



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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## **Upholding the highest standards**

OLAF helps seize more than two tonnes of counterfeit mechanical parts

**During July and August, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) supported the Italian, Polish and Spanish customs authorities in seizing more than two tonnes of counterfeit bearings coming from Asia. The seizures, which took place in Italy, Poland and Spain, are particularly important as the bearings in question could not only cause mechanical failures but could also seriously endanger lives, especially if used in the medical or transport sectors. Coming in different sizes, bearings are used in an array of products, from engines to car axles or electric fans. The illegal trade in such mechanical parts causes significant financial damage to the European industry.**

"This case is an example of the constructive cooperation between OLAF and its partners," OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler said. "We are proud to have prevented the loss of revenue for manufacturers of genuine products and to have protected the wellbeing of European citizens," he added.

### **A tailored approach to fighting illegal trade**

With efficiency in mind, the Anti-Fraud Office works to complement the work of its partners, often providing invaluable support.

#### **Poland**

In July 2016, OLAF investigators detected a shipment of allegedly counterfeit bearings while it was still in transit. OLAF informed the Polish authorities and the manufacturer of genuine products. The latter confirmed that the 280 kg of bearings were counterfeit. The fake products were destined to reach a worldwide supplier of medical, robotic, energy, railway and mechanical engineering material.

#### **Italy**

Also in July, OLAF provided information to Italian Agenzia delle Dogane, who used it to seize 313 kg of counterfeit bearings. The mechanical parts, imported from China, had already been released for free circulation in the European Union. The Italian customs officers from Ravenna conducted a thorough investigation and located the bearings in a warehouse in the Region of Ravenna.

A technical assessment confirmed that the seized bearings did not correspond to standards of resistance and quality, which could pose serious threats to the health and safety of consumers.

The person responsible for importing and trading these products was reported to the Italian judicial authorities.

## **Spain**

In August 2016, OLAF was approached by a mechanical parts manufacturer to support a large seizure of counterfeit bearings in Barcelona, which had reached Spain by air cargo. The co-operation between OLAF and Spanish customs led to a seizure of 1.5 tonnes of counterfeit products.

## **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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