

SUMMARY OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE OLAF ANTI-FRAUD COMMUNICATORS NETWORK (OAFCN)

6th June 2008, Brussels, Belgium

1. Welcome Address

- New members were welcomed by Mr Alessandro Buttice:
 - Thomas Obruca, Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior
 - Eleni Brokou and Yannis Rountos, Ministry of Economy & Finance
 - Gyongyi Kerekyarto, Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard
 - Colonel Lipari, Italian Comando Generale della Guardia di Finanza

2. Approval of the Agenda

- The first order of business was the approval of the agenda. There were no suggestions so the agenda was considered approved.

3. Presentation of the Summary of the 12th OAFCN meeting, Brussels, 5-6 December 2007 & Presentation of the Summary and Shortened Version of the Minutes of the 11th OAFCN Meeting, Brussels, 4 May 2007

- A concise set of minutes of the provisional sets and summaries of minutes will be emailed to members. Any additional comments members might have will be considered for the final version.
- Mr Buttice highlighted the importance of keeping accurate minutes in light of the attention from journalists as well as the Ombudsman, the Data Protection Officer and other community bodies. In addition, Unit D1 took the view that any document produced internally is considered public, hence the need for accuracy.

4. European Institution's Open Day 2008 with the involvement of the OAFCN. Theme of the 2008 event: "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue"

- Ms Muriel Laugel explained that the Open Day is a means of describing in simple terms to the general public the work of the European Commission. It will provide an opportunity to talk about the activities of OLAF and the OAFCN, in particular to raise awareness.
- As part of the 'Television drama as a Means of Combating Fraud & Corruption affecting the EU's Financial Interests' project, four TV screens will show European TV dramas. Promotional material from various member partners will also be shown. There will also be a child's throwing game.
- Members were invited to send links for any press releases or photos they might publish about attending the event. A photo gallery of the event will be published on the OLAF Internet site

5. Flash Eurobarometer survey about the perception of EU27 inhabitants on fraud, fight against fraud

- It was stated that in the following weeks OLAF will start a flash Eurobarometer. Ms Bernadka Volf explained Eurobarometer is the name for the opinion polls on different topics relating to the European Union. A standard Eurobarometer is carried out each autumn and spring.
- Ms Volf continued that the results of the 2004 Eurobarometer were useful for OLAF campaigns as it revealed people were very concerned about corruption and fraud, showing that the EU15 (as it was at that time) and the then accession countries agreed the EU should coordinate national investigations and there should be more cooperation between EU institutions and member bodies. Also citizens of the EU15 trusted the police more to fight against fraud, whilst the accession countries trusted the institutions more. Also the majority of citizens stated that they are badly informed about the fight against fraud.
- To see the difference since 2004, in particular the impact of the work of OLAF and OAFCN joint actions, the flash Eurobarometer will start in mid-June and results will be published mid-July. Questions will be asked by telephone to the general public. A Marker Research company has been chosen following a call for tender. Statistical method will be used to analyse results. OLAF will notify OAFCN members of the results.
- Ms Volf further explained that the flash Eurobarometer will analyse public awareness and perception of fraud in all 27 Member states asking EU citizens' opinions about: how frequent fraud and corruption are at national level in comparison to EU level; whether they see a need for an organisation that fights on EU level or if they think that it is enough that only national investigation organisations fight against fraud; whether they think the EU should coordinate investigations and; whether they have ever been in a situation where they had to pay a bribe.
- Members were reminded to keep the nature of the questions confidential until results are published.

6. OLAF Annual Activity Report 2007, joint Media activities/planning

- Ms Amira Szonyi from OLAF explained the European Commission report 2007 (Art. 280 Report) is to be produced and it is separate to the OLAF report which relates to the protection of the EU's financial interests, which will be jointly presented mid-July.
- Ms Szonyi explained that the European Commission report is a report drawn up by OLAF in close collaboration with the Directorates General and the member states, providing an overview of the major developments in the field of legislation; the results of the fight against fraud; statistics on irregularities; cases of detected fraud; figures on recovery; the most important legislative developments in member states. OLAF's report relates to the number of closed and open cases and cooperation with the various authorities. M. Szonyi added that both reports are expected to be published mid-July 2008. OAFCN members were told they could apply for a paper copy if desired by contacting Ms Muriel LAUGEL.

- Mr Jörg Wojahn explained that the report will contain case studies, although they tend to be less specific due to data protection concerns.

7. **Development of relations with the International Federation of Journalist (IFJ)**
<http://www.ifj.org/> and the International Press Association IPA/API
<http://www.api-ipa.eu>

- Mr Butticé briefly resumed that OLAF and the IFJ are trying hard to work together following issues concerning the Tillack case and previously asked questions from the journalist Edward Word.
- Mr Aidan White, Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, stated that this opportunity to talk is useful as it is a chance to reinforce the question of building a relationship of trust between public authorities and investigation authorities in particular and journalists and media. Mr White circulated a document called the *Ethical Journalism Initiative* which concerns the recent pressure journalists feel themselves to be subject to. He stated that investigative journalists are being targeted and sometimes killed asking important and difficult questions. He continued that these journalists genuinely see the value of journalism as a contributing factor to the quality of democracy. He continued that they will be producing a book later on in the year which will address aspects of ethical standards in journalism, including the code of practise, the way that journalists work with government and state authorities and how very often those relationships are characterised by corrupt processes, perhaps through political influences or financial questions.
- Ms Renata Nikolova, Bulgarian journalist, thanked Mr White for the initiative stating it will be supported in Bulgaria. Mr White thanked Ms Nikolova and added that Bulgaria is one of the countries with a serious problem, particularly concerning access to information.
- Ms Cinthia Pinotti from the Italian Court of Auditors, stated that in the case of Italy, a problem exists between the information flow and the judiciary, in particular concerning the publication of the final rulings. Also, she added there are complex issues in terms of data protection. She continued that the issue of transparency is important. Mr White replied that the issue of trial by television is currently an important debate due to the imbalance between the competing interest of justice and the people's right to a fair trial. He added as for access to documents, the administration of the process is the defining quality of the journalist recognizing if it is obstructive or not. As communicators, he continued, the job is not to act as a sign-post to send off journalists to go and do your job. He added it is however the job to know the business well and give the people the information they ask for in digestible chunks.
- Mr Wojahn added that there is a tendency within administration and the courts on a Community level to put forward the data protection argument as a proxy guard, harming the tasks of journalists. Mr White suggested whether a special meeting of experts, including the foreign Correspondence Association in Brussels would be useful.
- Mr Christian Unteanu, ZIUA Press Group and IFJ member, stated that it is a good sign for the creditability of the spokesperson and the institutions that following the Tillack

case, they were able to apologize. However, he added, that as the spokespersons of both Mr Kallas and OLAF were feeding journalists incorrect information for years, it raised the issue of how sure can the journalist be sure about the information they receive. He continued that the memorandum signed between OLAF and the IFJ could be used as a general framework for discussion. He added a public apology is not enough and that they await the end of the enquiry. Following a question from Johannes Thuy, Eurojust, he advised that it is at national level where cooperation between institutions and journalists are most important. He put forward the suggestion of a round table for dialogue with the emphasis on conflict prevention.

8. Debriefing on the possible production of TV drama series (Kommissar Rex, ZDF, RAI, Europol): latest developments (AB)

- Mr Butticé added that the producer for Kommissar Rex contacted OLAF and a meeting was set up where they discussed cases under investigation and they were given an introduction to the work of OLAF. Mr Rudiger Hagen, Zollkriminalamt, added that the Criminal Office in Austria gives it full support. However, he continued, problems still exist with the production side concerning funding and the question of exclusivity. He continued that perhaps in the meeting in Cyprus he will be able to provide more information on developments.
- Mr Paolo Luigi Rebecchi, Corte dei Conti, stated that the Italian customs are also keen to operate, in particular the Air and Sea section.
- Mr Massimo Scialla, Guardia di Finanza, added that work is being done between the Romania and Italian authorities on the TV series. He stated that the European Commission made an official proposal to the Vice-Director of RAI and on 10th July 2008 they have arranged a high level meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

9. Organisation of the 8th OAFCN Training Seminar, Cyprus, 12-14 October 2008

- Mr Butticé stated that as decided at the last meeting, the next training seminar will take place in Cyprus 12-14th October 2008 with the topic 'New Technologies, New Instruments for Communication, Information, Internet TV, YouTube and so on applied to combating fraud.' He continued that any proposals for the seminar would be welcomed. He added that the FBI Head of Communications had expressed interest in attending the conference. He continued that the Cypriot Press Association would also be invited.
- Ms Niki Hadjiyanni, Cyprus Customs & Excise, stated that the Hilton has been chosen as the venue and they will be help with the organisational aspects if required.

10. Any Other Business

- Mr Johannes Thuy, Eurojust, as well as Mr Paolo Luigi Rebecchi, Corte dei Conti, highlighted the increased use of video streaming on the Internet as a point to be added on to the agenda of the next meeting. In addition, Ms Cinthia Pinotti, Italian Court of Auditors, added that ways of targeting a young audience could be looked at.

- Mr Johannes Thuy, stated that following administrative changes within Eurojust, the proposed plan to hold the next training seminar at The Hague had to be postponed
- Members were invited to send in any additional ideas they may have to OLAF about the next training seminar in Nicosia, Cyprus.

