



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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## **OLAF and partner enlargement countries pin down ways to better detect fraud**

**Identifying common ways to detect and prevent fraud topped this year's agenda of the Annual Conference of Anti-Fraud Coordination Services (AFCOS). Organised by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and hosted by the Montenegrin AFCOS in Budva on 7-9 June, the event gathered investigators, police officers, civil servants and financial experts from nine Enlargement and Eastern Partnership countries.**

"There is a joint responsibility for both the European Union and the beneficiary countries to fight fraud affecting the EU's financial interests. This is a crucial issue, because if fraud remains undetected and unreported it puts into question the credibility of both sides," OLAF's Director for Policy, Margarete Hofmann said at the opening ceremony of the event, where she was joined by Mr. Dragan Darmanovic, Assistant Minister to the Treasury Department of the Ministry of Finance Montenegro.

"OLAF stands ready to assist its partner authorities both regarding investigative cooperation and policy advice. However, ultimately, a strong political will and persistence of all actors involved making the fight against fraud and corruption a central pillar of government action is a crucial element for success", Ms. Hofmann added.

Participants discussed patterns and practices that could signal irregularities or fraud in EU-funded projects. For instance, the programme looked into the challenges of investigating multi-donor funded projects, including best practices of cooperation between investigative offices of international donors and national authorities. Furthermore, the event saw the exchange of best practise and expertise, as well as discussion on how to improve investigative and judicial cooperation with OLAF.

Participants came from EU candidate and potential candidate countries, namely Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*. For the second time, representatives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia attended as observers.

Anti-Fraud Coordination Services take an active role in the implementation of comprehensive anti-fraud strategies at national level, identifying possible irregularities at national level in relation to the management of the EU funds, and in effectively safeguarding the EU budget.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

**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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