



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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## **JCO Cerberus: OLAF, French and Spanish Customs launch large-scale operation targeting organised crime cash, seize €6.4 million**

**Cash smuggling across borders remains the predominant method for organized crime groups to transport the proceeds of their illegal activities, a transnational challenge which can be best addressed when European Union (EU) customs and law enforcement agencies work together. Such an example of positive cooperation yielding impressive results is Joint Customs Operation (JCO) Cerberus, which was coordinated by the French Direction Générale des Douanes et Droits Indirects and the Spanish Agencia Tributaria, and was co-organized and financed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The operation gathered 27 EU Member States, as well as the European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union, Europol and Norway. Due to JCO Cerberus, in just one week, €6.4 million were taken off black market roads.**

JCO Cerberus aimed to establish a picture of illegal money transfers stemming from both inside and outside of the European Union, and to control failure to declare cash, in order to fight against organized crime, money laundering and terrorism financing.

Reinforced controls implemented on cash movements during the JCO enabled European customs to make a total of 87 seizures, gathering € 6.4 million. The main cases were identified in air traffic (€ 3.7 million), followed by road transport (€ 2.3 million). As a result of the controls, 43 investigations were launched, most of these in France, Spain and Sweden.

Controls focused on the physical cash entering or leaving the European Union, accounting for 61.1% of the detected values. Though lower in number, checks on the intra-community cash movements had a better yield in terms of detections (36.9% of the total amount).

During the JCO Cerberus, "sniffer dogs" were of real added value and alone allowed the discovery of € 978 515. Hence, it was recommended to develop the training and use of dogs able to sniff out cash in all EU Member States.

OLAF financed JCO Cerberus and provided the Virtual Operations Coordination Unit, a part of the Anti-Fraud Information System (AFIS), for the secure exchange of information during the operation.

Europol performed cross-checks in its databases, allowing the identification of potential criminal links.

**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.

**For further details:**

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