

“Information partnership”: A free media must question the performance of public institutions. This can build walls between journalists and institutional spokespersons. But is it possible, through the development of mutual trust and professional respect to have a shared objective to tell a story fully and with frankness? What is the give and take in such a "partnership"?

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This subject encompasses two ways of thinking that are very different in nature: communication with the public, which is a matter of general interest, and what has become known as media culture, which is increasingly pursuing the objective of tearing down the barriers between the public (and therefore the subject of information) and the private.

The multiplication of the number of information channels, of which there has been an explosion in the last few years, has turned the news into an industry at the expense of investigations and inquiries.

With regard to fraud prevention and the role played by the customs authorities, there is a pressing need to move beyond simply circulating information to creating situations and setting up workshops where representatives from the media, spokespersons from the institutions and companies can meet face-to-face.

The path to partnership will therefore involve overcoming the temptation for each sector to defend its own independence by opening up opportunities for dialogue and contact between the many seekers of information on fraud prevention activities and making clear the sensitive nature and importance of investigations and enforcement operations.

The seminar that took place on 30 June at the offices of the Customs Service under the title “True or false? The Customs Service’s new instruments in the fight against counterfeiting” is an example of how to give representatives from the public and private sectors the opportunity to analyse the socio-economic impact of counterfeiting and develop new prevention strategies.

Communication was greatly enhanced because the seminar was attended by both the messenger and recipient of the message, which meant that both were able to take on board the feedback immediately and work together on joint communication strategies.

The broad exposure the press can offer should encourage similar initiatives, and we intend to adopt this course to further the development of an information partnership.

Clearly, the media will always determine whether operations conducted by organisations responsible for protecting the general public are viewed positively.

By increasing the number of occasions for coming together and explaining we can work towards achieving this outcome.