

OLAF helps uncover suspected textile diversion scheme

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has supported a coordinated customs operation with Polish and Spanish customs that led to the seizure of several containers of textiles suspected of being diverted onto the EU grey market instead of being exported to Africa as declared.

The operation focused on flows of goods transported from China towards Africa via a rail corridor entering the European Union through Poland and then expected to leave the EU via the ports of Spain to Africa. According to customs declarations, the goods – mainly textiles – were only transiting through the EU and were not intended for the sale on European market.

Textile products are subject to relatively high customs duties in the EU. These duties help ensure fair competition for European producers and generate revenue for national budgets and the EU. Because of this, textile shipments are closely monitored, especially when they move under the [transit procedure](#), a special customs regime that allows non-EU goods to travel across the EU without paying duties on the condition that the goods leave the EU customs territory and their exit is properly recorded.

OLAF's analysis of trade flows identified suspicious patterns suggesting that consignments declared as leaving the EU might in fact have remained in the European Union. To verify this, OLAF proposed that the customs authorities in Poland and Spain carry out coordinated controls on selected containers travelling along the route. The results of the operation fully confirmed the concerns, as none of the containers selected for coordinated control in fact travelled to Spain, even though the transit system confirmed their arrival there.

Following the controls, Polish customs authorities seized three containers loaded with almost 70,000 kilograms of textiles. OLAF continues to work closely with national customs administrations across the European Union to detect and prevent fraud schemes that exploit customs procedures and trade facilitation mechanisms.

Petr Klement, Director-General of OLAF, said: *“Diversion schemes that abuse transit procedures undermine fair competition, deprive public budgets of revenue and put honest businesses at a disadvantage. This operation shows the importance of close cooperation between OLAF and national customs authorities to protect the EU market and ensure that transit procedures and customs rules are respected.”*

For additional information about the operation, please refer to the [press release issued by Polish customs](#).

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 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(0)2 29-52335

E-mail: olaf-media@ec.europa.eu

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



[European Anti-Fraud Office](#)



[European Anti-Fraud Office](#)



[@EUAntiFraud](#)