictures of the scanner, with EU funding stickers on it, were published on social media and more social media activities are planned for next year. They will send OLAF's Hercule team a report on the project by the end of the year.
- Inga Mauriciene told how the customs department under the Ministry of Finance of Lithuania had been awarded a grant for the development and implementation of an IT system helping customs offices in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia exchange information and images generated by 12 X-ray scanners located at internal and external border crossing points. As a result of the IT tools, two different seizures of more than 12 million cigarettes were made in October 2017, which prevented potential losses of almost EUR 2 million.

Luciano Lizzi, GdF representative, urged AFCOS colleagues to apply for expenditure funding (and not just revenue projects) so the money for it isn't reduced.

In response to JB's plea to better communicate, the OLAF press team called on members' support for a Hercule-related Twitter campaign which should be a recurring communication action for the next few years. It would take the form of a tour across Europe of successful Hercule projects, similar to the 515 customs Twitter campaign in 2017. It would show citizens how Hercule has changed their lives through funding detection and prevention activities. OLAF suggested organising the campaign to coincide with Hercule month from mid-January to mid-February 2019 and said they would send the Network a campaign proposal. Services were asked to report back to their headquarters and get back to OLAF if they were interested in joining and to send pictures, visuals and success stories. France (AFCOS), Spain (Guardia Civil) and Italy (Guardia di Finanza) said they might be able to contribute. The GdF mentioned it has a specific page on its website where technical equipment acquired with Hercule funding (for example "forensic tools") is listed. Members were told that whether or not they got involved in this Twitter campaign, they should still keep in mind to inform OLAF throughout the year if their service publicises Hercule-funded projects (conferences, launch of equipment etc).

Twitter approach by OLAF – Sandra Juncu, OLAF

Sandra Juncu, OLAF press officer, gave the OAFCN some tips about how to exploit Twitter as a communication tool based on OLAF's recent experience:

- Before you put together a Twitter strategy, think about what you want to communicate, to whom and what resources (financial and human) you have
- Vary your content to avoid social media *fatigue*
- Use current affairs to get across your messages: OLAF warned about counterfeit goods on back to school day
- Use several visuals for your press releases to increase the shelf life of the latter.

Asked who OLAF's main audience is and how OLAF measured how successfully it reached them, Sandra replied journalists are the main audience but that it is important to get as much visibility as possible and to keep your account alive with content. She said reach success was measured through the number of retweets and analytics.

Petr Maly from the Czech general prosecutor's office asked how to deal with hate and rude comments, to which Karin Burger from Dutch customs responded that it was important to answer such comments factually and not ignore them.

Dutch customs communication on Brexit – Karin Burger, Dutch customs

Karin Burger (KB) said with Brexit approaching and with it the UK potentially no longer being part of the EU internal market and customs union, this will bring about the end of the free movement of goods. Dutch customs is preparing for the consequences of this, namely the reinstatement of customs formalities and the supervision of the movement of goods between the UK and the EU, including the levy on customs duties.

In 2018, they have been running a communication campaign targeting businesses who have never dealt with customs formalities. Research showed that although 35,000 businesses were trading with the UK, in September only 18% of them were actually preparing for Brexit. Through their campaign whose message was "Hope for the best, prepare for the worst", Dutch customs provided these businesses with a huge amount of information about what they should do regarding Brexit, including via an application which was downloaded 72,000 times. All this led to 46% of businesses preparing for Brexit by October.

Her advice was:

- go towards your target groups - don't hide behind your website
- get information from your target group - why are people not preparing, what is holding them back?
- use your findings to push out your own content

The Danish customs agency said they wanted to do something similar.

Latvian #FraudOff! campaign – Ilona Skorobogatova and Arta Graudina, Latvian AFCOS

The Latvian Ministry of Finance (AFCOS) presented the second edition of its #FraudOff! campaign. The inspiration for the campaign came out of a 2016 OAFCN meeting. Whereas in 2017, the campaign targeted counterfeit goods, the 2018 campaign targets the working relationship culture "I am the BOSS of my future". The campaign targeted and encouraged youngsters (Generation Z) to ensure that their employer does not subject them to fraud. To spread the message, the main channels used were *YouTube vloggers*, an emoji video with 5 main tips that should be known to everyone entering into an employment relationship, various games and participation in youth events and exhibitions. Latvian AFCOS did a related Twitter guest posting week with OLAF in April. #FraudOff! was nominated as the best word of the year in Latvia and the Ministry of Finance won, amongst others, the highest award for the campaign in the IPRA Golden World Awards (GWA) 2018 in the field of public relations. In 2019, the focus will be on social responsibility and fraud reporting and Latvian AFCOS called on other OAFCN services to support them with ideas.

Greek public integrity Hackathon and anti-corruption campaign video - Konstantinos Pavlikianis, Greek AFCOS

Konstantinos Pavlikianis (KP) from the Greek General secretariat against corruption (AFCOS) presented a Hackathon they had organised in 2017 together with the Organisation for economic cooperation and development (OECD) which aimed to address Greece's challenges in fighting corruption in the public sector. It was a two-day event, with 38 participants (students, from academia and start-ups) working individually or in teams to develop prototypes of smart phone and IT applications to share anti-corruption information with their target audience. A panel of judges chose the winners. The first prize went to a team who developed the idea of a tool for monitoring the state budget of the Greek parliament. The joint second prizes went, on the one hand, to a group for their idea of an online platform to monitor the stage of cases in real time in court and, on the other hand, to a group for coming up with a

three-part corruption learning and reporting application for children and high school students.

KP showed a video they had produced as part of an anti-corruption campaign.

Cyprus customs activities on the occasion of 50 years of customs union – Ermioni Panteli and Christos Christou, Cyprus customs

To mark the 50th anniversary of the customs union, Ermioni Panteli from Cyprus customs' press team explained how their communication activities included giving presentations to schools and university students, publishing press articles, giving the anniversary publicity via social media and giving out promotional materials (including luggage tags) to passengers at the airport. They will also organise a football game on 5 December, the earnings of which will go to charity.

The GdF mentioned a specific programme it has been running for years for pupils in schools on 'educating on economic legality'.

AOB

Alina Burea asked for volunteers to contact OLAF to co-host the next seminar. Karin Burger (NL customs) suggested the focus should be a 1-2 day serious crisis exercise.

4. Conclusions and next steps

OLAF will send the OAFCN a recap of the actions jointly carried out in 2018.

The actions for the 2019 action plan will be:

- the **Hercule Twitter campaign** (main action)
 - member services will support this campaign which will be a recurring communication action for the next few years. Services should get back to OLAF if they are interested in joining and send pictures, visuals and success stories. France (AFCOS), Italy (Guardia di Finanza) and Spain (Guardia Civil) said they might be able to contribute.
 - OLAF will send the Network a campaign proposal.
 - Finnish customs will send OLAF's Hercule team a report on their project by the end of the year
 - OLAF will publish the new Hercule call for tender on its website in March 2019 and inform the OAFCN
 - OLAF will send the OAFCN the Hercule annual work programme, after its adoption at the end of the year. Member services should disseminate it at national level
 - whether or not they get involved in the Twitter campaign, members should still inform OLAF throughout the year if their service publicises Hercule-funded projects (conferences, launch of equipment etc).
 - OAFCN services to contact Latvian AFCOS if they want to support their #FraudOff! campaign in 2019 focusing on social responsibility and fraud reporting
- make **youngsters and youth issues** the **target** of antifraud communication

- organise an **OLAF-OAFCN anti-fraud day**
- member services to get in touch with DG Communication if they know people **in their service or at national level** who have somehow helped protect EU citizens and so can be considered as **'heroes'**
- OLAF will let the OAFCN know in advance the **focus** of its **annual report** (as part of a toolkit)
- volunteers to **co-host** the next **seminar** should contact OLAF
- member services to invite OLAF's director-general to their events and press conferences

Recurring actions will be:

- publish joint press releases
- organise joint press conferences
- send OLAF images, videos and materials for its communication database

5. Next meeting

No meeting date was set, but the next meeting is likely to take place in the second half of 2019.

6. List of participants

Surname	First name	Organisation
Andriuskaite	Ruta	Financial crime investigation service - LT
Angelides	Andreas	Police - CY
Bernacer	Teresa	Tax agency - ES
Burger	Karin	Customs administration - NL
Christou	Christos	Customs & excise - CY
De Jesus Salvador	Ismael	Republican national guard - PT
De Zutter	Leen	Eurojust - EU institutions
Endruzyte	Renata	Special investigation service - LT
Farrugia	Yvonne	Police - MT
Góngora Zurro	Ignacio	National anti-fraud coordination service - ES
Gonzalez Gonzalez	Luis Miguel	Guardia Civil - ES

Graudina	Arta	Ministry of finance - LV
Hervent	Ivan	Customs & excise - BE
Kaijanto	Piia	Customs - FI
KURE	Irena	Budget supervision office - SI
Kwiecinska	Dorota	Department for the audit of public funds - PL
Lascu	Mirela	European investment bank - EU institutions
Lizzi	Luciano	Representative of the Guardia di Finanza, from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU
Madsen	Rikke	Tax agency - DK
Maly	Petr	General prosecutor's office - CZ
Martinonienė	Elena	Prosecutors general's office - LT
Mauriciene	Inga	Ministry of finance - LT
Mota Torres	Alexandra	Tax & customs - PT
Nicoulaud	Bruno	Délégation nationale à la lutte contre la fraude - FR
Panteli	Ermioni	Customs & excise - CY
Pavlikianis	Konstantinos	General secretariat against corruption - EL
Pildava	Sigita	State police - LV
Pisoni	Lorenzo	Customs - IT
Potrpin-Bertole	Petra	Gov. office for development & EU cohesion policy - SI
Prievalska Bartosova	Tatiana	Control section - government office - SK
Prudicova	Hana	Customs - CZ

Ramljak	Ivana	Service for combatting irregularities & fraud - HR
Rascanu	Carmen	Fight against fraud department (DLAF) - RO
Rebecchi	Paolo Luigi	Court of auditors - IT
Said	Mark	Internal audit & investigations department - MT
Skorobogatova	Ilona	Ministry of finance - LV
Thorndal Moll	Jesper	Customs agency - DK
Vintrlik	Jakub	Ministry of finance - CZ