



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

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## **OLAF Launches Enforcement Group to Tackle Illegal Waste Shipments**

**The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) organised the inaugural meeting of the Waste Shipment Enforcement Group (WSEG) on 22-23 May in Warsaw, Poland. The event brought together over 50 stakeholders from across the EU and beyond – including environmental, customs and police authorities, carriers and judicial authorities – in a joint effort to thwart the growing threat of illicit trade of waste.**

The discussion in Warsaw, held with the support of the Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection of Poland, focused on the latest trends, international flows of illicit trade, strengthening inspections and enforcement measures as well as the use of IT tools to collect information and alert partners. Participants shared practical experience from inspections, outlined common challenges and analysed the modus operandi detected in the illicit trade of waste.

Illegal shipments of waste pose a serious risk to the public health, legitimate businesses and global security. Hazardous or improperly managed waste can contaminate the soil, water and air and its unchecked movement across borders undermines EU's transition toward greener, more sustainable economy. Furthermore, waste trafficking distorts fair competition and burdens compliant businesses.

Ernesto Bianchi, OLAF's Director for Revenue and international Operations – Investigations and Strategy, welcomed the group's launch by saying: *"The Waste Shipment Enforcement Group is a practical platform for action, dialogue and cooperation. OLAF is proud to support this effort, helping to turn shared intelligence into concrete investigations."*

The Waste Shipment Enforcement Group was set up by the recently adopted [Regulation on waste shipments](#) with a mandate to improve enforcement and operational cooperation within the EU and with third countries. The regulation empowers OLAF to support Member States in uncovering and investigating illegal waste shipments and to coordinate joint actions.

Speaking on OLAF's wider role, the Director-General of OLAF Ville Itälä said: *"Environmental crime knows no borders. Waste trafficking harms our environment, our health and our economy – and it undermines the rules that protect European citizens. By supporting this enforcement group, OLAF aims to unite operational minds to turn information into action and stop this crime at its source."*

## Background

OLAF exchanges real-time information on suspicious waste shipments with customs and environmental authorities of EU countries of origin and non-EU countries of destination. OLAF monitors both the original shipments and the returns of refused containers to make sure they are not diverted on their way back to the EU source country.

### **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:**

Pierluigi CATERINO

Spokesperson

European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

Phone: +32 2 29 52335

E-mail: [olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)

<https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu>



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