

## **OLAF to play an even bigger role in stopping waste trafficking and fighting climate change**

**Today, the European Commission adopted a proposal to revise the EU's rules on waste shipments. The proposed changes include enhancing the role of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to counter cross-border waste trafficking involving suspicious movements inside the EU.**

Up to 30% of all waste shipments may be illicit, estimates suggest, making up to 9.5 billion euros for criminals. 70 million tonnes of waste are shipped per year within the EU, in addition to nearly 33 million tonnes of waste that the EU exports to non-EU countries.

Thanks to its long-standing experience, OLAF tracks down illicit cross-border traffic of dangerous substances. OLAF has been working closely with the national authorities of the Member States and of third countries to track down and stop international waste smuggling attempts. The Italian authorities, for example, have recently [stopped some 800 tonnes of waste](#) thanks to alerts and intelligence provided by OLAF.

OLAF exchanges real-time information on suspicious waste shipments with customs and environmental authorities of EU countries of origin and non-EU countries of destination. OLAF monitors both the original shipments and the returns of refused containers to make sure they are not diverted on their way back to the EU source country. OLAF also participates in the operations organised under the umbrella of the World Customs Organization to target illegal shipments of hazardous waste.

In its work, OLAF has detected suspicious movements of waste inside the EU. These movements are organised either with the purpose of hiding the tracks of waste destined for illicit export, or with the purpose of dumping waste illicitly inside the EU.

Under the Commission's proposal to revise the EU's Waste Shipment Regulation, OLAF would be tasked to put its expertise and tools at the service of national authorities also with regard to suspicious intra-EU movements of waste and to support transnational investigations by EU Member States on waste trafficking. The purpose is to strengthen the overall enforcement capacity and make the best use of available resources.

Ville Itälä, Director-General of OLAF, said: *"I very much welcome the European Commission's proposal. Illicit waste shipments are one of the worst environmental crimes. And not only do they harm our planet – they also fuel international criminal networks. OLAF has two decades of experience against international smuggling of all kinds: we investigate, track down shipments, connect the dots, bridge different national systems, detect the broader scheme. We look forward to putting this expertise at the service of Europe's green ambitions and lawfulness."*

The new rules put forward by the European Commission will now be discussed by the European Parliament and Council. More information on the proposal is available in the European Commission's [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#).

**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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