

OLAF and Danish Presidency united against customs fraud

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU hosted a High-Level Conference on Customs Fraud in Copenhagen on 12-13 November 2025, continuing a well-established series of annual high-level events dedicated to tackling customs fraud in the EU.

Building on previous editions in Helsinki (2019), Seville (2023), and Budapest (2024), this year's conference brought together over 100 senior customs officials from across the EU. Participants discussed the most pressing operational challenges in the fight against customs fraud, an issue that continues to threaten the proper functioning and security of the EU internal market.

Each conference in this series was organised by OLAF in close cooperation with the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, reflecting a strong and ongoing partnership with Member States. This collaboration underscores the shared commitment to ensure that all citizens benefit from fair trade and secure borders.

The 2025 conference focused on challenges such as cross-border export fraud, security and defence and how OLAF can better support Member States' efforts in detecting, preventing, and investigating fraud. Special attention was given to how new technologies, and automation can be used to improve efficiency of fraud detection.

Through plenary debates and dedicated workshops, the event fostered the exchange of best practices among Member States and encouraged a translation of these exchanges into concrete, operational, and coordinated actions at both EU and cross-border levels.

Acting Director-General Salla Saastamoinen said: *“Customs fraud harms everyone – it deprives public budgets of much-needed revenue and distorts fair competition. It can even endanger public safety when fake or unsafe goods enter the EU market. By fighting customs fraud, OLAF and its partners protect citizens, safeguard legitimate trade and strengthen Europe’s economic and security resilience.”*

OLAF remains fully committed to working with Member States and EU institutions to strengthen Europe's capacity to prevent and combat customs fraud in an increasingly complex and digital global environment.

OLAF mission, mandate and competences:

OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop wrongdoings related to EU funds.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud, corruption and irregularities 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 irregularities 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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