

OLAF meets with African partners to strengthen EU– Africa cooperation in fighting fraud of EU budget

On 27 and 28 June, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and its African partners met in Brussels to discuss how to strengthen cooperation in the fight against fraud and corruption. Participants included representatives from North, South and Central Africa, as well as from the Forum of General State Inspectorates of Africa (FIGE) and the respective EU Delegations.

"Africa is a priority partner for the EU, the Commission and OLAF. The discussions in the Pilot Group meeting were lively, informative and very worthwhile. Participants from North, South and Central Africa had thus the chance to share their knowledge and experiences in the fight against fraud. It was also a chance for OLAF representatives to share some of their experiences and best practices in detecting, investigating and preventing fraud. Such interactions are key in strengthening cooperation and understanding, making our actions in fighting fraud more effective. I look forward to the positive outcomes which will follow this meeting", said Director-General of OLAF Ville Itälä.

OLAF can investigate allegations of fraud against European Union funds wherever they occur, either within or outside Europe. Currently in its tenth edition, the so-called "Pilot Group" meeting was organised to strengthen the cooperation between OLAF and investigative authorities in Africa and establish new channels of cooperation between a range of bodies across Africa and the EU.

The two-day event focused on how to overcome operational challenges, as well as achieve greater cooperation among the organisations represented. Moreover, further presentations and discussion focused on best practices in relation to reporting fraud, investigative interviewing techniques and fraud prevention. An overview of the latest policy and institutional developments regarding the protection of the EU's financial interests was also provided.

Background:

OLAF cooperates with a large number of partner organisations in non-EU countries to ensure that EU's external dimension of its policies reaches its intended beneficiaries, without being diverted by fraud and corruption.

The meeting between OLAF and its African partners, which took place this year on 27-28 June in Brussels, is part of a series of meetings which was launched in 2007. The Pilot Group was created to strengthen the cooperation between OLAF and African national authorities, as well as to enhance EU-Africa and trans-African cooperation.

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.

For further details:

Jana CAPPELLO
Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
Phone: +32 2 29 85549
E-mail: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud



Eirini NIKOLAIDOU
Deputy Spokesperson
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
+32 2 29 83128
olaf-media@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud

