

Protecting EU institutions: OLAF investigations into EU funds misuse in Parliament feed into Paris verdict

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On March 31, 2025, the Paris Correctional Court found nine Members or former Members of European Parliament and several parliamentary assistants guilty of embezzling European Union funds. Two investigations closed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in cooperation with the French judicial authorities fed into the verdict.

The OLAF investigations concluded in 2016 and 2018 uncovered suspicions of fraud and serious irregularities involving the fictitious employment of parliamentary assistants by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) affiliated with the French political party Rassemblement National (*formerly known as Front National*).

As widely reported by the media, Marine Le Pen and other members of the same political party were persons concerned in these investigations.

The investigations revealed serious irregularities and focused on the fictitious employment of individuals falsely listed as parliamentary assistants despite never having worked for the European Parliament.

In one instance, for example, the evidence gathered revealed that an assistant had been paid by the European Parliament without ever providing support to the MEP in parliamentary offices as required. Instead, this individual lived near Paris and worked for the political party exclusively.

During its investigation, OLAF successfully coordinated with the French judicial authorities, conducting parallel inquiries to ensure all possible aspects were covered. At the request of the French judicial authorities, OLAF staff also provided assistance to the criminal police as experts under the mandate of the French prosecutor.

The French Public Prosecutor integrated OLAF's findings into their ongoing judicial proceedings. OLAF's administrative investigations also contained financial recommendations to recover over EUR 420,000 to the EU budget, along with disciplinary recommendations to the European Parliament. Following OLAF's recommendations, the European Parliament recovered all the funds.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said, *"The European Parliament is the directly elected cornerstone of European democracy. In strong cooperation with the French Judicial*

Authorities, we safeguarded the integrity of the EU institutions. Taxpayers rightly expect their representatives to use their resources in line with our rules. Concerning the very few who do not: such serious misconduct, can damage both the Union's financial interests and its reputation. OLAF will continue to fight it without fear or favour."

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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