

SHIELD V: Over 3.4 million pills seized in Operation Targeting Counterfeit Medicines

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Press release no 3/2025

Over 3.4 million pills have been seized as part of Operation SHIELD V, in which the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has played an essential coordinating role. This annual operation targets the misuse and distribution of counterfeit medicines, doping substances, illegal food or sports supplements, and counterfeit COVID-19 medical supplies.

In its fifth consecutive year, OLAF facilitated the efforts of the Member States customs authorities in ensuring the integrity of the European market. The coordinated actions of the customs authorities resulted in the seizure of significant quantities of illicit goods, including: 3,4 million pills, over 59.000 packages (sachets, sprays, packs, pens), 1,510 vials (ampoules, flasks) and 272 pieces of medical devices.

Joint Effort across 14 Member States

Operation SHIELD V included the active involvement of customs authorities from 12 EU Member States, namely Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Italy's Guardia di Finanza. This collaborative effort was further supported by relevant rights holders, ensuring that counterfeit goods were accurately identified and swiftly intercepted.

"Traffickers recklessly jeopardise people's health to turn a quick profit, a reality we cannot ignore. To protect European citizens, cooperation is essential. By combining efforts, OLAF, Europol, and national customs authorities have safeguarded European consumers from dangerous health products," said Ville Itälä, Director General of OLAF.

Operation SHIELD continues to exemplify the importance of coordinated action in tackling illegal activities that endanger public health and undermine legitimate businesses. OLAF's role ensures that these threats are met with a unified and effective response, safeguarding the health and wellbeing of citizens across the European Union.

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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Details

Publication date 30 January 2025

Author [European Anti-Fraud Office](#)

News type

- OLAF press release