

## **26th meeting of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN)**

***Brussels, 14 -15 April 2016***

### **Welcome Addresses**

OLAF Director General Giovanni Kessler opened the meeting. He pointed out the difficulties OAFCN members faced as communicators in the anti-fraud area, as they are often unable to give ample comments to the media on the work of their services because of confidentiality obligations. He addressed the fine line press officers must tread in being transparent and open to the press, whilst at the same time ensuring the confidentiality of investigations and judicial proceedings, and the respect for personal data and procedural rights. However, he reminded participants that communication is important, and that they should strive to involve the press as much as possible in their work. He pointed out that any gaps left by the press services could be filled by journalists with inaccurate or even possibly misleading information, and, as such, consistency, clarity, and willingness to engage with the press are paramount.

Deputy Spokesperson Silvana Enculescu followed, welcoming all OAFCN members, and particularly the European Investment Bank, who was attending the meeting for the first time. She highlighted the importance of anti-fraud efforts, as a recent European Parliament report had revealed that corruption and organised crime were costing the EU at least EUR 71 billion a year, with public procurement fraud alone accounting for EUR 5 billion. She mentioned the importance of the work of OAFCN members, who have a role in both prevention and in deterrence. She added that, based on the feedback received from members, this particular meeting would be a very practical one. Many sessions would involve working in groups and brainstorming ideas, while most presentations would have an interactive element.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was approved by all members.

### **Approval of the minutes of the 25th OAFCN meeting (Brussels, 20 March 2015)**

The minutes of the previous OAFCN meeting were adopted.

### **The role of investigative journalism in deterring fraud with EU funds – Margo Smit (Dutch Public News)**

The first presentation was delivered by Margo Smit, an investigative journalist who also authored a report for the European Parliament on the state of investigative journalism within the European Union member states and its role in deterring fraud with EU funds. She showed OAFCN members statistics on different countries from around the world. Margo Smit pointed out that a high percentage of citizens believe that investigative journalism is more efficient at deterring corruption and fraud than national anti-bribery laws. However, she had found out that there was very little investigative reporting on EU funds throughout the European Union. The output was small and uneven, and the topics covered were largely uniform. The content largely

centred on incidental issues such as abuse of power by persons/institutions, or structural issues, such as misuse of farm subsidies or of structural funds. While cross-border investigative reporting had somewhat increased since 2012, the focus of most journalists shifted to issues such as the financial crisis, tax evasion and the refugee crisis. In working with journalists, she advised OLAF and OAFCN members to clarify the restrictions under which they have to work, particularly when it comes to matters of confidentiality or timing of information. They should also keep in mind that most journalists are generalists and should thus tailor the information appropriately, to provide materials that are suitable for the media. Ideally, services should also be able to provide this information in a variety of languages. She also encouraged OAFCN members to invite journalists to round tables and to provide trainings for them, as well as to encourage reporting on outcome, such as on the recovery of funds.

### **The European Corruption Observatory - Alison Coleman (Transparency International)**

The following presentation, delivered by Alison Coleman of NGO Transparency International, focused on the different projects the organisation was running. Ms. Coleman presented the Corruption Perception Index 2015, several studies on Integrity in the European Union, as well as initiatives on making EU public budget and spending data available, and on developing integrity pacts for public procurement. She then focused on one Transparency International project in particular - the European Corruption Observatory - a new monitoring platform tracking corruption-related news in Europe. The media monitoring tool on corruption aims to provide an evidence base for EU policy-making, facilitate analysis and identification of corruption trends and promote pan-European cooperation.

### **European Commission campaign: Ex-smokers are Unstoppable - Jill Berger (JWT)**

Jill Berger, from Communications Agency JWT, went on to present a good practice in comprehensive communications initiatives – the Ex-smokers are Unstoppable campaign developed by the European Commission. She presented the thinking behind the campaign, such as aligning the tobacco policy priorities of the European Commission with the particular health needs of the European citizens. She presented innovative ways of exploring online communications, such as supporting user-developed content on Instagram. She also discussed the need to have a strong voice or ambassador of the campaign, a person whom your audience looks up to, but to whom they can also relate. In an exercise with OAFCN members, Ms. Berger split the participants into groups, and asked them to choose a target group and an ambassador of an anti-fraud communication campaign they would wish to develop.

The audience then worked in two groups during the workshop sessions.

### **Developing a successful communication strategy – Karin Burger (NL customs) & Claudia Köver (OLAF)**

The first workshop centred on the best ways to communicate policy matters. Karin Burger of Dutch Customs taught participants how to anticipate needs and create core messages. The workshop also discussed the different functions of communication within the policy lifecycle. Moreover, the presentation addressed the challenges of communicating policy in the digital age, such as the need to inform our audiences, explain complex topics to them, but also engage them in discussions.

OLAF Press Officer Claudia Kover followed, explaining to participants the best ways to build a successful communication campaign. She pointed out the different steps in planning the campaign, such as mapping out the objectives of the organisation, deciding on the human and financial resources needed and on the appropriate target group and determining the concrete actions to be carried out. A practical exercise followed, whereby participants had to come up with an idea for a communication campaign, following the different steps previously laid out.

### **What makes a successful Hercule project – Winfried Kleinegris (OLAF)**

During the second workshop, Winfried Kleinegris, Head of Sector "Hercule", shared with participants an overview of the Hercule programme, its objectives and actions. Mr. Kleinegris particularly emphasized the need to align project proposals with the needs and goals of the European Commission. He shared the general, specific and operational objectives of the Hercule III Programme. These include improving prevention and investigation, increasing the protection of the Union's financial interests, strengthening the fight against fraud by providing technical support, limiting exposure of the Union's financial interests to fraud and enhancing legal and judicial protection of the Union's financial interests. He also gave participants information on the type of actions supported through the programme, and the instruments available. Moreover, he explained that the programme is implemented on the basis of an annual work programme, and thus detailed the work programme for 2016. He also gave examples of the different Calls for Proposals that OAFCN members might be interested in.

### **Implementation of the 2015 OAFCN Action Plan and drafting of the 2016 action plan – Silvana Enculescu and Alina Burea (OLAF)**

The final workshop related to the development of the 2016 OAFCN Action Plan. Alina Burea (OLAF Spokesperson) started off by recalling the actions from the 2015 Action Plan and asked participants what worked and what didn't in the implementation of the previous year's Action Plan. Silvana Enculescu continued by explaining that in developing an Action Plan, it is important to agree on priorities, to find opportunities for cooperation, to brainstorm specific actions that are useful for all stakeholders, to decide the practical details, and to determine a model of assessing success. She also offered participants different ideas for activities they might want to organise in 2016 related to joint media work, social media, joint campaigns, exchange of good practice and new technologies. The participants then split into groups, and brainstormed activities they would like to develop in the coming year. The ideas that emerged and that members agreed on are:

#### 1. Related to joint media work:

- Developing joint press releases and joint media articles
- Compiling and sharing a database of media contacts
- Developing briefings for journalists

#### 2. In relation to social media (for those members who have social media accounts):

- Follow each-other on social media, and share each-other's posts
- Guest-post on other members' social media channels

### 3. Anti-fraud campaign (tentative options):

- A group of members expressed interest in developing a European anti-fraud awareness-raising campaign. Their target audience would be 14-19 year-old students and their teachers, while the actions would take place both online and in schools and play areas. The group also believed a "Goalkeeper" would be a good ambassador for their cause, as the idea would be that he/she *Keeps fraud out*. OAFCN members identified possible partners in education experts and psychologists, but also believed they should cooperate with the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. The deliverables of the campaign would be a multilingual website, but also videos and actions on the ground.
- A second group had an idea of developing an online campaign to raise awareness of the harmful impact of counterfeit goods. The deliverables would be different images with anti-counterfeiting messages, which could be gathered in an image bank. The group agreed that the campaign would not need a lot of resources, except for content creators and funds for Search Engine Optimization and post boosting.

### 4. Circa (tentative option):

- The final group suggested revamping Circa as one of the points in the action plan. They agreed that they needed a safe space to share information and prompt discussions, but that the current Circa was not meeting their needs. Therefore, it was suggested to develop a survey to assess user needs and then implement technical changes to create a better user experience.

The OLAF press office would then follow-up on these actions, and assist OAFCN members plan joint activities throughout 2015.

### **Any other business (AOB)**

As the mandate of the current Advisory Board members - Gian Luca Berruti (IT GdF), Dorota Kwiecinska (PL MoF), Nico Dusseldorf (Lux customs), Lorenzo Pisoni (IT customs) and Wolfgang Schmitz (DE customs) - was expiring, Alina Burea reminded members of the need to renew the Advisory Board. She invited OAFCN members to express interest in taking part in the Advisory Board. The members would submit their candidacy through email in the following weeks.