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OLAF participates in Conference of International Investigators

More than 80 investigators from the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) participated in the Conference of International Investigators (CII) from 4 to 6 May. The CII is a forum for investigators of international organisations in which OLAF actively participates. This year's conference, the 21st edition, was hosted by the World Food Programme and took place virtually for the first time.

The conference was a unique opportunity for OLAF to present its investigative work and share its expertise in anti-fraud policy. During the course of the three-day event, OLAF staff led several thematic sessions, focusing mainly on sharing experiences from various investigations, including on over-pricing issues in projects and on OLAF's recent activities in relation to its inquiry into COVID-19 related products. A session was also held on OLAF's approach towards data analysis, from processing to reporting. The 500 or so participants also benefited from training sessions and workshops, as well as numerous opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking.

OLAF Director-General, Ville Itälä said: *"This year's CII conference was a great experience for OLAF. Not only was it a fantastic opportunity for us to pass on our investigative knowledge and policy expertise in the anti-fraud area, it was also an opportunity for OLAF investigators to meet and learn from their counterparts in other organisations. OLAF's success depends on cooperation with its partners, and the CII is one of key events for us to reforge those connections each year."*

Background:

The Conference of International Investigators (CII) was established to assist investigators and their offices in the professional conduct of their work and to support their important role in developing, maintaining and improving the integrity of their organizations. It seeks to continuously advance the work of its participants through the harmonization of practices and sharing of ideas and leading practices. Its annual conferences enable and enhance close cooperation and collegiality among investigative offices of participating organizations, facilitate the exchange of information, provide advanced hands-on training, and enable its participants to hear from industry specialists and receive the latest developments in the field.

OLAF is an active member of the CII and OLAF's Acting Deputy Director-General, Ernesto Bianchi is a member of CII's Secretariat. In addition to OLAF, around 40 investigative services of international organisations participate in the works of the CII.

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.

Once OLAF has completed its investigation, it is for the competent EU and national authorities to examine and decide on the follow-up of OLAF's recommendations. All persons concerned are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in a competent national or EU court of law.

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