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OLAF and Chinese customs sign arrangement to strengthen cooperation in customs investigations

On 29 June, OLAF signed a Strategic Administrative Cooperation Arrangement with the General Administration of Chinese Customs (GACC). The arrangement will facilitate cooperation in OLAF's customs investigations with China. In particular, it is accompanied by an Action Plan which sets out concrete steps for close cooperation in customs investigations on undervaluation fraud until 2018.

The signature took place on the fringes of the EU-China summit (see Commission press release 15/5279). It was signed by Chinese Customs Minister Mr Yu Guangzhou and OLAF Director-General Mr Giovanni Kessler in the presence of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Council President Donald Tusk.

The action plan on undervaluation foresees concrete steps such as jointly investigating fraud networks and exchanging experience and best practice. Undervaluation concerns cases where importers declare a customs value of their goods which is far too low leading to lower customs duties being paid on the goods which is a loss to the EU budget.

OLAF has recently appointed a member of its staff as liaison officer to be posted at the EU Delegation in Beijing from September 2015. This new position will further facilitate communication and cooperation between OLAF and the GACC.

Background:

OLAF's mandate allows it to investigate cases of customs fraud (i.e. the evasion of import duties, antidumping duties and countervailing duties). This type of fraud can generate vast illicit profits for criminals and can cause large losses of tax revenues for the EU and Member States' budgets.

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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